

Social and Critical Theory *Volume 11*

# *Recognition and Social Ontology*

*Edited by*  
*Heikki Ikäheimo*  
*Arto Laitinen*

BRILL

# Recognition and Social Ontology

# Social and Critical Theory

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VOLUME 11

# Recognition and Social Ontology

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## Volume Foreword

*Recognition and Social Ontology* edited by Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen brings together a range of critical perspectives on the questions of recognition and ontology from leading scholars working in continental and analytic philosophy. Although the concepts of recognition and ontology were joined in the work of Hegel, they subsequently went their own ways, even though subterranean currents and concerns remained. These two currents have once again been brought into alignment in the light of recent Hegel scholarship, interpretation and conceptual innovation. Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen have brought together ground-breaking work from major thinkers on the nature of interpersonal recognition and the constitution of personhood, and the social worlds in which they are located and recreated.

John Rundell, Series Editor  
The University of Melbourne, Australia



## Preface and Acknowledgements

About ten years ago in Jyväskylä, the editors of this book together with Eerik Lagerspetz realized that Hegelian approaches to social phenomena were tackling basically the same questions as more analytical theories of social and institutional reality. This realization, and the excitement that followed, led first to some courses taught together, then to a research project and a conference, and this book is in many ways a result of these endeavours. We'd like to thank Eerik Lagerspetz for all the encouragement and shared efforts along the way.

We'd also like to acknowledge our *Doktorvater* Jussi Kotkavirta, who introduced the topic of recognition to us relatively early on. Jussi gave undergraduate courses on Hegel's Jena practical philosophy during the early 90's, and we were impressed with the promise of the notion of recognition as discussed by contemporary Hegel-scholars. It has been quite something for us to see the boom of theories of recognition since then. We are very grateful to Ludwig Siep, Michael Quante, Christoph Halbig, Axel Honneth and Nicholas H. Smith for their remarkable generosity in providing us with all sorts of support along the way.

Edited books are, of course, written entirely by the contributors, and we cannot thank them enough for their wonderful work, numerous wise suggestions, and for agreeing to come on board in the first place. In addition, we would like to thank Robert Brandom, for permission to reprint his "The Structure of Desire and Recognition: Self-Consciousness and Self-Constitution", previously published in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2007, pp. 127–150, and in *Dialectics, Self-Consciousness, and Recognition: The Hegelian Legacy*, A. Grøn, M. Raffnsøe-Møller, and A. Sørensen (eds.), Aarhus University Press/NSU Press, 2009, pp. 140–171.

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Sydney and Jyväskylä, January 2011

Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen

## Notes on Contributors

**Robert B. Brandom** is Distinguished Service Professor of Philosophy and a fellow of the Center for the Philosophy of Science, at the University of Pittsburgh, as well as a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. His interests center on philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, and the philosophy of logic. He has published more than 50 articles on these and related areas. His books include *Making It Explicit* (1994), *Articulating Reasons* (2000), *Tales of the Mighty Dead* (2002), *Between Saying and Doing* (2008), and *Reason in Philosophy* (2009).

**Vincent Descombes** is director of studies at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, and regular visiting professor at the University of Chicago. His work on the philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of literature includes *Modern French Philosophy* (1980), *Objects of All Sorts: A Philosophical Grammar* (1988), *Proust: Philosophy of the Novel* (1992), *The Barometer of Modern Reason: On the Philosophies of Current Events* (1993), *The Mind's Provisions: A Critique of Cognitivism* (2001), *Les Institutions du sens*, (1996), *Le Complément de sujet* (2004), and *Le raisonnement de l'ours. Et autres essais de philosophie pratique* (2007).

**Margaret Gilbert** is Abraham I. Melden Chair in Moral Philosophy, at the University of California Irvine. Her research interests cover philosophical social theory, philosophy of social sciences, ethics, philosophy of law and political philosophy. Her books include *On Social Facts* (1989), *Living Together* (1996), *Sociality and Responsibility* (2000), *Marcher Ensemble* (2003), and *A Theory of Political Obligation* (2006).

**Heikki Ikäheimo** is Research Fellow at Macquarie University, Sydney. His publications include *Self-Consciousness and Intersubjectivity* (2000), *On the Nature of Social and Institutional Reality* (ed. with Eerik Lagerspetz and Jussi Kotkavirta,

2001), *Dimensions of Personhood* (ed. with Arto Laitinen, 2007), "On the Genus and Species of Recognition" (*Inquiry*, 2002), "A Vital Human Need—Recognition as Inclusion in Personhood" (*European Journal of Political Theory*, 2009), and a number of other articles on Hegel, recognition and personhood.

**Arto Laitinen** is Research Fellow at Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies and a University Lecturer in philosophy, University of Jyväskylä. His publications include *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Charles Taylor* (ed. with Nicholas H. Smith, 2002), *Dimensions of Personhood* (ed. with Heikki Ikäheimo, 2007), *Strong Evaluation without Moral Sources* (2008), *Itseään tulkitseva elämä* (2009), *Hegel on Action* (ed. with Constantine Sandis, 2010), *Solidaarisuus* (ed. with Anne B. Pessi, 2011), and a number of articles on the philosophy of recognition.

**Robert B. Pippin** is Evelyn Stefansson Nef Distinguished Service Professor in the Committee on Social Thought, the Department of Philosophy, and the College at the University of Chicago. He is the author of several books on German idealism, including *Kant's Theory of Form* (1982), *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (1989), and *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem* (1999). His latest books are *The Persistence of Subjectivity* (2005), *Hegel's Practical Philosophy* (2008), *Nietzsche, Psychology and First Philosophy* (2010), and *Hollywood Westerns and American Myth* (2010). He is a winner of the Mellon Distinguished Achievement Award in the Humanities, and is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American Philosophical Society.

**Michael Quante** is Full Professor of Practical Philosophy at Westfälische Wilhelms-University, Münster. He is the Speaker of the Centrum für Bioethik and Associated Editor of the journal *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*. His books include *Pragmatic Idealism* (1998, co-edited with Axel Wüsthube), *Personales Leben und menschlicher Tod* (2002), *Einführung in die Allgemeine Ethik*, (2003), *Hegel's Concept of Action* (2004/1993), *Moral Realism* (2004, co-edited with Jussi Kotkavirta), *Enabling Social Europe* (Springer 2005; with Bernd v. Maydell et al.), *Person* (2007), *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (2008, co-edited with Dean Moyar), *Karl Marx: Ökonomisch-Philosophische Manuskripte*.

*Studienausgabe mit Kommentar* (2009), and *Menschenwürde und personale Autonomie* (2010).

**Paul Redding** is Professor of Philosophy at the School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry, University of Sydney. He works mainly in the areas of Kantian philosophy and the tradition of German idealism, and on the relationship of these to the later movements of analytic philosophy and pragmatism. He is the author of *Hegel's Hermeneutics* (1996), *The Logic of Affect* (1999), *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought* (2007) and *Continental Idealism: Leibniz to Nietzsche* (2009).

**Ludwig Siep** is University Professor in Philosophy at Westfälische Wilhelms-University, Münster. His research interests include the philosophy of German Idealism, history of practical philosophy and general and applied ethics. His publications include *Hegels Fichtekritik und die Wissenschaftslehre von 1804*, (1970), *Anerkennung als Prinzip der praktischen Philosophie* (1979), *Praktische Philosophie im Deutschen Idealismus* (1992), *Der Weg der Phänomenologie des Geistes. Ein einführender Kommentar zu Hegels "Differenzschrift" und "Phänomenologie des Geistes"* (2000), *Konkrete Ethik. Grundlagen der Natur- und Kulturethik* (2004) and *Aktualität und Grenzen der praktischen Philosophie Hegels. Aufsätze 1997-2009* (2010).

**Titus Stahl** is Assistant Professor for Social Philosophy at the Institute for Philosophy at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany. His research interests cover the methodological foundations of critical theory, the role of recognition on the ontological level of normative social practices and the constitution of collective agents, as well as ethics, metaethics, philosophy of the social sciences and 19th and 20th century German philosophy, especially Kant, Hegel and Marx. His PhD thesis *A Critical Theory of Social Practices. On the Social Ontological Foundations of Immanent Critique* will be published as a German language monograph in 2011.

**Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer** is Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Leipzig. He specializes in the philosophy of language, logic, mathematics and the history of metaphysics, with special focus on Hegel. He is the author of *Grundprobleme der Logik* (1986), *Hegels Analytische Philosophie* (1992),

*Sinn-Kriterien* (1995), *Was heißt Denken?* (2004), *Philosophie des Selbstbewußtseins* (2005), *Sprachphilosophie* (with Friedrich Kambartel, 2005), *Philosophiegeschichte* (2006), *Formen der Anschauung* (2008) and *The Pragmatics of Making it Explicit* (ed., 2008). He is the editor or co-editor of various philosophical journals, handbooks and readers, such as *Philosophische Rundschau* and *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*.

**Italo Testa** is Assistant Professor at the Department of Philosophy of the University of Parma, where he teaches Political Philosophy. His books include *Hegel critico e scettico* (2002), *Riconoscimento naturale e autocoscienza sociale* (2002), *Hegel contemporaneo* (ed. with Luigi Ruggiu 2003), *Hegel e le scienze sociali* (ed. with Alessandro Bellan, 2005), *Teorie dell'argomentazione* (with P. Cantù, 2006), *Ragione impura* (with R. Genovese 2006), *Lo spazio sociale della ragione. Da Hegel in avanti* (ed. with Luigi Ruggiu, 2008), and *La natura del riconoscimento. Riconoscimento naturale e ontologia sociale in Hegel* (2010).

## Chapter One

# **Recognition and Social Ontology: An Introduction**

Heikki Ikäheimo & Arto Laitinen

This book focuses on the connections between two contemporary, intensively debated fields of inquiry: Hegel-inspired theories of recognition (*Anerkennung*)<sup>1</sup> and analytical social ontology<sup>2</sup>. The aim of the collection is to make philosophical progress by bringing together the substantially overlapping but in practice so far mostly isolated debates in these fields. If recognition has social ontological significance, as it seems to have, how does taking this seriously fit with the analyses put forward in contemporary social ontology (or, as it is sometimes called by some of the main proponents, “philosophical social theory”, “philosophy of society”, or “philosophy of sociality”)? Are there ways in which theories of recognition and the current understandings in analytical social ontology could enrich one another? How do leading theorists in these fields, as well as younger scholars familiar with both fields, see the connections?

This collection draws attention to issues that are arguably best elaborated by drawing on both sources, without letting the unfruitful division of the philosophical discipline into the ‘analytical’ and ‘continental’ streams get in the way. Several of its contributors have been previously engaged in important and influential work at the crossroads of these streams of contemporary thought, and have significantly contributed to their cross-fertilization.

In this introductory chapter, we will first briefly characterize the topic of social ontology and ask whether social ontology, as it is widely practiced in contemporary analytical philosophy, could have something useful to learn from recognition-theories. Secondly, we will characterize the topic of theories of recognition and again ask whether philosophy of recognition, as it has been discussed recently, might have something to learn from the analytical tradition of social ontology. Thirdly, we will clarify some of the intricacies of the concept of recognition, and, fourthly, provide a chapter by chapter summary of the rest of the book.

## **1. Social Ontology**

In a book preceding most of the recent debates on analytical social ontology in the English speaking philosophical world, Carol Gould points out that the term ‘social ontology’ can be understood in two ways that are not necessarily mutually exclusive.<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, it may mean the study of the nature of social reality, of individuals, institutions, processes and so on that societies are composed of. Roughly, social ontology thus concerns those aspects of reality that social sciences study, as opposed to natural sciences. Its main task, understood in this way, is to determine the basic entities of social life, their interaction and change. On the other hand, ‘social ontology’ may mean “ontology socialized”, which is the study of “the social roots of conceptions of [...] reality”. In this sense, all ontology (of nature as well as of society) may be social. Think of for instance the sense in which the ontology of planets is social, because the criteria of “planets” are socially and historically construed by relevant experts.

In Gould’s view, the two senses of ‘social ontology’—the first having to do with the constitution of the social world and the second with conceptions of the world and their social roots—are related to the extent that conceptions whereby social reality is understood are not merely descriptive of social

reality, but partly constitutive of it.<sup>4</sup> Whereas, say, Pluto, the ninth rock from the Sun, is utterly *unaffected* by whether we count it as a planet or not, the ontology of parliaments, revolutions, workers' movements, non-governmental organizations, money, recessions, universities, and football games is doubly social, since how they are conceived is in various ways constitutive of what they are and how they play out as elements of social reality.

This collection is mainly focussed on social ontology in the first sense, but part of the practical importance of bringing together different ways of thinking about the constitution of social reality stems from the fact that philosophical accounts of it are themselves part of the repertoire of cultural representations affecting the ways in which humans actually organize and reproduce social life. Particular ways to theorize the social world may have at least an indirect role in creating or maintaining particular forms of social organization.

The branch of philosophy called social ontology is in principle interested both in what is socially constituted and in who or what does the constituting. Understood in this broad sense, we can schematically distinguish three overlapping and mutually dependent topics in social ontology:

1. persons themselves, or personhood;
2. collectives of persons (groups, collective agents, communities, societies, etc); and
3. institutions or institutional structures (systems of norms, organizations etc).

This taxonomy is certainly debatable, but it is helpful for our purposes. Each of these three phenomena or spheres of phenomena are arguably 'social' *both* in being somehow socially constituted *and* in participating in the constitution of the other elements of social reality. They are also clearly interrelated in many ways and this is important to keep in mind when distinguishing them. It is a noteworthy fact about much contemporary analytical social ontology, that whereas the ontology of collectives (2.) and institutional structures (3.) is usually discussed in ways that attend to their interconnections, persons (1.) are mostly treated as a separate topic. In contemporary mainstream social ontology, persons are thought of as engaging in various acts or activities constitutive of social reality such as sharing intentions, committing themselves collectively to something, attributing each other statuses, rewarding or sanctioning each other's behaviour and so on, but the social aspects of their own constitution are mostly not dealt with within the discipline. This is so despite the fact that it is a platitude of common sense, social science and philosophy that humans develop into persons only within social relations

and institutional structures, and that only individuals with person-making capacities, i.e. persons, are capable of maintaining social structures and institutions. If we are to believe the Hegel-inspired criticisms of the Social Contract -tradition, neglecting the ways in which social and institutional reality shapes individuals may lead to an unrealistic and biased view of social reality, with possibly harmful practical effects.<sup>5</sup>

As shown by several articles in this collection, Hegel's concept of recognition is designed to grasp processes and structures that are equally constitutive of persons, their communities and the space of norms and reasons.<sup>6</sup> If contemporary recognition-theorists following Hegel's lead are able to show how this actually works, then this should be useful for social ontology by providing it with theoretical means to grasp persons not merely as constitutors of social reality, but also themselves socially constituted. Not only would this produce a more coherent picture of the social world as an interconnected whole, it would also make social ontology better equipped to address issues of political and ethical importance to do with how collective and institutional reality structures persons, as it were, from the inside, or how relations of power and authority are always already at play when persons create, reproduce or revise social and institutional reality. Such issues are of course nothing new to social science and social theory, but they are surprisingly often put aside or left under-theorized in contemporary philosophical theories of social and institutional reality, either intentionally or otherwise. This is thus one obvious place where the Hegelian theories of recognition seem to hold a promise for social ontology.

Philosophical theories of recognition may, further, be able to provide conceptual tools for systematizing various points and insights that have been made within analytical social ontology, concerning for example the phenomenon of holding others responsible, criticisable or authorized, or the phenomena of esteem, respect or 'social commitment' to other group members, or indeed the explicit use of the notion of 'recognition.'<sup>7</sup>

## **2. Theories of Recognition as Theories in Social Ontology?**

In social and political philosophy, it has been impossible in the recent years to avoid hearing about the theme of 'recognition'. (For a brief outline of some of

the ways in which it has been used, see the next subsection of this Introduction.) Much of the discussion, however, has not had an explicitly social ontological agenda.

Why has it been thought then that recognition is a theme that deserves philosophical and theoretical attention? An answer given by a major part of contemporary literature on the theme is that only through recognition from others are individuals able to build and maintain harmonious or flourishing personal identities and self-conceptions. Thus, recognition from others is thought to be important *psychologically*. Furthermore, some of the recent literature also emphasizes the function of recognition in solidifying and harmonizing (or improving the ethical qualities of) social relations by including people in spheres of social life as peers, while not denying their differences. In other words, recognition is thought to be important also *socially*. Perhaps the largest part of the discussions have turned around the idea that recognition is something that individuals and groups—due to its psychological and/or social importance—demand and struggle for in the political arena, and thus that recognition is a phenomenon with serious *political* importance. If this is so, then there are numerous issues to address and debate, having to do with what exactly the needs, demands and struggles for recognition being voiced in the political realm and social life more generally are about, with what normative consequences should be drawn from the fact that humans are in various ways, individually and collectively, dependent on recognition, how to distinguish between justified and non-justified demands for recognition, and so forth.

What is striking about these views on recognition, however, is that from the perspective of what could be called ‘the original idea’ of recognition they shed only partial light on the importance of recognition for persons. Namely, for Hegel, the founding father of theories of recognition, recognition is not merely a phenomenon that has psychological, social and political importance in the lives of more or less fully fledged human persons and societies, but also an *ontologically* important phenomenon in that it is part of what constitutes human persons and their social and institutional world in the first place.<sup>8</sup> In Hegel’s view recognition is a central element of the psychological, social and institutional structures constitutive of the social world of persons. Thus, according to the original idea, recognition is a social ontological concept.

Importantly, this original idea has been taken up—more or less simultaneously with the mentioned discussions in social and political philosophy—in contemporary ‘non-metaphysical’ readings of Hegel and contemporary neo-Hegelian philosophizing more widely.<sup>9</sup> These developments in Hegel-scholarship and Hegelian philosophy have, in principle, also made it much easier for analytical philosophy and Hegelian streams of thought to speak to each other, in that they have done much to free Hegel from the obscure associations attached to him and the generally bad press he has had within analytical philosophy.<sup>10</sup> In brief, as anyone who has followed the recent wave of Hegelian literature knows, Hegel is nowadays not considered as representing a regress in philosophy back to dogmatic metaphysics that Kant already thoroughly criticized, but rather as continuing Kant’s critical program in his own way.

Secondly, even if Hegel himself lived and wrote before Darwin (and in fact did not accept evolutionism even in its Lamarckian form), contemporary readings appropriate Hegel in ways that are compatible with the nowadays indisputable fact that humans and their societies are a result of natural and cultural evolution. Thirdly, contrary to what was for a long time a standard interpretation in the English speaking world, on the more recent readings Hegel’s central term ‘spirit’ does not stand for an ethereal entity or cosmic principle determining human affairs, but rather for the historically developing concrete practices, psychological, social and institutional structures, and the realms of cultural representations of the human life-form as an interconnected whole. Many of the contributors to this volume have had leading roles in this broad movement of re-appropriating Hegel and Hegelian ideas in contemporary philosophy—and despite their differences, the concept of recognition has played important roles in their work. In short, according to several influential contemporary readings—by Robert Brandom, Robert Pippin, Paul Redding and others—recognition is a central concept of Hegel’s ontology of the ‘spiritual’ realm, which is close to co-extensive with those aspects of reality that social ontology is interested in.

Given the current state of discussions, it seems that theories of recognition might however have much to gain from detailed acquaintance and communication with the theories in contemporary social ontology by Bratman, Gilbert, Miller, Pettit, Searle, Tuomela and others. For instance, the nature of groups and institutions have been analysed in these theories in much more detail

than in the Hegelian tradition, and the same goes for examining how the social and institutional aspects of normativity relate to the possible pre-institutional aspects of normativity, for example in the theories of Joseph Raz and David Copp.<sup>11</sup> If contemporary advocates of Hegel want to start developing a Hegelian view of groups, institutions or normativity, they will be saved from re-inventing the wheel by using the existing accounts, as points of comparison. Currently, the Hegelian theories of recognition are relatively quickly satisfied by the general Hegelian idea that the same process that constitutes an “I” or person also constitutes some kind of “we”, without really looking into the different kinds of forms of collectivity or “we-ness” as loci of collective action, collective commitment and so forth. Also, whereas elaborations on the nature of *freedom*, especially with regard to the question how institutions can actualise freedom, are a distinct strength of the Hegelian theories, the ontology of institutions is often not developed in detail in contemporary Hegelianism. All in all, furthering the exchange between research on recognition and on contemporary social ontology promises to be of mutual benefit.

As for the contemporary debates about the “politics of recognition”—they too would benefit from the co-operation of social ontology and the more ontologically inclined Hegelian theories of recognition. For example, a worry has often been expressed that talking about recognition between groups easily leads to a reification of groups or collective identities, and thereby to a neglect of questions of dissent within groups, the irreducibility of personal identity to collective identity and so on. Sometimes one reads sweeping claims that such reification and the corresponding suppression of “difference” is essential to the idea of recognition in general. While we take this to be a gross simplification, it is in our view fair to say that the debates on politics of recognition suffer from a lack of adequate theoretical attention to the ontology of groups, collectives and collective action. There are numerous important issues to be scrutinized in this regard for those who are willing to draw on the best work done in the two contemporary fields of inquiry that this book aims to draw closer together.

### **3. What is “Recognition” in the Relevant Sense?**

So far we have said next to nothing about what exactly is the concept or phenomenon of recognition that is the topic of the aforementioned debates and

of this book. Next, we want to make a few basic distinctions that should be useful for clarifying the conceptual landscape around the rather slippery term ‘recognition’. While it is clear that not all authors use the term in the same way, the different uses do not comprise a chaos, but tend to cluster around certain central meanings that are related in interesting ways.

First of all, there are three everyday usages of the term, all of which are present in the literature, sometimes connected in useful ways, other times confused in less useful ways.<sup>12</sup> One of them is arguably the paradigmatic sense that provides unity to most, even if not all, recent discussions in political philosophy and neo-Hegelianism using the term, and it is helpful to distinguish it from the other two. Firstly, ‘recognition’ can be used as synonymous with ‘identification’ (or ‘re-identification’). In this sense *anything* can be recognized i.e. identified numerically as the entity it is, qualitatively as an entity with certain qualities, and generically as belonging to a certain species. Secondly, ‘recognition’ can be used roughly synonymously with ‘acknowledgement’. In this sense, recognition or acknowledgement has *evaluative or normative entities or facts* as its objects, so that we can acknowledge something as valuable, as valid, as giving reasons, and so forth. Thirdly—and this is the paradigmatic sense of ‘recognition’ at least in most Hegel-influenced discussions—there is a sense of ‘recognition’ in which it seems only *persons* (and perhaps groups or collectives of persons) can be recognized.<sup>13</sup>

It is recognition in this emphatically *interpersonal* sense—which it may be best to distinguish from the two other senses by reserving the terms ‘identification’ and ‘acknowledgement’ for these respectively—that is at issue in Hegel’s fable of the “master and bondsman,” and that arguably forms the guiding thread running through most of the literature explicitly or implicitly inspired by Hegel’s elaborations on recognition.

What is then recognition in the interpersonal sense? Is it one single phenomenon, or are there perhaps several forms or dimensions of recognition? Those who think recognition has only one form subscribe to what might be called a *one-dimensional* view of recognition, whereas those who think recognition comes in several forms subscribe to a *multi-dimensional* view of recognition. If there are several forms or dimensions, what are they, and how are they related? Are they merely connected by something like family resemblances so that interpersonal recognition is a cluster- or family resemblance

concept, or are they related in more systematic ways so that recognition could perhaps be seen as a genus-concept in the traditional sense, covering the different forms as its species?

On what maybe the most influential recent Hegel-inspired account of recognition, that of Axel Honneth's, recognition has several—and more exactly three—forms. Honneth calls these love, respect and esteem, respectively.<sup>14</sup> Very generally speaking, all three are on Honneth's account different kinds of positive or affirmative responses to persons, each to a different aspect of their personhood or personal identity. Love relates to persons as singular, needy beings capable of happiness and misery; respect relates to persons as capable of rational self-determination and bearers of rights and duties that follow thereof; and esteem relates to persons as having particular qualities, capacities and achievements that merit evaluative affirmation by others.

There is a further sense of 'recognition' that is closely reminiscent of interpersonal recognition—and therefore easily confused with it—but is arguably not quite the same thing. One of the potentially confusing similarities is that also this further sense of 'recognition'—let us call it *institutional recognition*—has persons as its objects. Whereas interpersonal recognition focuses on persons *per se*, institutional recognition focuses on persons as bearers of institutional, or, to use Searle's term, deontic powers (which it is further good in turn to distinguish conceptually from non-institutional deontic considerations familiar from Kantian and other moral theories—whether one thinks any of such considerations are valid or not). Utilizing Honneth's triadic division, loving, respecting and having esteem for the other can all, as forms of interpersonal recognition, be understood as responses to persons that are not explicitly concerned with, or conditional on, their institutionally created deontic powers, such as rights or duties.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, institutional recognition concerns institutional deontic powers explicitly.<sup>16</sup>

It may be, further, useful to distinguish between two senses of 'institutional recognition'. One is the granting of deontic powers to persons by the appropriate authorities, and another is responding appropriately to persons as bearers of particular deontic powers they have been granted previously. For example, a police officer is granted particular powers, such as the right to arrest people in certain circumstances, and the duty to protect them in other circumstances. Whether one wants to call the granting of deontic powers 'recognition' maybe

a matter of taste, but it is certainly conceivable. The other sense of ‘institutional recognition’ is rather commonsensical. One responds to a police officer as a bearer of the relevant deontic powers appropriately, for instance, by not resisting arrest, or by not obstructing her from fulfilling her official duties.

In contrast to interpersonal recognition, these forms of ‘institutional recognition’ are in a distinct sense ‘impersonal’ even though they have persons as their objects: respecting John as a reasonable man capable of self-determination responds to him as an irreplaceable person, whereas ‘respecting’ his (or him as giving an) order to stop after speeding on a highway responds to him as a bearer of a role or position. We say in the latter kinds of cases that what takes place—both the ordering and the obeying—are not to be ‘taken personally’. Similarly, while granting deontic powers is typically conditional on certain features of the object person, any set of deontic powers or the institutional roles or positions they comprise are still fundamentally transferable to other persons (whereas John’s self-determination is not). In real life, the interpersonal and the institutional forms of ‘recognition’ may co-exist and mingle in many ways, but there are many obviously bad ways of their getting confused that lead both to dysfunctional interpersonal relations and dysfunctional institutions.<sup>17</sup>

As to interpersonal recognition, there are further questions concerning its nature as, on the one hand, *responsive to* persons or something about them, and, on the other hand, *creative or constitutive of* persons, something about them, or the life-form of persons more generally. One can debate about how these responsive and constitutive aspects of interpersonal recognition are related, what exactly is it that different forms of interpersonal recognition respond to, what exactly are they constitutive of, and how. As pointed out above, the general Hegelian idea is that interpersonal recognition is in various ways constitutive of psychological, social and institutional structures comprising of ‘spirit’ or the human life-form, but different authors cash out this general idea in quite different ways. Also, there are complex issues about how interpersonal recognition is related to different forms of identification, to institutional recognition, and more generally to the acknowledgement of norms, institutions and so on. Even if one takes interpersonal recognition as the central phenomenon, a full picture of the social world needs to have these closely related phenomena in view as well. These are all issues that the contributions to this collection are engaged with.

#### 4. Chapter by Chapter Outline

This book is divided in three parts. The first part focuses on the social constitution of *personhood*. The second part addresses the role of recognition in the *human life-form as a whole*, or in what Hegel calls “spirit”. The third part discusses the role of recognition in various central elements of the human life-form, especially the nature of *collectives and institutions* and their relationships.

While the three parts have been arranged thematically, there is also a kind of historical progression: the first part discusses the introduction of the concept of recognition in Hegel, and the essays comment ways in which he preserves or modifies central Kantian themes. The second part discusses further the systematic place of recognition in the views of Hegel and surveys its developments in Marx, Dilthey, Gadamer, and the contemporary Hegel-influenced theories of Taylor, Ricoeur, Pinkard, Brandom and Pippin. The third part focuses largely on questions explicitly addressed by contemporary analytical social ontology, for example by Searle, Gilbert and Tuomela.

The chapters are thematically intertwined in many further ways and could have been grouped differently as well. All of them are self-standing essays, suitable for being read on their own in whatever order.

##### *Part One: Recognition and the Social Ontology of Personhood*

The first part of the collection focuses on the social constitution of personhood, examining whether the same processes that constitute social practices or the whole human life-form are also constitutive of persons themselves—that is, whether humans become and are persons only by being initiated in and participating in the lifeform. The *locus classicus* for this idea is Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where he argued that a self-consciousness is an essentially social achievement in that it only exists in a relation with another self-consciousness, and *is* only as recognized. In a recent influential essay, reprinted here, Robert Brandom tackles these claims in an original manner. His essay is followed by two new essays (by Robert Pippin and Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer), which comment Brandom’s claims critically while also developing independent lines of argumentation.

In Chapter 2, “The Structure of Desire and Recognition: Self-Consciousness and Self-Constitution,” Robert Brandom focuses on the difficult question of

how desiring animals come to develop relations of recognition whereby they distribute authority amongst themselves and thus institute a space of normative statuses. He conceives the transition from desire to recognition as a transition from the tripartite structure of want and fulfillment of biological desire to a socially structured, reciprocal, reflexive recognition. Brandom proceeds by reconstructing Hegel's notion of experience and self-consciousness and argues that at the center of Hegel's phenomenology of consciousness is the idea of experience being shaped by identification and sacrifice. Experience is the process of self-constitution and self-transformation of a self-conscious being that risks its own being. Ultimately, at the center of the Hegelian notion of selfhood is the realisation that selves are the loci of accountability. To be a self, it is concluded, is to be the subject of normative statuses that refer to commitments; it is to be able to take a normative stand on things, to commit oneself and undertake responsibilities.

Brandom's chapter shows more generally how the coming about of selves or persons as undertakers of commitments and as subjects and authorities of normative statuses, on the one hand, and the coming about of the world of collectively administered norms, on the other hand, can be seen as aspects of one and the same process in which recognition, as Brandom defines it, is a central factor.

In Chapter 3, "On Hegel's Claim that Self-Consciousness is 'Desire Itself' (*Begierde überhaupt*)," Robert B. Pippin provides a rival take on the connections between desire, self-consciousness and recognition in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel's text is very dense and has given rise to various interpretations. Hegel makes the claim that self-consciousness is "desire itself" (*Begierde überhaupt*), and that it finds its satisfaction only in the recognition of another self-consciousness. Pippin's essay sheds light on these claims, commenting also Brandom's chapter, and illuminates the nature of Hegel's view on the fundamental dependence of self-conscious beings on one another. The very core feature of free persons, their self-consciousness, is inherently social.

On Pippin's view Hegel treats self-consciousness as (i) a practical *achievement*, the result of an attempt, never as an immediate presence of the self to itself, and (ii) sees such an attempt and achievement as necessarily involving a relation to other people, a social relation, which is inherently normative.

To interpret Hegel's claims, in Chapter Four of *Phenomenology*, one has to take a stand on how the preceding discussion bears on them. Pippin argues that Hegel did not make a fresh start, merely changing the subject, or merely reconsider the same questions discussed in previous chapters, but continues his argument of the previous chapters by addressing new questions. Pippin stresses that Hegel's overall argument can best be understood as modifying central Kantian doctrines.

In Chapter 4, "Intuitions, Understanding, and the Human Form of Life," Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer, who elsewhere has defended yet another reading of Hegel's argument in the chapter of *Phenomenology* in question, addresses a question that he thinks is not adequately dealt with in Brandom's approach. How does (inferential) *sapience* or *understanding* relate to (non-inferential) human *sentience* or *intuition*? He explores "intuition" and "understanding" as the two "roots" of human sapience. First, he emphasizes the need for an appropriate notion of logical analysis for a *philosophical* anthropology, which does not merely describe particular behaviour or reconstruct phylogenetic histories as *evolutionary* anthropology does, but focuses on the most basic and general conceptual distinctions between life-forms.

Stekeler-Weithofer then argues that human personhood is a matter of being actively engaged in joint practices embedded in a cultural history. He interprets consciousness as involving jointly exercised intentional control, which already appeals to generic norms and practical traditions and therefore cannot be reduced, as Brandom's analysis suggests, to sanctioning behaviour of individuals. Stekeler-Weithofer's radical claim is that learning the central person-making competence, namely conceptual understanding, takes place in cooperative relations that involve recognitive attitudes between participants in a thick ethical sense. This means that the ontology of the human life-form is fundamentally ethical.

### *Part Two: Hegel, Marx, and Beyond: Recognition, Spirit, and Species Being*

The second part has four essays, focussing on Hegel's usages of recognition in the context of his theory of spirit more generally. This part contains a re-examination of Hegel's view on recognition by a pioneer and central reference in the contemporary revival of interest in recognition, Ludwig Siep, as well as essays by Heikki Ikäheimo and Paul Redding on Hegel's social

ontology and his full theory of Spirit. Finally, an essay by Michael Quante discusses the role of recognition in Marx, who is probably the most influential philosopher of all times influenced by Hegelian ideas.

In Chapter 5, “Mutual Recognition: Hegel and Beyond”, *Ludwig Siep* re-examines the role of recognition as a principle of practical philosophy that he discussed extensively in his pathbreaking 1979 monograph *Anerkennung als Prinzip der praktischen Philosophie* (yet to be translated in English). Since then, he has developed his views further significantly. This paper makes an overview of some of the most important recent work on recognition, as well as examines the central claims of his early book both in light of recent developments in the field and his own subsequent work. He starts with general comments on the significance of recognition in Hegel’s writings on objective spirit, and then sketches what he considers to be the main internal problems of Hegel’s theory of recognition within his philosophy in general. Siep also discusses what he sees as problems in the recent theories of recognition, and in the final section puts forward his own current view of the role that the concept of recognition can play in social philosophy, suggesting that it is more limited than argued for in his 1979 book.

Chapter 6 by *Heikki Ikäheimo*, “Holism and Normative Essentialism in Hegel’s Social Ontology”, focuses on two important features of Hegel’s social ontology. He starts by pointing out a lacuna in contemporary analytical social ontology, namely a lack of attention to the ontological constitution of the arguably central entities of the social and institutional world—persons. What he calls Hegel’s “holism”, is Hegel’s attempt to grasp the constitution of persons and the rest of the social and institutional world as an interconnected whole. The second feature of Hegel’s social ontology is his Aristotelian “normative essentialism”. Ikäheimo argues that at least a sweeping rejection of normative essentialism in social ontology is self-deceptive, and then continues to reconstruct the rational kernel of Hegel’s quite ambitious brand of normative essentialism.

Ikäheimo claims that three principles are central to Hegel’s social ontology—concrete freedom, self-consciousness, and interpersonal recognition—and discusses in detail how these are related and how they are essential to both Hegel’s holism and his normative essentialism. He then focuses on the question what exactly interpersonal recognition must be if it is to execute all the tasks it has for Hegel, criticizes construals of the concept that are

inadequate in this regard, and spells out the content of recognitive attitudes in a way that in his view is adequate, by means of the concepts of freedom, affirmation and significance. Ikäheimo continues by suggesting ways to understand the teleological nature of Hegel's normative essentialism, and concludes by pointing out three features of the young Marx's reinterpretation and utilization of elements of Hegel's social ontology.

*Paul Redding's* essay "The Relevance of Hegel's 'Absolute Spirit' to Social Normativity" (Chapter 7) goes to the heart of the Hegelian conceptual apparatus. It examines, first, Hegel's notion of recognition and his normative approach to social life, and argues that individual subjectivity must be conceived so that its reduction to the status of *mere* bearer of social norms can be avoided. Here Redding sides with Gadamer's criticism of Dilthey's more empiricist transformation of Hegel's 'objective spirit' in Dilthey's influential distinction between natural sciences and *Geisteswissenschaften*.

Secondly, in line with Hegel's 'original idea', Redding explores recognition not only in relation to subjective and objective spirit but also in relation to *absolute* spirit (roughly, collective self-representations in art, religion, and philosophy). Redding argues that the notion of recognition can be used to relieve even the concept of *absolute* spirit of the charges (still shared by Dilthey and Gadamer) of Hegel as positing a pre-critical 'spiritualistic' ontology. Redding argues that neither philosophy nor theology is for Hegel a matter of pre-critical metaphysics, to which he is often taken to be committed.

The contribution by *Michael Quante*, "Recognition as the Social Grammar of Species Being in Marx" (Chapter 8), discusses the social ontology of the young Karl Marx from the point of view of the concept of recognition, arguing for a much stronger presence of central Hegelian motives in his thinking than usually acknowledged. Quante examines the nature of Marx's essentialism and analyses in detail his notion of 'species being,' locating its historical background in Hegel's thought and its interpretations and modifications by Ludwig Feuerbach and Moses Hess. Quante's claim is that in his 1844 writings Marx developed a conception of recognition, in close connection to the theories of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and his *Philosophy of Right*. For Marx, this concept has both anthropological and evaluative significance, and it is an essential element both in determining the features that non-estranged social organisation has to have, and in making explicit which features make the division of labour in capitalist societies alienated.

### *Part Three: Groups, Institutions and Recognition*

The third part of the book discusses more specific themes of contemporary analytical social ontology by Searle, Gilbert, Tuomela and others. It has five essays—one of them by Gilbert herself—addressing issues to do with primitive forms of sociality, group-formation, institutional power, and the tricky question of how the instituting “we” and the instituted “we” relate to each other—all from the point of view of the idea of recognition.

In her paper “Mutual Recognition and Some Related Phenomena” (Chapter 9), *Margaret Gilbert* continues to develop her influential Plural Subject account of social reality, and discusses three closely related phenomena. In her terminology, one is *common knowledge* of co-presence. Here she draws on Charles Taylor’s challenge to conventional accounts of common knowledge. The second and third phenomena are what she calls *mutual recognition* and *joint attention*. Gilbert suggests that common knowledge of co-presence is essential to mutual recognition, and this, in turn, is essential to joint attention. Gilbert suggests that, through mutual recognition subjects constitute a fundamental kind of social group, arrive at *sociality*, and thereby pave the way for constituting concrete groups with more concrete character.

In Chapter 10, titled “Social Space and the Ontology of Recognition”, *Italo Testa* discusses central concepts of John Searle’s influential theory of social ontology and asks how the concept of recognition relates to them. Testa points out that certain holistic properties of individuals and social realities are *sui generis* social phenomena—ontologically subjective or, more precisely, *ontologically intersubjective*—insofar as they do not exist independently of the existence of a certain type of interaction, namely interaction characterized by recognitive relations. Testa goes on to articulate these properties with the help of the notions of constitutive rules and deontic powers. He then argues that recognitive phenomena, which on a Searlean account are specific to human interaction, are in part proper to animal interaction as well. This suggests that recognitive relations could play a constitutive role that is much broader than appears to be the case on the Searlean account.

In Chapter 11, “Recognition, Acknowledgement, and Acceptance”, *Arto Laitinen* discusses three phenomena all called “recognition”. The first is mutual recognition between persons in the Hegelian or Honnethian sense, which Laitinen examines in the first section. Secondly Laitinen studies, by

drawing also on the work of Rovane and Gilbert, whether recognition of persons is necessary, sufficient and/or paradigmatic for the existence of groups. While mutual recognition has an inherent tendency towards group-formation and is certainly paradigmatic and desirable for the formation of groups, it is not sufficient for the existence of groups. (He admits that there might be (somewhat exotic) counter examples to the claim that it is necessary.) In the third and fourth sections Laitinen discusses responsive “acknowledgement” of reasons and institutive “acceptance” of social norms, constitutive rules or institutional facts, and asks what over and above mere “identification” the relevant attitudes are. He also argues that it is crucial to distinguish these two phenomena that have often been conflated—there are reasons that do not originate in the acceptance of social norms, and occasionally social norms fail to have genuinely valid normative implications to be acknowledged. It is one thing to accept that a social norm is in force and another thing to acknowledge its valid normative significance. Laitinen further points out that acceptance and acknowledgement typically enable new ways of (mis)recognition concerning persons.

The contribution by *Titus Stahl* (Chapter 12), “Institutional Power, Collective Acceptance, and Recognition”, is concerned with the role of recognition in institutional power, which is a subclass of social power that rests on (collectively) accepted status functions. Stahl analyses this in terms of entitlements and capacities of persons to influence other people’s reasons to act by issuing demands that a system of status functions entitles them to issue.

Stahl argues for a specific ‘recognition account’ of institutional power. At the core of the recognition account of A’s institutional power in a group is the readiness of the group-members to grant each other the authority to sanction each other’s behaviour in regard to some norm or rule R, which in turn prescribes the members to respect the institutional obligations entailed by A’s institutional status entitling A to make legitimate demands on the group members’ behaviour.

In “The Problem of Collective Identity: The Instituting We and the Instituted We” (Chapter 13) Vincent Descombes tackles the issue of whether groups or their constitutions come first. He articulates and defends Hegel’s somewhat paradoxical view that in some sense it is impossible, always too late, for a group to make a constitution for itself. He starts with Hegel’s discussion

of the question “Who is to frame a constitution?” and introduces a distinction between two concepts of a social context for action, one atomistic and the other holistic or moral (*geistig*). Next, Descombes explains the Hegelian notion of a “spirit of the nation” by reference to Montesquieu. Montesquieu, the author of *The Spirit of Laws*, introduced a social concept of institution, as opposed to a merely political one, pointing out that legislators could establish laws, but that they could not establish manners and customs. Thirdly, Descombes raises the question whether a group of individuals could establish an institution by an act of collective commitment. He argues that the collective subject of institutions could not be expressed by what the linguists call an “inclusive We” (restricted to the present persons) since the personal exercise of instituting powers requires that an institutional context is already given.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See for example ed. A. Gutmann, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994 (including Charles Taylor’s highly influential essay “The Politics of Recognition”); A. Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Cambridge Mass., MIT Press, 1995; A. Honneth, *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2007; N. Fraser and A. Honneth, *Recognition or Redistribution: A Philosophical-Political Exchange*, London, Verso, 2003; P. Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 2005; S. Thompson, *The Political Theory of Recognition: A Critical Introduction*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2006; eds. B. v. d. Brink & D. Owen, *Recognition and Power*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007; J.-P. Deranty, *Beyond Communication: A Critical Study of Axel Honneth’s Social Philosophy*, Leiden, Brill, 2009; eds. H.-C. Schmidt am Busch & C. Zurn, *The Philosophy of Recognition: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2010. See, further, L. Siep, *Anerkennung als Prinzip der praktischen Philosophie: Untersuchungen zu Hegels Jenaer Philosophie des Geistes*, Freiburg, Karl Alber, 1979; A. Wildt, *Autonomie und Anerkennung: Hegels Moralitätskritik im Lichte seiner Fichte-Rezeption*, Stuttgart, Clett-Cotta, 1982; R. Pippin, *Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989; R. Pippin, *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008; R. Brandom, *Making it Explicit: Reason, Representing and Discursive Commitment*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press,

1994; T. Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994; R. Williams, *Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other*, Albany SUNY Press, 1992; R. Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997; P. Redding, *Hegel's Hermeneutics*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1996. A more extensive bibliography on recognition can be found in the internet at [www.recognitionforum.com](http://www.recognitionforum.com).

<sup>2</sup> See for example D. Lewis, *Convention*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press., 1969; M. Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, London, Routledge, 1989; M. Gilbert, *Living Together: Rationality, Sociality, and Obligation*, Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield, 1996; M. Gilbert, *Sociality and Responsibility: New Essays in Plural Subject Theory*, Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield, 2000; M. Gilbert, *A Theory of Political Obligation: Membership, Commitment, and the Bonds of Society*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006; P. Pettit, *The Common Mind*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993; P. Pettit, *A Theory of Freedom*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2001; J. Searle, *The Constitution of Social Reality*, New York, The Free Press, 1995; J. Searle, *Making the Social World: Structure of Civilization*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010; R. Tuomela, *A Theory of Social Action*, Dordrecht, Reidel, 1984; R. Tuomela, *The Importance of Us*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995; R. Tuomela, *Cooperation: A Philosophical Study*, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 2000; R. Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Social Practices: A Collective Acceptance View*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002; R. Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007; eds. H. Ikäheimo et al. *On The Nature of Social and Institutional Reality*, Jyväskylä, SoPhi, 2001; M. Bratman, *Faces of Intention*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; M. Bratman, *Structures of Agency*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007; and S. Miller, *Social Action*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> C. Gould, *Marx's Social Ontology: Individuality and Community in Marx's Theory of Social Reality*, Cambridge, Mass., The MIT Press, 1978, xv–xvi. Gould's book was central in giving the term 'social ontology' wider currency. An even earlier usage of the term in this sense is J. B. Gittler's "Social Ontology and the Criteria for Definitions in Sociology", *Sociometry*, vol. 14, no. 4, 1951, pp. 355–365.

<sup>4</sup> Gould, *Marx's Social Ontology*, p. xvi.

<sup>5</sup> See M. Quante, "On the Limits of Construction and Individualism in Social Ontology", in eds. Ikäheimo et al., *On the Nature*, pp. 136–164.

<sup>6</sup> For arguments for the view that recognition is, in different ways, constitutive of personhood, see eds. H. Ikäheimo & A. Laitinen, *Dimensions of Personhood*, Exeter, Imprint Academic, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> On social commitments, see for example Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality*, pp.18–19, 32–45 and *passim*. For explicit uses of "recognition" in different senses,

see for example Searle, *Making the Social World*, p. 8 and passim; Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, pp. 217–218 and 470; see also Gilbert’s contribution to this volume, Chapter 9; Pettit, *A Theory of Freedom*, pp. 24, 79 and passim; and P. Pettit & G. Brennan, *The Economy of Esteem*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 3, 20–21, 33 and 185–194.

<sup>8</sup> Hegel took over the concept from Fichte, whose version was more rudimentary. See for example Siep, *Anerkennung als Prinzip*. On Fichte’s account, the concept has less social ontological significance, although it is central for self-conscious subjectivity. In Hegel-interpretation, on the other hand, there are well known complexities. The role of “recognition” in Hegel’s writings is the subject of significant debate, partly because his discussion of recognition is always embedded in larger argumentative structures. The best known textual context is the so-called “master and bondsman”-passage, and the transition from natural desire to mutual recognition between self-conscious subjects in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977 [1807], §§178–96). Whether recognition is central for Hegel’s mature system, for example in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (ed. Allen Wood, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991[1821]) has divided interpreters. It is probably fair to say that any representation of “Hegel’s theory of recognition” will be a selective reconstruction. Yet, interpreters as different as Brandom, Honneth, Redding, Siep and Williams all agree that for Hegel recognition is a concept with social ontological significance.

<sup>9</sup> Surprisingly, also between these two streams of discussion about recognition—on the one hand in political philosophy and on the other hand in Hegel-scholarship and neo-Hegelian philosophy—there has been so far very little exchange. For one attempt at unification, see H. Ikäheimo, “Making the Best of What We Are: Recognition as an Ontological and Ethical Concept”, in eds. H.-C. Schmidt am Busch & C. Zurn, *The Philosophy of Recognition*.

<sup>10</sup> See P. Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

<sup>11</sup> D. Copp, *Morality, Normativity and Society*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995; J. Raz, *Practical Reason and Norms*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990 (1975).

<sup>12</sup> We are now only talking about the English term ‘recognition’, not Hegel’s original ‘*Anerkennung*’ nor its equivalents in languages other than German or English. We have analysed these three senses in more detail in our “Analysing Recognition – Identification, Acknowledgement and Recognitive Attitudes between Persons”, in eds. v. d. Brink & Owen, *Recognition and Power*, pp. 33–56.

<sup>13</sup> There are many further ways in which “recognition” has been used, and there are various borderline cases between the three broad classes. H. L. A. Hart’s “rule of recognition” is a borderline case between identification and acknowledgement—it is

roughly a rule for identifying the norms that are legally valid. (See H. L. A. Hart, *The Concept of Law*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1961.) Further, what we here label “acknowledgement” is quite a broad class. It covers first of all what Searle and Tuomela call “acceptance” or “recognition”, which is constitutive of the institutional reality, and secondly, responsiveness to genuinely normative reasons, whether institutional or not. (Below, in Chapter 11 by Laitinen it is argued that these two should not be conflated.) Compare with David Copp’s distinction between “normativity type-one” and “normativity type-two” in *Morality, Normativity and Society*, p. 10 onwards. What we below call institutional recognition of persons is another borderline case, closely intertwined with acknowledgement of norms. It is also a complicated question whether it would be misleading to count the phenomenon that Margaret Gilbert (in *On Social Facts*, and chapter 9 below) calls “mutual recognition” as just one more detailed case of interpersonal recognition in the sense of Honneth, Taylor, Hegel et al. Finally, drawing on the work of James Tully and Stanley Cavell, the term “acknowledgement” has been used by Patchen Markell, (*Bound by Recognition*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2003) in contrast to what he calls “recognition”. Markell provides a detailed view of the difference between two general approaches, one aiming at recognition and the other characterized by acknowledgement. One crucial point here concerns acknowledgement of one’s own finitude, and lowering one’s ambition on the ideals of sovereign agency allegedly inherent in the theories of recognition. His usage of acknowledgement is thus different from any of the three things we list above (identification, acceptance/acknowledgement, and recognition).

<sup>14</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*.

<sup>15</sup> Note, however, that in his discussion of respect Honneth himself does not clearly distinguish between the interpersonal and the institutional senses of recognition.

<sup>16</sup> Note that non-institutional interpersonal recognition, especially respect, may however concern non-institutional deontic features, assuming there are such.

<sup>17</sup> One aspect of modernization is usually thought to be a differentiation of interpersonal and institutional relations. Hence, one might argue that such an evaluative judgment involves a typically modern way of looking at societies. From an ontological perspective, however, it is arguable that no institutional system can exist without forms of interpersonal recognition. One can ‘respect’ the policeman as a bearer of institutional powers without having much respect for him as an individual person, yet it would be a completely different claim to say that there could be ‘respect’ for institutional powers in a society even if no-one had absolutely no interpersonal respect for any others as having (non- or pre-institutional) authority on his or her behaviour. Distinguishing between the interpersonal and the institutional is of decisive importance for clarity in social ontology.



**Recognition and the Social Ontology  
of Personhood**



## Chapter Two

# **The Structure of Desire and Recognition: Self-Consciousness and Self-Constitution**

Robert B. Brandom

### **I The historicity of essentially self-conscious creatures**

One of Hegel's big ideas is that creatures with a self-conception are the subjects of developmental processes that exhibit a distinctive structure. Call a creature 'essentially self-conscious' if what it is *for* itself, its self-conception, is an essential element of what it is *in* itself. How something that is essentially self-conscious *appears* to itself is part of what it *really* is. This is not to say that it really *is* just however it appears to itself to be. For all that the definition of an essentially self-conscious being says, what such a one is in itself may diverge radically from what it is for itself. It may not in fact be what it takes itself to be. But if it does mistake itself, if its self-conception is in error, that mistake is still an essential feature of what it really is. In this sense, essentially self-conscious creatures are (partially) *self-constituting* creatures. Their self-regarding attitudes are efficacious in a distinctive way.

For such a being can change what it is *in* itself by changing what it is *for* itself. To say of an essentially self-conscious being that what it is for itself is an *essential* element of what it is in itself entails that an alteration in self-conception carries with it an alteration in the self of which it is a conception. Essentially self-conscious creatures accordingly enjoy the possibility of a distinctive kind of self-transformation: *making* themselves be different by *taking* themselves to be different. Insofar as such a difference in what the essentially self-conscious creature is *in* itself is then reflected in a further difference in what it is *for* itself—perhaps just by in some way acknowledging that it has changed—the original change in self-conception can trigger a cascade. That process whereby what the thing is in itself and what it is for itself reciprocally and sequentially influence one another might or might not converge to a stable equilibrium of self and conception of self.

Because what they are in themselves is at any point the outcome of such a developmental process depending on their attitudes, essentially self-conscious beings do not have *natures*, they have *histories*. Or, put differently, it is their nature to have not just a *past*, but a *history*: a sequence of partially self-constituting self-transformations, mediated at every stage by their self-conceptions, and culminating in their being what they currently are. The only unchanging essence they exhibit is to have what they are in themselves partly determined at every stage by what they are for themselves. Understanding what they are requires looking retrospectively at the process of sequential reciprocal influences of what they at each stage were for themselves and what they at each stage were in themselves, by which they came to be what they now are.

Rehearsing such a historical narrative (Hegel's "*Erinnerung*") is a distinctive way of understanding oneself *as* an essentially historical, because essentially self-conscious, sort of being. To be *for* oneself a historical being is to constitute oneself as *in* oneself a special kind of being: a *self-consciously* historical being. Making explicit to oneself this crucial structural aspect of the metaphysical kind of being one always implicitly has been as essentially self-conscious is itself a structural self-transformation: the achievement of a new kind of self-consciousness. It is a self-transformation generically of this sort that Hegel aims to produce in us his readers by his *Phenomenology*. The kind of self-consciousness it involves is a central element in what he calls "Absolute Knowing".

I suppose that when it is sketched with these broad strokes, this is a reasonably familiar picture. Entitling oneself to talk this way requires doing a good bit of further work, however. Why should we think there are things that answer to the definition of ‘essentially self-conscious beings’? What is a self? What is it to have a self-conception—to take oneself to be a self, to be a self to or *for* oneself? For that matter, what is it for *anything* to be something *for* one? And how might the notion of a self-conception, or anything else, being *essential* to what one really is, what one is *in* oneself, be cashed out or explained? Hegel’s way of answering these questions, his detailed filling-in and working-out of the relevant concepts, is no less interesting than the general outline of the story about essentially self-conscious, historical beings those details are called on to articulate.

## II Identification, risk, and sacrifice

Let me address the last question first. Suppose for the moment that we had at least an initial grasp both on the concept of a *self*, and on what it is to have a *self-conception*, something one is *for* oneself. The story I have just told about essentially self-conscious beings indicates that in order to understand the relationship between selves and self-conceptions, we would need also to understand what it is for some features of a self-conception to be *essential* elements of one’s self, that is, what one is *in* oneself, what one *really* is. A self-conception may include many accidental or contingent features—things that just happen to be (taken to be) true of the self in question. The notion of an *essentially self-conscious being* applies only if there are also some things that one takes to be true of oneself such that one’s self-conception having those features is essential to one’s being the self one is. How are they to be thought of as distinguished from the rest?

Hegel’s answer to this question, as I understand it, can be thought of as coming in stages. The first thought is that what it is for some features of one’s self-conception to *be* essential is for one to *take* or *treat* them *as* essential. They are constituted as essential by the practical attitude one adopts toward them. The elements of one’s self-conception that are essential to one’s self (i.e. that one’s self-conception has *those* features is essential to what one actually is), we may say, are those that one *identifies* with. Talking this way, essentially

self-conscious beings are ones whose *identity*, their status as being what they are *in* themselves, depends in part upon their attitudes of *identification*, their attitudes of identifying with some privileged elements of what they are *for* themselves. Of course, saying this does not represent a significant explanatory advance as long as the concept of the practical attitude of identification remains a black box with no more structure visible than its label.

So we should ask: what is it that one must *do* in order properly to be understood as thereby *identifying oneself* with some but perhaps not all elements of one's self-conception? The answer we are given in *Self-Consciousness* is that one identifies with what one is willing to *risk* and *sacrifice* for. Hegel's metonymic image for this point concerns the important case of making the initial transition from being merely a living organism, belonging to the realm of Nature, to being a denizen of the realm of Spirit. The key element in this index case is willingness to risk one's biological life in the service of a commitment—something that goes beyond a mere desire.<sup>1</sup>

It is only through staking one's life that freedom is won; only thus is it proved that for self-consciousness, its essential being is not [just] being, not the immediate form in which it appears, not its submergence in the expanse of life, but rather that there is nothing present in it which could not be regarded as vanishing moments, that it is only pure being-for-self. [§187]

By being willing to risk one's life for something, one makes it the case that the life one risks is *not* an essential element of the self one is thereby constituting, while that for which one risks it is. An extreme example is the classical Japanese samurai code of bushido, which required ritual suicide under a daunting variety of circumstances. To be samurai was to identify oneself with the ideal code of conduct. In a situation requiring *seppuku*, either the biological organism or the samurai must be destroyed, for the existence of the one has become incompatible with the existence of the other. Failure to commit biological suicide in such a case would be the suicide of the samurai, who would be survived only by an animal. The animal had been a merely necessary condition of the existence of the samurai (like the presence of oxygen in the atmosphere, which is important to us, but with which we do not just for that reason count as identifying ourselves). No doubt even sincere and committed samurai must have hoped that such situations would not arise.

But when and if they did, failure to act appropriately according to samurai practices would make it the case that one never had been a samurai, but only an animal who sometimes aspired to be one. One would thereby demonstrate that one was not, in oneself, what one had taken oneself to be, what one was for oneself. The decision as to whether to risk one's actual life or to surrender the ideal self-conception is a decision about who one is.

I called the sort of example Hegel uses to introduce this thought 'metonymic' because I think that a part is being made to stand for the whole in this image. The point he is after is far broader. For identification in the general sense is a matter of being willing to risk and if need be sacrifice something one actually is (in oneself) for something one is merely for oneself, even if what is risked is not life, but only other commitments or entitlements. Hegel's arresting story of the struggle-unto-death offers a vivid image of one important dimension of the transition from Nature to Spirit. But once the realm of Spirit—all of our normatively and conceptually articulated doings—is an up-and-running enterprise, most of what we have to lose, to risk, and to sacrifice is not a matter of biology, but of culture. What we at these subsequent stages in our development are in ourselves is in large part a matter of status, commitment, authority, and responsibility. Rejecting something one already is because it collides with some commitment is identifying with the commitment one endorsed, by sacrificing something else.

So, for instance, risking or sacrificing one's job for a point of moral or political principle is a self-constituting act of identification in the same sense that risking or sacrificing one's life for it is. And acts of identification through risk-or-sacrifice need not be such large-scale, wholesale affairs as these. From the point of view of identification, paying taxes, though seldom a threat to biological endurance (though there is a box labeled 'death and taxes'), does belong together with liability to military service (a risk of a risk of life). Both express one's practical identification, through sacrifice, with the community one thereby defends or supports. Whenever undertaking a new commitment leads to breaking a habit or abandoning a prior intention one is identifying with that commitment, in practical contrast to what is given up. The historical cascade of sequential self-transformations by identification with elements later sacrificed, each stage building on the previous ones, takes place largely

in the normative realm opened up by the initial bootstrapping transition from the merely natural.

Indeed, I want to claim that Hegelian *Erfahrung*, the process of experience, ought to be understood as having this shape of identification and sacrifice. It, too, is a process of self-constitution and self-transformation of essentially self-conscious beings. Each acknowledged error calls for an act of self-identification: the endorsement of some of the mutually incompatible commitments one has found oneself with, and the sacrifice of others. Experience is the process whereby subjects define and determine themselves as loci of account, by practically “repelling” incompatible commitments. (Compare the way objects are determinately identified and individuated by the specific properties they exhibit, and hence the materially incompatible properties they modally exclude—properties themselves determinately contentful in virtue of their relation of exclusive difference from a specific set of materially incompatible properties.<sup>2</sup>) Subjects do that by *changing* their doxastic and inferential commitments: rejecting some, refining others, reciprocally adjusting and balancing what claims are taken to be true, what one is committed to doing, and what is taken to follow from what, so as to remove and repair discordances. This is the process by which the always somewhere colliding and competing claims of the mediating authority codified in universals and the immediate authority exercised by particulars are negotiated and adjudicated. It is accordingly the process by and in which conceptual contents develop and are determined.

### **III Creatures things can be something for: desire and the tripartite structure of erotic awareness**

The story about essentially self-conscious beings, elaborated in terms of identification through risk-and-sacrifice, is what forged the link between the constitution through development of *selves* and the constitution through development of *conceptual contents* in the process of experience. And that story presupposes a conception of selves, and so of self-conceptions. In order to entitle ourselves to an account of the shape sketched in the previous two sections, we must answer the questions left hanging at the beginning of the previous one: What is a self? What is it to have a self-conception—to take

oneself to be a self, to be a self to or *for* oneself? For that matter, what is it for *anything* to be something *for* one?

The first and most basic notion, I think, is *practical classification*. A creature can *take* or *treat* some particular *as* being of a general kind by responding to it in one way rather than another. In this sense, a chunk of iron classifies its environments as being of one of two kinds by rusting in some of them and not in others. The repeatable response-kind, rusting, induces a classification of stimuli, accordingly as they do or do not reliably elicit a response of that kind. Since reliable differential responsive dispositions are ubiquitous in the causal realm, every actual physical object exhibits this sort of behavior. For that reason, this sort of behavioral classification is not by itself a promising candidate as a definition of concepts of *semantic content* or *awareness*; pansemanticism and panpsychism would be immediate, unappealing consequences.

Hegel's alternative way in is to look to the phenomenon of *desire*, as structuring the lives of biological animals. A hungry animal treats something as food by "falling to without further ado and eating it up," as Hegel says (*Phenomenology* §109). This is clearly a species of the genus of practical classification. The state of desiring, in this case, hunger, induces a two-sorted classification of objects, into those consumption of which would result in satisfying the desire, and the rest. The constellation of *hunger*, *eating*, and *food* has structure beyond that at work in the inorganic case of *rusting* (response) and *wet* (stimulus). What ultimately drives the classification is the difference between hunger's being satisfied and its not being satisfied. But the classification of objects by that difference is conditioned on a mediating performance, process, or response. What is classified is objects which *if* responded to by eating *would* satisfy the hunger, and those that do not have that property. Both the role played by the practical activity of the desirer, that is, what it *does* in response to the object, and the hypothetical-dispositional character of the classification in terms of the effect of that doing on the satisfaction of the desire, are important to Hegel's picture.

Desires and the responsive practical performances that subserve them play distinctive roles in the lived life of an animal. They are intelligible in terms of the contributions they make to such functions as its nutrition, reproduction, avoidance of predation, and so on. Because they are, they direct the erotic

awareness of the desiring animal to the objects that show up as significant with respect to them in a distinctive way. They underwrite a kind of primitive intentionality whose character shows up in the vocabulary it entitles us to use in describing their behavior. Dennett<sup>3</sup> considers in a related context a laboratory rat who has been conditioned to produce a certain kind of behavior in response to a stimulus of a repeatable kind, say, the sounding of a certain note. We can in principle describe the repeatable response in two different ways: 'The rat walks to the bar, pushes it down with its paw, and sometimes receives a rat-yummy', or 'The rat takes three steps forward, moves its paw down, and sometimes receives a rat-yummy'. Both describe what the rat has done in each of the training trials. What has it been conditioned to do? Which behavior should a reductive behaviorist take it has been inculcated and will be continued? Abstractly, there seems no way to choose between these coextensional specifications of the training. Yet the way in which desiring organisms like rats are directed at desire-satisfying objects via expectations about the results of performances leads us confidently to predict that if the rat is put six steps from the bar, when the note sounds it will walk to the bar and push it down with its paw, *not* walk three steps forward and move its paw down. We do so even in this artificial case for the same reasons that we expect that if we move a bird's nest a few feet further out on a limb while it is away, on its return it will sit in the nest in its new location, rather than on the bare limb in the nest's old location. The bird is "onto" its nest (to use a locution favored by John McDowell in this context) rather than the location. That is the object that has acquired a practical significance because of the functional role it plays in the animal's desire-satisfying activities. A desire is more than a disposition to act in certain ways, since the activities one is disposed to respond to objects with may or may not satisfy the desire, depending on the character of those objects.

Erotic awareness has a tripartite structure, epitomized by the relations between *hunger*, *eating*, and *food*. Hunger is a desire, a kind of *attitude*. It immediately impels hungry animals to respond to some objects by treating them *as* food, that is, by *eating* them. *Food* is accordingly a *significance* that objects can have to animals capable of hunger. It is something things can be *for* desiring animals. *Eating* is the activity of taking or treating something *as* food. It is what one must *do* in order in practice to be attributing to it the desire-relative erotic significance of *food*. *Eating* is the activity that is *instrumentally appropriate* to

the desire of *hunger*. It is *subjectively* appropriate, in that it is the activity hungry animals are in fact impelled to by being in the desiring state of hunger. It is *objectively* appropriate in that it is an activity, a way of responding to environmental objects, that often (enough) results in the satisfaction of the desire.

This distinction between two sorts of instrumental propriety of activity to desire funds a distinction between *appearance* and *reality* for the objects responded to, between what things are *for* the organism (the erotic significance they are *taken* to have) and what things are *in* themselves (the erotic significance they *actually* have). Anything the animal responds to by eating it is being taken or treated *as* food. But only things that actually relieve its hunger really *are* food. The possibility of these two coming apart is the organic basis for conceptual *experience*, which is the collision of incompatible *commitments*. Even at the level of merely erotic awareness, it can lead to the animal's *doing* things differently, in the sense of altering which objects it responds to by treating them as having the erotic significance generated by that desire. Its dispositions to respond to things differentially as *food*, that is, by *eating* them, can be altered by such practical disappointments. If all goes well with an experiential episode in such a process of learning, the *subjectively* appropriate differential responsive dispositions become more reliable, in the sense of more *objectively* appropriate to the desire that motivates those activities.

#### **IV From desire to recognition: two interpretive challenges**

This account of the tripartite structure of erotic awareness offers a reasonably detailed answer to the question: What is it for things to be something *for* a creature? It is a story about a kind of proto-consciousness that is intelligible still in wholly naturalistic terms and yet provides the basic practical elements out of which something recognizable as the sort of theoretical conceptual consciousness discussed in the first three chapters of the *Phenomenology* could perhaps be understood to develop. We know that Hegel subscribes to the Kantian claim that there can in principle be no consciousness (properly so described) without *self*-consciousness. So making the step from the erotic awareness of animal denizens of the realm of Nature to the conceptual consciousness of knowers and agents who live and move and have their being in the normative realm of Spirit—creatures who have achieved the status of

*selves* or *subjects*—requires the advent of self-consciousness. We need to understand what this achievement consists in, and why genuine consciousness requires it. As we will see, what is required to be able to take something to be a *self* is to be able to attribute attitudes that have distinctively *normative* significances: to move from a world of *desires* to a world of *commitments*, *authority*, and *responsibility*.

The account of the tripartite structure of erotic awareness gives us a place to start in addressing this issue. We should apply the answer we have in hand to the question ‘What is it for things to be something *for* a creature?’ to the more specific case: ‘What is it for *selves* to be something things can be for a creature?’ That is, what would be required for the erotic significance something had for a desiring animal to be not *food* or *predator*, but *self* or *subject*, in the sense of something things can be something *for*? And second, once we understand what it is to take or treat things as selves or subjects, what must one do to take *oneself* to be a thing of that kind, to take oneself to be a *self*?

The tripartite account of the structure of erotic awareness provides two sorts of resources for answering these questions. First, it tells us something about what a self or subject *is*. It is something things can be something *for*. What it offers is a construal of that status in terms of what it is to be a *desiring* animal, a subject of erotic awareness, an institutor of erotic significances, an assessor of the consilience or disparity of what things are *for* it or subjectively and what they are *in* themselves or objectively, the subject of the experience of *error* and the cyclical feedback process of revision-and-experiment it initiates and guides. This is what a (proto-)self in the sense of a subject of erotic awareness is *in* itself. The question then is what it is for something to be one of those, to have that erotic significance, *for* some (to begin with, some *other*) creature. The second contribution the tripartite structure of erotic awareness makes to understanding the nature and possibility of self-consciousness consists in providing the form of an answer to this more specific question. For it tells us that what we must come up with to understand what it is for something to be accorded this sort of erotic significance by some creature—to be *for* it something things can be something *for*—is twofold: an account of the desire that institutes that erotic significance, and an account of the kind of activity that is instrumentally appropriate to that desire. The latter is an account of what one must *do* in order thereby to count as *taking* some creature as itself a taker, something things can be something *for*, an institutor of erotic significances.

The philosophical challenge, then, is to see what sort of an account of self-consciousness one can produce by assembling these raw materials: applying the tripartite account of erotic awareness to itself. The interpretive challenge is to see to what extent one can by doing that explain the index features characteristic of Hegel's distinctive claims about the nature of self-consciousness. Two features of his approach are particularly worthy of attention in this regard, both of them features of his master-concept of *recognition*. First is his view that both self-conscious individual selves and the communities they inhabit (a kind of universal characterizing them) are synthesized by reciprocal recognition among particular participants in the practices of such a recognitive community. Self-consciousness is essentially, and not just accidentally, a *social* achievement. Second, recognition is a *normative* attitude. To recognize someone is to take her to be the subject of normative statuses, that is, of commitments and entitlements, as capable of undertaking responsibilities and exercising authority. This is what it means to say that as reciprocally recognized and recognizing, the creatures in question are *geistig*, spiritual, beings, and no longer merely natural ones. Here are some of the familiar representative passages:

Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged. ... The detailed exposition of the Notion of this spiritual unity in its duplication will present us with the process of Recognition. [§178]

A self-consciousness exists for a self-consciousness. Only so is it in fact self-consciousness; for only in this way does the unity of itself in its otherness become explicit for it. The 'I' which is the object of its Notion is in fact not 'object'; the object of Desire, however, is only independent, for it is the universal indestructible substance, the fluid self-identical essence. A self-consciousness, in being an object, is just as much 'I' as 'object'. With this, we already have before us the Notion of Spirit. What still lies ahead for consciousness is the experience of what Spirit is—this absolute substance which is the unity of the different independent self-consciousnesses which, in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence: 'I' that is 'We' and 'We' that is 'I'. [§177]

But according to the Notion of recognition this [that a self-consciousness' certainty of itself have truth] is possible only when each is for the other what

the other is for it, only when each in its own self through its own action, and again through the action of the other, achieves this pure abstraction of being-for-self. [§186]

I see two principal philosophical challenges that arise in understanding the discussion of recognition and self-consciousness in these and related passages in the material in *Self-Consciousness* that precedes the discussion of *Herrschaft und Knechtschaft*. First, how are we to understand the transition from the discussion of the concept of *desire* to the discussion of the concept of *recognition*? This corresponds to the shift from consideration of particular merely *biological* creatures impelled wholly by *natural impulses*, in relation to their species, on the one hand, to consideration of genuinely *social* self-conscious individuals motivated by normative relations of *authority* and *responsibility* within their communities, on the other. How one understands the relation between these, both conceptually and historically, is evidently of the first importance in understanding what Hegel has to teach us about the normative realm he calls “*Geist*.”

The second issue concerns the formal structure of his account of the synthesis of social substance by relations of reciprocal recognition. To recognize someone is to take or treat that individual in practice as a self: a knowing and acting subject, hence as subject to normative assessment as potentially committed, responsible, authoritative, and so on. The picture that is presented of the sort of community within which fully adequate self-consciousness is achieved is one in which recognition is an equivalence relation: everyone in the community recognizes and is recognized by everyone else (“each is for the other what the other is for it”), and so recognizes everyone recognized by anyone else. Individuals are, roughly, particulars whose exhibition of, characterization by, or participation in, universals is essential to them. In the case of self-conscious individuals, this means that the norms of the community they are members of are essential equally to the individual members and to the community as a whole.<sup>4</sup>

In such an ideal community, each member is to be able to recognize himself *as* a member. To say that is to say that recognition is *reflexive*. Recognition is also to be *symmetric*, that is to say, reciprocal or mutual (Hegel’s “*gegenseitig*”). It is this aspect that is lacking in the defective forms of recognition that structure

the defective forms of self-consciousness rehearsed in the *Phenomenology*, beginning with the discussion of Mastery. The view appears to be that insofar as recognition is *de facto* not *symmetric*, it cannot be *reflexive*. I cannot be properly self-conscious (recognize myself) except in the context of a recognition structure that is *reciprocal*: insofar as I am recognized by those I recognize. (This is the essence of Hegel's Wittgensteinian view of self-consciousness, which by contrast to a Cartesian view sees it as a *social* achievement, which accordingly takes place in important respects *outside* the self-conscious individual. It is not a kind of inner glow.)

A big question is then: why? Why should it be the case that *reciprocal* (that is, *symmetric*) recognition is a necessary condition of *reflexive* recognition (that is, self-consciousness, awareness of oneself *as* a self).

Here is a thought about the shape of a possible answer. It is a formal fact that *if* a relation is both symmetric and transitive, then it is also reflexive, and hence is an equivalence relation. That is, if  $\forall x, y [xRy \rightarrow yRx]$  and  $\forall x, y, z [xRy \& yRz \rightarrow xRz]$ , then  $\forall x [xRx]$ . For we can just apply the transitivity condition to the symmetry pairs  $xRy$  and  $yRx$  to yield  $xRx$ .<sup>5</sup> So *if* recognition were (for some reason) *de jure* transitive—if it were part of the nature of recognition that one is committed to recognizing anyone recognized by someone one recognizes—then achieving *de facto* symmetry of recognition would suffice for achieving *de facto* reflexivity of recognition. That is, each community member would recognize herself—and in that sense count as self-conscious—so long as everyone was recognized by everyone they recognized, that is, so long as recognition were *reciprocal*. So *one* way to forge the desired connection between social *reciprocity* of recognition and self-consciousness would be to establish that recognition must by its very nature be *transitive*.

In what follows, we will see how the tripartite account of erotic awareness can be used in a natural way to build a notion of *recognition* that satisfies these twin philosophical constraints on the interpretation of Hegel's notion of self-consciousness in terms of recognition. Doing so will both clarify the nature of the transition from *desire* to *recognition*, and explain why *reciprocal* recognition is the key to *self-consciousness*.

## V Simple recognition: being something things can be something for being something things can be for one

We can think of the tripartite structure of erotic awareness as consisting of three elements and three relations among them. The three elements are:

- 1 an *attitude* (desire), e.g. *hunger*;
- 2 a responsive *activity*, e.g. *eating*; and
- 3 a *significance*, e.g. *food*.

The three relations are:

- 4 The attitude must *motivate* the activity, in the sense of *activating* a (more or less reliable, in a sense determined by the assessments in (6) below) disposition to respond differentially to objects.
- 5 Responding to an object by engaging in the activity is taking or treating it in practice *as* having a significance defined by the attitude that motivates the activity. This is the *subjective* significance of the object.
- 6 The desiring attitude *assesses* the object, implicitly attributing to it an *objective* significance, accordingly as responding to it by engaging in the activity the attitude motivates does or does not satisfy the desire. If it does not, if what the object was subjectively or *for* the animal does not coincide with what it was objectively, or *in* itself, that is, if the activity was not *successful* in satisfying the motivating desire, then an *error* has been committed. In that case the desire motivates *changing* the reliable differential responsive disposition to engage in the associated activity when activated by the desire and stimulated by a range of objects.

What we are now interested in is a more complicated constellation of elements and relations, in which the tripartite structure of erotic awareness enters *twice*. It is, of course, the structure of the whole thing: “Self-consciousness is desire” [§174], at least in the sense that the most primitive form of self-awareness is to be understood as a development of the basic structure of erotic awareness. But the significance attributed to an object, what it is *for* the organism exhibiting the erotic awareness in question, is to be erotically aware: to be something things can be something *for*. That is, the significance attributed by engaging in a responsive activity and assessed by the motivating attitude (item (3) above) must itself exhibit the tripartite structure of erotic awareness. For one to have that significance *for* oneself—not just being *in* oneself something things can be something *for*, but being that *for* oneself as well—that significance must be something things can be or have *for* one.

The tripartite structure of erotic awareness (TSEA) tells us that the two big questions that must be answered are these:

- What *activity* is it that institutes this significance (namely, having the TSEA)? That is, what is it that one must *do*, how must one *respond* to something, to count thereby as *taking* or *treating* it as exhibiting the TSEA? What is to the TSEA as *eating* is to *food*?
- What *desire* or other *attitude* is it that motivates that *activity* and *assesses* the *success* of taking something as having the erotic significance of being a TSEA, i.e. being something things can be something *for*? What is to the TSEA as *hunger* is to *food*?

To begin to address these questions, and to indicate an important point of contact with Hegel's own vocabulary, we may call what I must *do*, the activity, whatever it is, that I must engage in, in order thereby to be *taking* or *treating* something in practice as something things can be something *for*, 'recognizing' that other creature. So far, this is just a label for an answer to the first question. Recognizing others is attributing to them the practical significance of exhibiting the tripartite structure of erotic awareness: taking them to be takers, subjects for whom things can have a practical significance relative to a desire and mediated by an activity. What can we then say at this level of abstraction about the desire or *attitude* that is the third element completing the TSEA whose attitude is recognizing and whose significance is exhibiting the TSEA? Hegel's answer is, I think, clear, if surprising: it is *desire for recognition*, the desire that others take or treat one in practice as a taker, as something things can be something *for*, as an instituter of significances.

If we bracket for the moment the crucial question of *why* a desire to be recognized is the attitude for which recognizing others is the appropriate activity, and so why it institutes the significance of being something things can be something *for*—making that something things can be *for* one, a proto-conception of *selves*—we may ask what would happen if a being with that desire got what it wanted. If the desire for recognition is satisfied by responding to others by recognizing them, then according to the TSEA the subjective significance the recognized ones have *for* the recognition-desirer shows up as being *correct*, as what they objectively are *in* themselves: subjects of significance-instituting attitudes and activities. And what is required for that is just that one be recognized (for that is what it takes to satisfy the desire) by those one recognizes (for that, on the line of thought being considered, is what one

must *do* in order, if all goes well, to satisfy the desire). So it follows from the claim that the desire that completes the higher-order TSEA whose activity is recognition and whose instituted significance is exhibiting the TSEA is a desire for recognition that the recognition-desire can be satisfied only by achieving *reciprocal recognition*. On this construal, then, having a practical proto-conception of *selves*—being able to take or treat things as subjects things can be something *for*, recognizing them—and being self-conscious in the sense of *reciprocal* recognition are two aspects of one achievement, two sides of one coin.

In order to give a reading of these claims in terms of the tripartite structure of erotic awareness, the black-box notion of *recognition* must be filled in so as to answer the following three questions.

- 1 *Recognizing*: What, exactly, is it that one must *do* in order to be recognizing someone? That is, what *is* the activity we have labeled ‘recognizing’? How is it that doing that *is* taking or treating someone *as* exhibiting the tripartite structure of erotic awareness? What is the differential responsive disposition that is to be licensed by the instituting attitude?
- 2 *Being recognized*: Why should the desire to be taken or treated that way oneself, that is, to be recognized, be the one making appropriate that activity, namely, recognizing?
- 3 *Self-consciousness*: Why does the reciprocal recognition that results when that desire for recognition is satisfied by recognizing someone else amount to *self-consciousness*, in the sense of applying a (proto-) conception of *selves* to oneself?

The challenge is to give an answer to the first question that will entail plausible answers to the other two questions.

The first point to make is that *general* recognition, taking someone to be something things can be something *for*, must be understood in terms of *specific* recognition: taking someone to be something things can have a *specific* significance for, say being of kind K (e.g. food, a predator, a potential sexual partner). One takes someone to be a taker in general just in case there are some specific significances, values of K, for which one takes it that that individual is a K-taker, i.e. can take things to be Ks. So it will suffice to answer the questions above for specific recognition, relativized to some instituted significance K things can have for a creature, in order to answer those questions for the more general case.

Specifically recognizing someone as a K-taker requires, according to the tripartite structure of erotic awareness, responding to the other in a way that practically or implicitly attributes both an attitude and an activity related to each other and to the significance K in the three ways specified as (4), (5), and (6) above. This means:

- One must attribute an activity that one takes to be what it is for the other to be responding to something *as* a K.
- One must attribute a desire or other attitude that one takes to *license* or *authorize* responding to things *as* Ks, i.e. by engaging in that activity.
- One must acknowledge in practice a distinction between *correct* and *incorrect* responses of that sort, assessed according to the attributed attitude that authorizes responses of that kind.

My suggestion as to where we start is with the thought that in the most basic case, one can only take another to be a K-taker if one is oneself a K-taker. Taking the other to be a K-taker will then be attributing to him activity of the same sort in which one oneself engages in response to things one (thereby) takes to be Ks. That is, my taking you to be able to treat things *as food* is my taking it that you respond to some things with the same behavior, *eating*, with which I respond to food.

We are now in a position to put in place the keystone piece of this explanatory structure. What the recognizing attributor responds differentially *to* as the success of a desire-authorized responsive activity is the cessation of that activity. Thus no longer being disposed to respond to things by eating things indicates that hunger was satisfied, so the thing previously responded to as food was *in* itself what it was *for* the one recognized as a desirer of food.

What, then, is the differential response that is keyed to this difference in the one being recognized as a K-taker? This is the decisive point. My taking *your* K-response to have been authorized by a K-desire that serves as a standard for the success of your K-taking, and taking that K-response to have been *correct* or *successful* by that standard, is my acknowledging the *authority* of your K-taking, in the practical sense of being disposed *myself* to take *as* a K the thing *you* took to be a K. Taking it that the kind of fruit you ate really was food, in that it satisfied *your* hunger, is being disposed to eat that kind of fruit myself when and if *I* am hungry, i.e. have a *desire* of the same kind.

This is a second-order disposition, involving a change in my first-order dispositions. My specific K-recognitive response to you is to acquire the disposition: *if I have the K-desire, then I will K-respond to the things to which I (thereby) take you to have successfully K-responded.* My acknowledging *your* K-desire as *authoritative* in the dual sense of licensing *your* responsive K-activity and serving as a standard of *normative* assessment of its *success* or *correctness* consists in my treating it as *authorizing* my *own* K-takings, should I have a K-desire.

So in the first instance, my treating your K-desire as having the normative significance of being authoritative for K-takings is treating it as authoritative for them full stop—not just for *your* K-takings, but for K-takings generally, and so for *mine* in particular. What it is for it to be K-takings (and not some other significance or no significance at all that you are practically attributing to things by responding to them in that way) that I *take* your responses to be consists in the fact that it is *my* K-taking responsiveness (and not some other activity) that I am conditionally disposed to extend to the kind of objects that satisfied your desire. The link by which the specifically recognized one's activity is assimilated to that of the recognizer is forged by the *interpersonal* character of the specific authority of the recognized one's successful takings, whose acknowledgment is what specific recognition consists in. The *only* way the recognizer's erotic classifications can be practically mapped onto those of the other so as to be intelligible as implicitly attributing specific desires, significances, and mediating responsive activities exhibiting the tripartite structure of erotic awareness is if the *authority* of the assessments of responsive significance-attribution on the part of the one recognized is acknowledged in practice by the recognizer. So specific recognition involves acknowledging another as having some authority concerning how things are (what things are Ks). When I do that, I treat you as one of *us*, in a primitive normative sense of 'us'—those of us subject to the same norms, the same authority—that is instituted by just such attitudes.

## **VI Robust recognition: specific recognition of another as a recognizer**

Looking back at the most primitive sort of pre-conceptual recognition of others, from the vantage-point of the fully developed conceptually articulated

kind, brings into relief the crucial boundary that is being crossed: between the merely *natural* and the incipiently *normative*. In the merely erotically aware animal, *desire* is a state that *motivates* and *regulates* responsive activity *immediately*. It causally activates differential responsive dispositions to engage in activities, and its matter-of-factual satisfaction causes the creature to desist from or persist in them. But the recognizer, who is aware of the creature *as* aware of things, does not *feel* that creature's desires, but only *attributes* them, implicitly and practically, by treating the creature *as* having them. The recognizer accordingly takes up a more distanced, mediated, abstract attitude toward these significance-generating attitudes. The recognized creature's attitudes are seen (treated in practice) as *assessing* the *correctness* of practical responsive classifications, as *licensing* or *authorizing* the responsive activity—in the first instance in the case of the one recognized, but then also on the part of the recognizer who merely attributes the attitude to the other. The relation between the attitude the recognizer attributes and the activity he himself engages in is a *normative* one. Even in the most primitive cases it is intelligible as the acknowledgment of *authority* rather than mere acquiescence in an impulse. In treating the attitudes of the recognized other as having authority for those who do not feel them, the recognizer implicitly accords them a significance beyond that of mere desires: as *normatively* and not merely *immediately* significant attitudes.

The story I have rehearsed about what happens when the tripartite structure of erotic awareness is applied to itself as significance shows how *recognition* develops out of and can be made intelligible in terms of *desire*. But it also shows why just being erotically aware is not enough to give one a conception of a self. That is something one can get only by recognizing others. For the possibility of treating attitudes as having a distinctively *normative* significance opens up in the first instance for the attitudes of *others*, for desires one attributes but does not immediately feel. The claim we have been shaping up to understand is Hegel's central doctrine that self-consciousness consists in reciprocal recognition. It is clear at this point that recognizing others is necessary and sufficient to have a conception of selves or subjects of consciousness. But the relation between that fact and *reciprocity* of recognition as what is required for the participants to count as applying that concept to themselves in the way required for self-consciousness has not yet been made out. To make it out, we can apply the observation made in the previous section

that *if* recognition could be shown to be *de jure* transitive, then any case in which it was also *de facto* symmetric (reciprocal) would be one in which it was also *de facto* reflexive. For reflexivity follows from transitivity and symmetry.

Simple recognition is not in the relevant sense transitive. For what I am doing in taking another to be a subject of erotic awareness—namely, simply recognizing that desirer *as* a desirer—is *not* what I take that desirer to be doing. The one simply recognized need not be capable of being in its turn a simple recognizer, and so something with even a basic conception of selves. For that we need to go up a level, and consider what it is to take another not just to be erotically aware, but to be aware of others *as* erotically aware. That is, we must consider what it is to recognize another as a simple recognizer, hence as itself the kind of thing for which things can have a specifically *normative* significance. I shall call that practical attitude *robust* recognition. Robust recognition is a kind of simple recognition: simple recognition of someone things can have a specific kind of erotic significance for, namely the significance of being something things can have erotic significances for.

What is important for my story is that robust recognition is transitive. This is clear from the account already offered of recognition in terms of acknowledging the authority of what things are *for* the recognized one. Recognizing someone as a recognizer is acknowledging the authority of his or her recognitions for one's own: recognizing whomever he or she recognizes.

Since it is a kind of simple recognition, the activity element of the erotic structural triad characteristic of robust recognition—what one must *do* to be taking or treating someone *as* (having the significance of) a simple recognizer—is practically to acknowledge *as* authoritative for one's own takings of the one being recognized (if they are successful, and within the range of significance of one's simple recognition). In this case, doing that is acknowledging the authority of the recognized one's simple recognitions. Those simple recognitions are themselves a matter of acknowledging the authority of the ground-level erotic takings of the one simply recognized. So what the robust recognizer must *do* to be taking someone as a simple recognizer is to acknowledge as authoritative whatever ground-level takings the one robustly recognized acknowledges as authoritative. And that is to say that the robust recognizer treats as *transitive* the inheritance of authority of ground-level takings that is what simple recognizing consists in.

It might seem that the hierarchy generated by acknowledging different levels of recognition is open-ended: robust recognition is taking to be (simply recognizing as) a simple recognizer, super-robust (say) recognition would be simply recognizing as a robust recognizer, super-duperrobust recognition would be simply recognizing as a super-robust recognizer, and so on. Perhaps surprisingly, the crucial structural features of recognition do not change after we have reached robust recognition. The key point is that robust recognition is a specific instance of simple recognition, i.e. recognition of something as having a special kind of erotic awareness, namely, awareness of something *as* being erotically aware. As we have seen, that is a particular kind of erotic significance things can have. As a result of this fact, the nascent recognitional hierarchy could be formulated as: erotic awareness, simple recognition of something as erotically aware, simple recognition of something as simply recognizing, simple recognition of something as a simple recognizer of simple recognizers, and so on. But what one must *do* in order thereby to be simply recognizing someone—the activity (corresponding to *eating* in the paradigmatic erotic desire-activity-significance triad of *hunger, eating, food*) one must engage in to count as taking or treating an organism as (having the significance of being) erotically aware—is to acknowledge the *normative authority* for one's own responses of their takings of things as something. Taking someone to be a simple recognizer is accordingly acknowledging in practice the authority of their takings of someone as an erotic taker, which is acknowledging the authority of their acknowledgings of authority. Whatever ground-level takings of things as something the one being robustly recognized (simply recognized as a simple recognizer) takes to be authoritative the robust recognizer takes therefore to be authoritative. In robustly recognizing you, I must simply recognize whomever you simply recognize.

The effect is to produce the *transitive closure* of the acknowledgment of authority of ground-level takings in which simple recognition consists. By the 'transitive closure' of a relation is meant the relation  $R'$  that is generated from  $R$  by the two principles: (i)  $\forall x \forall y [xRy \rightarrow xR'y]$  and (ii)  $\forall x \forall y \forall z [(xRy \ \& \ yRz) \rightarrow xR'z]$ . It is an elementary algebraic fact that the transitive closure of the transitive closure of a relation is just the transitive closure of that relation. (Technically: closure operations are idempotent.) All the structural work has been done the first time around. For  $a$  to recognize  $b$  in the 'super-robust' way—simply to recognize  $b$  as a robust recognizer—would commit  $a$  to acknowledge as

authoritative *b*'s simple recognitions of someone *c* as a simple recognizer. *B*'s simple recognition of *c* as a simple recognizer (which is *b*'s robust recognition of *c*), we have seen, consists in *b*'s practical commitment to inherit *c*'s acknowledgments of another's—*d*'s—ground-level takings as authoritative. The effect is then that *a* must likewise be practically committed to inherit *b*'s inherited acknowledgments of those ground-level commitments as authoritative. But this puts *a* in exactly the position *a* would be in if *a* recognized *b* *robustly*, rather than *super-robustly*. Formally, once one has established that a relation is transitive, that  $\forall x \forall y \forall z [(xRy \ \& \ yRz) \rightarrow xRz]$ , that has as a consequence (and hence requires nothing else to establish) that  $\forall w \forall x \forall y \forall z [(wRx \ \& \ xRy \ \& \ yRz) \rightarrow wRz]$ .

Since robust recognition is the transitive closure of simple recognition, there is no difference between simple recognition of someone as a robust recognizer, and robust recognition (simple recognition of someone as a simple recognizer) of someone as a robust recognizer. And robust recognition is transitive: for what one is doing to be robust recognizing, it must include commitment to robustly recognize (simply recognize as a simple recognizer) whomever is robustly recognized by those one robustly recognizes. These are facts about the activity pole of the structure of simple and (therefore of) robust recognition. What relates them is that the significance pole of robust recognition is the whole structure of simple recognition—just as the significance pole of simple recognition is the whole triadic structure of ground-level erotic awareness. Indeed, we have seen that the significance pole of ground-level erotic awareness is the crucial element in the activity pole of simple recognition (and therefore of robust recognition). For practical acknowledgment of the authority of the ground-level significances attributed in non-recognitional erotic awareness is what the activity of simple recognizing consists in.

If these are the relations between the *activity* and *significance* poles making up the triadic structure of recognitional awareness, what, then, about the *attitude* or *desire* pole? The story told so far lays it down both that the desire that motivates simple recognizing (and so institutes its characteristic significance) is a *desire for* (simple) *recognition*, and that the only erotic takings on the part of one recognized that a simple recognizer is obliged to acknowledge as authoritative are those that the one recognized takes to be *successful*. So we should

ask: which of the recognizing of a simple recognizer should a robust recognizer take to be successful? The answer is: only those that satisfy the relevant desire. That is a desire to be simply recognized, which is to say a desire to have the authority of the simple recognizer's takings acknowledged by another. But that is precisely what a robust recognizer does in simply recognizing anyone as a simple recognizer. So from the point of view of a robust recognizer, *all* the simple recognitions of the one robustly recognized count as successful, and hence as authoritative. There is nothing that could count as taking someone to have a desire to be simply recognized, motivating that one's simple recognitions, which fails to be satisfied.

With this observation, we have reached our explanatory-interpretive goal. For we wanted to know:

- 1 how *recognition* should be understood to arise out of *desire*,
- 2 how *normativity* should be understood as an aspect of *recognition*,
- 3 how *self-recognition*, that is *reflexive* recognition relations, should be understood to require *reciprocal* recognition, that is to say *symmetric* recognition relations, and
- 4 how *self-consciousness* should be understood to consist in the self-recognition achieved by reciprocal recognition.

The answer to the first question was supplied by seeing how the tripartite structure of erotic awareness could be applied to itself, so that what something was taken or treated in practice *as* was a desiring, significance-instituting creature. The answer to the second was supplied by seeing how simple recognizing consists in the recognizer's achieving a mediated, distanced, relation to the immediate felt impulse of the recognized one's desire, in the form of its significance, conditional upon the recognizer's own desires, for the recognizer's own practical awareness. In this way the other's desire is practically acknowledged as *authoritative*, and the other's desire shows up for the recognizer in the shape of the recognizer's *commitment* or *responsibility*. The answer to the third question was supplied by showing how (because of the idempotence of transitive closure operations) the social authority structure constitutive of robust recognition is essentially and in principle, hence unavoidably, *transitive*. For it is a basic algebraic fact that wherever a transitive relation happens to hold *symmetrically*, it is also *reflexive*. It remains only to put these answers together to supply a response to the fourth and final question.

## VII Self-Consciousness

The connection between robust recognition and *self*-consciousness is as immediate as that between the tripartite structure of erotic awareness and consciousness. For to be a self, a subject, a consciousness—for Hegel as for Kant—is to be the subject of *normative* statuses: not just of desires, but of *commitments*. It is to be able to take a normative stand on things, to commit oneself, undertake responsibilities, exercise authority, assess correctness. Recognition of any kind is taking or treating something *as* such a self or subject of normative statuses and attitudes. It is consciousness *of* something *as* (having the normative significance of) a self or subject. For recognition itself exhibits the tripartite structure of erotic awareness—proto-consciousness. The significance it accords to the one recognized is that of exhibiting that same structure. And adopting that practical attitude toward another is taking or treating its states as having normative significance as authorizing and assessing performances—not merely *producing* them but making them *appropriate*. Eating on the part of the one recognized is now treated as something that involves a *commitment* as to how things are, a commitment that can be *assessed* by both recognized and recognizer (who need not agree) as *correct* or incorrect.

*Self-consciousness* then consists in applying this practical protoconception of a self to oneself: recognizing not just others, but oneself. This is *self*-consciousness, or having a self-conception, in a double sense. First, it is a matter of consciousness of something *as* a self: treating it as having that practical significance. Second, it is an application of that conception *to oneself*. Having a self-conception in the first sense consists in a capacity for *recognition*. We might call this a ‘conception of selves’. For that is what one must be able to *do* in order thereby to be taking or treating something *as* a self, in the sense of a subject of normative statuses of *authoritative* (in the sense of probative, though still provisional and defeasible) *commitments* as to how things are. Having a self-conception in the second sense is a matter of the *reflexive* character of one’s recognition: that among those one recognizes is oneself. The lowest grade of self-conception that exhibits these two dimensions would be simple recognition of oneself: being erotically aware of oneself *as* erotically aware of things. We might call this ‘*simple* self-consciousness’. But the two dimensions are much more tightly bound up with one another if one is aware of oneself *as* able simply to recognize things. In that case, the conception of selves that one

applies to oneself is *as* something that has a conception of selves. We might call this '*robust self-consciousness*'.

If *a* robustly recognizes *b*, then *a* acknowledges the (probative, but provisional and defeasible) authority of *b*'s successful simple recognitions. Robust recognition, we have seen, is a kind of simple recognition: simple recognition as able to take others to be simple recognizers. If *b* *robustly* recognizes someone, then that recognition is *successful* just if it satisfies *b*'s desire for robust recognition. If *b*'s robust recognition of someone is successful in this sense, then in virtue of robustly recognizing *b*, *a* must acknowledge *b*'s robust recognition as authoritative. But since by hypothesis *a* *does* robustly recognize *b*, *b*'s desire for robust recognition *is* satisfied, so all his robust recognitions are successful (in *a*'s eyes). Thus if it should happen that *b* *robustly* recognize *a*, then since *a* robustly recognizes *b*, we have a symmetry of robust recognition. Since, as we have seen, robust recognition is transitive, this means that *a* will acknowledge the authority of *b*'s robust recognition of *a*. So *a* counts as robustly recognizing himself. Thus robust self-consciousness is achievable only through *reciprocal* recognition: being robustly recognized by at least some of those one robustly recognizes. This means that a *community* (a kind of universal) is implicitly constituted by one's own robust recognitions, and actually achieved insofar as they are reciprocated. That is the sort of reciprocally recognitive community within which alone genuine (robust) self-consciousness is possible: the "I" that is "We" and "We" that is "I".

## VIII Conclusion

I can now bring my story to a quick close. I started it with the concept of *essential* elements of one's self-conception being ones that one *identifies* with, in the sense of being willing to risk or if need be sacrifice for them. One consequence of the transition from desire to commitment within the attitude component of the tripartite structure of erotic awareness is that where the activity-motivating character of desire is extinguished with its satisfaction, the activity-licensing character of commitment need not be. In particular, desire for recognition in the form of a commitment to being recognized is a standing, structural element of self-consciousness. It persists even when fulfilled by the achievement of reciprocal recognition that is self-consciousness. Because it persists as part of the necessary background against which any

other commitments are adopted and relinquished, being for oneself a recognizer is an *essential* element of one's self-conception. One's identification with it consists practically in the structural impossibility of relinquishing that commitment in favor of others. To be self-conscious *is* to be *essentially* self-conscious: to be *for* oneself, and identify oneself with oneself *as* something that is for oneself, a recognized and recognizing being.

A fuller telling would continue with an account couched in the same basic terms of the specific distorted form of self-consciousness that construes itself under the distinctively modern, alienated category of *independence* that Hegel epitomizes in the form of the "Master." It would explain how the self-conception characteristic of Mastery arises from overgeneralizing from its capacity immediately to constitute itself as *essentially* self-conscious—making it so just by taking it so—to yield an ultimately incoherent model of a self-consciousness *all* of whose conceptions are immediately constitutive, thus eliding quite generally the crucial 'distinction that consciousness involves', between what things are *for* it and what they are *in* themselves. And it would explain what Hegel elsewhere calls '*die Wirkung des Schicksals*': the metaphysical irony that undermines the Master's existential commitment to possessing authority without correlative responsibility, to being recognized as authoritative without recognizing anyone as having the authority to do that. But that is a story for another occasion.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This way of putting things, in terms of commitments rather than desires, will be discussed and justified below.

<sup>2</sup> This comparison is developed in "Holism and Idealism in Hegel's *Phenomenology*," chapter six of R. B. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1992.

<sup>3</sup> D. C. Dennett, "Intentional Systems," reprinted in *Mind Design*, ed. J. Haugeland, Cambridge, MA, Bradford Books, 1981.

<sup>4</sup> Hegel makes claims along these lines in his telegraphic discussion of the relation between self-consciousness and desire. One example is the summary claim that "the unity of self-consciousness with itself must become essential to self-consciousness, i.e. self-consciousness is *Desire* in general" [§167]. He stresses that "*Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness*" [§175], that is, in another

recognized recognizer. "The satisfaction of Desire is ... the reflection of self-consciousness into itself, or the certainty that has become truth [that is, what things are *for* it and what things are *in* themselves coincide]. But the truth of this certainty is really a double reflection, the duplication of self-consciousness. Consciousness has for its object one which, of its own self posits its otherness or difference as a nothingness" [§176]. The object is the other one recognizes, who cancels the difference between it and the index consciousness in the sense that it, too, recognizes the other, thereby applying to both the other and itself one universal expressing a respect of similarity or identity: being something things can be something for. "A self-consciousness exists only *for a self-consciousness*. Only so is it in fact a self-consciousness; for only in this way does the unity of itself in its otherness become explicit for it" [§177]. "Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged [*nur als ein Anerkanntes*]. ... The detailed exposition of the Notion of this spiritual unity in its duplication will present us with the process of Recognition [*Anerkennen*]" [§178].

<sup>5</sup> Reflexivity is not redundant in the mathematical definition of equivalence relation because the argument depends on the relation being everywhere-defined, in the sense that that for every  $x$  there is *some*  $y$  such that  $xRy$ , i.e. that everyone *recognizes* someone. Given the philosophical surround, this condition can, I think, be suppressed.



## Chapter Three

# **On Hegel's Claim that Self-Consciousness is "Desire Itself" ("Begierde überhaupt")**

Robert B. Pippin

### I

Kant held that what distinguishes an object in our experience from the mere subjective play of representations is rule-governed unity. His famous definition of an object is just "that in the concept of which a manifold is united." (B137). This means that consciousness itself must be understood as a discriminating, unifying activity, paradigmatically as judging, and not as the passive recorder of sensory impressions. Such a claim opens up a vast territory of possibilities and questions, since Kant does not mean that our awake attentiveness is to be understood as something we intentionally *do*, in the standard sense, even if it is not also a mere event that happens to us, as if we happen to be triggered into a determinate mental state, or as if sensory stimuli just activate an active mental machinery.

Kant also clearly does not mean to suggest by his claim that "the form of consciousness is a judgmental form" that consciousness consists of thousands of very rapid

judgmental claims being deliberately made, thousands of 'S is P's or 'If A then B's taking place. The world is taken to be such and such without such takings being isolatable, intentional actions. What Kant *does* mean by understanding consciousness as "synthetic" is quite a formidable, independent topic in itself.<sup>1</sup>

Now Kant's main interest in the argument of the deduction was to show first that the rules governing such activities (whatever the right way to describe such activities) cannot be wholly empirical rules, all derived from experience, that there must be rules for the derivation of such rules that cannot themselves be derived, or that there must be pure concepts of the understanding; and secondly that these non-derived rules have genuine "objective validity," are not subjective impositions on an independently received manifold, that, as he puts it, the a priori prescribed "synthetic unity of consciousness" "...is not merely a condition that I myself require in knowing an object, but is a condition under which any intuition must stand in order to become an object for me." (B138) Kant seems to realize that he gives the impression that for him consciousness is a two-step process; the mere reception of sensory data, and then the conceptualization of such data, but he works hard in the pursuit of the second desideratum to disabuse his readers of that impression.

Aside from some Kant scholars, there are not many philosophers who still believe that Kant proved in this argument that we possess synthetic a priori knowledge, although there is wide admiration for the power of Kant's arguments about, at least, causality and substance. But there remains a great deal of interest in his basic picture of the nature of conscious mindedness. For the central component of his account, judgment, is, as already noted, not a mental event that merely happens, as if causally triggered into its synthetic activity by sensory stimuli. Judging, while not a practical action initiated by a decision, is an *activity* sustained and resolved, sometimes in conditions of uncertainty, *by* a subject and that means that it is normatively structured. The rules of judgment governing such activity are rules about what ought to be judged, how our experience ought to be organized (we distinguish, judge, for example, successive perceptions of a stable object as really simultaneous in time, and not actually representing something successive). Such rules are not rules describing how we do judge, are not psychological laws of thought. And, to come to the point of contact with Hegel that is the subject of the

following, this all means that consciousness must be inherently *reflective or apperceptive*. (I cannot be *sustaining an activity*, implicitly trying to get, say, the objective temporal order right in making up my mind, without in some sense knowing I am so taking the world to be such, or without apperceptively taking it so. I am taking or construing rather than merely recording because I am also in such taking holding open the possibility that I may be taking falsely.) So all consciousness is inherently, though rarely explicitly, self-conscious. It is incorrect to think of a conscious state as just 'filled' with the rich details of a house-perception, as if consciousness merely registers its presence; I take or judge the presence of a house, not a barn or gas station; or in Kant's famous formula: "the '*I think*' must be able to accompany all my representations." But what could be meant by "inherently," or "*in some sense knowing I am taking or judging it to be such and such*"? In *what* sense am I in a *relation to myself* in any conscious relation to an object? That is, the claim is that all consciousness involves a kind of self-consciousness, taking S to be P and thus taking myself to be taking S as P. But in a self-relation like this the self in question cannot be just another object of intentional awareness. If it were, then there would obviously be a regress problem. By parity of whatever reasoning that established that the self must be able to *observe* itself as an object in taking anything to be anything, one would have to also argue that the *observing* self must also be observable, and so on. The self-relation, whatever it is, cannot be a two place intentional relation.<sup>2</sup>

Hegel's own most famous discussion of these issues is found in the first four chapters of his 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit* (PhG hereafter). The first three chapters of that book are grouped together under the heading "Consciousness" and the fourth chapter is called simply "Self-Consciousness." (That fourth chapter has only one sub-section, called "The Truth of Self-Certainty" and that will be the focus of the following discussion.<sup>3</sup>) Accordingly, especially given the extraordinarily sweeping claims Hegel makes about his indebtedness to the Kantian doctrine of apperception<sup>4</sup>, one would expect that these sections have something to do with the Kantian points noted above, and so with the issue of the self-conscious character of experience and the conditions for the possibility of experience so understood. But there has been a lot of understandable controversy about the relation between the first three chapters and the fourth. Since the fourth chapter discusses desire, life, a struggle

to the death for recognition between opposed subjects, and a resulting Lord-Bondsman social structure, it has not been easy to see how the discussion of sense-certainty, perception and the understanding is being *continued*. Some very influential commentators, like Alexandre Kojève, pay almost no attention to the first three chapters. They write as if we should isolate the chapter on Self-Consciousness as a free-standing philosophical anthropology, a theory of the inherently violent and class-riven nature of human sociality. (There are never simply human beings in Kojève's account. Until the final bloody revolution ushers in a classless society, there are only Masters and Slaves.) Others argue that in Chapter Four, Hegel simply changes the subject to the problem of sociality. We can see why it might be natural for him to change the subject at this point, but it is a different subject. (Having introduced the necessary role of self-consciousness in consciousness, Hegel understandably changes the topic to very broad and different questions like: what, in general, *is* self-consciousness? What is a self? What is it to be a being "for which" things can be, to use Brandom's language, who offers his own version of the change-of-subject interpretation.)<sup>5</sup> More recently, some commentators, like John McDowell and Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer, have argued that there is actually neither a new beginning nor a shift in topics in Chapter Four. In McDowell's treatment the problem is an extension and development of the one that emerged in the first three chapters but still basically concerns that issue: how to understand the right "equipoise" between independence and dependence in the relations between subjects and objects. What appear to be the orectic and social issues of Chapter Four are for McDowell "figures" or analogies for what remains the problem of the mind's passive dependence on objects and active independence of them in our experience of the world, in just the sense sketched above in the summary of Kant (i.e. neither independent subjective imposition, nor merely passive receptive dependence). What we have is a picture of our active, spontaneous self in a kind of mythic confrontation and struggle with its own passive empirical self, struggling at first, futilely for radical independence, and then an initial but doomed relation of dominance (as if the soul tries to make of its own corporeal nature a *Knecht* or mere servant). So for McDowell, by "desire" Hegel does not mean to introduce the topic of desire as a necessary element in the understanding of *consciousness* itself (as the text, however counterintuitively, would seem to imply). Rather, says McDowell, "'Desire überhaupt' functions as a figure for the gen-

eral idea of negating otherness, by appropriating or consuming, incorporating into oneself what at first figures as merely other, something that happens in perception, say."<sup>6</sup> And "life," the next topic in the chapter, is said to exemplify the structure of *der Begriff*; let us say: the basic logical structure of all possible intelligibility, all sense-making.<sup>7</sup> The struggle to the death for recognition is said to be a rich and colorful "allegory" of the possible relations of an independent and dependent sides within one consciousness. And so McDowell asserts that Chapter Four does not yet directly introduce the issue of sociality at all, despite the famous phrase there about the new presence of an "I that is a We and a We that is an I."

This interpretation has the very great virtue of preserving a connection with the first three chapters, but I will argue that while the general issue of the logic of the relation between independence and dependence is certainly applicable to the relation between spontaneous apperception and the passive empirical self, McDowell's interpretation, however rich in itself, fails to do justice to the radicality of what Hegel actually proposes. I want to argue that Hegel means what he says when he says that self-consciousness *is* "desire *überhaupt*,"<sup>8</sup> means that to be relevant to the question of the apperceptive nature of consciousness itself, and that he *thereby* provides the basis for the claim that self-consciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness.<sup>9</sup>

So here stated all at once is the thesis I would like to attribute to Hegel. (That is, in Chapter Four. As noted, the entire book is a meditation on self-consciousness, on the becoming self-consciousness of *Geist*.) I think that Hegel's position is that we misunderstand all dimensions of self-consciousness, from apperception in consciousness itself, to simple, explicit reflection on myself, to practical self-knowledge of my own so-called "identity," by considering any form of it as in any way observational or inferential or immediate or any sort of two-place intentional relation. However we come to know anything about ourselves (or whatever self-relation is implicit in attending to the world), it is not by observing an object, nor by conceptualizing an inner intuition, nor by any immediate self-certainty or direct presence of the self to itself. From the minimal sense of being aware of being determinately conscious at all (of judging), to complex avowals of who I am, of my own identity and deep commitments, Hegel, I want to say, treats self-consciousness as (i) a practical

*achievement* of some sort.<sup>10</sup> Such a relation must be understood as the *result of an attempt*, never, as it certainly seems to be, as an immediate presence of the self to itself, and it often requires some sort of striving, even struggle (and all of this even in accounting for the self-conscious dimension of ordinary perceptual experience.) It, in all its forms, is some mode of mindedness that we must achieve, and that must mean: can ultimately fail to achieve fully and once having achieved can lose. It is nothing like turning the mind's eye inward to inspect itself. Admittedly, it seems *very* hard to understand why anyone would think that my awareness, say, not just of the lecture I am giving, but whatever kind of awareness I have that I am in the process of giving a lecture, am actually following the appropriate rules, should involve any such practical activity. It seems so effortless to be so self-aware; there is no felt desire or striving or struggle involved, and as a report of what seems to me to be the case, it even appears incorrigible. But Hegel wants to claim that as soon as we properly see the error of holding that the self in any self-awareness is immediately present to an inspecting mind, his own interpretation is just thereby implied. If the self's relation to itself *cannot* be immediate or direct, but if some self-relation is a condition of intentional awareness, the conclusion that it is some sort of *to-be-achieved* follows for him straightforwardly.<sup>11</sup> Even a minimal form of self-conscious taking opens up the possibility of taking falsely, or in a way inconsistent with other (or all) such takings and so sets a certain sort of task. More about this in a minute; this is the central motive for his version of the claim that consciousness is apperceptive.<sup>12</sup>

Another way of putting this point, one that ties in with almost every aspect of Hegel's philosophical approach, would be to point out that if self-consciousness or any form of taking oneself to be or be committed to anything is not introspective or observational then it must always be *provisional*. Such a self-regard requires some confirmation or realization out in the world and for others, for it to count as what it is taken to be. The clearest examples of this occur in Hegel's theory of agency where one cannot be said to actually have the intention or commitment one avows, even sincerely avows, until one actually realizes that intention and the action counts as that action in the social world within which it is enacted. (And of course, people can come to find out that their actual intentions, as manifested in what they actually are willing to do, can be very different from those they avow, even sincerely avow.)<sup>13</sup>

And (ii) he sees such an attempt and achievement as necessarily involving a relation to other people, as inherently social. This last issue about the role of actualization begins to introduce such a dependence, but it is hard to see at the outset why other people need be involved in the intimacy and privacy that seems to characterize my relation to myself.

His case for looking at things this way has three main parts. In a way that is typical of his procedure, he tries to begin with the most theoretically thin or simple form of the required self-relation and so considers the mere sentiment of self that a living being has in *keeping itself alive*, where *keeping itself alive* reflects this minimal reflective attentiveness to self. Such a minimal form of self-relatedness is shown not to establish the sort of self-relatedness (normative self-determination) required as the desideratum in the first three chapters. He then asks what alters when the object of the desires relevant to maintaining life turns out not to be just another object or obstacle but another subject and, in effect, he argues that everything changes when our desires are not just thwarted or impeded, but challenged and refused. And he then explores how the presence of such an other subject, in altering what could be a possible self-relation, sets a new agenda for the rest of the *Phenomenology*, for both the problems of sapience and agency.

## II

The central passage where the putative "practical turn" in all this takes place is the following.

But this opposition between its appearance and its truth has only the truth for its essence, namely, the unity of self-consciousness with itself. This unity must become essential to self-consciousness, which is to say, self-consciousness is *desire* itself. (§167) [*"Begierde überhaupt,"* which could also be translated as "desire in general," or "desire, generally" or "mere desire."]14

The passage presupposes the larger issue we have been discussing — the way Hegel has come to discuss the double nature of consciousness (consciousness of an object, a this-such, and the non-positional consciousness or implicit awareness of my taking it to be this-such)<sup>15</sup> and so the opposition, or, as he says, the "negativity" this introduces within consciousness, the fact that

consciousness is not simply absorbed into (“identified with”) its contents, but has also, let us say, taken up a position toward what it thinks.<sup>16</sup> To understand this, we need the following passage from the Introduction.

However, consciousness is for itself its concept, and as a result it immediately goes beyond the restriction, and, since this restriction belongs to itself, it goes beyond itself too. (§80)<sup>17</sup>

He is actually making two claims here. The first is the premise of his inference: that “consciousness is for itself its concept.” The inference seems to run: If we understand *this* properly, we will understand why he feels entitled to the “and as a result,” the claim that consciousness is thereby immediately “beyond” any such restriction or concept that it sets “for itself.” (I want to claim that this all amounts to a defense of the claim that consciousness must be understood as apperceptive.) He means to say that normative standards and proprieties at play in human consciousness are “consciousness’s own,” that is, are *followed* by a subject, are not psychological laws of thought. This is his version of the Kantian principle that persons are subject to no law or norm other than ones they have subjected themselves to.<sup>18</sup> (This is what is packed into the “for itself” here.) This does not mean either in Kant or in Hegel that there are episodes of self-subjection or explicit acts of allegiance or anything as ridiculous as all that; just that norms governing what we think and do can be said to govern thought and action only in so far as subjects, however implicitly or habitually or unreflectively (or as a matter of “second-nature”), accept such constraints and sustain allegiance; they follow the rules, are not governed by them. (As all the post-Wittgensteinian discussion of rule-following has shown, there cannot be any rules for the following of these rules, so one can be said to be following such rules in carrying out what is required without any explicit calculation of how to do so.) How the allegiance gets instituted and how it can lose its grip are matters Hegel is very interested in, but it has nothing to do with individuals “deciding” about allegiances at moments of time. Or, to invoke Kant again, knowers and doers are not explicable as beings subject to laws of nature (although as also ordinary objects, they *are* so subject), but by appeal to their representation of laws and self-subjection to them.

And he means this to apply in ordinary cases of perceptual knowledge too. I know what would count as good perceptual reasons for an empirical claim

on the basis of whatever "shape of spirit" or possible model of experience is under consideration at whatever stage in the PhG. That is, Hegel considers empirical rules of discrimination, unification, essence/appearance distinctions, conceptions of explanation, and so on, as normative principles, and he construes any set of these as a possible determinate whole, as all being simply manifestations of the overriding requirements of a "shape of spirit" considered in this idealized isolation of capacities that makes up Chapters I–V, and he cites possible illustrations of such a shape and such internal contradictions (determinate illustrative actual cases like trying to say "this here now," or trying to distinguish the thing which bears properties from those properties). The concepts involved in organizing our visual field are also norms prescribing how the visual field ought to be organized and so they do not function like fixed physiological dispositions. We are responsive to a perceivable environment in norm-attentive ways. Finally, since the principles involved guide my behavior or conclusions only in so far as they are accepted and followed, they can prove themselves inadequate, and lose their grip. This is what Hegel means in the conclusion of his inference by saying that consciousness "immediately goes beyond this restriction." It is always "beyond" any norm in the sense that it is not, let us say, stuck with such a restriction as a matter of psychological fact; consciousness is always in a position to alter norms for correct perception, inferring, law-making or right action. Perception of course involves physiological processes that are species-identical across centuries and cultures, but perceptual knowledge also involves norms for attentiveness, discrimination, unification, exclusion and conceptual organization that do not function like physiological laws. And so (as Hegel says, "as a result") we should be said to stand always by them and yet also "beyond them." (This can all still seem to introduce far too much normative variability into a process, perception, that seems all much more a matter of physiological fact. But while Hegel certainly accepts that the physiological components of perception are *distinguishable* from the norm-following or interpretive elements, he also insists that they are *inseparable* in perception itself. As in Heidegger's phenomenology, there are not two stages to perception; as if a perception of a white rectangular solid which is then "interpreted as" a refrigerator. What we *see* is a refrigerator.)

The second dimension of this claim from ¶80 concerns how such consciousness is "beyond itself" in another way. Besides the claim that consciousness,

as he says, “negates” what it is presented with, does not merely take in but determines what is the case, the claim is also that ordinary, everyday consciousness is *always* “going beyond itself,” never *wholly* absorbed in what it is attending to, never simply or only *in* a perceptual state, but always resolving its own conceptual activity; and this in a way that means it can be said both to be self-affirming, possibly issuing in judgments and imperatives, but also potentially “self-negating,” aware that what it resolves or takes to be the case might not be the case. It somehow “stands above” what it also affirms, to use an image that Hegel sometimes invokes. It adds to the interpretive problems to cite his canonical formulation of this point, but it might help us see how important it is for his whole position and why he is using language like “negativity” for *consciousness itself*. (Such terminology is the key *explicans* for his eventual claim that self-consciousness is desire.) This is from the “Phenomenology” section of the last version of his *Encyclopedia* (The “Berlin Phenomenology” again).

The I is now this subjectivity, this infinite relation to itself, but therein, namely in this subjectivity, lies its negative relation to itself, diremption, differentiation, judgment. The I judges, and this constitutes it as consciousness; it repels itself from itself; this is a logical determination.<sup>19</sup>

So the large question to which Hegel thinks we have been brought to by his account of consciousness in the first three chapters is: just *what is it* for a being to be not just a recorder of the world’s impact on one’s sense, but to be *for itself* in its engagements with objects? What is it in general *for a being to be for itself*, for “itself to be at issue for it in its relation with what is not it”? (This is the problem that arose with the “Kantian” revelation in the *Understanding* chapter of the PhG that, in trying to get to the real nature of the essence of appearances, “understanding experiences only itself,” which, he says, raises the problem: “the cognition of *what consciousness knows in knowing itself* requires a still more complex movement.” (§167, my emphasis) This is the fundamental issue being explored in Chapter Four. That the basic structure of the Kantian account is preserved until this point is clear from:

With that first moment, self-consciousness exists as *consciousness*, and the whole breadth of the sensuous world is preserved for it, but at the same time only as related to the second moment, the unity of self-consciousness with itself. (§167)<sup>20</sup>

This passage and indeed all of ¶167 indicate that Hegel does have in mind a response to the problem of a self-conscious consciousness (of the whole breadth of the sensible world) developed in the first three chapters (what *is* the relation to itself inherent in any possible relation to objects?), and that he insists on a common sense acknowledgement that whatever account we give of a self-determining self-consciousness, it is not a *wholly* autonomous or independent self-relating; the "sensuous world" must be preserved.

But it is at this point that he then suddenly makes a much more controversial, pretty much unprepared for, and not at all recognizably Kantian, claim.

But this opposition between its appearance and its truth has only the truth for its essence, namely, the unity of self-consciousness with itself. This unity must become essential to self-consciousness, which is to say, self-consciousness is *desire* itself. (¶167)

Hegel is talking about an "opposition" between appearance and truth here because he has, in his own words, just summarized the issue of consciousness's "negative" relation to the world and itself this way.

Otherness thereby exists for it *as a being*, that is, as a *distinguished moment*, but, for it, it is also the unity of itself with this distinction as a *second distinguished moment*. (¶167)

That is, consciousness may be said to affirm implicitly a construal of some intentional content, but since it has thereby (by its own "taking") negated any putative immediate certainty, since it is also always "beyond itself," its eventual "unity with itself," its satisfaction that what *it* takes to be the case *is* the case and can be integrated with everything else it takes to be case, requires the *achievement* of a "unity with itself," not any immediate certainty or self-regard. (This is his echo of the Kantian point that the unity of apperception must be achieved; contents must be, as Kant says, "brought" to the unity of apperception.)

But still, at this point, the gloss he gives on the claim that "self-consciousness is desire" is not much help. The gloss is, as if an appositive, "This [the unity of self-consciousness with itself] must become essential to self-consciousness, which is to say, etc." The first hint of a practical turn emerges just here when Hegel implies that we need to understand self-consciousness as *a unity to be achieved*, that there is some "opposition" between self-consciousness and

itself, a kind of self-estrangement, which, he seems to be suggesting, we are moved to overcome. The unity of self-consciousness with itself “*muß ihm wesentlich werden,*” must become essential to the experiencing subject, a practical turn of phrase that in effect almost unnoticed serves as the pivot around which the discussion turns suddenly and deeply practical. (As we shall see, it eventually does much more clearly “become essential” as a result of a putative encounter with another and opposing self-conscious being. And it is clearly practical in the sense in which we might say to someone, “You’re wasting chances for advancement; your career must *become* essential to you.”)

Since the self-conscious aspect of ordinary empirical consciousness is much more like self-determination, or one could say a resolve or a committing oneself (what Fichte called a self-positing) than a simple self-observation or direct awareness, he begins again to discuss consciousness as a “negation” of the world’s independence and otherness. We are overcoming the indeterminacy, opacity, foreignness, potential confusion and disconnectedness of what we are presented with by resolving what belongs together with what, tracking objects through changes and so forth.<sup>21</sup> Hegel then makes another unexpected move when he suggests that we consider the most uncomplicated and straightforward experience of just this striving or orectic for-itself-ness; that we now consider what he calls life.

By way of this reflective turn into itself, the object has become *life*. What self-consciousness distinguishes from itself *as existing* also has in it, insofar as it is posited as existing, not merely the modes of sense-certainty and perception. It is being which is reflected into itself, and the object of immediate desire is something *living*... (§168)

This is the most basic experience<sup>22</sup> of what it is to be at issue for oneself as one engages the world. As Hegel says, we begin with what we know we now need, a “being reflected into itself,” and our question, how should we properly describe the self of the self-relation necessary for conscious intentionality and ultimately agency, is given the broadest possible referent, its own mere life. We have something like a sentiment of self as living and, as we shall see, needing to act purposively in order to live. Other objects too are not now merely external existents, “*not merely the modes of sense-certainty and perception*” (although they are *also* that) but now also (in order to move beyond the empty formality of “I am the I who is thinking these thoughts”) they are

considered as *objects for the living subject*, as threats to, means to, or indifferent to such life-sustaining. This brute or simple *for-itself* quality of living consciousness (which form of self-relation we share with animals) will not remain the focus of Hegel's interest for long, but, if it is becoming plausible that Hegel is indeed trying to extend the issue raised in the Consciousness section (and neither changing the subject, nor repeating the problem and desideratum in a figurative way) it already indicates what was just suggested: that he is moving quickly away from Kant's transcendental-formal account of the apperceptive nature of consciousness. The I is "for itself" in consciousness for Kant only in the sense that the I (whoever or whatever it is) must be able to accompany all my representations. The world is experienced as categorically ordered because I in some sense order it (I *think* it as such and such), and that activity is not merely triggered into operation by the sense contents of experience. It is undertaken, but I do so only in the broad formal sense of temporally unifying, having a take on, the contents of consciousness, bringing everything under the unity of a formally conceived apperceptive I. (This simply means that every content must be such that *one continuous I can think it.*) The "I" is just the unity effected. The subject's relation to objects is a self-relation only in this sense, and Hegel has introduced what seems like a different and at first arbitrary shift in topics to my sustaining my own life as the basic or first or most primary model of this self-relation, not merely sustaining the distinction between, say, successions of representations and a representation of succession.<sup>23</sup>

It is not arbitrary because Hegel has objected, and will continue to object throughout his career, to any view of the "I" in "I think" as such a merely formal indicator of "the I or he or it" which thinks. In Hegel's contrasting view, while we can make a general point about the necessity for unity in experience by abstracting from any determination of such a subject, and go on to explore the conditions of such unity, we will not get very far in specifying such conditions without, let us say, more determination already in the notion of the subject of experience. This criticism is tied to what was by far the most widespread dissatisfaction with Kant's first *Critique* (which Hegel shared) and which remains today its greatest weakness: the arbitrariness of Kant's Table of Categories, the fact that he has no way of deducing from "the 'I think' must be able to accompany all my representations" *what* the I *must* necessarily think, what forms it must employ, in thinking its representations. The emptiness of

Kant's "I" is directly linked for Hegel to the ungroundedness and arbitrariness of his Table of Categories.<sup>24</sup>

However, understanding this charge would take us deep into Hegel's criticisms of Kantian formality. What we need now is a clearer sense of what Hegel is proposing, not so much what he is rejecting. Let me first complete a brief summary of the themes in Chapter Four (once we begin reading it this way) and then see where we are.

### III

As we have seen, if a self-conscious consciousness is to be understood as striving in some way then the most immediate embodiment of such a striving would be a self's attention to itself as a living being.<sup>25</sup> That is how it is immediately for itself in relation to other objects. Living beings, like animals, do not live in the way non-living beings (like rocks or telephones) merely exist; they must strive to stay alive, and so we have our first example of the desideratum, a self-relation in relation to objects. Life must be led, sustained and this gap between my present life and what I must do to sustain it in the future is what is meant by calling consciousness *desire* as lack or gap, and so a negation of objects as impediments.<sup>26</sup> If consciousness and desire can be linked as closely as Hegel wants to (that is, identified) then consciousness is not an isolatable registering and responding capacity of the living being that is conscious. And if this all can be established then we will at this step have moved far away from considering a self-conscious consciousness as a kind of self-aware spectator of the passing show and moved closer to considering it as an engaged, practical being, whose practical satisfaction of desire is essential to understanding the way the world originally makes sense to it (the way it makes sense of the world), or is intelligible at all. Hegel's claim is that consciousness *is* desire, not merely that it is accompanied by desire. (Obviously this claim has some deep similarities with the way Heidegger insists that *Dasein's* unique mode of being-in-the-world is *Sorge*, or care, and with Heidegger's constant insistence that this has nothing to do with a subject projecting its pragmatic concerns onto a putatively neutral, directly apprehended content.)

At points Hegel tries to move away from very general and abstract points about living beings and desire and to specify the distinctive character of desire

that counts as "self-consciousness," as was claimed in his identification. He wants, that is, to distinguish purposive doings that are merely the natural expression of desire (and a being that is merely subject to its desires), and therewith a corresponding form of self-consciousness that is a mere sentiment of self, from actions undertaken in order to satisfy a desire *as such*; that is, from the actions of a being that does not just *embody* its self-sentiment but can be said to act *on* such a self-conception. He wants to distinguish between natural or animal desire from human desire, and so tries to distinguish a cycle of desires and satisfactions that continually arise and subside in animals from beings *for whom* their desires can be objects of attention, issues at stake, ultimately *reasons* to be acted on or not. This occurs in a very rapid series of transitions in ¶175 where Hegel starts distinguishing the cycle of the urges and satisfactions of mere desire from a satisfaction that can confirm the genuinely self-relating quality of consciousness, rather than its mere self-sentiment.

That is, we have already seen a crucial aspect of the structure of Hegel's account: that any self-relating is always also in a way provisional and a projecting outward, beyond the near immediacy of any mere self-taking. Conscious takings of any sort are defeasable, held open as possibilities and so must be tested; and avowed commitments must be realized in action for there to be any realization of the avowed intention (and so revelation of what the subject was in fact committed to doing). The projected self-sentiment of a merely living self is *realized* by the "negation" of the object of desire necessary for life, part of an endless cycle of being subject to one's desires and satisfying them. This all begins to change at the end of the paragraph (¶175), as Hegel contemplates a distinct kind of object which, in a sense, "*negates back*," and not merely in the manner of a prey that resists a predator, but which can also, as he says "effect this negation in itself"; or, come to be in the self-relation required by our desiring self-consciousness. That is, Hegel introduces into the conditions of the "satisfaction" of any self-relating another self-consciousness, an object that cannot merely be destroyed or negated in the furtherance of life without the original self-consciousness losing its confirming or satisfying moment. He then identifies a further condition for this distinction that is perhaps the most famous claim in the *Phenomenology*.

It is this one: "Self-consciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness." (¶175). He specifies this in an equally famous passage from ¶178: "Self-consciousness exists *in* and *for itself* because and by

way of its existing in and for itself for an other; i.e., it exists only as recognized.”

As he goes to make clear in the exposition of that claim, Hegel wants to introduce a complication in any account of the self-relation he is trying to show is constitutive for intentional consciousness and purposive deeds. As we have seen, consciousness is said to be “beyond itself” because its self-relating self-determining is always defeasable (or challengeable in the case of action) and so its being in its very self-relation in some way “held open” to such a possibility is considered a constitutive condition. In the broadest sense this means that such takings and doings are supported by reasons, even if mostly in deeply implicit and rarely challenged ways. (Conscious takings can always “rise” to the level of explicit judgments and defenses of judgments; habitual actions can be defended if necessary.) Hegel now introduces the possibility—unavoidable given the way he has set things up—that all such considerations are uniquely open to challenge by other conscious, acting beings. Such challenges could initially be considered as merely more natural obstacles in the way of desire-satisfaction in all the various forms now at issue in Hegel’s account. But by considering imaginatively the possibility of a challenge that forces the issue to the extreme, a “struggle to the death,” Hegel tries to show how the unique nature of such a challenge from another like-minded being forces the issue of the normative (or not just naturally explicable) character of one’s takings and practical commitments, and any possible response, to the forefront. To be norm-sensitive at all is then shown not just to be *open* to these unique sorts of challenges, but to be finally *dependent* on some resolution of them. It is on the basis of this account, of how we can be shown to open ourselves to such challenges and such dependence just as a result of a “phenomenological” consideration of the implications of the apperception thesis, that Hegel begins his attempt to establish one of the most ambitious claims of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: the sociality of consciousness and action.

#### IV

So the Hegelian claim at issue now is that *what one needs to add* to the picture of a “differentially responsive desiring being with a mere sentiment of itself, of its life,” in order to differentiate such mere systematic responsiveness from

action on the basis of claims, commitments, entitlements, justifications, warrants, *is the presence of another subject* capable of challenging such a potential claimant. Only in the presence of such a challenge, goes the argument, does the subject's self-relation become normative, not a natural expression of desire. Why would he formulate the issue this way?

The answer can be formulated in the neo-pragmatic language made well known recently by Robert Brandom, and I want to take up a bit of his interpretation of this chapter as a way of exploring what Hegel might mean. The first Hegelian point that Brandom captures extremely well in his own terminology is that self-consciousness has a distinct characteristic: how I take myself to be, is *self-constituting*; I *am* who I take myself to be or can only be said to be an I or subject in so far as I determinately take myself to be such and such, in some determinate way or other, and I accordingly functionally vary as such self-constituted takings vary. Since such a self-relation is realized in deeds, fulfillments of projected commitments, I can turn out not to be whom I took myself to be (or can turn out not to know what I took myself to know), but that erroneous self-conception is still an essential dimension of who I am. (I might *be* a fraud, for example, or self-deceived, and therein lies something crucial to my "self.")<sup>27</sup> So, as Brandom puts it, summing up one of the most momentous and influential claims of the *Phenomenology*, self-conscious beings do not have natures, they have histories. Human beings have taken themselves to be Christians, athletes, opera singers, spies, kings, professors, knights, and so on. They only are such if they take themselves to be, and their taking themselves to be at least partially constitutes their being such.<sup>28</sup> And that is indeed Hegel's deepest point here and is stressed throughout many formulations. "Geist," he says, "is a product of itself," historically self-made over time.<sup>29</sup>

What I want to say is that Brandom, because he favors his own account (not Hegel's) of the relation between a causal perceptual interchange with the world and the role of sociality in the constitution of veridical claims (his score-keeping account)<sup>30</sup>, reintroduces the two-step story Kant and Hegel were trying to avoid and so isolates the social nature of self-consciousness in a way that is the mirror opposite of McDowell's account. Where McDowell's interpretation makes Chapter Four look like a reconsideration, even if also a deepening and so an extension, of the issue of consciousness and object,

Brandom's is a "new topic" interpretation of Chapter Four. Whereas McDowell, even if he is certainly not trying to deny that sociality and social dependence will play crucial roles in Hegel's account later, denies that such themes are relevant here, and so tries to preserve a common sense picture in which *successful perception* does not involve such social dependence<sup>31</sup>, Brandom too distinctly isolates the sociality of self-consciousness.<sup>32</sup> McDowell is generally suspicious of attributing any strong role (or at least what *I* would call a strong or robust role) to sociality in the conditions of perceptual knowledge. His position is more Kantian and concentrates only on the Hegelian account of the way conceptual activity shapes perceptual knowledge and intentional action. Brandom, in contrast, concentrates on the issue of self-consciousness and sociality because he has his own quasi Sellarsian theory of perceptual content and the mind-world relation. What I am trying to argue is that neither gets right the relation between Chapter Four and the first three chapters.

The basic question at issue here is how to explain the necessary conditions for this self-constituting, and the terms of Hegel's answer are well laid out by Brandom: what would we have to *add* to the picture of an object's differential responsiveness to its environment (something that iron can do in responding to humid environments by rusting and to others by not rusting), to get differential responses that are intentional, that are not simply caused responses to the world, but which can be said to involve taking the world to be a certain way. This is the proto-intentionality typical of animals who, when hungry (and so desirous), can practically classify, take the objects in their environment as food (desire-satisfying). But differentially responding to food and distinguishing it from non-food, does not satisfy hunger just *ipso facto*. (As would be the case if we were still at the level of the iron.) The animal must *do* something to satisfy its hunger and must do what is appropriate, sometimes involving several steps and even cooperation with other animals. It must get and eat such food. Another way of saying that the animal does not just respond to food items in its environment, but takes things to be food, is that there is now possible for the animal an appearance-reality distinction. It can take things to be food that are not and can learn from its mistakes. Or it only responds and acts to eat such food when it is hungry, when in a proto-intentional way it takes the food as to-be-eaten *now*.<sup>33</sup>

Thus far, I think this tracks very well what Hegel is up to. Having conceded that without sensory interchange with the world, there is no possible

knowledge about the world, he goes on to argue that such a perceptual interchange alone, or the mere matter of fact modification of our sensibility, cannot amount to a world we could experience. We must understand how things are taken to be what they are by subjects, and that means understanding the kind of beings for whom things can appear, and so be taken (apperceptively) to be such and such, or not; indeed take things to be such and such in the light of their possibly not being so; a normatively attentive being. And this means understanding the difference between mere differential responsiveness, and a desiring, discriminatory consciousness, a practical classification (or "taking"), which is the most basic, minimal way of understanding how things can be for a subject, and not just response-triggers. Noting this distinct capacity has gotten us to animal consciousness as proto-intentional.

The next step is the crucial one. *Now* what do we have to add to this picture to get not proto-intentionality but real intentionality; that is, not just something like a sentiment of one's life in play as one seeks to satisfy desire actively, differentially and in practically successful ways, but genuine self-consciousness and practical self-determination (acting on reasons one can produce)? What is it for a *self* to be for itself in all its engagements with the world and others, if it is not an introspectable object? One way to look at this, in line with what has been said so far is this: we need to know what is necessary in order to introduce a distinction between what I take myself to be and what I am (or what I take myself to know and what I do know), and we must do this without suggesting that one misapprehends oneself as an object (as if mistaking a dog for a wolf) or as if any direct confirmation of what one takes to be so is possible.<sup>34</sup> Rather, what is involved in so taking oneself is to attribute a certain determinate authoritative status to oneself, one that has to be provisional and is subject to challenge.<sup>35</sup> That is, one can take hunger or the desire for food to be much more than an occasion or a stimulus to act, but to be a reason to act, *or not*, and "assuming command," as it were, of such determinations is to take oneself to be, authoritatively, *such a determiner*, "the decider," in the immortal words of our former president.

The question is: under what conditions would this *be* what it is *taken to be* (would so ascribing such authority to oneself be having such authority)? That is, it is always theoretically possible to see any such resolution or self-ascription or self-assertion to be the expression of some *other* desire, perhaps a complex psychological desire for dominance or self-sufficiency

or whatever. It is in answer to this question that Hegel introduces as a necessary element in, as I am putting it, this being what it is taken to be, another self-ascribing subject whose position clashes with, and renders impossible what would have been possible but for the presence of two such subjects and merely finite resources. This forces on one a question of commitment.<sup>36</sup> In being committed one is forced to resolve incompatibilities and sacrifice something; one is not just expressing a desire. To take oneself to be committed is to ascribe to oneself an authority that unavoidably involves an attitude towards another. The most obvious is that in taking myself to be an authoritative taker I also establish a status that I have to concede is open to the other if the same reasons for the commitment apply, and that I cannot deny the other. It is in the presence of this sort of challenge that the implicit authority and status self-ascribed must be realized and can turn out to be in deed an actual such status and not another expression of the subject's subjection to the imperatives of life. And that realization must involve the possibility of just such a claim to authority by another. Likewise, put a different way, such avowals could be in some psychological sense "sincere" but turn out to be inconsistent with what someone attributing to himself such an authority would have to say and do.

In making this clear Hegel introduces a dramatic illustration that has become very well-known, a "struggle to the death" for recognition. This is the beginning of the suggestion we have touched on before—that Hegel considers the distinct normative status of human subjects as not a reflection of some substantive or metaphysical nature, but as a social achievement of a kind and so as bound up with an inevitable and distinct form of social conflict. Here he begins by trying to make clear in a very simple way what it is to have achieved a kind of independence from the species-specific requirements of "life," and he claims that such an achievement is only possible in relation to others and is just that—something we achieve. (Human beings, *Geist*, make themselves into beings who ultimately hold themselves and others to account; do not just interact and clash as the result of the contingent expressions of desire.)

We intuitively resist this picture, I think, and think that such a norm-responsiveness must be explained by some metaphysical distinction between the *kind* of thing we are and the *kind* of things animals and inanimate beings

are. And there is no appeal to this sort of metaphysics in Hegel's account. Desire-triggered responses are experienced as commitments when in some context *I am compelled to decide* what is important, what is significant, what perhaps weighs against life itself. This is not the emergence of a metaphysical distinctiveness, but the start of a new game that, as far as we know, only human animals can play, a language game, or *Geist*-game of holding each other to account by appealing to and demanding practical reasons, justifications for what emerge as claims of authority. What we want to know now is how such a game can be effectively played, the answer to which cannot be provided by attention to the biological properties of the beings or their evolutionary history.

In Brandom's summation of the point we have reached, he says:

what is required to be able to take something to be a *self* is to be able to attribute attitudes that have distinctively *normative* significances: to move from a world of *desires* to a world of *commitments, authority* and *responsibility*.<sup>37</sup>

In the extreme conditions imagined by Hegel, attributing a normative significance to myself or acknowledging someone's entitlement to claim authority cannot be expressions of sentiment or preference if what is at stake and can be risked is all attachments to life, desire, and so forth.<sup>38</sup> (The radical Hegelian claim, which need not be an issue here, is that *all* having such authority amounts to is being acknowledged—under the right conditions and in the right way—to have such authority.)<sup>39</sup> And if that is so then the relevant satisfaction or resolution of such an insistence cannot be just the submission or retreat of some other. The resolution must be a kind of acknowledgement, a recognition of the authority claimed in such a struggle. That is all that in this game would make authority authority. And so the desire inherent in all consciousness, it has turned out, must be, cannot but be, a *desire* for recognition by others.<sup>40</sup> Just as we saw at the outset with Kant—one cannot be said to be a reason-responsive being without being a creature of desire, striving to close the gap between claim and justification, intention and successful realization, action and legitimation—so in Hegel's transformation of that point, in ascribing a certain normative, authoritative status to oneself, one cannot be said to be indifferent not only to those who practically prevent the realization of such claims, but also to those who challenge and reject such status altogether, and who can claim a like and conflicting authority for themselves.

How this all works is then spelled out by Brandom in ways quite close to his own account of the role of the social attribution of authoritative status as the required normativity essential to possible intentionality in general as well as self-consciousness.

So specific recognition involves acknowledging another as having some authority concerning how things are (what things are Ks). When I do that, I treat you as one of *us*, in a primitive normative sense of ‘us’—those of us subject to the same norms, the same authority—that is instituted by just such attitudes.<sup>41</sup>

However, there are various aspects of Brandom’s account that do not match Hegel’s in Chapter Four, and these divergences are related. His account is of course a reconstruction<sup>42</sup>, but, for one thing, he leaves out an element that on the surface seems quite important to Hegel’s sense of the case he is making. I mean his appeal to the experience of *opposed self-consciousnesses*. This concerns what Brandom has elsewhere called disparagingly the “martial” rhetoric of Chapter Four, especially the talk of a struggle to the death, which Brandom wants to treat as a metonymy, a figure of sorts for genuine commitment. (Regarded this way, being willing to risk anything important could show that the commitment functioned as norm, instead of a mere expression of desire.) But Hegel treats the extreme situation, the risk of life, as a key element *in* the story itself, not as an exemplification of a larger story (the making explicit of the logical nature of commitment). It illustrates the possibility of an independence from all dependence on life itself.

I think that what Hegel tries to explain at this point, is why it is that we cannot treat as satisfactory any picture of a monadically conceived self-conscious desiring consciousness, a desiring being who can practically classify and who is aware of being a practical classifier and so has a normative sense of properly and improperly classifying, but is imagined in no relation to another such self-conscious classifier or imagined to be indifferent to another’s takings. This is inadequate on the simple empirical premise that there are other such subjects around in a finite world, and that those other subjects *will not and from their point of view cannot allow* such pure self-relatedness. Brandom is right that what distinguishes holding a commitment from merely expressing a desire is a willingness to alter or give up the commitment if it conflicts with others. One wouldn’t be committed to anything if one knowingly accepted

inconsistent commitments. And Hegel asks us to imagine how an inescapable conflict with others attempting to satisfy their desires forces on one the *nature* of one's attachment to life; it is in response to such conflict that the relation can now count as a commitment, given that one surrendered or sacrificed the original commitment for the sake of life. *Life has become a value*. But the sketch we have so far of a self-conscious theoretical and practical intentionality simply insures not only that there will be this contention, but that on the premises we have to work with so far, it has to be a profound contention that can, initially or minimally conceived, only be resolved by the death of one, or the complete subjection of one to the other. This will play a large role in Hegel's account of the sociality on which we are said by him to depend.

## V

So where does all this leave us? In general we have a picture of a self or subject of experience and action estranged from, or divided within itself (without, as he put it, a "unity" that "must become essential to it") but conceived now in a way very different from Plato's divided soul, divided among distinct "parts" in competition for rule of the soul as a whole, and in a way very different both from other forms of metaphysical dualism, and from what would become familiar as the Freudian mind, split between the conscious and the distinct unconscious mind, or most explicitly for Hegel (and for Schiller) in distinction from the Kantian conception of noumenal and phenomenal selves. In a way somewhat similar to Rousseau, and in an unacknowledged way in debt to him, Hegel treats this division *as a result*, not in any factual historical sense but as a disruption of natural orectic unity that must always already have resulted, or that can only be rightly understood as effected. This division functions in Hegel, as it does in some others, as the source of the incessant desire not for rule or successful repression but for the wholeness so often the subject of broader philosophical reflections on human life. Hegel does not accept the Platonic or Cartesian or Kantian account of a fixed dualism and so entertains this aspiration for a genuine reconciliation of sorts within such divisions. This is so in Hegel because he does not treat this division as a matter of metaphysical fact. The problem of unity emerges not because of any discovery of a matter of fact divided soul, but in the light of the realization that what counts as an aspect of my agency and what an impediment to it or what is a constraint on freedom, is a different issue under

different conditions. In this light, under the conditions Hegel entertains in this chapter, the natural cycle of desire and satisfaction is interrupted in a way for which there is not an immediate or natural solution, and one's status as subject, judge, agent, is now said to emerge, in varying degrees, imagined under a variety of those possible conditions, as a result of the putatively unavoidable conflict. The premise for this account is the one we saw above. Hegel's way of putting it was that consciousness must always be thought to be "beyond itself". Or more expansively put: that we have to understand a human self-relation as always also a projection outward as much as a turn inward. Once we understand such a self-relation as a normative self-determination, such a self is open, opens itself to, counter-claim, contestation, refusal, a different form of negation that forces a different sort of response, what Hegel will describe as initially a struggle for recognition.

This is a lot to get by reflection on Kant's central idea, that "The 'I think' must be able to accompany all my representations," but that is, I have argued, Hegel's source. It is this reflection on Kantian spontaneity, understood by Hegel as also self-dividing or self-alienating, that grounds the hope for an effected or resultant form of reconciliation of self with other, and thereby of self with self.

This way of looking at things is the source of Hegel's beautiful image for this aspect of his project, an image that (typically) resonates both with Christian and pagan undertones. Later in the PhG (§669), he describes human existence itself as a "wound" ("*Wunde*"), but one which, he says, has been self-inflicted and which (one infers, which *therefore*) can be healed, even "without scars" ("*ohne Narben*"). Such a healing requires the resolution of the social dialectic that he introduces in the next phase of the argument of Chapter Four and that he continues to pursue throughout the book.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I present an interpretation of the point in "What is Conceptual Activity?" forthcoming in ed. J. Shear, *The Myth of the Mental?*

<sup>2</sup> The post-Kantian philosopher who first made a great deal out of this point was Fichte, and the modern commentator who has done the most to work out the philosophical implications of the point has been Dieter Henrich, starting with *Fichtes ursprüngliche Einsicht*, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1967.

<sup>3</sup> This is quite a typical Hegelian title, and can be misleading. By "The Truth of Self-Certainty" (*Die Wahrheit der Gewißheit seiner selbst*), Hegel does *not* mean, as he seems to, the truth *about* the self's certainty of itself. He actually means, as we shall see, that the *truth* of self-certainty is not a matter of self-certainty at all, just as sense-certainty was not certain. This relation between subjective certainty and its realization in truth is a basic structure of the PhG. Its most basic form is something like: the truth of the inner is the outer, rather than anything suggested by the title (as in: how to explain the fact of such self-certainty). I am disagreeing here with Scott Jenkins, "Hegel's Concept of Desire," *Journal of The History of Philosophy*, 47, 1, Jan 2009, 103–130, p. 114.

<sup>4</sup> "It is one of the profoundest and truest insights to be found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that the unity which constitutes the unity of the *Begriff* is recognized as the original synthetic unity of apperception, as the unity of the I think, or of self-consciousness." "Wissenschaft der Logik," Bd. 12, in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Rheinisch-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Hamburg, Felix Meiner, 1968–, p. 221; *Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller, Amherst, Humanity Books, 1969, p. 584.

<sup>5</sup> There are other interpretations which tend to isolate the argument in Chapter Four in other ways, construing it as a kind of "transcendental argument" that aims to prove that the "consciousness of one's self requires the recognition of another self." A. Honneth, "From Desire to Recognition: Hegel's Account of Human Sociality," in *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Critical Guide*, eds. D. Moyar and M. Quante, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, 76–90, p. 76. On *that* issue itself ("from desire to recognition") and on the one and a half pages of argument in Hegel that seek to establish this, Honneth has a number of valuable things to say. But, as I will be arguing, no convincing interpretation of the chapter is possible that does not explain the underlying structure of the "Consciousness-Self-Consciousness" argument in the book as a whole. And I don't believe that Honneth's very brief remarks about understanding ourselves as "*creators* of true claims" or "the rational individual...aware of its constitutive, *world-creating* cognitive acts" presents that structure accurately.

<sup>6</sup> J. McDowell, "The Apperceptive I and the Empirical Self: Towards a Heterodox Reading of 'Lordship and Bondage' in Hegel's *Phenomenology*," (hereafter AI) in ed. K. Deligiorgi, *Hegel: New Directions*, Chesham, Acumen, 2007, p. 38.

<sup>7</sup> Especially the relation between universal and particular. And there is a good deal of truth in that characterization. The experiencing subject inevitably becomes aware of itself as a living being of a kind, something it shares with all other such beings, and itself as a singular subject whose own life is not "life" in general or species-life.

<sup>8</sup> Hegel's developmental procedure here requires a general cautionary note. The identification of self-consciousness with desire occurs at a very early stage, as Hegel begins to assemble the various dimensions and elements he thinks we will need in

order to to understand the self-conscious dimension of consciousness. Initially Hegel is only saying: we have *at least* to understand that self-consciousness must be understood as mere desire (another sensible translation of “*Begierde überhaupt*”). It will prove impossible to consider such self-consciousness *as merely desire* and nothing else, and that impossibility is the rest of the story of the chapter. But this procedure means that from now on self-consciousness must be still understood as inherently or ectic, whatever else it is.

<sup>9</sup> Brandom also thinks of the PhG as an allegory; in his case an allegory of various dimensions of the issue of conceptual content. R. Brandom, “The Structure of Desire and Recognition: Self-Consciousness and Self-Constitution,” (hereafter SDR), included in this volume as Chapter Two. I discuss Brandom’s interpretation in Section IV. Here and throughout, I want to resist such allegorical or figurative interpretations in both Brandom’s and McDowell’s accounts.

<sup>10</sup> This is contrary to the interpretation by Fred Neuhouser, “Desire, Recognition, and the Relation between Bondsman and Lord,” in *The Blackwell Guide to Hegel’s Phenomenology*, ed. K. Westphal, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, pp. 37–54, who argues that Hegel in effect changes the subject from apperception to a practical self-conception and self-evaluation. I think Hegel’s presentation is motivated by the internal inadequacies of the Kantian notion of apperception. Without that issue in view, we won’t have a sense of *why* the problem of self-consciousness’s unity with itself should emerge here, why such a unity “must become essential to it,” and why the discussion of a single self-conscious being certain of its own radical and complete independence (*Selbstständigkeit*) will have to appear unmotivated, simply a new theme. Compare *ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>11</sup> So self-consciousness, while not “thetic,” to use the Sartrean word, or intentional or positional, is not *sort of* or *vaguely* positional, caught at the corner of our eye, or glimpsed on the horizon. It is not intentional at all. I borrow the language of “thetic” or later in this article, “positional” and “non-positional,” from the famous exposition by Sartre in his *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness*, New York, Hill and Wang, 1991. The idea is the one we have been discussing—that apperception should not be understood as a dyadic intentional relation to an object. The problem for Kant and Hegel, as well as for Sartre, is to explain how self-consciousness could be a consciousness of a self in any sense other than as a consciousness of an object.

<sup>12</sup> John McDowell has suggested (in a response to a presentation of an earlier version of this lecture at the Kokonas Symposium at Colgate University in November 2008) that the notion of “achievement” is a misleading term here, that whatever achievement is involved in being able to judge apperceptively should be understood along the model of learning a language, of being initiated into a linguistic community,

something that involves no notion of struggle or practical achievement in the usual sense. It just happens. But (a) Hegel is here describing just the minimal conditions for such a capacity to be in effect and it is only as he explores the implications of the realization of this capacity that he introduces the orrectic and social issues that follow and (b) what Hegel is describing is like the acquisition of a linguistic capacity as long as we admit that such an acquisition finally has to involve much more than acquiring rules of grammatical correctness. To be initiated into a linguistic community is to be initiated into all the pragmatic dimensions of appropriateness, authority, who gets to say what, when and why. One is not a "speaker" as such until one has learned such matters of linguistic usage and Hegel wants to treat such norms in terms of their historical conditions, primarily in this chapter the social conditions and social conflict "behind" any such norms. See also his "On Pippin's Postscript," in *Having the World in View*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2009. Compare Habermas's account of what a full pragmatics of language has to take in, how full initiation into a linguistic community means that speakers "no longer relate *straightaway* to something in the objective, social, or subjective worlds; instead they relativize their utterances against the possibility that their validity will be contested by other actors." J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. I, Boston, Beacon, 1985, pp. 98–99. In Hegel's account, the standards for this unique kind of challenge to a speaker or agent cannot be made out transcendently or "quasi-transcendently," as Habermas sometimes says, but will require the unusual reconstructive phenomenology under consideration here.

<sup>13</sup> This issue is the central one and is explored at length in my *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> I am following here Terry Pinkard's translation. His valuable facing-page translation is available at [http://web.mac.com/titpaul/Site/Phenomenology\\_of\\_Spirit\\_page.html](http://web.mac.com/titpaul/Site/Phenomenology_of_Spirit_page.html). The paragraph numbers in the text refer to Pinkard's translation as well.

<sup>15</sup> "As self-consciousness, consciousness henceforth has a doubled object: The first, the immediate object, the object of sense-certainty and perception, which, however, is marked *for it* with the *character of the negative*; the second, namely, *itself*, which is the true *essence* and which at the outset is on hand merely in opposition to the first." (§167)

<sup>16</sup> His formulation later in the *Berlin Phenomenology* is especially clear: "There can be no consciousness without self-consciousness. I know something, and that about which I know something I have in the certainty of myself [das wovon ich weiss habe ich in der Gewissheit meiner selbst], otherwise I would know nothing of it; the object is my object, it is other and at the same time mine, and in this latter respect I am

self-relating." G.W.F. Hegel: *The Berlin Phenomenology*, trans. M. Petry, Dordrecht, Riedel, 1981, (hereafter BPhG), p. 55.

<sup>17</sup> He also introduces here a claim that will recur much more prominently in this account of the difference between animal and human desire. "However, to knowledge, the goal is as necessarily fixed as the series of the progression. The goal lies at that point where knowledge no longer has the need to go beyond itself, that is, where knowledge works itself out, and where the concept corresponds to the object and the object to the concept. Progress towards this goal is thus also unrelenting, and satisfaction [note the introduction of *Befriedigung*] is not to be found at any prior station on the way. What is limited to a natural life is not on its own capable of going beyond its immediate existence. However, it is driven out of itself by something other than itself, and this being torn out of itself is its death." (§80)

<sup>18</sup> This principle is of course primarily at home in Kant's practical philosophy, but it is also at work in the theoretical philosophy, particularly where Kant wants to distinguish his own account of experiential mindedness from Locke's or Hume's.

<sup>19</sup> BPhG, p. 2, my emphasis.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. again the *Berlin Phenomenology*: "In consciousness I am also self-conscious, but *only also*, since the object has a side in itself which is not mine." (BPhG, p. 56)

<sup>21</sup> Cf. "The 'I' is as it where the crucible and fire which consumes the loose plurality of sense and reduces it to unity...The tendency of all man's endeavors is to understand the world, to appropriate and subdue it to himself; and to this end the positive reality of the world must be as it were crushed and pounded, in other words, idealized." *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften, Erster Teil. Die Wissenschaft der Logik*, in *Werke*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1969–79, Bd. 8, p. 118; *Hegel's Logic, Being Part One of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. W. Wallace, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1982, p. 69.

<sup>22</sup> That is, the one that presupposes the least.

<sup>23</sup> The section on life, essentially §§168 to §§174 is among the most opaque of any passages in Hegel (which is saying something). What I need here is Hegel's basic framework, in which he starts with the claim that with our "reflective turn" ("*durch diese Reflexion in sich selbst*") consciousness is related to "life." Self-relation as mere sentiment of oneself as living and as having to maintain life though does not establish my taking up and leading my determinate life as an individual. I am just an exemplar of the species requirements of my species, playing them out within the infinite "totality" of life itself as genus. Just by living I am nothing but a moment in the universal process of life, a kind of Schellingean universal (who talked this way about life). But throughout, the framework is: the first *object* of self-consciousness is life. That is, Hegel does not suddenly decide to talk about life, just *qua* life. As he says several times, he wants to understand life as the immediate object of desire (itself the most immediate

form of self-relation), a sentiment of self that opens a gap, something negative to be filled (requires the negation of barriers to life and the negation of stasis, in the face of the need to lead a life). That is, I take a main point to be the one introduced in ¶168: in this self-relation, there is an "estrangement" (*Entzweiung*), "between self-consciousness and life," as he says. All through the phenomenology of "life as the infinite universal substance as the object of desire," the problem Hegel keeps pointing to is how, under what conditions, the self-relating can be said to become a relating to self that is me, a distinction within the universal genus, life. I seem rather just to submit myself to the imperatives or demands of life for my species. Rather than being the subject of my desire, I am subject to my desire. The first three chapters have already established the need to understand some sort of normative autonomy and this first actuality of self-relatedness, life and leading a life, conflicts with this requirement unless such a subject can establish its independence of life. What is important to my account here is the course of this "becoming determinate" account until it begins to break into its conclusion, toward the end of ¶171, until "this estrangement of the undifferentiated fluidity is the very positing of individuality" ("*...dies Entzweien der unterschiedlosen Flüssigkeit ist eben das Setzen der Individualität*"). Such a self-determined individual must be established and that requires especially a different, non-natural relation with another subject who must realize the same self-relatedness. What Hegel struggles to say after this is why, without the inner mediation by the outer, i.e. without a self-relation in relation to another self, this fails, a typically Hegelian coming a cropper. See the different account in Neuhouser, 'Desire, Recognition, and the Relation Between Bondsman and Lord,' p. 43.

<sup>24</sup> Hegel's formulation of this point is given in ¶197 in his own inimitable style. "*To think does not mean to think as an abstract I, but as an I which at the same time signifies being-in-itself, that is, it has the meaning of being an object in its own eyes, or of conducting itself vis-à-vis the objective essence in such a way that its meaning is that of the being-for-itself of that consciousness for which it is.*"

<sup>25</sup> It may help to establish the plausibility of this reading by noting how much this practical conception of normativity and intentionality was in the air at the time. I have already indicated how indebted this chapter is to Fichte. Ludwig Siep has clearly established how much Hegel borrowed from Fichte for the later sections on recognition and his practical philosophy in general. See his *Anerkennung als Prinzip der praktischen Philosophie*, Alber, Freiburg/Munich, 1979, and many of the important essays in *Praktische Philosophie im Deutschen Idealismus*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 1992.

<sup>26</sup> Readers of Peirce will recognize here his category of "Secondness." As in "...you have a sense of resistance and at the same time a sense of effort...They are only two ways of describing the same experience. It is a double consciousness. We become aware of ourself [sic] by becoming aware of the not-self." C.S. Peirce, *Collected Papers of*

*Charles Sanders Peirce*, Vols. I–VI, eds. C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1931–5, I, p. 324. An excellent exploration of the links between pragmatism and Hegel is Richard Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*, Philadelphia, PA, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971.

<sup>27</sup> SDR, p. 26.

<sup>28</sup> Only partially, because, as Brandom points out, one can fail to act in a way consistent with such a self-ascription, and so discover that one was not who one took oneself to be.

<sup>29</sup> I develop an extended interpretation of this claim in *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*.

<sup>30</sup> I won't try to give an account here of this theory. See, *inter alia*, Brandom's "The Centrality of Sellars' Two-Ply Account of Observation," in *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2002, and pp. 388–90 of my "Brandom's Hegel," *European Journal of Philosophy* vol. 13, no. 3, 2005.

<sup>31</sup> Or at least any social dependence more complicated than socialization into a linguistic community.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. for example his gloss on "Self-consciousness is desire itself." He signals that he wants the discussion to be about the relation between self-consciousness and erotic awareness as such. "...at least in the sense that the most primitive form of self-awareness is to be understood as a development of the basic structure of erotic awareness." SDR, p. 38.

<sup>33</sup> "A desire is more than a disposition to act in certain ways, since the activities one is disposed to respond to objects with may or may not satisfy the desire, depending on the character of these objects." SDR, p. 32.

<sup>34</sup> That would be like taking something to be Y on the basis of what one took to be X, and that would hardly help matters.

<sup>35</sup> This is what we discussed earlier in the phenomenological (in the Husserlian sense) language of "positional" consciousness.

<sup>36</sup> Honneth, 'From Desire to Recognition', p. 8, claims that most commentators on this chapter fail to explain the transition from what he calls the experiencing subject's "disappointment over the independence of the object" and an "encounter with the other and to recognition." I am arguing that this is the wrong way to look at this transition, that the ceaselessness of mere desire (being subject to one's desires) is a "disappointment" only from the view of the observing, philosophical "we" that always parallels and comments on the experience of the experiencing subject. (This is so because such a point of view already "knows" what the results of the first three chapters require and why the self-relation characteristic of a merely erotic consciousness will not supply sufficient "independence.") All Hegel needs on that level is the assumptions of simple finitude and scarcity, and the extreme possibility of a contesting subject who pushes the conflict "to the death." In his commentary Honneth, it

seems to me, invents an internal problem – the experiencing subject's sense of it is own, all-negating, all-consuming "almightiness" – that I do not see in the text and it would be extremely odd and wholly unmotivated if it were there. Since this is the basis of Honneth's extended comparison with Winnicott (*ibid.*, p. 9), I think this kind of gloss is not relevant to the argument of Chapter Four.

<sup>37</sup> SDR, p. 34.

<sup>38</sup> In Brandom's formulation: "For one to have that significance *for* oneself – not just being in oneself something things can be something *for*, but being that *for* oneself as well – that significance must be something things can be or have *for* one." SDR, p. 38.

<sup>39</sup> This issues in a familiar "recognitional paradox." This statement of the radical claim, it might easily be argued, is incoherent. It can't be that one has the authority by being recognized to have it, because the recognizer recognizes on the basis of some reason to grant that authority. *That* reason cannot be "you merit recognition because I recognize you" without obvious circularity. If there must be such an internal ground for meriting recognition then clearly someone can have an authority that is not recognized. The problem is an old one. In a sense it goes back to Aristotle's claim that honor cannot be the highest human good because one is honored for something higher than being honored; one is honored for what one did to deserve honor. It is also obviously related to the Euthyphro discussion of piety. In this regard, see the useful discussion of "misrecognition" in H. Ikäheimo and A. Laitinen, "Analyzing Recognition," in *Recognition and Power*, eds. B. van den Brink and D. Owen, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 53–56.

<sup>40</sup> Alexander Kojève, who basically inflates this chapter to a free-standing, full-blown philosophical anthropology, put this point by claiming that for Hegel the distinctness of human desire is that it can take as its object something no other animal desire does: another's desire. This desire to be desired (to be properly recognized) amounts to the basic impulse or conatus of human history for Kojève. See *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, assembled by R. Queneau, ed. A. Bloom, trans. J. Nichols, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1969, pp. 3–30.

<sup>41</sup> SDR, p. 142.

<sup>42</sup> In the language of *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, he is more interested in a *de re* interpretation than a *de dicto* one. That is, he wants to know not just what the historical Hegel is committed to, but, given what that historical Hegel was committed to, what *would* he *have* to be committed to in another, perhaps more perspicuous, more contemporary vocabulary. See also my "Brandom's Hegel," in *European Journal of Philosophy* vol. 13, no. 3, 2005, 381–408.



## Chapter Four

# Intuition, Understanding, and the Human Form of Life

Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer

### **I. From philosophical anthropology to logical analysis and back**

It is well known that the the basic question of Kant's philosophy is: *What is man?* It asks for the characteristic competence of *human sapience*, that is, knowledge and Understanding, and the corresponding preconditions of becoming and being a *person*.<sup>1</sup> On this reading we can see a close connection between Kant's analysis of the formal conditions of conceptual Understanding in his transcendental logic on the one hand, and of the material conditions of judgments or propositions with objective empirical content in his transcendental aesthetic on the other hand. Thus, Kant's analysis of our world-related experience can be understood as a critical reflection on the conditions, and limits, of reasonable empirical claims and on the status of a priori sentences by which we make the logical forms and inferential norms governing the content of empirical statements explicit. It can also be understood as an

account of the most important general distinction between human knowledge and merely animal cognition.

The lasting significance of Kant's philosophy, at least if taken together with some important improvements by Hegel, consists in a thoroughgoing criticism of the two major positions in traditional theory of cognition: on the one hand Cartesian '*rationalism*' and on the other hand '*empiricism*.' Empiricism splits up into a 'naturalist' or 'materialist' and a 'subjectivist' tradition of Hobbes and Hume, respectively. The characteristic feature of rationalism is an 'ontic' reification of the individual thinking *self*, accompanied by an insufficient analysis of our cognitive competencies. The resulting '*mentalism*' is a kind of half-way secularization of the traditional Christian soul. In empiricism, our cognitive faculties are grasped in terms of a *modular addition of computational abilities* to mere *animal capacities*. This image of man prevails in modern cognitive science. Its leading model is this: An animal has the faculty of *sentience*, to borrow the phrase from Robert Brandom.<sup>2</sup> *Sentience* consists of behavioural reactions to sensations or perceptual inputs. As immediate reactions, they are determined by 'instinct.' These reactions and 'dispositions' are called 'functionally proper', if they somehow appear as 'successful' for the survival of the individual or the whole species (at least in the long run). As a result, animal instinct' in a surviving species is by definition 'unerring', for any ascription of 'error' on the generic level would be anthropocentric. Individual animal behaviour can be, of course, 'erroneous', at least 'unsuccessful'. But it always appears as 'causally' governed by innate instinct or acquired dispositions of self-movement in reaction to sensation and perception.

With respect to human intelligence, Hobbes, Locke, and Hume—even though they differ in details—defend quite similar versions of *cognitive naturalism* in their theories of human language and thought. They try to 'explain' our human capacity of reasoning by the assumption that there is a kind of linguistic mechanism in the mind or brain which makes symbolic representations of real and possible states of affairs possible. More precisely, the individual person is said to 'process ideas' in her mind or brain. These 'ideas' are understood as a result of impressions, which are always somehow caused either by events in the outer world or in the mind. Altogether, man appears as an animal equipped with a logical computing machine in the brain.

Why should we not be content with such a picture of cognitive naturalism? It seems to be an advanced—and after the invention of complex computing machines and robots even ‘exact’—version of the age-old idea that man is a *rational animal*, a *zōon logon echōn*.

The question is, do we really understand personhood and human knowledge if we picture man in this way? The metaphors of man as a machine (La Mettrie) and the brain as a computer may mystify our capacity of Understanding and our competence of reasoning much more than help to solve the age-old riddle of human sapience. For there is the possibility that, as in mentalism, we have only replaced the *words* “soul” and “thinking” by the *words* “brain” and “calculating.” The rest is metaphor. On the other hand, we all seem to agree that *homo sapiens* does have rational capacities. Yet, as soon as we acknowledge that we can actualise these capacities both *correctly* and *incorrectly*, and that knowledge-claims or convictions can be both *true* or *false*, we obviously need a differentiated analysis of these *normative proprieties* of human (speech) *acts*—in distinction to the *mere behaviour* of animals, which seems to be causally and dispositionally ‘necessitated’ by the immediate circumstances. It is therefore that we need to comprehend the difference between animal sentience and human sapience. However, if we define, with Kant, human Understanding more or less as the faculty of *proper rule-following*, the question still remains how to understand this talk about rule-following as distinguished from mere behaviour governed by dispositions. Moreover, it is still unclear what is meant by ‘rules.’ Is what is at stake only explicit rules of *inferential reasoning* in deducing *sentences* from *sentences*? If so, why does Kant count *Imagination* (*Einbildungskraft*), that is, the power of spontaneously producing pictures and texts, melodies and other representations, as one of the capacities of *Understanding*?

We have to distinguish *implicit* ‘norms’ from *explicit* rules, as Brandom sees with Ludwig Wittgenstein and Wilfrid Sellars. The use of explicit rules in inferences, or of subjunctive sentences expressing them, always already presupposes and requires the implicit norms of correct rule-following. On the other hand, in making implicit norms explicit, we usually do not just leave them as they are. This well known paradox of analysis holds for all explicit articulations of inferential commitments and entitlements. It holds for speech acts in dialogues as well as for turning a case law into a set of written rules.

Comprehending this dialectics of making practices explicit is especially important for seeing the limitations, and also possible dangers, of striving for 'exact rules' that allegedly make all the 'sufficient and necessary conditions' of all relevant cases explicit. No real practice allows for the achievement of this goal. Therefore, we often have to content ourselves with a much 'weaker' version of making implicit norms explicit, for example by merely inventing titles for some of them. 'Naming' general 'principles' by such titles and articulating very general 'title-sentences' can be sufficient to state some generic features of a practice or institution. When we talk about the 'structure' of a practice we usually refer to such high level sentences which Hegel has labelled as "speculative." Yet, in most of these cases, we do not arrive at full sets of 'structural descriptions' or 'rules.' We only make explicit some important "moments," as Hegel puts it, of an institution that is already well known in practice. This is how we should also understand the way in which we talk about performing roles in a joint practice—for example when we speak of the 'normative stance' of dialogue partners, about what they are committed to, what we may therefore expect them to do, and what we and they are entitled to do according to the implicit norms of the practice in which they are involved. Whereas the word "implicit" misleadingly suggests that we can make the norms totally explicit in rules and sentences, already Karl Bühler introduced the new expression "empractical" in order to express in a short and correct way that forms and norms are embedded in practices and that they are real in our performances, not merely in our speech about them.

Another central question remains open in Brandom's approach, namely: How does (inferential) *sapience* or *Understanding* relate to (non-inferential) *human* sentience with its *special form of perception*? This special form is traditionally called *Intuition*.<sup>3</sup> According to John McDowell, Brandom should take this question more seriously than he actually does. This leads us back to Kant's 'foundation' of transcendental logic in his transcendental aesthetic, in which at least an outline of an answer to this question is sketched, however unconvincing it may appear at first sight.

Even though Hume awakened him from his dogmatic slumber of 'rationalism', Kant immediately departs from Hume's all too radical empiricism, which ultimately leads to theoretical scepticism and practical behaviourism. Hume's subjectivism cannot account for the normativity of any idea of 'truth'

in human knowledge-claims and ‘science’. And this means that it does not allow for a proper distinction between what *seems* to be right or true and what *is* true. In fact, empiricism in general can be characterised by the lack of this distinction. It results, basically, from a sweeping argument of the following form: It is often difficult to make any such distinction with sufficient subjective certainty and trans-subjective or objective reliability; therefore there can be no such distinction. But this is a sophistic pseudo-inference from the fact that our joint practice of making distinctions, like everything in the real world, is in many respects necessarily finite and imperfect.

What we need is comprehension of what we are actually doing when we, counterfactually, *talk about* pure or perfect knowledge or truth—in analogy to what we are doing when we talk about pure numbers and perfect geometrical forms. What Kant wanted to do was to direct our attention to the difference between *actual things* and *pure ideas* as mere objects of reflecting thought, as well as to the activity of applying the ‘pure’ forms to the realm of empirical knowledge. It is precisely by this that Kant’s logical analysis of the ‘pure’ or ‘abstract’ ways in which we express formal *presuppositions* of empirical knowledge changes the entire perspective of philosophy. On this reading, Kant does *not* construct any dogmatic theory of human cognition that could fit our empirical self-observation or psychological experiments somehow. Rather, Kant’s critical philosophy makes implicit (that is, “empractical”) forms and norms of Understanding and Intuition explicit, which, despite of the all too many shortcomings in Kant’s ways to express himself, must on no account be confused with psychological claims about an allegedly synthetic construction of contents or even objects using a manifold of ‘sense data’ and sets of ‘logical operations’ as the starting-point, as we still find these in (logical) empiricism or 20th century analytical philosophy.

Kant begins with the insight that merely formal or schematic rules of logico-linguistic inference, expressing ‘analytical’ truths<sup>4</sup>, are far from being sufficient if we want to know how our judgments or propositions (and the defining sentences and words) can have content at all. This ‘content’ is to be understood, according to Kant, as consisting jointly of its ‘inferential meaning’ which corresponds to Kant’s word “*Bedeutung*” and its ‘intuitive sense’ which corresponds to Kant’s words “*Sinn*” and “*Sinnlichkeit*.” It is crucial to see that they refer to the special *form* of human sentience and perception. McDowell has

rightly stressed that there is such a special form. But he, too, does not really make it explicit. Or rather, he focuses only on the narrow interconnection of conceptual determination and perception, or on *apperception* as it was traditionally understood, not on Intuition as the competence to refer practically to present things around us, of course mediated by our senses. Hence, we need an answer to the questions what perceptive Intuition is and what role Intuition, which is not mere sensation, necessarily plays in all cases in which our judgments or propositions should refer to the real world of Experience<sup>5</sup>. In order to understand this, we need some explication of the relevant “rules of projection” (Wittgenstein) of language onto the world. Yet, we must acknowledge that we cannot make the *practical norms* of properly projecting language onto the real world entirely explicit by rules that are themselves presented in the form of implicational sentences. For no such implication will ever leave the realm of words and sentences. Hence, the talk about “rules of projection” in fact refers to *implicit or empractical material norms*. Their application relies heavily on joint, and jointly controlled, ‘practical conventions’ of using signs in reference to objects given in *joint* Intuition. As a consequence, Kant’s *analysis* of the basic forms and norms of human Experience includes both the powers of Understanding in the sense of German “*Verstand*” and of ‘object-related perception’ or *Intuition* in the sense of German “*Anschauung*.”

Objective Experience is now either ‘apperceptive’, that is, conceptually informed and insofar self-conscious Intuition of actual objects and real properties at present, or it is conceptual (meaning verbally articulated) Understanding of objects and states of affairs that can or could be perceived, or rather ‘observed’, as we might want so say instead of ‘intuited’. In fact, we could use the word “observation” for ‘perception in the mode of actual and objective Intuition.’ It is precisely in this sense that Intuition (or observation) without the possibility of (proper) conceptual thought is blind, and that thought without the possibility of (proper) Intuition (or observation) is empty.

Kant’s reflection on Experience is an altogether *meta-level* enterprise. Hegel’s term for this is “speculation.” The word is not highly appreciated today, but it should be understood simply as a title for making implicit ways (forms and norms) of our joint practice of Experience explicit. This is a meta-level reflection on the forms of human practices, not on inner processes of some

presupposed Self. In other words, speculation in Hegel's sense is the systematic *articulation* of what we *already must know how to do* 'before' we can make empirically meaningful claims with definite content. Hegel sees, moreover, that not only the 'objects' of such a meta-level analysis, but also the analysis itself, is always already embedded into the whole system of human practices and their traditions. We must remain aware of this if we want to fulfil the task that was formulated in Kant's philosophy, namely of comprehending the *unity of human reason* as well as the *unity of the world*. Only by embedding the faculties of individuals into a more comprehensive picture can we overcome the unconnected dualism of theoretical (including empirical) knowledge and practical orientation. Thus, speculation turns out to be a process of 'localising' something in a geographical map. By such a 'topography' or 'topology' of particular 'regions' in the world in which we live, including our own practices, we can also discern internal, conceptual, limitations of the theoretical knowledge-claims of particular sciences, whether natural or social—for example in comparison to, and partially in contrast with, practical know-how involved in individual and joint actions.

It has to be admitted, however, that many parts of Kant's and Hegel's philosophy still remain quite obscure. This holds especially for Hegel's talk about the "Whole as the True," and his identification of Truth and Knowledge with "the Concept" and "the Idea." In order to clarify Hegel's most difficult sentences about these things at least in outline, we should read them as shorthand for insights such as the following: All truth-conditions are *immanent* and finite—even those of the 'infinite' claims of pure mathematics. Any real, concrete, world-related, knowledge is also finite.<sup>6</sup> And this means, in particular, that we have to *locate it in our own historical point in time*—even if we know that we will always be able to enhance our knowledge so that any knowledge of today apparently is *revisable*, at least with respect to its *articulation*. In contrast to fictitious or utopian accounts of what we might be able to do in the future or what some God allegedly can do, both claiming to know something and revising the expressions or inferential content of our knowledge claims always *takes place here and now*. Our real criteria of success or truth only 'exist' in our making use of them. Truth and reason are features of our practice of developing generic knowledge and judging about fulfilments of our 'ideas'. These 'ideas' should not be read in the sense of Locke or Hume. Rather, they are fulfilment conditions in our project to develop human culture 'reasonably.'

We are always already orientated in this practice, as we can say now, towards a general *project of reason*. In Hegel's sense, an idea is the leading form of a real project in which we really take part. In our case, it is the idea of *improving* our joint use of conceptual, generic or default inferences. Since all developments of ideas or projects involve a complex *division of labour*, as Plato already knew, we have to locate the *particular regions* within the *overall* development of joint Reason. This is what the idea of the 'unity of reason' amounts to. It is more or less the same idea as the idea or project of the unity of humankind.

Obviously, human knowledge now gets a dialectical structure. It results from the unavoidable tension between the enterprise of *fixing* generic inferences on the one hand, and *developing* our generic knowledge on the other. Fixation belongs to the process of improving joint understanding by means of schematization. Development is part of the process of revision. Fixation accelerates and broadens understanding extensionally. Revision 'intensifies' knowledge, makes it more rigorous and precise. Having grasped this dialectic, Hegel transforms Kant's merely 'synchronic' and therefore only seemingly 'eternal' distinction between *a priori* and *a posteriori* truths into a *relative* and '*diachronic*' distinction: The inferential norms that determine the material content of words and sentences stem from a public domain of fixed knowledge. This public knowledge belongs to Hegel's category of *genericity* (*Allgemeinheit*).<sup>7</sup> Generic knowledge is characterised by its function of providing schematic default-licenses for conceptual inferences. Think, for example, of sentences like: 'cows eat grass' or 'man has reason', which are neither 'analytic' in Kant's sense, nor 'empirical' in Hegel's sense. In talking about cows, we may expect them to eat grass, though we know also that some cows are fed by grained fish or meat. Of men we expect at least some rational capacity, though many men show a considerable lack of reason. These are examples of how we use generic truths in which we articulate presupposed normality conditions for whole domains of empirically world-related sentences and claims. They also show why, according to Hegel, common sense always thinks in a much too abstract, schematic way, so that philosophy has to defend concreteness not only with respect to the practise of subsuming individual cases under general principles in particular applications, but also in view of the 'categorical', that is logico-linguistic, status of the general or generic sentences themselves.

What is expressed by proper empirical statements belongs to the category of 'singularity' (*Einzelheit*). According to this definition, statements that contain universal quantifications about individuals (such as all singular apples in a basket) are also judgments that belong to the category of singularity. On the other hand, a generic sentence about what an apple is should not be taken to be 'empirical' in the narrow sense of the word. It rather is a conceptual statement, representing some 'general' knowledge about apples. Such knowledge is *presupposed* in empirical cases in which someone says, for example, that "there is an apple in my hand."<sup>8</sup>

Finally, the category of 'particularity' (*Besonderheit*) refers to the practice of *applying generic or default inferences to singular cases or subsuming singular cases under generic types* and to the empractical forms and norms of this practice.

As we can now see, Hegel replaces the traditional dichotomy of, on the one hand, analytical or synthetic *statements a priori*, and, on the other hand, empirical *statements a posteriori* by his new trichotomy. By it, Hegel articulates different logical categories referring to the *status* of a sentence or utterance. Its status is *generic* if it articulates a *conceptual* judgment or default inference. It is *singular* if it refers to one, many or all singular (empirical) cases. There are always further judgments involved that limit a presupposed generic set of default inferences to the *particularly* relevant ones. Hence, we can create the *particular* form of applying generic conceptual conditions to singular explicit cases. For instance, when we say that a landscape is flat we refer to a different margin of precision than when we talk about a floor or a monitor-screen.

Even though Brandom's model of dialogical scorekeeping of singular commitments and entitlements is an important generalisation of speech act theory into the direction of a dialogical pragma-semantics, it does not have enough room for the categories of *genericity* and *particularity*. As a result, his concept of *material inference* hangs in the air, just as he inherited it from Wilfrid Sellars. Brandom's all too dialogical approach lacks a sufficient analysis of the *generic* form of *conceptual norms*. There is no differentiation between *generic* or conceptual and merely *contingent* or empirical 'material' inferences in his model. Singular acts of individuals in dialogues cannot institute material inferences and therefore, Brandom's approach ends 'aporetically', or in a dead end that is. Though Brandom is right in trying to avoid the positions

of regulism, or the idea that we are governed by rules somehow implemented in the brain, and intentionalism, which is the idea that my individual intentions decide the meaning of my utterances, he himself relapses into a position of behavioural regularism, as we shall see more clearly now.

Generic inferences belong 'by definition' to a certain kind of public domain of possible *joint* Knowledge. Such Knowledge with capital K should neither be confused with subjective true beliefs with or without good enough reasons, nor with any 'eternal' knowledge. Brandom does not distinguish particular knowledge-claims of individuals from generic Knowledge. This is a serious omission since only the latter has normative power in the sense that it is used as a measure for subjective understandings and beliefs. It is precisely '*scientia*' or Knowledge (*Wissenschaft*) in this sense that in all its breadth is the measure of 'all things', their 'real existence', 'truth' and our 'good understanding', and not—as Sellars and Brandom think—science in the narrow English sense of merely 'natural' or 'physical' science. When we appeal to the principle of '*scientia mensura*' in the first mentioned very broad sense, that is, to any generic knowledge from knowing how to do things properly to using already explicit rules or default forms of conceptual inference, we (that is, each of us) are always referring to what *we* (that is at least one of us) can (and sometimes should) *know today*, not to some distant future. In this vein, Hegel ridicules all appeals to utopian 'truths' or 'possibilities' in scientific fictions and asks us to show our individual knowledge and joint Knowledge *here and now*. To borrow the famous proverb in Aesop's fable: *Hic Rhodus, hic salta!*

Brandom is nevertheless right to look for a new account of the normativity of material inferences. Yet, contrary to what his model suggests, it cannot suffice that individual dialogue partners are actually content with claims and reasons that are put forward by their partners or opponents in a real dialogue. In such a dialogue, I might for instance show acceptance by refraining from any actual 'protest' or 'sanction' against my partner. But this form of recognition, as a merely actual or contingent attitude or behaviour towards my partner, could be utterly arbitrary. Brandom tries to escape from this unwelcome result by talking of some "normativity all the way down"—which rather means 'normativity all the way up'. For what he means by this are *meta-level* assessments of the propriety of recognitions or criticisms, or positive or negative 'sanctions'. Even though I might not actually recognise you

as being entitled to your actions, or acknowledge your actions as properly fulfilling some of your commitments, you still might be right, and I might be wrong—which is to say that somebody else might criticise my “scorekeeping”—and so on, *ad infinitum*.

Brandom understandably tries to avoid any ‘mystical’ assumption of some generic level of truth or correctness to appeal to. He wants to stay content with actual recognitions and criticisms. Any actual recognition or criticism is a performative act, which can, in turn, be recognised or criticised by others. But this does not mean that there is no need, and no possibility, of appealing to some *already jointly recognised norms*. On the contrary. Since Brandom refuses to talk about *joint commitments* and *generic knowledge*, he cannot sufficiently distinguish between correctly saying that some move in a game is valid on one side, and merely *taking* it as valid. The norms for such a distinction remain behind the veil of what he can make explicit.

If there were indeed no such norms to appeal to, there would be no way to distinguish between merely factual recognitions and normatively correct recognitions, between merely actual sanctions or justified sanctions. Everything would collapse into a complex game of *taking things* in some way or another. And this would mean, in the end, that Brandom’s talk about normativity would diffuse into merely factual *coordinations* of linguistic and non-linguistic *behaviour*, including “sanctioning behaviour.” But this is just *social regularism*. Therefore, since Brandom’s concept of *material inferences* does not provide for a sufficient solution to the question of how *conceptual* or *generic* inferences are to be distinguished from merely *subjective* inferences, it remains unclear how *propositional content* is or can be constituted or instituted.

Our starting, and leading, question, *what is man*, becomes now all the more urgent. Can we really ‘explain’ human understanding, cognition, knowledge, that is, Understanding, Intuition and Experience, and the notion of truth, in a regularist or *behaviourist* way? Asking this is asking about the limits of ‘naturalistic’ pictures of human cognition. What follows from contentment with such pictures? Do they really fulfil acceptable criteria for sufficient explanation? In lack of clear criteria, many approaches in modern cognitive science and philosophy of mind cannot in fact live up to their own bold promises. This is to say that it is unclear whether they really produce knowledge, rather than ideological beliefs.

Any serious philosophical analysis of the meaning of words, sentences and utterances thus leads us back to an analysis of the implicit, practical, faculties of human Understanding, Intuition, and Experience, which, in turn, always refer to a much more comprehensive context of joint human actions and cooperation, far beyond the merely discursive practice of talking, making claims, asking questions or answering them. Philosophy of mind has to acknowledge at least this much, if it does not want to be already outdated by Hegel's insights and arguments.

## 2. Learning to be a person in cooperative relations

Let me now start again with the following proposition, which is rather a truism than a 'claim': *Man is a species (Lebewesen) with a particular life-form (Lebensform)*. This life-form is a kind of project. Therefore Hegel subsumes it under the title "idea." Or rather, "the idea" (*die Idee*). As such, it is what Plato calls "the idea of the good" (*idea to agathou*). What both Plato and Hegel have in mind is 'the good form of human life as such' ("*kath'auto*," "in itself"). This form of being human cannot be understood by simply adding extra features on top of those characteristic of the life-form of our relatives, the animals, or, more specifically, of the primates such as the chimpanzees. What we need is a differential analysis. In such an analysis we have to start with ourselves because any understanding, including the understanding of ourselves, is always already part of our life-form. It is part of our project of living and leading a good human life. Therefore, the starting point for understanding the ape is understanding man, as Marx famously says, not vice versa—even if we can always improve our understanding of ourselves through comparison with other life-forms. This is to say that we have to start with some already presupposed generic knowledge about the 'conceptual' differences between humans and animals. This is so because knowledge must be seen always in the context of performing actions and actualising forms properly, that is according to the leading norms governing our actions empirically—as far as they are not yet made, in addition, explicit by rules, labels or sentences.

Moreover, we always already distinguish between (conceptually) 'essential' and merely 'contingent' or 'empirical' properties of human beings, corresponding to the category of singularity. The same holds for essential properties

of any living species. This distinction defines, so to speak, the essence or substance ('second *ousia*' in the sense of Aristotle) of the (concrete) being. It is the relevant species in question. It determines the subject that does something or the object we talk about. On the other hand, we have merely empirical facts expressed by sentences that belong to the category of singularity. This distinction might not be easy to understand. But it is absolutely crucial from a logical point of view. For in empirical investigations (in a sufficiently narrow sense) we always already *presuppose* the essential or conceptual properties of human being (or of another species) 'a priori'—even if often unknowingly or unnoticed. These 'conceptual' properties are not just 'analytic'. They are not merely conventional or arbitrary distinctions between what is and should be counted as human, animal, plant, or some non-organic thing or matter. These *conceptual* conditions are rather, as it were, *synthetic-apriori* conditions for being human—or alternatively for being a good enough, not too mutilated, sick or dead exemplar of a particular animal species or plant.

As we can see now, conceptual analysis can never abstract away from Experience. This does not imply that the distinction between the empirical (in singular cases) and conceptual (in generic knowledge) turns void. Rather, we should neither identify conceptual statements with 'merely analytical' statements, nor with merely empirical propositions about (sets of) singular objects and processes. Conceptual statements express generic knowledge. We can therefore understand why, and how, Hegel replaces Kant's talk about "synthetic a priori" by "conceptual," and "generic knowledge" sometimes simply by "the Concept."

Correspondingly, we should distinguish between two forms of investigations, *empirical* investigations and *phenomenological* or *conceptual* investigations. *Empirical* investigations show particular empirical properties of singular (many or all) members of a set of individuals. *Phenomenological* investigations, in contrast, result in generic statements about a 'species' of things or processes. These generic statements are used to express synthetic a priori or conceptual conditions for being a good enough exemplar of the species in question.<sup>9</sup>

I want to say now that the 'essential form' of man is *self-conscious personhood*, or, what amounts to the same, that the *eidos* or *second ousia* of a human being (*das Wesen des Menschen*) is the same as *the life-form of (being) a person*. This already presupposes the competence of taking part in *human practices*.

Being a person is playing various roles in these practices that altogether add up to what can be called *the human form of life* which comprises, as such, all different possibilities of living an all in all 'good' (enough) human life without excluding 'contingent' mishaps, diseases, failures and so on. Yet, serious or essential failures are excluded, as, for example the life of Caspar Hauser in his solitary prison.

We can live a personal or human life only in the context of joint human practices. As a result, "personhood" and "person," not "mind" and "brain", should be the words by which we secularize the traditional notion of the *human soul*, at least if we do not merely want to talk about the soul in the sense of a psychological *character*.

Wittgenstein reminds us that we can understand the methodological and conceptual order of practical and theoretical (verbal) presuppositions best if we look at how we learn to do things. It seems clear that we first learn to take part in human practices in a kind of *behavioural way*, so to speak. That is, we first seem to learn what I would like to call *proper conduct*. Only later we learn intentional actions.

It is a truism that we can become persons only in the context of learning to take part in human practices. This is the reason why the *we-groups* of primary learning are so essential. It was only due to having first learned many things in England—including a certain way of '*thinking*' or *talking to himself*—that Robinson Crusoe could be technically skilled in the way he was, much more so than his servant Friday according to Defoe's story. But it is not merely our technical skills that make us persons. Rather, we are persons to the degree in which we take part in *developing our human world*.

The important conceptual insight now seems to be this: All intentional actions, whether in the *I-mode* of individual action or in the *we-mode* of joint intentions and collective action,<sup>10</sup> rest on joint behaviour ('*Verhalten*') and collective conduct ('*Benahmen*'). This collective conduct already involves implicit evaluations of correctness and the corresponding norms. The satisfaction-conditions of these norms deciding whether they are fulfilled or whether we remain dissatisfied, are controlled, as we shall see, not only by the teachers, but almost immediately by the learners as well. This means that proper collective conduct already involves joint control of conduct even though the level of explicitness

and intentionality may still differ on the side of the teachers and on the side of the learners respectively.

It is indeed crucial that a child's learning does not merely consist in a passive training (*'Abrichtung'*) for behaving in a certain way, as is the case with animals. Rather, learning is, as we can say, a *joint conduct*, consisting, on the one hand, of some appropriate and often already intentional and conscious actions on the side of the teacher, and, on the other hand, of some appropriate, often not in the full sense conscious and intentional conduct—potentially including control of the teacher's conduct—on the side of the student. In other words, there is a development from individual behaviour via joint conduct to individual action, and from there to joint intentional action.

Let us call an actual possibility or 'power' to *behave* in a certain determinate way X (which is appropriate in a given typical situation S) *the faculty to do X*. Let us further call the actual possibility or power of taking an appropriate part Y in a certain joint conduct *the ability to do Y*, and finally the actual possibility or power to perform an action scheme Z at will *the competence to do Z*. For example, I have the *competence* of reciting the beginning of the *Ilias* if I wish, but an infant does not. The infant may also not yet have the *ability* to speak. But it already has the *faculty* of listening and distinguishing human speech from other sounds, as well as the ability to learn the given language, at first by developing proper conduct. Of course, we do not always have to use this regimentation of terminology, but in many cases it may prove helpful. For we can now say that being a person does not merely consist of having certain faculties. Rather, it involves also having the competence of thinking, speaking, judging as well as intentional, that is, deliberate and spontaneous, acting. Before acquiring the competence, a potential person has the *ability to learn* these things, or in other words the ability to acquire the competence. Animals, in contrast, have neither such competence, nor even the ability. They may have astounding faculties, but no animal is part of the system of joint reciprocal personal relations. We express this fact when we say that no animal is a person or—in another way—when we say that humans are not animals.

Unfortunately, the difference between the modal concepts of ability, faculty, and competence is often lost by reducing them all to the so-called 'behavioural dispositions' and to their (allegedly) underlying bodily states and causes.

This holds already for the usual understanding of preferences, often (as in Davidson's way of speaking) rather vaguely conceived as "pro-attitudes." A decisive point to note is that there cannot be any such *propositional* attitudes, not even wishes for some non-present state of affairs in the future, which are not always already *mediated by a joint practice*. This crucial fact is often ignored, though it was clearly noticed by Wittgenstein. The reason for this is that one does not reflect deeply enough on the important distinctions between *immediate desires* (1), conceptually determined *wishes* (2) and *intentions* that actually guide *spontaneous actions* (3). Already the proper fulfilment of wishes must be controlled by an appeal to 'public' criteria. A mere desire, by contrast, is satisfied if it simply disappears, for whatever reason, or rather, for whatever cause. This is not true of any proper fulfilment of wishes, nor of intentions.

But, one might still want to ask, why couldn't, or shouldn't, we include animals in the group of persons? We certainly can do this in the sense of *caring for* animals and improving this care. Also, there are of course important ethical norms that tell us how to treat animals. Yet, any such norm, rule or principle is *our* own norm or principle. It is mere fantasy to assume that an animal could partake in controlling the proprieties of joint behaviour and joint action. At least when it comes to *judgements about right and wrong, true and false*, we human beings are the only beings who can be held responsible for drawing such distinctions. This sentence obviously says something about the *categorical difference* between us humans, as persons, on the one hand, and mere animals (not to speak of plants or lifeless things in the natural world) on the other hand. In fables, we can fancy possible worlds in which animals or even mountains are able to speak. But in reality, we *know* that they do not speak. We do not merely believe this, just as we do not merely 'believe' that stones do not fly without external causes.

Of course, there is always some need to take the details into account, such as the fact that there are similarities between the behaviour of humans and the behaviour of primates. And of course some interactions between humans and animals—especially pets like parrots or dogs—exist. Yet, certain essential differences remain unaffected by these facts. It does not really further our understanding of these differences and similarities to state—as if a cautionary note—that after all we do not know what it is like for animals to cooperate in plays and in animal games. We do know about these differences—just as

much as we know about any ‘facts’ of this generic kind. For despite the possibility of using signals in order to coordinate behaviour between humans and ‘higher’ animals, or between higher animals of some species, we also know about the limits of this form of interaction. We can call this hard fact a *synthetic a priori reason* for drawing a distinction *between humans and animals*. The reason for the differentiation is *synthetic*, not analytic. In other words, it is not merely a consequence of some formal, merely verbal, rule of language. Nor is it an arbitrary proposal. Rather, it rests upon wide human Experience. The argument is *a priori* only in the sense that the distinction itself determines what can be counted as reasonable judgements concerning ‘real possibilities’ of interacting with animals. In the same way there are ‘a priori’ arguments for the ‘fact’ that men are not stones and trees are not intelligent. It is by such principles that we determine that living stones and anthropomorphized animals belong to fairy tales or science fiction stories. The critical dimension of philosophy has always been, and will always be, to make this critical distinction between mere fictions and real possibilities. How difficult this can be, can be observed in the fact that in our post-modern times it sounds dogmatic not to take the ‘possibility’ into consideration that animals might be able to talk or that robots might act in ways that would oblige us to recognise them as personal members of our human world.

In an important sense, we already know quite a lot about the limits of animal behaviour and learning, even though detailed empirical investigations might add specific improvements to our knowledge. It has become a bad habit recently to ridicule any ‘a priori’ or generic knowledge as ‘dogmatic’, to only believe in the latest ‘empirical findings’ about animal or artificial intelligence and to confuse real science with empty promises of science fiction. It is of course perfectly legitimate and interesting to ask *why* it is impossible for animals to have the relevant abilities or competences to take part in the relevant social practices. But to ask *why* this is so—for instance, that apes in contrast to human infants are incapable of simple joint reference to objects—already *presupposes* the knowledge *that* they are not capable. And this can be established only by phenomenological Experience.

Michael Tomasello and his group have shown in detail what is already known at the level of generic knowledge, namely that animals do not participate in our practice of pointing things.<sup>11</sup> Importantly, this practice, which is the

practice of joint Intuition of present objects around us, already presupposes some joint control of joint reference to the particular objects of perception. Therefore, we find already in Intuition a fundamental difference between human beings and animals. First and foremost, this is not to be confused with the faculty of using signs in primitive signalling, which higher animals certainly have. The crucial issue here is *jointness* in attentive and intentional reference to objects. Any such jointness is mediated by *roles* in *games*, as I would like to put it with a certain *homage* to Friedrich Schiller, Ludwig Wittgenstein, as well as Johan Huizinga whose book carries the title "*Homo Ludens*." No animal seems to be able to learn how to participate in such games properly. These games are 'natural' paradigms of cooperative practices with perspectival roles. The competence of discerning these roles is necessary for proper interaction. It is a competence of 'transforming' perspectives, or rather, of knowing how to deal with the basic facts of subjectivity and perspectivity in Intuition and any performance in action. As a result, conscious *action* presupposes *interaction*. For in actualising a generic action I take up a role, just as I do in any speech act, whether silent or aloud.

### 3. Joint control of proper perception and action

As I have suggested, object-related *Intuition* (*Anschaung*) must already be seen as an elementary practice, not as a merely subjective perceptive relation to present things around one.<sup>12</sup> Human perception in the mode of Intuition is related to an *already* determinate and existing object, movement or process here and now, and as such, it must already be understood as a successful participation in a joint practice. Whereas sensation (*Empfindung*) and animal perception are merely individual faculties, perception in the mode of Intuition is not. It is *social* in the sense that it involves the competence in partaking in an *exchange or sharing of perspectives between individuals*.

A crucial point here is that having a perspective and being aware of one's perspective is deeply embedded in playing a role in a joint game. Note that a game can be a cooperative game even if it is competitive. In this complicated case, competition is part of the cooperation and must be distinguished, therefore, from non-cooperative *fight*s. In fights I take you as an enemy or perhaps as an object of utilisation. In contrast, one cannot play a cooperative game,

even a competitive one, purely strategically. Rather, the partners must be *recognised as partners*.

My claim is that Intuition as joint perceptive reference to present objects presupposes some cooperative game and the corresponding cooperative control of jointness. Donald Davidson speaks in this context of *triangulation*.<sup>13</sup> In this nice metaphor, the three corners of the triangle represent two persons and one object. But Davidson does not tell us anything more detailed about the relation between the persons and the normative structure of this relation. In particular, he does not seem to differentiate between, on the one hand, mere *coordination* of perceptive behaviour, and, on the other hand, the *cooperative joint action of joint perception*. It is the latter that is required in *referring to an object* and *showing it* to someone else. In any case, the idea expressed by the metaphor is that reference to an object in Intuition is, at the same time, a relation to other real or possible persons. Importantly, when I show something to you, I do not only control your behaviour with respect to the object that is pointed—but also your reaction to my showing it. That is, I expect you to signal somehow to me that you realise that I am pointing you the object and that you ‘understand’ my pointing it to you. Consequently, *my* Intuition of an object involves properly taking part in *our* Intuition of the object. And this means that it is not merely a perceptive relation between me and the object, but between me, the object and you, or more generally, between me, the object and a possible second or third person. Thus, the metaphor of triangulation represents the perceptual and, at the same time, social, process of *Intuition* or *deixis*.

Consciousness of perspectives presupposes some awareness of the *difference* between my perspective and yours, and between our respective roles. It also requires some knowledge of how to change places or roles and, if we are already at the level of language, of how to talk about the roles or how to talk about the object as it appears from a perspective other than one’s own. This is already an argument against any merely ‘subjective’ (purely egoistic or instrumental) picture of triangulation, such as the one that Brandom draws in his article “The Structure of Desire and Recognition: Self-Consciousness and Self-Constitution”, included in this collection.

In Intuition we (can) refer to *the same* present object or the same present process. This possibility or competence is a methodologically essential condition

for any present Experience of objects or properties. Accordingly, it is a conceptual truism that whatever I can experience or perceive in the mode of Intuition can (or at least could) be experienced or perceived in the mode of Intuition by others as well.

Notice now that a proper change of perspective requires social control. When a parent points something to his or her child, he or she controls the reaction of the child in order to secure joint reference. And vice versa: from early on, the child controls the parent, such that both can check whether the other refers to the object or process properly. This happens by checking, for example, whether the other consistently looks in the right direction, or touches the right part of a thing, or brings the right object, or plays the right game. When a child learns how to look in the same direction as the parent, it is the *object* to look at, which defines what sameness of direction is, and not, as in geometry, parallelism of lines. Therefore, the child cannot just 'do the same' as the parent.

It is also in situations of joint perception that we learn how to distinguish and how to produce phonematic forms correctly. This is my central argument for the necessity of pre-linguistic triangulation. In fact, I believe that in Kant's usage, the word *Anschauung* covers this case of sounds, too. We do not just learn, like a parrot, to imitate words. We learn to distinguish and produce them *properly*. And this means that we learn how to control the correctness (propriety, appropriateness) of utterances and speech acts, with respect to their syntactic forms as well as their semantic meaning: Parents and children control jointly whether they pronounce the words correctly, use the words properly, answer to questions in an adequate way and so on. This is primitive co-authority between the parent and the child. It presupposes mutual recognition in the sense of respecting the other person as sharing authority with one. The child begins to get hold of its own authority, in a sense, by controlling whether the parent is properly occupied with the given mutual joint game. It also controls the approvals or disapprovals of the parents. At some point, the child starts to control whether the parent is properly interested in objects of joint attention. The practice of mutual control of this sort is the foundation of any kind of deictic reference to things and hence necessary for language learning. It is therefore foundational for any linguistic competence deserving the name.

Recognition of the child as a person thus consists in respecting her as a partner in a joint game. There are many things—both pre-given and self-produced—that such games can be about, but they are always games in which other persons are co-players. As Kant seems to have noticed, the most prominent and most important spontaneously *self-produced things* are words (concepts) and images. The word “Understanding” (“*Verstand*”) is his title for properly managing the formal norms of this ‘spontaneous’ game in which we ‘produce’ words and images. The norms are those of proper articulation as well as of schematic inferences that can be learned by heart. The word “Intuition” (“*Anschauung*”) hence refers to the practice of dealing with things given to our senses, including the words and images produced by other persons. The proprieties of Intuition, its norms of correctness, are determined, as I have said, by the jointness of the game. The fulfilment of the normative conditions is controlled by the success of the cooperation. This means that cooperativeness in the sense of willingness to play the relevant games together with others is a crucial pre-condition for good, successful, understanding. Moreover, only through a coordination of Understanding and Intuition can words or images properly or truly refer to the world.

Let me repeat: Having a perspective and being able to change it—or rather, to keep track of such changes—are already cooperative acts. The competence to perform them greatly surpasses mere animal cognition. It already involves some form of *recognition*—in a fairly demanding sense. This recognition is not respect or attribution of authority to a person, as it were, once and for all. It consists, more concretely, in recognising particular actions by a person as proper and fitting in the cooperative games in question. Therefore, reducing recognition to a relation between individual persons easily results in too abstract a conception. To recognise a person as a person is to accept her as a partner in particular joint games, and this consists in numerous acts of recognising particular behaviour, conduct, acts, attempts and successes in joint games. Of course, this form of recognition relative to particular games is to be distinguished from the ethically deeply important *default recognition* of the *dignity* of any human being, which is independent of concrete cooperation with her, as well as of any preconditions concerning particular faculties, capacities and competence. Indeed, recognising the dignity of humans does not allow for an ‘entrance exam’ of any sort. Still, *both* of the implied concepts of personhood are *thick* concepts. This distinction between *thick* and *thin*

concepts was made prominent by Bernard Williams<sup>14</sup>, but the idea (even if not the word) goes back to Elizabeth Anscombe<sup>15</sup>: A concept like “selling X” or “promising Y” is ‘thick’ if its use entails ‘ethical’ evaluations, commitments and entitlements, which are not entailed by ‘thin’ concepts (like “passing X to a person” or “uttering a sound”). When we use ‘thin’ concepts we speak on a level of ‘pure’ or ‘brute’ facts.

The—perhaps rather radical—claim I want to defend here is that at least rudimentary forms of ‘ethical togetherness’ are already involved in Understanding and Intuition, and thus in speaking, hearing and joint orientation in space. This is due to the fact that Intuition and Understanding are already forms of cooperation. Cooperation presupposes cooperativeness, expressed, for example, by the *principle of charity* with respect to interpretation<sup>16</sup> and the *principle of clarity* with respect to signalling intentions. These principles are well-known and only mentioned here. The point is that they play a crucial role already in very basic practices. Intuition presupposes some awareness of *possible* changes of perspectives, which, in turn, presupposes certain *actual* changes of this sort. In this generic sense, Intuition is structurally cooperative. The same holds for Understanding. Moreover, because of its dependence on Knowledge, any ‘strategic’ act already presupposes non-strategic cooperation. As a result, any purely strategic attitude towards other persons is deceiving them and acting in a deficient mode—a form of cheating.

While sensations and perceptions in the sense of merely differential reactions to what is sensed are part of our *animal* nature, it is something completely different to learn to take part in a cooperative joint practice of (pre-linguistic or already conceptualised) perception in the mode of Intuition. At first glance it may seem that we can share joint perception and joint *deixis* with a well-trained dog, a horse or a dolphin. We certainly can *point to* a dog for example that there is a ball over there to play with. The question is how far such ‘joint’ and ‘shared’ reference goes. Whereas a child can show something to the parent and control that he or she refers to it in the right way, a dog can only do this in a very limited sense, if at all. What a dog certainly cannot do is to control together with us the correctness and jointness of such deictic references.

In this context, we can of course talk about ‘degrees of development’. In the real world, there are always continuities and degrees, as Kant has famously stressed, and as we can see best in the case of colours. We are, however,

always interested not merely in continua of non-differentiation but also in robust (qualitative or quantitative) differences. It is not at all 'dogmatic' to stress such classificatory distinctions. Only they can provide us with sufficiently clear and generically reliable inferential orientation. Without schematization we can never arrive at situation-independent knowledge, not to speak of full-fledged, including mathematical, science.

We can now see clearly in which respect Intuition already differs from merely animal sensation and perception governing its dispositional reaction: Object-related Intuition presupposes the competence of relating *my* perspective on the object here and now to *your* perspective on the same object then and there. Intuition therefore presupposes the mastery of a *change of perspectives on the object of perception* within (our present!) *space*. It is in this sense that we can defend Kant's claim that space is the "outer form" of Intuition. Objective human perception in the mode of Intuition also presupposes the mastery of the logical form of *tempus*, at least in all those cases, in which we refer to processes and movements, instead of things or "*gestalts*." Watching Peter run now, I can subsequently say that Peter ran.<sup>17</sup> As rational competence, Intuition and Understanding exist only on the basis of a cultural practice, in which we *jointly* refer to the world present to us here and now.

Practical competence of mastering the forms of Intuition is pivotal to understanding any *reference* of words. Mere animal sensation is not enough for projecting symbols onto the real world. Not to see this is the main error of empiricism, in philosophy as well as in the sciences. Moreover, we cannot investigate human Intuition and its forms by purely experimental methods. This is so because Intuition and its forms are always already presupposed as a *social practice* in all our experiments and observations. The same is true of *Understanding* and *Experience*. Understanding also already involves taking part in a common culture in a proper way. It is presupposed in any empirical enquiry about any issue. These presuppositions are the main reason why merely empirical investigations in the cognitive sciences can, at best, improve some details in our systems of generic pre-knowledge, but not disprove 'folk-psychology' (as it is pejoratively called) as a whole and declare it as 'non-scientific.' Replacing conceptual default-knowledge with the latest theoretical beliefs is a perverted description of the task of the empirical sciences. This is the reason why we need critical philosophy in Kant's sense. Its core method is

*transcendental* or *presuppositional* analysis of Intuition and Understanding. As such, it is a special form of *logico-conceptual* and *methodological reflection* on the basic forms of *human* cognition in contrast to *animal* cognition.

#### 4. I, You, and Us

There is a broad tradition of philosophers, including Kant, who say that the main difference between man and animal lies in the fact that humans can say "I." However, we make the corresponding distinctions in practice long before we actually use the word. Moreover, the distinction between *me* and *you* already presupposes the realm of *us*, that is, a certain practical understanding of who *we* are. This implies, to speak in Raimo Tuomela's terms, that any human action in the "I-mode" already presupposes a practice in the "we-mode."<sup>18</sup> Hegel comes close to the truth when he famously talks in the chapter on "Self-Consciousness" of his *Phenomenology of Spirit* of the *I* that is a *We* and the *We* that is an *I*, meaning by this that any use of the word "I" presupposes some *You*, and therefore some *Us*. Moreover, the content of a declaration or assertion made in the first person plural must be such that anyone of us *could have* said it and that anyone of us can in principle understand it. On the other hand, in using the word "we" an individual person expresses that he wants to talk on behalf of the others belonging to the *Us* in question. In fact, it is only appropriate to say "we" if each of us is willing to say "we." Hence, saying "I" requires the possibility of saying "we" and this requires the cooperation of, as it were, "all of us." This is a truism, but it is an important one.

Moreover, any action in the "I-mode" is controlled with regard to its 'correctness.' Its correctness is not defined by, say, its survival value, but by the very concept of the action in question. And what is important, actions of controlling correctness are actions that must take place in the "we-mode." I can, for example, play the piano for myself, in the "I-mode." But when I control the correctness of my playing, say, Beethoven's "*Für Elise*," I take part in a joint action—I judge my action in the "we-mode." Altogether this means that engaging in any action at all requires taking part in our culture of "we-actions" of speaking and understanding.<sup>19</sup>

The structural importance of jointness becomes especially clear when we reflect on the conditions of satisfaction or success in any attempt at cooperative

communication. Here, success depends not only on the speaker and on what he says and does, but also on the hearer and on what he does and says. This is the reason why 'intentionalist' approaches as found in Grice, as well as 'interpretationist' approaches as defended by Davidson are both insufficient and one-sided. Both cover only an aspect, or performative moment, of cooperative communication. Grice focuses on the speaker's *attempt* to communicate or to *start* a certain kind of cooperation. Davidson focuses on the attempt of the hearer to *understand* or interpret the attempt of the speaker. But truth and meaning as proprieties of speech acts can be comprehended only with reference to evaluations of success or failure of cooperative communication. It is not *me* as a speaker and not *you* as a hearer, but *us* both, speaker and hearer, who decide whether the cooperation was sufficiently successful. Moreover, most of the time it is not even up to the two of us. Everyone is, in principle, involved in controlling whether trans-individual and inter-personal norms of *good* communicative cooperation are fulfilled or not. The *maxims* of communicative cooperation, *sincerity* and *truthfulness* on the side of the speakers and *charity* and *trust* on the side of the hearers, show this, simply because they are in the end *ethical* norms, despite all attempts of naturalism to blur this fact.

This on a most general level, is the reason why Kant regards the liar as the chief enemy of humanity. All of us who seek excuses for our lies may gladly think that Kant is building too much recognition into the simplest mutual act of communication and cooperation. But merely 'instrumental' communication is indeed as defective as any other sort of cheating. There is always some trust required on the part of the hearer, and this means that we must presuppose that the speaker is trustworthy. This trust is not merely a regulative advice, but plays a governing role as a *constitutive ethical norm* in human communication and cooperation. Without it, our ascriptions of intentions to others would, in the end, be totally arbitrary. The reason for this can be easily seen: If I assume that the speaker may not be telling the truth, there is little I can learn from what he says. There are simply too many ways in which a statement can be false. In other words, without some basic assumption of trust I will lose any foothold for joint orientation.

Of course, as adults we always do some silent thinking in the form of non-public verbal planning and express to ourselves silent intentions, not only

with respect to our own future acts but with respect to the expected results of our speech acts as well. We do not tell everybody about our silent intentions and plans. Yet, we can do all these things only after we have learned to perform public and true expressions of intentions and promises. It is, therefore, a mistake to assume that there is a peculiar 'state of mind' that determines the 'content' of my tacit thinking directly, without the mediation by what it means to express the same words or sentences aloud and in public. I do not decide by myself whether I really mean what I say or think, nor does my brain do any such thing. The real form of internal monologues is nicely shown in dramatic literature, such as Shakespeare's plays, where actors often speak into 'the off.' On the other hand, there is the sense of "really meaning something," namely in cases when the future course of my actions shows that I really (try to) fulfil all the relevant commitments of my speech act.

Eventually, Understanding (*Verstand*) in general must be regarded as the capacity of taking part in potential cooperation. Its norms or rules of correctness are already ethical norms or rules. Even understanding a particular individual speech act already involves an *ethical attitude* towards the speaker. This shows up in the fact that we usually should not only assume that the speaker knows what he says, but also that he sincerely 'means' it. Assuming that the latter is the case is not speculating on his 'inner' states or hidden 'mental events.' It is rather a result of knowing about the difference between what we hear and what the speaker might think or intend silently, which is part of our explicit knowledge about the difference of perspectives between the speaker and the hearer. To put things in a nutshell: Being aware of one's own perspective is the opposite of living a merely subjective, animal life. Consciousness of one's subjectivity presupposes the competence of changing perspectives and, hence, of taking part in trans-subjective and object-related Experience.

## 5. Conclusion

According to Hegel, the main task of philosophy is to develop human self-consciousness. Thus, 'meta-physics' in the sense of reflecting on the basic forms of *physis* or nature, that is, on 'what there is', turns into philosophical anthropology. The task is to make the fundamental differences between the form(s) of leading an animal life and the constitutive form(s) of a human life explicit. The method, going back to Kant, is 'transcendental' or 'speculative'.

Its goal is a meta-level explication of the basic conceptual distinction between animal sentience, as the faculty of reacting with particular self-movements to sensations, and human Understanding, grounded on Intuition. In contrast to merely subjective animal perception, Intuition must be reconstructed as an already trans-subjective form of referring together to a jointly accessible world. Understanding thus already is partaking in a practice of ‘proper’ symbolic representations that can be produced spontaneously. All of this presupposes recognition of other humans as co-players with perspectives different from one’s own.<sup>20</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> “Understanding” with an initial capital letter will be used here to denote Kant’s (and Hegel’s) “*Verstand*.”

<sup>2</sup> See R. B. Brandom, *Making it Explicit. Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, Cambridge/Mass., Harvard University Press, 1994, for example pp. 4–8, 275–277.

<sup>3</sup> “Intuition” with an initial capital letter will be used to denote Kant’s “*Anschauung*.”

<sup>4</sup> Analytical sentences are *formally evaluated as true* on merely conventional grounds as ‘logical’ consequences of arbitrary terminological rules for *words*. In the process of language acquisition, we learn whole systems of such rules schematically or ‘by heart’. This holds for any level, including the level of scientific terminology.

<sup>5</sup> Since the times of British empiricism, there has been a tendency to identify “experience” with “(immediate) perception,” a tendency that leads to deep confusion in traditional epistemology and modern cognitive science. Here, I propose to distinguish experience in this sense from Experience with an initial capital letter. The latter consists with all forms of good judgement (“*bon sense*” or “*Urteilskraft*”) that we need in world-referring judgements and successful joint actions, in the sense of Kant’s (and Hegel’s) *Erfahrung*.

<sup>6</sup> We can comprehend *object-level truth-conditions* only if we already refer to the *particular* constitution of regional domains of discourse *in a larger setting of joint human practice*, as we can see, for example, if we look at the sub-disciplines of mathematics and physics, or biology and history. Therefore, any concrete notion of truth and knowledge (as it is defined and developed by us) is always *limited to a regional domain*. It is limited to a *genos* in Aristotle’s sense, which, as a topic of discourse, is always already situated in a larger, in a sense ‘unlimited’ and ‘holistic’ world.

<sup>7</sup> “Generality” is ambiguous; as a translation of Hegel’s word “*Allgemeinheit*” it could wrongly suggest *universal quantifications* of the form “all x have the property A(x).”

<sup>8</sup> In this sense, statements about frequencies would count as ‘empirical’, but statements about probabilities would not, because they are already generic. For example if we talk about *most* men or cats, we speak in the mode of empirical singularity. If we attach the probability value 1/6 to good dice, we speak generically.

<sup>9</sup> This is not the place to explain the distinction between phenomenological analysis and empirical research in all details. Only this much: In particular empirical investigations and in the conceptual articulation of their results we presuppose a huge amount of generic pre-knowledge. Its status is (relatively) a priori, yet not merely analytic.

<sup>10</sup> See for example R. Tuomela, “Joint Intention, the We-mode and the I-mode,” in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy XXX*, 2006, 35–58; compare also R. Tuomela, *The Importance of Us: A Philosophical Study of Basic Social Notions*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995.

<sup>11</sup> See M. Tomasello, *Origins of Human Communication*, Cambridge/Mass, MIT Press, 2008; M. Tomasello, “Why don’t apes point?,” in eds. N.J. Enfield & S. C. Levinson, *Roots of Human Sociality*, Oxford/New York, Berg, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Both the English word “intuition” and the German word “*Anschauung*” have misleading subjectivist connotations ranging from visual perception, introspection and imagination to mere opinion.

<sup>13</sup> See D. Davidson, “Rational Animals,” in *Dialectica* 36, 1982; D. Davidson, “Three Varieties of Knowledge,” in ed. A. P. Griffiths, *A. J. Ayer Memorial Essays: Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement 30*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991; D. Davidson, *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2001.

<sup>14</sup> See B. Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1985, pp. 129, 143–145 *et passim*.

<sup>15</sup> See G. E. M. Anscombe, “On Brute Facts,” *Analysis* 18, 1958, pp. 69–72.

<sup>16</sup> See D. Davidson, “Thought and Talk,” in ed. S. Guttenplan, *Mind and Language*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 169. We cannot say that we understand a speaker if *most* of what he says is true. Very often, we understand quite well what was said and still we do not believe it. We may think that the speaker erred or lied. It is even possible to say and think that large parts of the set of usual beliefs and common sense are wrong and that a whole tradition of texts and interpretations get certain things wrong.

<sup>17</sup> In his important work *Kategorien des Zeitlichen. Eine Untersuchung der Formen des endlichen Verstandes*, Frankfurt a. M., Suhrkamp, 2005, Sebastian Rödl has shown why, and how, time can be understood as an inner form of Intuition. Compare also my explanation of Kant’s concept of *Anschauung* in *Sinn-Kriterien*, Paderborn, Mentis, 1995, pp. 163–177.

<sup>18</sup> I use the expressions of Tuomela, yet largely disagree with his self-declared “naturalism.”

<sup>19</sup> Even though Martin Heidegger has clearly seen the practical context of our world-relations, including perception, he is much less clear with respect to the structure of what he calls *being-together* (*Mitsein*). He tells a pragmatist story about the unthematic world of instrumental action (*Werkwelt*) and the pragmatic contexts of meaning and reference (*Bedeutungszusammenhang*, *Verweisungszusammenhang*). Yet, no real or possible second person enters his picture as a necessary condition of Intuition. Even if he conveys awareness of this perspectivity (which, of course, implies self-conscious subjectivity), Heidegger does not make clear how it depends on real or possible cooperation with others. The others are at best pictured as co-producers of our tools, as co-consumers of our products and so on, which gives the impression that our relations to other people could be exclusively instrumental.

<sup>20</sup> I wish to thank Heikki Ikäheimo for his valuable suggestions.



**Hegel, Marx, and Beyond:  
Recognition, Spirit, and Species Being**



## Chapter Five

# **Mutual Recognition: Hegel and Beyond**

Ludwig Siep

The concept of mutual recognition plays a considerable role in recent social philosophy.<sup>1</sup> It seems to be a useful tool for addressing some of the problems modern societies with a large plurality of ethnic groups and religions are facing. This is what Charles Taylor suggests in his essay on “multiculturalism and the politics of recognition.” Not only ethnic minorities but also other groups may try to get their share of legal and public recognition by fighting for rights and positions. This fight is in Axel Honneth’s view the “moral grammar of social conflicts.” In a more fundamental way Paul Ricoeur recently conceived his “pathways of recognition” as social conditions not only for self-understanding and identity but also for cognition and fulfilment. In his view the “*théorie de la reconnaissance*” is a theory unifying epistemology, philosophy of mind, ethics and social philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

Ricoeur like Honneth and Taylor bases his theory to a great extent on his reading of Hegel’s theory of recognition. In the first part of my paper I will make a few brief

comments on this reading and on the significance of recognition in Hegel's writings on objective spirit (I). In the second I will sketch what I consider to be the main internal problems of Hegel's theory of recognition within his philosophy in general (II). In the third part I will turn to some problems of recent theories of recognition (III) and in the last part I will try to justify my own position with regard to the role which the concept of recognition can play for contemporary social philosophy (IV).

## I

Hegel's most famous passages on recognition are, as is well-known, the first sections of the chapter on Self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. At least since Kojève, the struggle for life and death and the lordship-bondage relation have been in the focus of interest, especially in the French "blend" of existentialist and Marxist thinking of the Mid-20th century. In the 1960s the Frankfurt-school, beginning with Habermas, developed its own reception and transformation of Hegel's theory of recognition. Habermas and later Honneth turned from the *Phenomenology* to the earlier Jena manuscripts. Especially Honneth understands recognition mainly as a "conflict model" of social relations.<sup>3</sup> Central to his own conception is the struggle between groups for rights and esteem. This focus on the "fight" or struggle for recognition is still visible in Paul Ricoeur's *The Course of Recognition*.<sup>4</sup>

For Hegel, however, recognition is a process or movement (*"Bewegung des Anerkennens"*), in which not only the life-and-death-struggle, but also the other "competitive" moments of recognition are only phases. In the "structural terms" of the introductory passages of the chapter on self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, the essence of the fight is the "negation of otherness." But there is also the other necessary element, the transcending of self or the "losing itself in the other" and "finding itself as another being."<sup>5</sup> This is the factor of love to which a series of phenomena correspond—from the love between man and wife to the ethical and religious "sense of community" with one another and with the community's infinite spirit.

The whole movement has to fulfil a structure which Hegel develops in the introductory passage of section A. of the Self-Consciousness chapter.<sup>6</sup> Here the movement of recognition is characterised as the unfolding of the concept of the "spiritual unity" or the "essence" of the self-consciousness. This "infinite"

unity is a unity of its own “duplication” into opposing but at the same time self-negating forms of self-consciousness.<sup>7</sup>

The phenomena which correspond to this “movement” or “concept” of recognition encompass many phases before and after the struggle for recognition. In the Jena writings preceding the *Phenomenology*, they start with love and end with ethical life within a state. In the *Phenomenology*, the fulfilment of the structure is marked by both the reconciliation of conscience and ethical life in the chapter on morality and the highest form of Christian religion, the “realm of spirit” in the protestant community. Although in the *Philosophy of Right* the concept of “recognition” plays a less prominent role, it is still a condition of individual freedom and the rationality of public institutions.<sup>8</sup> But it may be argued that the relation between individual and state as well as that between groups in the Berlin Hegel do not completely correspond to the formal structure of mutual recognition depicted in the *Phenomenology*.

## II

The reason for this deficiency is an internal problem of Hegel’s concept of recognition in general, namely a tension between the symmetrical structure and the asymmetry of the claims and institutions which fulfil or realise it. In several passages of his Jena writings Hegel indicates that mutual recognition is a symmetrical relation—both regarding the “love” and the “fight” moments or the affirmation of the other and its negation. In his Jena philosophy of spirit of 1805/06 he even speaks of a sort of self-renunciation or “offering” of the realised spirit or the state in relation to its citizens.<sup>9</sup> And in the chapter on morality in the *Phenomenology* Hegel characterises the reconciliation between the individual conscience, even the erring one, and the moral community as a completely symmetrical self-renunciation on both sides. This is the fulfilment of recognition which is itself absolute spirit. Here I would like to reaffirm an earlier thesis,<sup>10</sup> questioned for instance by Robert Williams,<sup>11</sup> namely that in the legal, moral and ethical differentiation of recognition Hegel finally fails to correspond to this symmetrical structure of mutual recognition. The existence, the strength, the international position of a nation state becomes an end in itself and that state gains a “godlike” absolute value and right in Hegel’s philosophy of state from his late Jena years onwards.

Of course, one may object that the relation between the individual right of a citizen and the authority and existence of a state may never become completely symmetrical. Consider the recent problems concerning the taking of hostages: If states were legally bound to save the lives of hostages in each incidence, very small groups of violent people could dictate the state's political decision and its authority would break down pretty soon. This would deprive the remaining citizens, especially future citizens, of the protection from violence which they have a right to. Even Paul Ricoeur approves the necessary asymmetry in questions of authority, not only that of the central state.<sup>12</sup>

Hegel's own examples are mainly taken from states of emergency—especially the state of war. In those cases states may dispose of the property and even the lives of their citizens by drafting them into the army. However, it can be doubted that Hegel regards the possible conflicts of rights between citizens and states only in this perspective. For him, these cases only manifest that in general the state is a higher entity than the individual citizen and that its main aim is to secure and strengthen its role in history. Its self-purpose is analogous to the church's<sup>13</sup> incorporating God's existence on earth, and the modern state inherits the role of kingdoms to gain and exhibit glory and majesty. This becomes clear in passages like that in § 323 of the *Philosophy of Right* where Hegel states that “the substance of the state—that is its absolute power against everything individual and particular, against life, property, and their rights, even against societies and associations—makes the nullity of these finite things an accomplished fact and brings it home to consciousness.”<sup>14</sup>

The reasons for Hegel's ultimate “substantialisation” of the state as an infinite, absolute being in the world cannot be discussed here. But the relation between the infinite substance of the state and finite individual life and rights is certainly asymmetrical not simply in the sense necessary for every modern constitutional state. Hegel understands the state's protection of individual rights as directed against other individuals and groups—not against the abuse of state power in the first place (“*Abwehrrechte*”). And this does not seem consistent with reciprocal recognition as exhibited in passages where Hegel discusses the mutual self-negation of individual and community.

The solution to this problem seems to be that mutual recognition in a symmetrical way cannot be completed or fulfilled within objective spirit.

As the *Phenomenology* exhibits, the reconciliation between individual self-consciousness as conscience (*Gewissen*) and the moral community is absolute spirit. The highest practical form of absolute spirit is the religious community in the form of enlightened Protestantism.<sup>15</sup> The recognition that even an error of consciousness or a deviant “conscientious actor” (*Gewissenstäter*) belongs to the common spirit cannot be realised in legal relations within a state.<sup>16</sup>

But the realm of Protestant religious life is not something beyond objective spirit. As Hegel resumes in the 1830 *Encyclopedia* (§552), the “holiness” of life in the Protestant sense is the virtuous secular life in the family, civil society and state. In what sense then would the moral community acknowledge the “innovations” of an individual conscience as belonging to the community’s own spirit if not as some innovation in its ethical functions and roles—for instance regarding professional ethics?

However, this seems to contradict Hegel’s concept of the good action according to the “idea of the good” in the *Science of Logic*.<sup>17</sup> Here as in other cases Hegel criticises the view of right or good action as the realisation of a purpose being within the soul before its “transposition” into an external world—the Aristotelian *techné* model but also the Kantian and Fichtean concepts of realising ideas or rational norms. Against those models Hegel argues that the forms of the good are self-realising and that individual action only manifests the hidden rational structure of the world, be it the natural, social or cultural world.

The consequences for Hegel’s philosophy of state can be seen for instance in the prominent role of the estate of universality, the state officials with their scientific and philosophical education. Compared with the impact of their rational will, that of the other members of society is not that of equal political participation. The function of delegations in the assembly of estates is only that of a completion by some competences and experiences which the “first estate” is lacking. It is hard to identify in Hegel the institution or form of ethical life which could mediate between the “holiness” of the state on the one hand and its protection of rights against its own power and the acknowledgement of innovative contributions to the forms of public life on the other. But this seems to be required by the “symmetrical” structure of mutual recognition.

### III

In this section I will turn to some recent attempts to transform Hegel's concept of recognition into a criterion of modern social philosophy. In the first section (A) I deal with attempts to draw on the theory of mutual recognition as a source of a social ontology. Here recognition is understood as constitutive of cultural and spiritual life, especially in its modern form. Whereas in these positions the normative force of the concept is rather implicit, another direction of the "recognition-reception" uses a transformed concept of recognition as a criterion of ethics and normative social philosophy (B).

A. There is no doubt that for Hegel the reality of the social world as "objective spirit" is not to be derived from or secondary to the reality of nature understood as material objects or processes governed by natural laws. Instead, spirit is more real than nature, and nature's own "reality" is only a process of exhibiting pre-stages to spiritual relations and determined to be understood in human knowledge. The process of recognition, as Hegel develops it in the *Encyclopedia Phenomenology*, is the constitutive process for reaching the unity of a common and "universal self-consciousness" (§ 436 ff.) in which everyone knows the other to participate in a common rationality ("reason").

The interpretation and transformation of this idea of mutual recognition as the constitutive process of the very reality of society and social life is at the core of the recent work of Robert Brandom, Robert Pippin and Terry Pinkard.<sup>18</sup>

(1) According to Brandom, Pippin, and Pinkard, the essential "message" of Hegel's theory of recognition is the equioriginality and, as it were the "self-construction" of social life and individual consciousness. Neither of these can be explained in terms of natural properties of the "social creature" or in terms of an act of conscious creation of community through a contract between autonomous individuals. Thus, a theory of human communities can neither be naturalistic, nor can it be based on a form of "methodological individualism." "A rational agent is not to be analysed in terms of properties and inherent capacities but as itself a kind of collective social construct, an achieved state."<sup>19</sup>

Robert Brandom has given the profoundest analysis of the emergence of a community of self-conscious agents and has repeatedly drawn parallels to

Hegel's analysis of recognition in the *Phenomenology*. In his essay "The Structure of Desire and Recognition: Self-Consciousness and Self-Constitution," he interprets Hegel's transition from desire to recognition as an analysis of the relational structure between desiring and need satisfying creatures on the one hand, and self-conscious human beings on the other. "Desiring" creatures stand in a threefold relation of desire, significance and practical response to their objects. It is through their desires (for food, nesting sites and so on) that they attribute to their objects a specific significance and that they categorise them as useful or "interesting" (and also as dangerous) or irrelevant objects. Through their behaviour they, in a way, "test" their desires and confirm or falsify them. In doing so, they align their desires as well as their reaction with the respective attitudes of conspecifics which they can adapt or imitate.

Now, creatures capable of self-consciousness are, on the one hand, able to take a distanced view towards desiring creatures. They can take a stance about those creatures' desires and reactions without having to share them or take them on. They can treat those attitudes as "theses" or hypotheses. Furthermore, they can treat (or at least implicitly "take") conspecifics as beings who themselves form such hypotheses in their behaviour.<sup>20</sup> The way such beings behave towards the significance they attach to things and their own actions is characterised by a particular structure of symbolicity and "publicity": They thereby make "normative" claims about correctness to which they commit themselves in view of others. Nowadays, this ambition to do what is important and correct for the group can possibly also be attested empirically by comparative primate research: Only human beings try to "tutor" and coach one another.<sup>21</sup>

But the actual attainment of self-consciousness requires a further step, and this is where mutual recognition comes into play. Human beings in particular have the primary desire to belong with their conspecifics and group. For this it is necessary that they recognise each other. More exactly, they have to recognise (in their behaviour and their cognitive acts) the "authority" of the other to confer significance as "normative", that is as commendable for others. "[A subject] is to be able to take a normative stand on things, to commit oneself, undertake responsibilities, exercise authority, assess correctness."<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, they have to be recognised (practically and theoretically) by the

other as themselves having such authority. This attempt is successful if another being capable of recognition reciprocates my demand to be recognised and thereby practically recognises me. It has to confirm in its behaviour that it accepts what is essential to me, namely being a subject of (and being committed to) ways of acting that express what is correct for everyone. According to Brandom, this also includes the acknowledgment of the respective (that is mine and the other's) conception of all other recognisers or the stance of "acknowledging the authority of their acknowledgings of authority."<sup>23</sup> This can apparently be meant only hypothetically, for one might as well not take over the criteria of inclusion and exclusion of all others within a group.

By means of such mutual recognition of the capacity to determine in thought and action what is important and correct for human beings, to adhere to it and—at least on a higher stage of cultural development—to justify it to others with reasons, there emerges a social community of self-conscious beings. For Hegel, however, a different kind of normativity is in play from the start: the normativity of "historical" experiences understood as a series of "revolutions" regarding claims about how consciousness understands reality and how a self-conscious being is to understand itself.<sup>24</sup> Its first phase leads from the aspiration to pursue the normative self-conception of one's "honor" without regard to one's own life and the claims of others to the experience that the actual spiritual "identity" of all lies in the affiliation to a judicial community.<sup>25</sup> The mutual "wanting to belong together" and the aspirations to establish rudimentary "norms" (as rule-like theses about correct behavior) do certainly not suffice for the experiences that all have the same claims to autonomous action, that is, to the choice of their own aims within a free space that is mutually granted.

A step further in this direction of understanding recognition as basis of a particular historical form of a community of self-conscious beings is the analysis of Terry Pinkard.

Following Hegel's passage in the *Phenomenology* from life to mutual recognition Pinkard claims that human life is "norms all the way down."<sup>26</sup> Even the simplest ways of guiding oneself through life and fulfilling the demands of our organic nature is concerned with the question "how it is appropriate to treat things."<sup>27</sup> This implies a self-understanding as acting rightly and in general as acting like a human being. But as a social animal these concepts will be disputed by fellow beings: "The demand for recognition is thus a demand

that the other agent attribute a certain normative status to oneself—that one be recognised as ‘getting it right’ by the other.”<sup>28</sup> But of course this demand has no authority as long as the concept of “being human” is expressed just from particular points of view. The first step to an “objective” understanding of the rules of human life is the process of mutually attributing to “the other the authority to confer such normative status”—namely to have “the authority to determine what it means to be human.”<sup>29</sup> But the dispute over the right rules for human life cannot be settled without some objective instance of “reasons that are valid for all agents”<sup>30</sup>—and this conception is that of Hegel’s “Reason” in the *Phenomenology*.

In Pinkard’s view Hegel understands reason neither as a formal (the concept of “there being a non-perspectival view” of what it means to be human) nor as a substantial metaphysical concept. Rather it is “something that is itself *achieved* in a social process, something which we *have become* committed rather than something to which we have always been committed.”<sup>31</sup> This becoming is presented in the *Phenomenology* as a process of failures of conceptions of “being human” and acting according to reason. Even the “practices of giving and asking for reasons” are the outcome of a reversal of the medieval conception of reason and truth explicable by unquestionable authorities. In the modern conception, reason is both the “social practice of giving and asking for reasons” and the capacity “of evaluating the positive assertions of a way of life against a notion of truth.”<sup>32</sup> The social practices, norms and institutions are “defeasible,” their claim to validity may fail. This is the negativity of reason which constantly questions its own achievements.

But the idea of truth and valid human norms cannot remain, in Hegel’s and Pinkard’s views, a mere ideal or negative criterion, “relativising” every institution and social consensus. The question “which ways of life are worthy of allegiance”<sup>33</sup> must be have some rational answer, because otherwise the delicate balance of being subjective or posited and objectively binding us even against our interests and convictions would fail. This requires, in Pinkard’s view, a narrative, a “story of reason itself.”<sup>34</sup> It must be “existential” and “rational” at the same time. Rational by telling the reasons why people “could no longer live as being those determinate people,” and existential by telling “why certain forms of life came to seem inescapable to them, to be matters not of choice but of destiny.”<sup>35</sup> The crucial experience of the modern way of

life is that of freedom and in this light the institutions and ways of life which Hegel develops in his *Philosophy of Right* can be proved as “mediating conditions” for mutual recognition and the “socially mediated ability to reason without there being any substantive principles of reason.”<sup>36</sup>

Although I agree with Pinkard that this is the theory of justification of modern institutions and ways of life which we should adopt, I doubt that this is what Hegel himself has in mind.<sup>37</sup> The analogy between the philosophy of spirit and a “pre-evolutionary” system of nature, as well as the justification of the philosophy of spirit by the *Science of Logic* proves that Hegel holds a much stronger conception of reason and spirit. Even if the *Logic* leaves room for further semantic differentiation and “enrichment,” it seems hardly an appropriate tool for reconstructing and justifying an open process of “existential” (however communal) discoveries of values and ways of life. For Hegel, the processes and achievements within nature, logic and history seem to have a sort of teleological structure,<sup>38</sup> not in the traditional metaphysical sense, but certainly not in the sense of an open process either—a process which can only be justified by the failure of precedent forms and the attractive and binding force of discovering new social forms of life.

Pinkard’s understanding of recognition as a condition of freedom in the sense of a historical and social achievement is shared by Robert Pippin who has elaborated this conception in his recent book on *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy*.<sup>39</sup> For Pippin, the very concept of a rational and free agent is “not to be analysed in terms of properties and inherent capacities but as itself a kind of collective social construct, an achieved state.”<sup>40</sup> One is a rational agent “in being recognised, responded to as, an agent; one can be so recognised if the justifying norms appealed to in the practice of treating each other as agents can actually function within that community as justifying, can be offered and accepted (recognised) as justifying.”<sup>41</sup> Like Pinkard, however, Pippin is aware that something more is needed for a justification of norms as a condition of freedom—not only social acceptance but “truth.”

Similar to Pinkard’s solution Pippin claims for a “narrative” similar to the *Phenomenology of Mind* but without a claim to teleological necessity. However, the story must claim to be told without alternatives: “Such a narrative can certainly do more than tell one of many possible stories about such developments.”<sup>42</sup> This claim to having no rational alternatives seems to be based on

the perspective of “how we got to be who we are” and the irresistible “grip” of the “essential features of modern moral and ethical and political identity.”<sup>43</sup> Pippin rejects teleology in an Aristotelian sense of anthropological capacities which can be fulfilled under modern conditions. There is more to “modern” freedom than just activating ones psychical potential under favourable social conditions. He also refutes all suggestions of an eternal concept of reason realising itself in history by inner differentiation and self-reflection. This is excluded by the creative force of spirit “producing” itself. But at the same time he denies all “post-Foucauldian” narratives of sheer contingency in the change of forms of social life. On the contrary, he holds that we cannot give up on the idea of freedom as “the aspiration to lead a life of one’s own in common with others, in the social and material conditions under which such equal dignity is actually possible.”<sup>44</sup>

Instead of a “continuation of Hegel’s project,”<sup>45</sup> this history of failures of life forms and the discovery of irreversible achievements binding any ongoing process of “reason giving” to values of human dignity, free agency and its required common institutions, seems to be rather a transformation of Hegel’s “phenomenological” concept of the “experience of consciousness.” It has to get rid of the metaphysical concepts of necessity and teleology, of “complete” understanding of nature, history, religion and so on, which Hegel himself transforms but reconstructs at the same time.<sup>46</sup> Such a conception has to give way for a much more evolutionary and contingent concept of development, without renouncing the irresistible and irreversible experiences at the basis of the modern concept of freedom spelled out in institutions like human rights, division of power, democratic participation and so on.

In some respects, however, one might even support Hegelian “necessities” over against accidental and creative processes of social “self-definitions”: there seem to be aspects of social reason giving and consensus formation which are constrained by “natural” conditions and therefore beyond creative reinterpretations—namely the laws and processes of nature still beyond human control and the physical and physiological conditions of human nature. That “objective spirit” is bound to human needs and natural resources, as Hegel accepts for instance in § 483 of the *Encyclopedia* (1830), is true even if the technical centuries have enlarged that control to a great extent. The way in which nowadays “nature reacts” to human interference seems to prove

that the limits and conditions in which every human way of life and reason giving take place are not at the complete disposition of human freedom. Natural history and the history of science and technology have quite another structure than the history of collective experiences with norms and ways of life.

A more general question regards the pragmatist (or Neopragmatist) interpretation of mutual recognition and its consequence for conceptual determination and the justification of norms in general. Hegel's discussion in the "Self-consciousness" chapter of the *Phenomenology* is but one step to his general thesis about the conceptual structure of reality. For Robert Brandom, the transition from "Consciousness" to "Self-Consciousness" proves that "one cannot understand the relations of *objective* incompatibility that articulate the conceptual relational structure in virtue of which the world is *determinate*, unless one understands the *processes* and *practices* constituting the acknowledgement of the *subjective* incompatibility of *commitments* that are thereby treated as representations of such a world."<sup>47</sup> But for Hegel this is only a one-sided ("abstract") truth. At the end of the whole series of experiences of the *Phenomenology* and throughout the *Science of Logic* true ("absolute") knowledge requires following ("*Sich-versenken*") the differentiation of the semantic content of concepts (or in view of the holistic structure of "the concept"). This "self-movement" of the concept structures every field of reality (nature, society, history). The institutions (for instance the division of power) and the norms of a rational society have to meet this structure, even if they (and their conceptual background) can be discovered only in a collective historical process. In this respect, Hegel, I am afraid, is more of a dynamic Platonist than a pragmatist.

B. The other trend of transforming Hegel's concept of recognition in modern philosophy uses this concept as an outright normative criterion for moral and legal action and social as well as political institutions. I will confine myself to three positions, namely those of Axel Honneth (1), Charles Taylor (2), and Paul Ricoeur (3).

(1) In his 1992 book on the *Struggle for Recognition* Honneth suggests three forms of recognition necessary for the social integration of individuals and groups into a non-oppressive form of society: love, right or rational legal relations, and solidarity. They roughly correspond to the main levels of Hegel's

ethical life: family, civil society, and state. To be sure, in a modern society the necessary emotional trust and support to be gained in a “primary social group” cannot be limited to the traditional family of heterosexual parents united by marriage. Independent of the institutional forms and the relation of the sexes, the emotions and “non-contractual obligations” in a protective group of friends or relatives are necessary for every successful process of socialisation. This group must be stable enough to generate trust and self-confidence.

The second necessary element of recognition, the legal relation between equal partners, is not limited to individuals but includes the relation between groups. Honneth emphasises the latter even more than the former. The reason for this emphasis is the view that the history of modern law in its different “generations”—namely protective rights, participatory rights, social rights and recently environmental rights—is the result of fights of formerly excluded groups for their inclusion and full legal standing. However, this struggle for recognition is not simply a question of group action because the feeling of being excluded and hurt in one’s self-estimation always begins with individuals.

The position to take part in legal procedures and to participate in elections and political processes is independent of merits and achievements. But the mutual recognition of the significance of activities and competences for the common practice in the light of shared values is equally necessary for self-worth.<sup>48</sup> Although this kind of recognition is directed at the particular individual, it is normally connected with the standing and reputation of a group as well—be it a profession, a religious community or an ethnic group within a pluralist society. Here Honneth touches on a subject of crucial significance in the modern discussion of mutual recognition. However, his primary concern is the conditions of individual self-worth which is bound to the feeling of being a member of a group recognised as a relevant part of society and contributing valuable performances to the common good.

Several problems of this concept have been discussed for the past 15 years. One of them is the relation between the communicative structures of a society and its basic economical organisation. Habermas was already criticised for the separation between labour and interaction. However, Honneth might answer that the economic structure is an object of fights for recognition as any

other part of the social structure shaped by public law. Today, the struggle for minimal wages and for global social standards regarding labour conditions and health insurances might be a part of that struggle.<sup>49</sup> In addition, it seems to be true that in most countries this struggle does not seem to touch the basic structure of free markets any more. This corresponds to Hegel's stance that markets are not only more productive than planned economies but also necessary conditions for the free choice of jobs and professions and therefore for the development of the faculties and life-plans of particular individuals.<sup>50</sup>

However, there is another, more problematic presupposition regarding the socio-economical organisation which Honneth seems to share with Hegel. For Hegel the recognition of the professional estates and their members is facilitated by the fact that the three main estates of civil society—the agrarian estate, trade and civil service—are necessary for the existence and maintenance of every society. This assumption seems very problematic today. Not only is the global market flexible in the sense that new professions and trades may be generated almost every day. Some of the most traditional like coal-mining or even agriculture may be given up in a country simply because the global-market provides these goods at much lesser costs than the national one. To be dependent in one's self-worth on the reputation of a profession as necessary for the existence of society is a rather shaky basis of recognition for a great part of the population.

There is another requirement which is hard to meet in modern societies. Solidarity in Honneth's terms is the mutual recognition of individuals and their group's contribution to the common practice in the light of shared values. This seems to presuppose a view of society as a common enterprise with a common product—a "work of all" (*Werk aller*) as Hegel calls it. This view has been very controversial in recent societies and social philosophy, as is demonstrated by the discussion of communitarianism, or even Rawls' liberal theory of social cooperation. If "shared values" are more than basic liberties and constitutional rights of modern pluralist societies, it is hard to find this common ground even in the form of an overlapping consensus.<sup>51</sup> Yet, for the contribution of groups and individuals to be regarded as valuable and therefore as a sufficient basis of individual and common "pride" the extent of such a consensus needs to be rather large.

Thus given the openness, flexibility and pluralistic structure of modern economies and societies it seems difficult to conceive a concept of recognition which contains a specific number of social or socio-psychological relations. Today, we can hardly base such a set of relations on something like a Hegelian concept of objective spirit and its logical structure which could guarantee the form, the number and the completeness of such relations.<sup>52</sup>

(2) Compared with Honneth's suggestion, Charles Taylor's concept of recognition between groups and between groups and individuals seems less substantial and more pluralist. Taylor realises a tension between two of the requirements for the formation of a stable personality, namely the respect for universal individual rights and the support of the cultural traditions of groups. As for Honneth, the membership or the sense of belonging to such a group is a necessary condition for an individual character and socio-psychological "identity." However, individuals may lack basic rights within their cultural groups. Or else they are not able to carry them out because they lack the ability of, for instance, reading and writing.

For Taylor, the solution to this problem seems to lie within the political and legal prudence of modern democracies with a legal system based on human rights. Such policies and legal procedures are able to balance "certain forms of uniform treatment" against the "importance of cultural survival."<sup>53</sup> The protection of this survival by a "politics of difference"<sup>54</sup> may restrict some of the individual rights of the members of those cultural groups, for instance the rights to learn and speak certain languages, the autonomy of parents to choose their children's school and so on. But these restrictions have strict limits. The basic protective rights to individual liberty, as for instance those of "habeas corpus" must not be jeopardised.

In Taylor's view, this process of balancing between universal individual rights and the survival of cultures which is also necessary for the identity and self-esteem of their members, cannot be secured in "procedural models of liberalism."<sup>55</sup> This "form of liberalism" is confined to legal procedures for the realisation of individual rights and claims—a form which communitarianism has always criticised as insufficient for modern republicanism. Instead, the form of liberalism which Taylor argues for is characterised by public debates about the "good life" for individuals and communities.<sup>56</sup> Only in this way the balancing between individual rights and the fair treatment of cultural and

ethnic groups, especially minorities, can be backed in a democratic manner. The general concept of a good public life has to be that of a mutually enriching diversity, like that of a chorus or orchestra. For Taylor, Herder developed such a conception from Christian sources.<sup>57</sup>

There are both theoretical and practical problems with Taylor's conception of a politics of multicultural recognition. The practical problems concern, of course, the boundary to be drawn between the requirements for the flourishing of cultural groups and the autonomous rights of their members and those of other groups. Is it, for instance, compatible with universal individual rights to reserve the right to buy land to certain ethnic groups? How many advantages can be granted to religious communities of a certain size and tradition within a country's history? To what degree are traditional roles and customs (including clothes) compatible with individual autonomy? Is it possible to leave these questions to the everyday public political debate or is it necessary to reach a basic "overlapping consensus" regarding the weight of public and private goods and rights?

The basic theoretical question seems to be whether the good of cultural diversity follows from the concept of recognition or has to be justified independently. In view of the history of philosophy it has to be realised that none of the classic philosophies of mutual recognition in the late 18th and early 19th century had a positive concept of cultural diversity.<sup>58</sup> Fichte and Hegel conceived a philosophy of history and of religion according to which the Western and Middle European nations, their cultures, constitutions and religions represented the highest stages of cultural development. Within Christianity, Catholicism belonged to the medieval past and only Protestantism represented the true and "absolute" religion. The nations, races, and religions of whole continents like Asia and Africa belonged to past stages of history. Immigrants from these regions could be accepted as members of civil society, but had no right to active citizenship and political participation. Among Europeans big differences between members of the two sexes were justified. In consequence, there is not even a complete equality of individual right, much less of cultural groups in the works of the "fathers of the theory of recognition."

Today, such differences between groups and their members are certainly overcome in the theory of recognition. But it is not at all clear whether the

value or good of a diversity of cultures in the world and within a particular society follows from the concept of recognition. To recognise means to acknowledge, respect, and appreciate what is there. But does it imply the intrinsic value of a diversity of individuals, groups, cultures, races or species? It seems that the recognition of claims, rights, or achievements and so on presupposes a *plurality* of subjects or bearers of such claims—but not necessarily a *diversity* of them. I will come back to this question at the end of my paper.

(3) The last modern philosopher that I will discuss here who has developed his own concept of recognition with regard to Hegel's theory is Paul Ricoeur. However, his concept of "*reconnaissance*" is much more comprehensive than the German "*Anerkennung*." It includes the meanings of "recognise" in the sense of "identify" and memorise, especially in relation to one's own conscious life and person. Thus Ricoeur discusses in his book about the "paths" or "courses of recognition" the development of epistemology from Descartes to Husserl and Bergson as well as the history of agency from the Greek tragedy to modern, especially Anglo-Saxon social philosophy. But in his third path of recognition<sup>59</sup> he treats Hegel's concept as the "peak" of the theory of social recognition between individuals and groups.

In my view, Ricoeur largely reduces Hegel's concept of the "movement of recognition" to one stage of this movement, the fight for recognition. However, he includes in the concept of fighting for recognition many modern conceptions of competition or strife for scarce goods, positions and rights. He follows Michael Walzer's concept of a variety of social spheres, where goods and positions are distributed according to criteria of competence, capabilities, performances and so on. But behind the competition to gain the goods to be distributed in those spheres is the desire for recognition.

Ricoeur criticises Hegel's conception of recognition as "fight" or "competition" because of its apparent endlessness and lack of fulfilment. Competition always needs scarce goods and rivals. And every goal achieved opens new horizons for competition. Even the world-leaders in politics, art, sports or business can still compare their achievements with historical predecessors and possible followers. Therefore anyone of them tries to "make history" or set a record "for eternity." Fulfilment of recognition can only be attained by another, non-competitive form of exchange. This form contains itself a variety

of modifications. Ricoeur calls them “states of peace.” They interrupt the eternal competition and they are anticipations of the final aim of recognition. Ricoeur mentions several forms of non-instrumental donations, relations of forgiveness and reconciliation, generosity and gratitude, celebrations and rituals of play, both in public and in private spheres, for instance erotic relations.

I cannot go into the details of Ricoeur’s phenomenology of forms of recognition here. In the phenomenological tradition of Husserl and Levinas he is especially interested in the symmetrical and asymmetrical relations between Ego and Alter in these forms. Regarding epistemic relations the “privileged access” to one’s own mental states is as undeniable as is the priority of the other in ethical relations.

As to Ricoeur’s critique of Hegel’s concept of recognition, the reduction of the complete movement of recognition to the fight leads him to overlook the affinity between his own concepts of peaceful relations of recognition and Hegel’s higher forms of love and reconciliation. Especially the moral and religious forms of reconciliation between the absolute particularity of conscience and the spirit of the moral and religious community in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* are much closer to Ricoeur than he seems to realise. However, the consequences of the concept of recognition as reconciliation for Hegel’s philosophy of objective spirit remain problematic, as we have seen above. There is no full recognition between the individual and the state and the recognition of the “creative” role of conscience seems to be very limited in the realm of public institutions.

Ricoeur’s own conception of “paths” of recognition is open to critical questions as well. Similar to Hegel’s case, the forms of peaceful recognition seem to belong rather to the private sphere of love and friendship and to a sphere above the legal, economical and political relations of modern societies. Ricoeur, to be sure, does not seem to agree to such a separation since he considers at least some acts of repentance and forgiveness as belonging to the sphere of politics. However, the relation between competitive and peaceful forms of recognition remains unclear in his conception. On the one hand, he considers peaceful relations of recognition as “interruptions,” even “cease-fires” in the ongoing perpetual strife for recognition. Even if these interruptions contain an anticipation of fulfilment, without which the fight would remain basically egoistic and without the justification of a universally valuable

and ethically acceptable goal, this conception of “Sundays” between working-days remains unsatisfying.

Ricoeur like Hegel might claim that these two forms of recognition are components of a system of social relations, forms of behaviour and an “organism” of institutions. However, it is hard to understand precisely the way in which these components are connected or related in different forms of recognition. Different from Hegel, for whom legal relations contain elements of love and fight for instance (or in more abstract terms, negation implies position and synthesis), in Ricoeur’s conception they seem rather mutually exclusive. The metaphors of interruption, “clearing” and so on hardly allow for a synthesis of the two components. At best they may be complementary in the way in which ethnologists and economists regard forms of market or profit exchange to be balanced or completed by forms of an economy of donation.

Another difficulty which Ricoeur shares with Honneth and Taylor concerns the question of completeness or necessity of the forms of recognition which he discusses. Without the conceptual framework of a logic of self-referring negation and of the mutual implication between universality, particularity and singularity it is hard to see how one could claim the necessity of just those forms of recognition. It is, of course, possible that none of the three philosophers would claim completeness and necessity for the forms of recognition proposed. But then fight and peace like love, right and solidarity are just common traits of a variety of social phenomena which might be ordered in a different way and which may be open to new forms of mutual recognition—for instance in new relations between partners of a different or the same sex.

This raises the question on which conceptual and methodological level the concept of recognition is situated in these philosophies. Is it an empirical concept in the sense of a common trait of social phenomena, is it a norm generated by human valuations or evaluative experiences, or is it a hermeneutical hypothesis for understanding the development, the order and the acceptance of historical social institutions? For Hegel, recognition is all this, because he understands the history of ethical life as a teleological process in which the inner goal of social relations is gradually developed and transparent. But without such a teleological conception it is much more difficult to clarify the role of the concept in social and historical explanation and in the normative application of a criterion for good or flourishing social relations.

## IV

What is the importance of the concept of recognition for contemporary ethics, social and political philosophy? Despite all the useful work which has been done during the last decades concerning this concept today I am rather more sceptical that mutual recognition could be the central and sufficient principle of practical philosophy, which is what I suggested in my book published in 1979.<sup>60</sup> I see at least three problems in ethics and social philosophy which cannot be sufficiently treated by a theory of recognition, understood as a normative criterion, not only as a (“quasi-transcendental”) condition for a community of self-conscious individuals committed to justify their actions. The first is the question of distributive justice (1), the second the ideal of a well-ordered pluralistic society (2), and the third the relation between mankind and nature, including both the inner or corporeal nature and the external natural world as well (3).

(1) It may be argued that mutual recognition understood as a symmetrical relation between subjects respecting their mutual claims in a system of legal equality contains the basic aspects of equality and fairness. Regarding distributive justice concerning social goods and positions, however, mutual recognition seems to be an insufficient criterion at least in two respects.<sup>61</sup> The first relates to the inner properties of the goods to be distributed, the second to the process of their evaluation in a community.

The *first* aspect has been made clear by Michael Walzer in his “Spheres of justice”: The species and the properties of goods to be distributed, be it security, citizenship, positions in the spheres of science, politics, or economics, provide at least to some extent the criteria for the recognition of claims to a fair share.<sup>62</sup> The *second* aspect relates to the “subjective” or evaluative quality of the goods to be distributed. Just distribution even in the form of a fair access to goods requires a common evaluation of them. The value of health, of education, of public goods and conditions for common enterprises in societies or states depends on shared experiences with these goods. To be sure, the structure of these experiences contains elements of recognition, namely the affirmation of others’ joys and sufferings. But I doubt that “sharing” can be completely analysed in terms of mutual affirmation or contestation, not even by the transcending of one’s limits characteristic of Hegel’s concept of love and unification. It contains more immediate forms of common feelings and

emotions, for instance outrage or enthusiasm in a public demonstration. Explicit communication, reflection and discussion may arrive only on higher levels of articulation.

Thus neither the content of the values shared (like health or aesthetic pleasure) nor the common experience regarding them may be reduced to or derived from relations of recognition between individuals or groups. Such experiences are an important justification for common values and rights, including human dignity and its legal specification. This raises doubts whether mutual recognition is a sufficient principle for practical philosophy.

(2) As to the second limit of the concept of recognition, I have used John Rawls' idea of a well-ordered society. However, this idea should not be restricted to individual rights and the distribution of positions and primary goods. Public goods and common valuations have to be included if the problem of mutual recognition between cultural, religious and ethnic groups in a pluralistic society is to be treated adequately. The necessary overlapping consensus between such groups requires a framework of what is good for a well-ordered society. Its most basic components are the well-being and freedom of the individual and the diversity of cultures. Both components do require a scale of forms of recognition from toleration to mutual enrichment.<sup>63</sup> But this must rest on a consensus on the value and weight of particular goods of common life.

For instance, the importance of the public sphere over against private enterprises or group interests has to be agreed on. Another example is the importance of religious rituals like the ringing of bells, the height of towers and minarets, the wearing of religious and traditional clothing in public office and so on. It is not enough to protect the individual freedom to practice one's religion. There is a common space shared by individuals and groups requiring some consensus on the importance and weight of the goods to be realised in that space.

Since many of these goods and their weight depend on traditions and historical experiences, the relation between the cultural memory of those groups and society in general must rest on a common understanding. Groups with completely different interpretations of history, especially the history of the relations between groups living together in a state or federation, are not likely to recognise each other in any positive way. But again, such a common

understanding presupposes a shared view of values, goods and historical experiences. Two converging ways to a common idea of a well-ordered “cultural cosmos” have to be pursued: one way starts with mutual respect regarding the other group’s experiences and reaches a consensus on goods and values—at least an overlapping consensus, but hopefully increasingly a consensus on conceptions of justice, well-being, generosity, courage and so on which allow for different cultural variations. The other way proceeds from shared value-experiences, for instance those concerning religious freedom, to the mutual respect for the differing interpretations and perspectives of the other individual or group. In both processes mutual recognition of the value experiences and interpretations is required. Yet, the forms of mutual respect and recognition itself depend on the value experiences which cannot be derived from these forms themselves.

(3) Something similar, but on a still larger scale seems necessary for the third problem. It concerns the relation of mankind to nature, the physical constitution of human beings as well as the nature they live in. I understand “nature” roughly in the sense of what is neither made nor completely controlled by human will and action. Modern biotechnology and medicine has dramatically increased human competence to control, change and replace natural beings and natural processes. For ethics and social philosophy the question of the good or permissible aims for these competences has become ever more urgent. In medical ethics the question of therapy versus enhancement or even the transhumanist perfection of the human body has been one of the most controversial in the last decades. In other fields of bioethics the controversy is over the use of cloning techniques, genetic engineering, nanotechnology, synthetic biology and so on. These techniques are aimed at getting rid of the contingencies of natural processes, especially in the realm of reproduction, growth and regeneration.

In my view, mutual recognition has some importance for these debates but is not a sufficient criterion. Regarding enhancement, mutual recognition comes into play in two respects. One concerns the relation between parents and offspring. The selection or predetermination of genetic properties of a child may reduce its autonomy in such a way that the symmetry and reciprocity characteristic of mutual recognition is undermined. The other aspect concerns the relation between individuals or groups with considerably changed bodies.

Human beings with greatly different capacities to perceive, think and act may lose the ability to communicate on an equal level and to respect each other.

Mutual recognition is also relevant to the relation between humans and animals. The question whether and which kinds of animals have “moral status” or claims to be respected or recognised by human beings is crucial to bioethics. Of course, this form of recognition cannot be symmetrical, since animals have no capacities to act responsibly and to fulfil duties. Therefore the question about the degree of respect owed to animals does not depend on the “inner logic” of recognition, but on the characteristics of animal constitution and capacities.

Even in a more fundamental sense recognition may be considered an important concept for bioethics: namely regarding the question whether and to what degree human beings should respect and preserve a basic form of independence of natural processes from human control. To formulate it metaphorically: Is it good for the human being to control everything or might it be better to recognise some independence and resistance of a “partner” in nature? The question is, of course, a normative one. It is not about the technical possibility of such control but rather about the goals to be pursued in biotechnology and biopolitics.

In my view, the question of what is good for the human being—and perhaps for the “rest of the world” too, if the ethical perspective transcends the anthropocentric stance—seems to be beyond the reach of the concept of recognition. To deal with it requires the framework of a “well-ordered cosmos,” encompassing not only society but also nature. It is of course controversial whether such a framework can be developed in philosophical ethics. It can be argued, however, that the very meaning of “good” in the main ethical traditions is that of a world which can be universally approved of and striven for.<sup>64</sup> To such a world belongs a variety of forms of being, life and culture. Another basic trait of such a world is the flourishing and well-being of species, cultures and individuals. In addition to the recognition between individuals and groups it seems necessary to adjust human rights to the possibility of a variety of flourishing species and their members. This in turn requires the existence of natural processes which are not completely under human control. This is certainly not a matter of symmetrical relation of recognition between equal partners.

Such a perspective can be understood as a sort of regulative idea orienting the processes of inter-cultural consensus formation on the one hand and the options for the biotechnical treatment of the human body and natural life on the other hand. Unlike the Kantian concept of “regulative idea,” however, it is not generated by the self-reflection of pure reason. Instead, it can be derived and specified by understanding the development of the moral point of view and the common experiences regarding the meaning of “being human,” in the last period especially regarding human rights and our cultural and natural heritage. It can be understood as a post-metaphysical transformation of Hegel’s “holistic” philosophy of nature and spirit as well as a transformation of Hegel’s method in the *Phenomenology* as proposed by Robert Pippin and Terry Pinkard. My view is that the concept of mutual recognition plays an important role in that conception, but that it has to be integrated in a larger framework of a well-ordered society, and more broadly of a well-ordered cultural and natural “cosmos.”<sup>65</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Compare for instance A. Düttmann, *Between Cultures: Tensions on the Struggle for Recognition*, London, Verso, 2000; M. Zürcher, *Solidarität, Anerkennung und Gemeinschaft*, Tübingen, 1998; and *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, volume 53, 2005 (contributions by W. Mesch, B. Rössler, A. Wildt, Ch. Zurn et al.). Recent books in English include eds. B. van den Brink & D. Owen, *Recognition and Power—Axel Honneth and the Tradition of Critical Social Theory*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007; S. Thompson, *The Political Theory of Recognition—A Critical Introduction*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2006; eds. H.-C. Schmidt am Busch & C.F. Zurn, *The Philosophy of Recognition: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> It seems that the French term “reconnaissance” covers a wider semantic range than the German “Anerkennung” and the English “recognition”. Compare L. Siep, “Der lange Weg der Anerkennung”, in *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, no. 6, 2007, p. 981–986. For a very useful distinction between the different philosophical meanings and uses of “recognition” see H. Ikäheimo, A. Laitinen, “Analyzing Recognition: Identification, Acknowledgement, and Recognitive Attitudes towards Persons”, in van den Brink & Owen, *Recognition and Power*, p. 33–56.

<sup>3</sup> Compare Honneth, *Kampf um Anerkennung. Zur moralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte*, Frankfurt/M., Suhrkamp, 1992, p. 7, 31, 149. In English: A. Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995, p. 2, 17, 93. Regarding Honneth’s concept of “Kampf” um Anerkennung and its relation to Hegel compare L. Siep, “Kampf um Anerkennung bei Hegel und

Honneth", in R. Forst, M. Hartmann, R. Jaeggi and M. Saar, *Sozialphilosophie und Kritik (Festschrift für Axel Honneth)*, Frankfurt/M., Suhrkamp, 2009, pp. 179–201.

<sup>4</sup> P. Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, trans. David Pellauer, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J.B. Baillie, London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1931, p. 229 ("lost its own self", "finds itself as another being").

<sup>6</sup> Compare L. Siep, "Die Bewegung des Anerkennens in der Phänomenologie des Geistes, in eds. D. Köhler, O. Pöggeler, G.W.F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 2006. pp. 107–127; as well as Michael Quante, "The Pure Notion of Recognition': Reflections on the Grammar of the Relation of Recognition in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit" in eds. H.-C. Schmidt am Busch and C. F. Zurn, *The Philosophy of Recognition: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Lanham, Lexington Books, Rowman & Littlefield, 2010, 89–106.

<sup>7</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 229.

<sup>8</sup> For the role of recognition in the Philosophy of Right cf. R. Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy, Rational Agency as Ethical Life*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, chap. 7, 8; and L. Siep, "Selbstverwirklichung, Anerkennung und politische Existenz. Zur Aktualität der politischen Philosophie Hegels," in eds. R. Schmücker u. U. Steinvorth, *Gerechtigkeit und Politik. Philosophische Perspektiven*, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 2002, pp. 41–56.

<sup>9</sup> Compare Hegel, Jenaer Systementwürfe III, *Gesammelte Werke* Bd. 8, Hrsg. v. R. P. Horstmann unter Mitarb. v. J.H. Trede, Hamburg, 1976, p. 255. ("Das Allgemeine seinerseits stellt sich so dar ... sich selbst aufzuopfern, und mich zu dem meinen kommen zu lassen.")

<sup>10</sup> L. Siep, *Anerkennung als Prinzip der praktischen Philosophie*, Freiburg, Karl Alber, 1979, pp. 278–285.

<sup>11</sup> Compare R. Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997, p. 329f.

<sup>12</sup> P. Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, 210f.

<sup>13</sup> At least in the Roman Catholic understanding.

<sup>14</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox, London, Oxford University Press, p. 209.

<sup>15</sup> Compare L. Siep, "Practical Reason and Spirit in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*", in eds. D. Moyer & M. Quante, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit. A Critical Guide*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 173–191.

<sup>16</sup> Only the royal pardon is a form of such reconciliation within the realm of political institutions.

<sup>17</sup> Compare L. Siep, "Die Wirklichkeit des Guten in Hegels Lehre von der Idee", in eds. Ch. Halbig, M. Quante, L. Siep, *Hegels Erbe*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 2004, pp. 351–367.

<sup>18</sup> Compare R. B. Brandom, "The Structure of Desire and Recognition: Self-Consciousness and Self-Constitution", in this volume; Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1994; Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, chapters 7 and 8.

<sup>19</sup> Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, p. 196.

<sup>20</sup> Regarding these capacities one could think of Michael Tomasello's studies of the mutual understanding of intentions and the formation of joint intentions by way of identification; M. Tomasello, *The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition*, Cambridge/Mass., Harvard University Press, 1999.

<sup>21</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Brandom, "The Structure of Desire and Recognition," p. 48 above.

<sup>23</sup> Brandom, "The Structure of Desire and Recognition," p. 45 above.

<sup>24</sup> I cannot see that this structure of experiences in the *Phenomenology* can be captured by Brandom's interpretation of the historical dimension of recognition according to the common law model. Compare "Brandom, Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel's Idealism," in Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, London, Harvard University Press, 2002, pp. 229–234. For a similar critique see R. Pippin, "Brandom's Hegel", *European Journal of Philosophy*, 13: 3, 2005, p. 399–401.

<sup>25</sup> That Brandom is less interested in a cultural-historical process seems to stem from the fact that he reads Hegel in this chapter of the *Phenomenology* as construing the consciousness of the master as a "distinctively modern, alienated category of *independence*." (Brandom, "The Structure of Desire and Recognition," p. 50 above.)

<sup>26</sup> Focussed on the concept of recognition Pinkard has summarised his interpretation in "Reason, Recognition, and Historicity", in eds. B. Merker, G. Mohr and M. Quante, *Subjektivität und Anerkennung*, Paderborn, Mentis, 2004, p. 54.

<sup>27</sup> *idem.*

<sup>28</sup> Pinkard, "Reason, Recognition and Historicity", p. 57.

<sup>29</sup> *idem.*

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>34</sup> *idem.*

<sup>35</sup> *idem.*

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>37</sup> I have sketched a similar conception of a historical justification of the basic values, norms and institutions of the modern liberal-democratic consensus in my book *Konkrete Ethik*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 2004, p. 34f., 54f., 164f.

<sup>38</sup> Compare the *Phenomenology* chapter on absolute knowledge (“der Geist ist das Werden seiner zu dem, was er an sich ist ...der in sich zurückgehende Kreis, der seinen Anfang voraussetzt und ihn nur im Ende erreicht”) (eds. Wessels & Clairmont, Hamburg, Meiner, 1988, p. 525) or the Introduction to the Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, “for it is the spirit which is eternally present to itself and for which there is no past” (*Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 24)

<sup>39</sup> Compare R. Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, chapter 8.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, p. 278.

<sup>43</sup> *idem.*

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p. 281.

<sup>45</sup> *idem.*

<sup>46</sup> That Hegel aims at a reconstruction of metaphysics by its reconciliation with enlightenment and modern scientific reason is clear from the plans for high school and university education which he designed with his friend and Bavarian state official. F. Niethammer, during his Nuremberg period.

<sup>47</sup> R. Brandom, “Holism and Idealism in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*”, in *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2002, p. 193.

<sup>48</sup> Compare A. Honneth, *The struggle for Recognition: the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995, p. 128 f.

<sup>49</sup> I doubt, however, that all labour conflicts may be interpreted in terms of groups “fighting for greater esteem of their social contributions” (A. Honneth in N. Fraser & A. Honneth, *Redistribution and Recognition—A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London, Verso, p. 154). For a similar critique see Ch. F. Zurn, “Anerkennung, Umverteilung und Demokratie,” in *Deutsche Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, vol. 53, no. 3, p. 452.

<sup>50</sup> Overemphasized by F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, London, Penguin, 1992.

<sup>51</sup> For a recent similar critique compare Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, p. 258.

<sup>52</sup> In his recent writings Honneth extends the concept of recognition to that of a “personal stance” in relation to every human being which avoids “reification” as the opposite of recognition. It remains to be seen whether such a broad understanding can be specified into relations characteristic of emotional, cognitive and institutional conditions of mutual recognition. Compare A. Honneth, *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008.

<sup>53</sup> C. Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition: An Essay*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 61.

<sup>54</sup> *idem.*

<sup>55</sup> *idem.*

<sup>56</sup> *idem.*

<sup>57</sup> Compare Taylor, "Demokratie und Ausgrenzung," in Taylor, *Wieviel Gemeinschaft braucht die Demokratie? Aufsätze zur politischen Philosophie*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 2001, p. 43.

<sup>58</sup> Compare L. Siep, "Toleranz und Anerkennung bei Kant und im Deutschen Idealismus," in *Toleranz als Ordnungsprinzip? Die moderne Bürgergesellschaft zwischen Offenheit und Selbstaufgabe*, eds. Ch. Enders, M. Kahlo, Paderborn, Mentis, 2007, p. 177–193.

<sup>59</sup> Ricoeur, *Course of Recognition*, chapter 3.

<sup>60</sup> L. Siep, *Anerkennung als Prinzip der praktischen Philosophie*.

<sup>61</sup> The insufficiency of recognition as a criterion for just distribution has been stated by N. Fraser, *Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics. Redistribution, Recognition, and Participation*, The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Volume 19, ed. Grethe Peterson, Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press, 1998, 1–67; and Ch. F. Zurn, "Anerkennung, Umverteilung und Demokratie."

<sup>62</sup> M. Walzer, *Spheres of Justice. A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*, New York, Basic Books, 1983.

<sup>63</sup> I have sketched such a scale in "Anerkennung zwischen Individuen und Kulturen," in eds. A. Gethmann-Siefert, E. Weisser-Lohmann, *Wege zur Wahrheit (Otto Pöggeler zum 80. Geburtstag)*, München, Fink, 2009, pp. 15–31.

<sup>64</sup> As I have done in my book *Konkrete Ethik*.

<sup>65</sup> In the evaluative ("Greek") sense of the term.

## Chapter Six

# Holism and Normative Essentialism in Hegel's Social Ontology

Heikki Ikäheimo

### Introduction

“If you say that collective intentionality is primitive, then it seems you are in a very bad company. It seems you are postulating some kind of Hegelian *Weltgeist* that is floating around overhead, or something like that.”<sup>1</sup>

Hegel is rarely mentioned in contemporary English-language social ontology, and when he is, then mostly in jokes or hand-waves towards something one should in any case avoid if one is to do serious philosophical work. A repertoire of standard jokes is part of the tradition of ‘received views’ to which new student generations are socialised in philosophy departments, and which forms the sea of default prejudices upon which the inquisitive mind sails. In Hegel’s case, jokes and caricatures about his philosophy have tended to linger on as received views, and reproduce themselves, even in the pages of textbooks, long after their reasonable use by date. Certainly, it would be surprising if this

would have been helpful in spreading knowledge and learning about what Hegel actually wrote.

As a consequence, although in Hegel-scholarship and philosophy explicitly drawing on Hegel's texts most caricatures and simplifications about Hegel's philosophy have long since been exorcised,<sup>2</sup> it is still a task to be accomplished ever anew to convince colleagues less acquainted with Hegel's work that it contains insights and innovations that are at least worth a serious study, and some of which might even turn out to be useful, for instance in social ontology.

In this article, we shall put aside the jokes and take a look at some of the central ingredients in what Hegel's own social ontology, as it is presented in his mature work, is actually made of. I proceed as follows. I will first (I) draw attention to a lacuna in contemporary Anglophone social ontology, where Hegel's work holds promise for remedy: the almost complete lack of theorising about the social constitution of human persons and its intertwinement with the constitution of the rest of the social and institutional world. What I call Hegel's *holism* is exactly his attempt to grasp the constitution of persons and the constitution of the rest of the social and institutional world as an interconnected whole. Secondly (II), as a preparation for taking a look at what Hegel actually writes, I will take up three sources of complexity that a reader of the central texts of his mature social ontology—The Philosophies of Subjective and Objective Spirit—is inevitably faced with. I shall also hint at prospects that these open for philosophical work that utilises Hegel's basic innovations without agreeing with him on details of ideal institutional design. The third of these sources of complexity is Hegel's *normative essentialism*.

This requires making a short excursion to the question whether normative essentialism of roughly Aristotelian kind that Hegel subscribes to is an option that can be taken seriously in social ontology at all (III). I argue that at least in certain issues relevant to social ontology normative essentialism is both common sense and impossible for social ontology respectably not to take seriously. This, however, does not do away with the radicality of Hegel's normative essentialism, and the rest of the article consists of a rational reconstruction of this feature of his social ontology, together with its holism.

This will be done by first (IV) thematising three basic principles of Hegel's social ontology—concrete freedom, self-consciousness, and interpersonal

recognition—and proposing how they are related. The rest of the paper will then concentrate on the most concrete one of these principles—interpersonal recognition—by discussing what it does according to Hegel (V), what it is not (VI), and what exactly it is (VII). In the last section (VIII) we shall return to perhaps the most controversial element of Hegel's social ontology—the idea that the essential structures constitutive of human sociality have a tendency towards self-actualisation.

I will conclude with a few notes about how one social theorist strongly influenced by Hegel, Marx, used some of the basic innovations of Hegel's social ontology, albeit in a rather one-sided way, and without agreeing with him on details of ideal institutional design. The possibility for such creative utilisations of Hegel's insights and innovations, whatever the details, are what constitutes the lasting relevance of his social ontology.

### **I. A Hegelian solution to a contemporary problem in social ontology?**

What is the object of social ontology? A relatively uncontroversial answer to this question would seem to go along the lines of “the social world, in the sense of the world of those entities, facts, features, relations, processes etc. that are socially constituted”. But what about what it is that does the constituting? Assuming that ‘constituting’ in the relevant sense is or involves some form of activity by suitable kinds of subjects, it would seem quite relevant for social ontology to be interested in such subjects as well.<sup>3</sup> The only kinds of subjects we know of that constitute social worlds are relatively complex animals, among which—a particular kind stands out: us humans. Even if sociality broadly understood is not an exclusively human phenomenon and even if non-human social worlds are therefore a legitimate object of social ontology, no other animals constitute social worlds that come close to even the most primitive known human societies in terms of complexity and depth of social constitution. In terms of what we mean by ‘sociality’, the paradigmatic general object of social ontology would certainly seem to be the human life-form.

Talking of individual members of this life-form, human persons that is, not only are they the paradigmatic constitutors of social worlds, they themselves

are in many ways the paradigmatic socially constituted entities. Among all partly or wholly socially constituted entities that we can single out in human social worlds, human persons are surely the ones in whose constitution sociality plays the most multifarious and complex role.<sup>4</sup> In thus not only being the subject or agent of social constitution but also its central object or result, the human person would seem to have a rightful place as *the* paradigmatic single object of social ontology.

And yet the fact is that persons and their social constitution have received very little attention in contemporary international—which means Anglophone—social ontology, and practically none by some of its most celebrated philosopher-practicians.<sup>5</sup> On the contrary, a typical move in the contemporary landscape of philosophical social ontology is to take more or less full-fledged persons as given and discuss the rest of social reality as constituted by them. This, it seems, leaves only two options:

- Either persons are thought of as not part of the social and institutional world at all, but related to it only externally,
- or, alternatively, it is admitted that persons are indeed part of the social and institutional world in the sense of being (partly or wholly) socially constituted themselves, but the task-description of social ontology is limited to only those aspects or elements of the social and institutional world that can be conceived of as constituted by already full-fledged persons.

Following the first option, persons are hence thought of as external to the world that is the object of social ontology, and therefore quite unlike the kinds of creatures we know we are: social beings not merely in the sense of subjects, but also in the sense of objects of social constitution. The second option avoids this awkward predicament, yet it produces another. That is, if it is admitted that persons themselves are partly or wholly socially constituted entities, but decided that social ontology only arrives on the scene when fully constituted persons are already given, then it is accepted that social ontology does not address the most fundamental levels or processes of social constitution at all. Even if many social phenomena—such as carrying furniture upstairs or going for a walk together, founding clubs, acting as the executive board of a business corporation, and so forth (to borrow typical examples from the literature)—actually can be accounted for by presupposing more or less full-fledged persons as given, the ones that can are surely not the ontologically most

foundational ones.<sup>6</sup> To the extent that social ontology resorts to such a drastic shrinking down of its task-description, it also remains of relatively limited use to anthropology, social sciences, pedagogy, and other disciplines where the social constitution of persons is an unavoidable topic.

To seriously thematise the very foundations of the social and institutional world, it would thus seem necessary to focus on social processes and structures that are constitutive of human persons themselves. One way to do this, one might suggest, would be by way of the opposite stage-setting: explicating the constitution of persons by assuming the (rest of the) social and institutional world as given. Yet, to use a familiar metaphor, this would be merely replacing the ontological egg with the ontological chicken. Assuming that in a philosophical account of the human life-form that intends to get at the bottom of its social constitution it is as illegitimate to assume as given a society devoid of persons, as it is to assume as given persons independently of society, it seems that the only remaining strategy is to account for the constitution of persons and the rest of the social world together.

### *Why Hegel?*

So what, if anything, does Hegel have to offer to the serious minds of busy people working in the field of social ontology? Perhaps most importantly, his philosophy involves a sustained attempt at systematically conceiving the constitution of human persons and the constitution of the rest of the social and institutional world as internally interconnected. The catchword here is, perhaps *prima facie* notoriously, '*Geist*', or 'spirit' as it is mostly translated in English.<sup>7</sup> However, rather than thinking of 'spirit' as a name for an ethereal entity floating around or above human societies, or a cosmic principle steering the actions of humans behind their backs, as is still often done, a scrutiny of what Hegel actually writes in the part of his mature system titled 'Philosophy of Spirit' has the best chance to start on the right foot when one thinks of 'spirit' as nothing more than a 'headline' or 'title-word'—to borrow Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer's simple but in my view very insightful suggestion—for the human life-form.<sup>8</sup>

More precisely, 'spirit' is best thought of as a title-word for three closely inter-related themes: first, for everything that distinguishes humans as persons

from simpler animals,<sup>9</sup> secondly for everything that distinguishes the social and institutional structures of human life-worlds from simpler animal environments and forms of interaction, and thirdly the collective human practices of reflecting on the human form of life and its position in the whole of what there is, namely art, religion and philosophy itself.<sup>10</sup> It is these three interrelated topics that are explicitly at issue in the three main parts of Hegel's *Philosophy of Spirit*—*Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, *Philosophy of Objective Spirit* and *Philosophy of Absolute Spirit*—respectively.

Understanding 'spirit' as a mere title-word has the simple virtue of avoiding a burdening of one's encounter with Hegel's text, from the start, with the back-breaking ballast of obscure associations and received views that it has been burdened with since Hegel's death. Whether a serious study will eventually lead one to affirm some such view of Hegel or not, it is a sound methodological rule that one should initially assume 'spirit' to mean exactly what is in fact discussed in Hegel's *Philosophy of Spirit*. And that, as said, is the human person, the human society (and its history), and the human reflection-forms of art, religion and philosophy.<sup>11</sup>

Saying that 'spirit' is a title-word for these topics is not saying that it names a mere collection of this and that having to do with, or belonging to, the human life-form. On Hegel's account, the distinction between subjective and objective spirit, or personhood and social and institutional structures, is "not to be regarded as a rigid one,"<sup>12</sup> but these are rather to be seen as aspects or moments of a closely interconnected whole, and the same is true of absolute spirit, or the self-reflective activities that human persons collectively engage in. Not only are these issues interrelated in all the myriad of ways that we know they are. Hegel also claims that there are certain overarching principles governing them together. In what follows, we shall start working our way towards them by clarifying first some of the complexities that a reader of Hegel is faced with.

## **II. Some complexities of reading Hegel, and prospects they open for a critical utilisation of his thoughts**

There is unfortunately no denying the fact that Hegel is not an easy philosopher to read, and that there are plenty of reasons why even the most skilled

readers of Hegel have to struggle to discern what exactly the basic principles of his text are and how exactly they play out in his discussion of particular themes. These are reasons to do with the structure of his system, his methodology, and his manner of expression. For our purposes it suffices to point out three sources of complexity.

*Different levels of conceptualisation and the relation between them*

First, there is an inbuilt 'necessary contingency' involved in the interplay of concepts and considerations with different levels of abstraction in Hegel's philosophical system. Even if each higher level of conceptuality provides structuring principles for each lower level, each descending step in levels of abstraction introduces a new layer of contingency untamed by the governing, higher or more abstract concepts and principles. This is clearly true of how the pure concepts or categories that are at issue in the first part of his three-partite system, the Logic, apply to the spatiotemporal world of real phenomena at issue in the two 'Real-philosophical' parts of the system, the Philosophy of Nature and the Philosophy of Spirit that is.<sup>13</sup> Even if Hegel is a conceptual realist in that in his view the basic categorical structure discussed in the Logic is "out there," not merely in subjective minds (and Hegel does not postulate a transcendental mind or subject in singular), this does not mean that the details of the world can be simply deduced from the logic.<sup>14</sup> Yet, the pure concepts or categories are structures of reality and they are at play in Hegel's description of the various realms of what there is. The same is true of how Hegel applies less abstract, that is, not purely logical, philosophical concepts or principles to particular object-realms: the higher levels provide structuring principles for, yet do not reduce the complexity and contingency of, the lower levels.

The problem for the reader is that it is often extremely difficult to discern how exactly the pure concepts mingle with the less abstract 'Real-philosophical' concepts, or, going down in levels of abstraction, with scientific and everyday concepts, in Hegel's structural descriptions of this or that particular region of nature or spirit. This difficulty is well known among readers of the *Philosophy of Right*, which is, in principle, an extended version of the Philosophy of Objective Spirit.<sup>15</sup> Yet, it is as much true of all the other parts of his Real-philosophy.

It is a consequence of the fact that structures of reality, as Hegel conceives of them, cannot be simply deduced from higher structures or principles, or that these principles cannot be applied to reality in any mechanical way, that Hegel's structural descriptions of the different realms and phenomena of nature and spirit are, by their nature, painstaking handiwork in trying to conceptualise each phenomena in ways that seem to get them right or do justice to them, all things considered. Since Hegel is far from explicit about the exact manner in which he utilises concepts and principles of different levels of abstraction in his often extremely intricate conceptualisations of this or that particular realm or structure of reality, following his thought requires painstaking effort from the reader as well.

Interestingly for those who are interested in utilising Hegel for contemporary philosophical purposes, the 'necessary contingency', or necessary degree of indeterminacy in the application of higher level structures at lower levels *also* means that it should be possible, by Hegel's own standards, to come up with descriptions that differ somewhat from his own by utilising his own higher order conceptual principles. This is so due to the fact that the more concrete level of concepts is in question, the more description is dependent on perspectivity and situationality. Even if Hegel did think that at the highly abstract level of the Logic pure thinking free of situationality is a meaningful ideal, he never thought this to be possible at the level of everyday concepts, nor even at the level of most scientific concepts, where interest, situation and perspective are necessary elements of anything deserving the name of knowledge.<sup>16</sup> In other words, one should not let the details of Hegel's own concrete levels of conceptualisation get in the way of reconstruction, or creative utilisation of his higher level principles.

### *Concentration of meaning and changing focus*

The second source of difficulty for any reading of Hegel's work is the enormous breadth of his philosophical concerns, together with the in comparison extreme brevity of the body of text that comprises his mature philosophical system. These factors together result in a level of concentration of meaning that may be matched by no other body of texts in Western philosophy. One aspect of this is that Hegel usually has many different goals in mind in writing any given passage included in his system.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, and this is most relevant for our theme, even if in principle everything in the system is somehow related to everything else, the different Real-philosophical parts of the system actually sometimes focus on partly unrelated concerns, and proceed on partly different levels of abstraction. That is to say that Hegel may have a certain set of issues in mind in a particular part of the system, but then drop some of the issues and take up new ones in a related part of the system—even though each of the issues should be discussed in both parts were they to be clarified systematically.

Importantly for us, this is in fact the case with the two most directly relevant parts of Hegel's system for social ontology, the Philosophy of Subjective Spirit and the Philosophy of Objective Spirit: Even if they are elements of an interconnected whole, it is difficult to grasp exactly this interconnection due to differences in focus and level of abstraction between these two parts. What I mean is that Hegel's interest and focus in Philosophy of Objective Spirit is on a significantly more concrete level of issues and considerations and thereby proceeds at a more concrete level of conceptualisation than is the case with Philosophy of Subjective Spirit. Part of what 'more concrete' means is 'more bound to Hegel's own particular time and place'. Whereas Hegel's structural description of the human person in Subjective Spirit contains relatively few claims that are at least obviously *only* reasonable about human being in a particular cultural and historical situation but not in others, his structural description of the social and institutional whole that he calls the state and describes in Objective Spirit contains a great number of details that are best described as Hegel's "own time [and place] comprehended in thoughts".<sup>18</sup>

### *Not mere description, but ideal description*

But there is a further complication. Namely, what is at issue is not merely to what extent Hegel's structural description of the human person or of the social and institutional world accurately describe existing human beings or societies in a simple observational sense. (Even if in this sense too it does seem quite obvious that the former is much more readily universalisable.) This is so because these descriptions are, as a rule, geared towards an *ideal* mode of existence of the phenomena in question. Thus, empirical humans or societies only conform to the descriptions to the extent that they conform to the ideal. On the other hand, Hegel means the ideals not to be external to the

phenomena, but immanent to each phenomenon as their *essence* or essential structure.

This is what is at stake in Hegel's famous "*Doppelsatz*" in the *Philosophy of Right*, according to which "what is actual is rational, and what is rational is actual".<sup>19</sup> Put very briefly, the point is, first, that everything has a conceptual structure, and secondly, that it is possible for anything to actualise its own conceptual structure more or less. The degree of something's being "actual" (*wirklich*) is the degree of its actualising its own conceptual structure and thus the degree of its being "rational" (*vernünftig*).

There is more to unpack in the *Doppelsatz* (we have only unpacked the first of its two sub-sentences), but the important point for us is that Hegel clearly subscribes to some form of Aristotelian *normative essentialism* according to which things can correspond to their essence or essential structure in different degrees and according to which the essence is somehow an immanent ideal in them. That is to say that *both* Hegel's description of the human person, *and* his description of the social and institutional structures of the state are 'idealising' or 'essential' descriptions and thus the question of their generalisability does not merely concern the question whether or to what extent all human beings or all states accurately correspond to the description (or rather the other way around), but rather how steady a foothold there is to argue that the descriptions describe *ideals* that are somehow immanent in humans in general, or societies in general, as their essential structure.

There is a marked *difference between* the first and the second case, so that chances to pull the argument through seem better in the first case than in the second. This is for the reason already mentioned—namely that Hegel's ideal description of the essential structures of human personhood in Subjective Spirit remain at a significantly more abstract level than his ideal description of the essential social and institutional structures of human society or 'the state' in Objective Spirit. This means that one may end up in endorsing (with some set of good reasons) Hegel's ideal of human personhood, without being able to endorse (with good reasons) the details of his institutional design. Importantly, this is compatible with subscribing to Hegel's general project of conceiving personhood and social structures as constitutively intertwined, since this project may still make good sense when one abstracts from

(whatever one thinks are) the questionable details of Philosophy of Objective Spirit, and stays at the higher level of abstraction on which Philosophy of Subjective Spirit proceeds—and does this in reading *both* the Subjective *and* the Objective Spirit.<sup>20</sup>

But what about the philosophical credibility of conceiving *essences or essential structures as immanent ideals* for beings whose structures they are? Can such an idea be taken seriously today? And is it of any relevance to social ontology?

### **III. Hegel's normative essentialism—sound common sense about something**

Whereas the attempt at systematically conceiving the constitution of human persons and the constitution of the rest of the social and institutional world as internally interconnected—let us call this Hegel's holism<sup>21</sup>—sounds like something that recommends Hegel's work for serious attention, normative essentialism has a ring to it that is not likely to win friends in many corners of the philosophical world today.<sup>22</sup> To see clearly what is at stake here, and thus to be able to make a balanced judgment about Hegel's position, two issues need to be clarified: first, what is 'essentialism' in general, and secondly, what is 'normative essentialism' in particular?

So what is essentialism? Let us agree that on the most liberal formulation essentialism is the view according to which it is *possible*, and, on a less liberal version, *actually the case* that some features of a thing are 'essential' to it, or (synonymously) that it 'has them essentially'. Let us call these two versions of essentialism the 'potentialist' and the 'actualist' version respectively. It is, further, possible to be a *global* potentialist or actualist essentialist and hence to claim that it is true of *all things* that some of their features either may be, or actually are essential to them. Alternatively, one may be a *local* potentialist or actualist essentialist and hence claim that it is true of *some things* that they either may have or actually have some of their features essentially. The same distinctions apply to anti-essentialism.<sup>23</sup>

In social ontology, essentialism is, as such, a perfectly normal position to take. To start with, to the extent that social ontology has as its primary general

object the human life-form in general, and thus not merely these or those particular people or societies, it is a universalising enterprise. And since it is not an empirical enterprise in any simple observational sense, but ontology, its generalisations are not merely empirical generalisations focused on actually, yet *contingently*, universal features of humans or human societies. What social ontology tries to grasp are *essential and thus necessarily universal* features or structures of the human life-form, or to borrow again John Searle again, “the structure of human civilization”.<sup>24</sup> If one is to do social ontology in this sense at all, one cannot help being an essentialist about something at least, namely the human life-form—and not only in the ‘potentialist’ sense of accepting that it is possible that some features or structures are essential to the human life-form, but also in the committed ‘actualist’ sense of proposing *some* particular features or structures as actually essential to it. That Hegel is an essentialist on the human life-form in these senses therefore in no way distinguishes him from the contemporary mainstream of social ontology exemplified by, say, John Searle.

But what about the fact that Hegel’s essentialism is of an Aristotelian, normative variant? What is normative essentialism? Let us agree that normative essentialism is essentialism on the above definition (so that the distinctions between the potentialist and actualist senses of essentialism, as well as between global and local essentialism apply to it), but with two added elements: that it is possible for a thing to instantiate the features or structures essential to it in different degrees, and that the more it does the better, in some sense relevant sense of goodness. Let us add to these a third element which is as much a feature of Hegel’s version of normative essentialism as it is of Aristotle’s: essences have some kind of tendency towards actualisation.<sup>25</sup>

There is a strong tendency, shared across very different philosophical schools, towards judging such a view out of hand as a mere metaphysical museum piece that no-one (after Newton, Kant, Darwin, Wittgenstein, Foucault, or whoever one’s favourite hero of anti-essentialism is) should take seriously. Yet, such a sweeping judgment involves an element of self-deception, since in fact we do take actualist normative essentialism perfectly seriously in some issues, and it is arguably very difficult not to do so. Indeed, normative essentialism is part of common sense—that is, of the kind of default-thinking that is at work in structuring actual human practices—about certain very

important elements of the human life-form, elements that are in various ways involved in practically everything that humans do. I mean usable artefacts.

Think of, say, chairs.<sup>26</sup> It makes perfectly good sense to ask what is the essence of a chair, or in more colloquial terms, what is it that makes something a chair. A rather workable general answer would seem to be something like 'sittability'. Sittability, it seems, is an example of essence in the normative sense, meaning that the more or better a chair instantiates this general functional (and clearly relational, since chairs should fit human backsides) property—or to use another term, practical significance—that makes it a chair in the first place, the better a chair it is.

When something exemplifies this feature or significance to a very high degree, it inspires essentialist judgments in satisfied sitters of the kind "now this is what I call a chair". At the other end of the scale, something's being absolutely horrible to sit on means that it is likely not to be taken as a chair at all, but either as an object with some other function or then just junk. Of course what exactly are the more precise features that comprise the general essential feature of sittability, or in other words what are the more precise features that makes a chair good to sit (for an average human backside), is a matter of further debate, but people designing chairs are expected to have a good enough answer.

Indeed, it belongs to the essence of chair designers that they are actualist essentialists on chairs: to stay in the business of chair-designing and thus to be a chair-designer one not only needs to have a good enough idea of the more exact constituents of sittability, but also to accept sittability as an essential feature of chairs, and not just as an accidental feature of them such as, say, colour.<sup>27</sup> This, of course, assumes that chair-consumers too are essentialists on the sittability of chairs, which is likely for obvious reasons: sit on really bad chairs long enough and you will become unable to sit at all.<sup>28</sup> In short, it is normatively essential to chairs that they are good to sit on.<sup>29</sup>

Hence, chairs easily fit the first two bills that make Hegel's essentialism normative: they can instantiate the features, structures or significances that are essential to them in different degrees, and the more they do the better—in a functional or instrumental sense of goodness. As to the third element of Hegel's normative essentialism—self-actualisation—focusing merely on the

practice of sitting (and thus abstracting from intervening factors such as, say, the practice of capitalist economy), there clearly is a tendency towards chairs exemplifying their general essential feature of sittability well and thus being good chairs. This tendency is immanent to chairs in the sense that it is immanent to the practice where chairs are constituted as chairs:<sup>30</sup> between sitting on better or worse chairs, people tend to choose the better ones if they can. To say that we should not be talking about *self*-actualisation of the essence of chairs because it is actually a social practice that does the actualising is to miss the point that this social practice is not external to chairs, but constitutive of their being chairs in the first place.<sup>31</sup>

All of this, it seems, is not only true of chairs, but of usable artefacts in general. Three points can be made here. First, actualist normative essentialism about chairs and other usable artefacts is common sense. Secondly, it is common sense in the practical sense of being at work in, and indeed constitutive of, the practices in which usable artefacts are what they are. Thirdly, it therefore would make little sense to suggest that although common sense may be normatively essentialist on chairs, in fact it is wrong to be so; or to suggest that common sense only grasps how this area of social reality “appears,” but not how it is “in itself”. How common sense takes or regards usable artefacts in social practices is constitutive of how they really are as entities of the social world.<sup>32</sup> This is to say that common sense is not merely ‘in the heads’ of people but also ‘out there’ structuring the social and institutional world—or in Hegel’s terms, not merely ‘subjective’ but also ‘objective spirit’.

As to the philosophical discourse of social ontology, given that social ontology is interested in the structure and constituting processes of the social world (and not, say, in the atom-structure of physical objects), and assuming that normative essentialism itself is an *essential* feature of the attitudes and practices that make usable objects such objects, and thus of these objects themselves, it follows that social ontology must accept normative essentialism itself as an ontologically accurate view of this part of our life-world. Common sense normative essentialism is *true* about usable artefacts *because* it is *constitutive* of them.

All in all, normative essentialism of the Aristotelian-Hegelian variant is thus both common sense and ontologically true of *at least something* very important to the human life-form. Hence the fact that Hegel is a normative

essentialist on the human life-form is at least not as obviously damning of him as sweeping—and in their sweepingness self-deceptive—rejections of normative essentialism would suggest. However, merely pointing out that normative essentialism is common sense about something of central importance to the human life-form, namely usable artefacts, does not alone do away with the radicality of Hegel's normative essentialism. His claim is namely that actualist normative essentialism is not merely true of particular elements of human life-worlds, such as chairs or other usable artefacts, but somehow of '*spirit*' in *singular*—or in other words, of *the human life-form as a whole*. To be absolutely clear about what this means, let us unfold it in terms of the four claims which we have agreed that normative essentialism consists of:

- a) On Hegel's view some features or structures of the human life-form are essential to it,
- b) these essential features of the human life-form can be actualised in different degrees,
- c) the more they are actualised the better, in some relevant sense (or senses) of goodness, and
- d) they have an immanent tendency towards actualisation.<sup>33</sup>

What could Hegel possibly have in mind in promoting such an idea? In what follows, we shall try to make sense of this in terms of how Hegel conceptualises the human life-form in his Philosophy of Spirit.

#### **IV. Basic principles of Hegel's social ontology**

So far I have pointed out two general features of Hegel's social ontology. First, it is *holistic* in that it involves an attempt at conceiving the constitution of human persons and the constitution of the rest of the social and institutional world as internally interconnected, or in other words at conceiving human persons and their life-world as mutually constitutive. Secondly, it involves a commitment to a normative and teleological kind of *essentialism* about the human life-form taken as a whole. Let us now to take a look at how these features play out in Hegel's social ontology by clarifying its basic principles.

When one asks for *the* basic principles of Hegel's social ontology, any answer will be selective since basically every single logical concept and principle

developed in the logic is *somehow* at play in Hegel's structural descriptions of the different regions of what there is, even though some are more important than others in particular regions. This also means that the interpreter can make different selections among the logical, real-philosophical and other principles at play in Hegel's text, which will illuminate the whole somewhat differently. To the extent that Hegel's overall conception is coherent, these need not be mutually exclusive.

In what follows, I will mention three closely interrelated principles that are undeniably central for Hegel's social ontology and therefore deserve to be called basic principles.<sup>34</sup> Each of them is a principle of different level of abstraction (or concreteness) so that presented in a descending order of abstraction (or ascending order of concreteness) the second principle is an instantiation of the first, and the third is an instantiation of the second (and thereby also the first). Both the second and the third principle introduce elements that are not determined by the higher levels (remember the 'necessary contingency'-point). Yet, on a plausible interpretive hypothesis the more abstract principles function as 'essences' of the more concrete ones in the sense of providing a norm or ideal for them. As will be seen, this hypothesis can be rather easily verified in the application of the first principle to the second, whereas in the application of the second principle to the third things get slightly more complicated.

The principles can be called

- (1) the principle of *absolute negation*, or of *being with oneself in otherness*,
- (2) the principle of *self-consciousness*, or of *consciousness of oneself in otherness*
- (3) the principle of *interpersonal recognition*.

It is best said immediately that one should not put too much weight on the names of the principles, especially in the first two cases, but rather (again) understand them as title-words for something that could be called with other names as well.

(1) As to the first principle, it could also be called—as Hegel himself often does—simply *freedom*. What is at stake is a structure involving two (or more) relata that are defined as what they are through each other, and are thus determined by each other without being alien or inimical to each other. Each relatum is thus 'with itself in the other'. Such a structure involves two

'negations', the first of which consists of the fact that the one relatum is not the other relatum. Yet as relata both are determined by each other. This determination by otherness is overcome by a second negation, which is the negation of the alienness or inimicality of the relata to each other. 'Absolute negation' means just this structure involving a first negation, and a second negation, as it were negating the first negation. As such, no temporal succession is meant; yet it is possible that one of the two negations of the absolute negation temporally precedes the other. To the extent that this is the case, the structure of absolute negation is (yet) deficiently unfolded.<sup>35</sup>

Without concretisation this is of course abstract to the extreme, but some hint of its usefulness derive from the fact that Hegel, as said, often calls it simply 'freedom'. Generally speaking, what is meant by freedom here is not *freedom from something*, but *freedom with something*. Hegel never tires emphasising that freedom from something, or "abstract freedom," is a self-undermining illusion in that attempts to realise it cannot escape from some form of dependence on, or determination by, that from which the attempt to be free is made. For Hegel, real or "concrete freedom" is not the impossibility of freedom from factors that necessarily determine one, but some form of reconciliation or state of mutual affirmation with them.<sup>36</sup> Concrete freedom thus has the formal structure of 'absolute negation'. What this means more concretely, will only become clear at the more concrete levels of discussion.

The principle of absolute negation applies in Hegel's view to many things and structures of both nature<sup>37</sup> and spirit. As to the realm of spirit which is the home ground of freedom, it does not merely apply where issues of freedom are usually discussed, namely in the practical dimension of actions, opportunities for action, motivations and so on, but more generally in the realm of *intentionality* in general. Here intentionality is the central added element of concreteness, which is in no way deducible from any logical principles, but is a given phenomenon of the spatio-temporal world that has to be conceptualised adequately as such.

(2) Thereby we come to the second principle. Hegel himself does not use the word 'intentionality', but calls the phenomenon or structure in question *consciousness (Bewusstsein)*. Consciousness, which is Hegel's general topic in the second part of *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit* titled 'Phenomenology', is a structure involving a subject and an object, where both relata can only be

what they are in virtue of each other. It is a structure defining what Hegel calls the “I” (*Ich*).<sup>38</sup> The I, just as its pre-intentional predecessor ‘self’ (*Selbst*) that Hegel discusses in the *Anthropology*, is not a separate entity, but a structural feature of the being of concrete flesh and blood subjects. There are two basic modifications of consciousness or ‘conscious-being’ (*Bewusst-Sein*): the *theoretical* and the *practical*, or in other words the epistemic and the volitional. Hegel discusses the first of these in a chapter titled ‘Consciousness as such’, and the second in a chapter titled ‘Self-consciousness’, both within ‘Phenomenology’.<sup>39</sup>

These particular titles should be given particularly little systematic importance *as titles* of the chapters in question since they are rather misleading in giving the impression that what Hegel means by ‘self-consciousness’ only relates to the practical dimension of intentionality. There is also another source of confusion, namely the fact that what Hegel actually means by ‘self-consciousness’—that is, in philosophical usage and not merely as the title of a chapter—is something quite different from how this term is usually understood in philosophy. Even if the usual sense of this term—some sort of second order consciousness or awareness of one’s own mental states—is not irrelevant for Hegel, it is far from being its only or even paradigmatic usage for him.<sup>40</sup>

Ideally, self-consciousness for Hegel is being conscious of something about oneself *in an object* of consciousness. This—*consciousness of oneself in objects*, or put in another way *conscious-being with oneself in otherness*—is a particular instantiation of the structure of *being with oneself in otherness*. Hegel calls this often also ‘knowing’ (*Wissen*) or ‘finding’ (*finden*) oneself in what is other to oneself. The structure of being, in the more concrete sense of conscious-being, with oneself in objects is on Hegel’s account an immanent ideal or norm both for theoretical and practical object-relations.

As to the theoretical dimension, theoretical consciousness involves by its nature a separation of objects from the subject *for* the subject or I. This is what it means to be conscious in the theoretical or epistemic sense. To the extent that the subject cannot grasp the objects in thought, cannot organise them or conceive their constitution and connections, what is at hand is only the first of the two negations of ‘absolute negation’. This means that the subject is determined by an objectivity that is from its point of view alien to it. The ideal

immanent to theoretical intentionality is, unsurprisingly, to cognise objectivity and thereby overcome its alienness. Common sense familiarity with the world, the sciences, and philosophy are thus the concrete practices (with different levels of abstraction) whereby the essential structure of self-consciousness or conscious-being in otherness is actualised in the theoretical or epistemic dimension. They are forms of self-consciousness in otherness in that the subject grasps independent objects in terms of conceptual structures with which it is familiar and with which it can operate in thought.

In other words, as the subject becomes familiar with the world and internalises its constitution in thought, it gradually finds the world instantiating structures that are also structures of its own thinking.<sup>41</sup> There is no hint of subjective idealism in all of this since all of the structures in terms of which subjects successfully grasp the world are really structures of the world (that is, not merely structures of how the world appears as organised by subjectivity) and they *become* structures of the subject's thinking only in interaction with the world.<sup>42</sup> The tendency of self-actualisation of the essential structure or principle is here as such nothing logical but proper to the level of concreteness at issue. It is simply whatever it is that moves humans towards a better epistemic grasp of the world—basically the need of finite human beings to overcome the hostility and alienness of the world that they are part of, by understanding it.

As to the practical dimension of intentionality,<sup>43</sup> practical consciousness is a volitional relation to objects. The difference to theoretical consciousness can be put by saying that whereas in theoretical consciousness objectivity appears in light of what it is, in practical consciousness it appears in light of what it ought to or should be in the subject's view. Thus, whereas the content of theoretical consciousness has what we might call an 'is-form', the content of practical consciousness has an 'ought-form'. The most primitive form of practical consciousness is *desire* (*Begierde*) for objects that would immediately satisfy immediately felt bodily needs—a purely animal object-relation in which instinct points out certain objects in light of something like the significance of 'must have/be' (or 'must avoid/not be').<sup>44</sup>

Whereas the object of theoretical consciousness is at its most primitive level (with only the absolute minimum of cognition having taken place needed to grasp anything in the subject-object-form at all) epistemically maximally alien

to the subject, the object of practical consciousness is at its most primitive level a “nullity”<sup>45</sup> to the subject in the sense of maximally lacking any independence or otherness. It is reduced to, or identical with the determination that is immediately relevant for the satisfaction of the subject’s given physiological needs. In other words, whereas in theoretical consciousness there is initially *too much otherness of and too little finding oneself in objects*, in practical consciousness there is initially *too much finding oneself in and too little otherness of objects*<sup>46</sup>. For the structure of self-consciousness *in otherness* to be actualised or fully unfolded *in the practical dimension*, the subject must view objects as being in accordance with its volition, yet *independent from* it. Again, the logical form or structure in question in no way provides or guarantees the urge or drive of the actualisation of this structure. Yet, Hegel thinks that there is something in concrete human beings that provides such a drive.<sup>47</sup>

Now, Hegel is a highly systematic thinker and he thinks also of the theoretical and the practical dimensions of intentionality or consciousness in their interrelations, as dimensions of the being of concrete flesh and blood subjects.<sup>48</sup> Put very briefly: the theoretical and the practical dimensions of intentionality can only take place together. Also, the actualisation of the essential structure of intentionality must happen *both* in the theoretical *and* in the practical dimension for it to happen at all: theoretical and practical *cultivation* are inter-related aspects of the actualisation of the essence of conscious-being, which is a form of concrete freedom in the sense of being determined by otherness with which one is ‘reconciled’ in the sense of *both knowing it and willing it*.<sup>49</sup> As we shall see, the actualisation of this ideal of concrete freedom as reconciliation of consciousness with objectivity, both in knowing and in willing, is what the actualisation of the essence of the human life-form, or the life-form of human persons<sup>50</sup> amounts to in Hegel.

There is one phenomenon that is decisive for the actualisation of this essence. What complicates matters here is that this phenomenon is on the one hand itself a concrete instantiation of the more abstract or general principle of self-consciousness in otherness, yet on the other hand it is not just one instantiation among others, but in several ways essential for its being instantiated anywhere at all. This phenomenon, one which is decisive *both* for the overcoming of mere animality *and* for the degree to which the human life-form realises its essence is (3) interpersonal recognition. The added element of concreteness

or specificity here is the intentional relationship with objects of a very special kind—namely other subjects.

## V. Hegelian recognition—from what it does to what it is

There is no doubt about the centrality of the concept of recognition for Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit. In one of his earlier system-sketches from 1805 Hegel puts this in simplest possible words: insofar as a human being overcomes mere naturality and thus is 'spiritual' "he is recognition"<sup>51</sup>. And in the 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*—just before the famous depiction of the figures of the master and the bondsman and the "struggle of recognition" between them—Hegel characterises spirit as "the unity of" opposite self-consciousnesses "in their complete freedom," or as "[t]he *I* that is *we* and the *we* that is *I*."<sup>52</sup> This is an instantiation of (1) the principle of absolute negation, and (2) of the more concrete principle of self-consciousness in otherness, in the relationship of conscious subjects to each other. Further, such a relation where subjects are 'I's (and 'thou's) by forming a 'we',<sup>53</sup> instantiates (3) the principle or structure of (mutual) interpersonal recognition.<sup>54</sup>

In his mature system Hegel is not as explicit about the centrality of recognition in what makes humans spiritual beings.<sup>55</sup> Yet, when one looks at the details the decisive fact remains: also in the final versions of Philosophy of Spirit recognition is *the* phenomenon through which the transition (a) from merely animal existence into a spiritual one is made. And as I will show, the principle of recognition is also in Hegel's mature Philosophy of Spirit a necessary and central element in (b) the actualisation of the essential structure of spirit, or of the essence of the life-form of human persons.

In the Introduction to his mature Philosophy of Spirit Hegel makes it clear that the "essence" of spirit, as what separates humans as persons from mere nature, is *freedom* and that this means more exactly "concrete freedom". It is the "vocation" (*Bestimmung*) of humanity to realise this essence of its own.<sup>56</sup> In other words, the actualisation of features that make humans persons is the actualisation of concrete freedom and thus to become concretely free is—somehow—a vocation for them. It is clear that humans do not always heed to this vocation and thus there is no guarantee that the essence will be actualised,

but what Hegel seems to be saying is that it is somehow built into their constitution in any case.

As we just saw, concrete freedom in the intentionality-involving mode of self-consciousness in otherness is a complex issue since it has a theoretical and practical dimension to it. Furthermore, different realms of objects of intentionality can be at issue. On the most general level, concrete freedom as self-consciousness can be *either* a matter of intentional relationships with *nature*, or then a matter of intentional relationships ‘within’ the realm of *spirit*. It is important to understand why the latter is the genuine home ground of concrete freedom: here the practical dimension of concrete freedom can be actualised in ways that it cannot with regard to nature in that the subject can have its *own will or volition* (i) *affirmed by the volition of other persons*, and (ii) *instantiated in social institutions*. In contrast, animal subjects cannot affirm anyone’s will in the relevant sense, nor can purely natural objects instantiate it.<sup>57</sup>

In other words, one’s practical intentionality can be reconciled with other persons, as well as with social institutions, as independent realities, in ways that it cannot with mere nature that neither affirms nor instantiates human volition. The two ‘directions’ (i) and (ii) of practical self-consciousness in otherness within spirit, or the social world of persons, are closely related but the first one of them—*interpersonal recognition*—has a certain precedence.

In order to have a clear focus on what exactly interpersonal recognition is on Hegel’s account, it is worth repeating the two important roles that it arguably has in his Philosophy of Spirit. First, it is a central factor in the overcoming of merely natural or animal existence, and, secondly, it is a central element in the actualisation of the essence of the human life-form, self-consciousness in otherness that is. With regard to recognition, the sense of *goodness* in which it is true that the more the essence is actualised the better has a clearly *ethical* dimension. To use terminology that is not Hegel’s but gets at what is at issue here, the degree of instantiation of recognition is the degree to which *inter-subjective* relations are *interpersonal* relations.

As noted above, according to Hegel’s structural description of the most primitive practical subject-object-relation that he calls ‘desire’ the object in it is wholly reduced, for the subject, to its significance for the satisfaction of

immediately felt need. Or as Hegel puts it, the subject sees in the object only “its own lack”.<sup>58</sup> The primitive desiring subject has no way of accommodating in consciousness anything in the world that does not fit its solipsistic need-driven view of things here and now. What Hegel is describing is more or less Harry Frankfurt’s “wanton,”<sup>59</sup> only thought through to its ultimate consequences. For it, there is no past and no future, no universals, and therefore no grasp of objects as transcending the immediate significances in light of which they are seen at a given moment as dictated by felt physiological needs.<sup>60</sup> The practical intentionality of immediate desire leaves no breathing space whatsoever for theoretical processes or activities of epistemically acquainting oneself with the world more broadly.<sup>61</sup> Hence, an extreme lack of otherness of objects in the practical dimension corresponds to their extreme otherness or alienness in the epistemic dimension with regard to *anything* in them that is not immediately relevant for desire.<sup>62</sup>

How do, then, full-fledged persons, or subjects with a person-making psychological composition and structure of intentionality—the kinds of subjects that contemporary social ontology takes for granted—come about in Hegel’s view? His account of the overcoming of pure wantonness and the coming about of personhood proceeds again at a level of structural description, yet with added quasi-empirical illustration—the figures of the master and bondsman. Here it is important to understand that the decisive issue are not the empirical or quasi-empirical details of Hegel’s illustration, but rather the principles and structural moments that they illustrate.

The essential factor in Hegel’s account is that subjects overcome the immediacy of natural wantonness by confronting other subjects in such a way that their structures of intentionality become *mediated* through each other. This is what happens in recognition, and this explains at least part of what Hegel meant in Jena by saying that the human being—as more than a mere wanton or animal—“is recognition”. However, knowing that bringing about a mediation of intentionalities through each other is what recognition *does* still leaves largely open the question what exactly recognition *is*. Hegel never gave a clear definition and it is probably not unfair to say that secondary literature has not been particularly helpful on this issue either. This general unclarity makes it possible that wildly different candidates for an answer are often proposed without considering their pros and cons in an explicit and organised way, or without contrasting them with other candidates at all.

## VI. Recognition as mediation of intentionalities

Let us approach the question what exactly recognition is by first considering two candidates that have been proposed in the literature and that actually suggest themselves by parts of what Hegel writes in the relevant passages. One of these is to think of recognition as *instrumentalisation* of the perspective of the other to the ends determining one's own perspective—and thereby having one's intentionality mediated by the instrumentalised intentionality of the other. The other candidate is to think of recognition as *fear* for a threatening or coercing other and thereby having one's intentionality influenced or mediated by the threatening or coercing intentionality of the other. How do such views suggest themselves by what Hegel writes?

On Hegel's depiction, the solipsist immediacy of the desiring intentionality is initially disturbed or decentred by the fact that another subject actively *resists* its subsumation to the determinations dictated by the first subject's immediate needs.<sup>63</sup> Such an encounter is potentially conflictual and various consequences may follow, the most extreme and structurally primitive being the death of one party and thus the complete annihilation of the challenge that it presented to the desire-orientation of the other. A significantly more elaborate solution is the instrumentalisation of one subject by another to the latter's desire-orientation by force: slavery. In Hegel's illustrative depiction of the master and bondsman it is the death-threat that the stronger imposes on the weaker that creates and maintains a relationship where A instrumentalises B who fears A. The intentionality of both parties is, indeed, thereby mediated by the intentionality of the other and thus pure solipsist wantonness seems to be left behind.

Now, even if there is a long history of readers confusing recognition with the relationship of the master and bondsman in Hegel, the thought is well known and widely agreed upon in Hegel-scholarship that this relationship does not instantiate recognition, at least not in an ideal way or in a full-fledged sense.<sup>64</sup> But why not, exactly? One suggestion is that this is because of the radical dissymmetry or inequality of the master-bondsman-relation. This suggestion thus invites one to think about what recognition is by removing the element of *dissymmetry* or *inequality* from the picture. The question is then whether we can really grasp what Hegel means by recognition by conceiving a state of *mutual instrumentalisation*, or of *mutual fear*?<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, both ways of

thinking about recognition actually appear in the literature. Since we are faced with issues that are of decisive importance for understanding what exactly Hegelian recognition is, it is worth considering these ways—let us call them the *instrumentalist* and the *phobic* view of recognition—shortly one by one.

### *Recognition as instrumentalisation of the other*

As to the instrumentalist view, instead of charting all the different variations it can take, I shall consider a particular version presented by Robert Brandom in his article 'The Structure of Desire and Recognition', reprinted in this collection.<sup>66</sup> What grounds are there for saying that Brandom presents recognition as intersubjective instrumentalisation in the article? In his terms "simply recognising" the other subject is taking it as a reliable indicator for oneself of what is food, or otherwise desire-satisfying. Focusing on the *practical* dimension of this, the practical significance in light of which the other subject is thereby seen in simple recognition is *usefulness* for finding out what one might be able to satisfy one's desires with.<sup>67</sup> As good chairs are good for sitting, good, that is, recognition-worthy other subjects are good for being informed about what is food (or something else of "the kind K"). Hence, on this account recognition does indeed involve a kind of mediation of intentionality through another intentionality in that a subject grasps another being as a subject intending the world and adjusts its own way of intending the world accordingly. Such an idea is not mere armchair-philosophical imagination, since something like this seems to be what higher apes actually do: they observe other apes looking at something and will look at the same direction with apparently the expectation of finding something of interest to themselves there.<sup>68</sup>

Following Brandom's story further, the subsequent stages of recognition ("robust," "super-robust" and so on) are, from the point of view of practical intentionality, interlocking systems of mutual intersubjective instrumentalisation. They are motivationally driven not only by simple desire, but also by what Brandom calls the "desire for recognition". Quite radically, the Brandomian basic level desire for recognition is, as to the practical significance that one desires to have in the eyes of others, *a desire that others would see one in instrumental lights*, namely as a reliable indicator of what is food, or

more generally, as a reliable “K-taker”. Clearly, this would not happen had the others no desire for food or for “the kind K”; thus for desire for recognition to be satisfied at the basic level, the more primitive desire has to be operative as well. Whether the primitive desire becomes eventually redundant at further levels is perhaps a moot point, but what remains is that there is a desire—namely for recognition as instrumentalisation of oneself—and that the others are instrumental for the subject for the satisfaction of this desire. Thought so, mutual recognition is thus a relationship in which subjects instrumentalise each other for their own self-instrumentalisation.

One question that could be asked here concerns the textual plausibility of thinking that what Brandom is talking about is what Hegel had in mind. As far as I can see, there is not much in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Nature* suggesting that he would have entertained such thoughts, nor do I see signs that he would have given them an important place in his *Philosophy of Spirit*. Still, the philosophically more interesting question is whether Brandom’s reconstruction of what recognition is *could in principle* make sense of what recognition does in Hegel’s view. I believe it involves two closely connected problems in this regard that are relevant for our purposes.

The first problem is that Brandom’s account does not seem to get right the *motivational* transformation that in Hegel’s view is of central importance in (a) the transition from animality or wantonness to spirituality or personhood. What motivates Brandomian subjects before recognition, in recognition and after recognition (to simplify the temporality involved a bit) is simply desire. What muddies the waters here is the notion of “desire for recognition”—not Hegel’s notion, but an invention by interpreters (most notably Alexandre Kojève). But the main thing is that although extreme wanton *solipsism* is already overcome (Brandom does not tell how) when we meet Brandom’s subjects the first time, the *egocentrism* of the subject’s practical perspective is not overcome by what Brandom calls recognition at all.<sup>69</sup> In short, Brandom’s subjects remain unshaken in the egoism of their desire-orientation, whereas arguably something quite a bit more radical happens to the motivational structures of subjects on Hegel’s account.

The second, closely related problem is that if mutual recognition is mutual instrumentalisation, then it is very difficult to see it as (b) an element of the essence of life-form of human persons whose actualisation is a

“vocation” for them, or in other words as an *ethical* principle or ideal. Another way to say this is to say that on Brandom’s instrumentalist account the *intersubjective* relation never transforms into an *interpersonal* relation where subjects are in each other’s perspectives *more than* mere means and thereby form a genuine ‘we’. That seems hardly ideal, and therefore Brandom’s account does not seem to grasp adequately what Hegel was after.

### *Recognition as fear for the other*

What about the second option for thinking of recognition as mutual mediation of practical intentionalities—thinking of recognition as mutual *fear* for the other? Such a view, even if it is not often put forth explicitly, does have a kind of shadow life in discussions about Hegelian recognition. Read, for instance, how Terry Pinkard depicts Hegel’s notion of concrete freedom as mutual recognition, which in his view is a relationship or state of co-legislation of shared social norms (or “the law”) by subjects who recognize each other as co-legislators:

[T]o be free is to stand in the relation of being both “master” and “slave” to another agent (who also stands in that same relation to oneself), for each to be both author of the law and subject to the law. Hegel generally characterizes this status as a mode of “being in one’s own sphere” (of being *bei sich selbst*, as he likes to put it).<sup>70</sup>

Pinkard certainly means “master” and “slave” here in some less than literal sense. Yet, since he does not give a clear alternative account of the motivational aspects of mutual recognition, his depiction does suggest the view that the decisive motivational element in Hegelian freedom is the same as what motivates the slave or bondsman to yield under the will of the master in Hegel’s illustration: fear. The only difference is that instead of the asymmetric or unequal relation we thus have a relationship of mutual fear, presumably enforced by mutual threat or coercion.

Something like this picture is germane to various ‘social pressure’ accounts of social norms or norm-obedience, in which the motivating force that social norms have over individuals eventually comes down to some kind of overt or internalised threat of the sanction of others.<sup>71</sup> Could it be that this is also

what Hegel had in mind—that his idea of recognising others (as co-authorities of social norms whereby one lives) motivationally equals to fear of them?

At first sight there are actually stronger textual reasons supporting this phobic view than there are for the instrumentalist view. Especially in the 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel puts significant emphasis on the idea that in contrast to the master who remains motivationally closer to a merely desiring subject, the bondsman has its motivational solipsism shaken off by the fear of death imposed by the threatening master. Hegel's depiction is famous for its drama:

This consciousness [of the bondsman, H.I.] has faced fear, not merely of this or that particular thing or merely at this or that moment. Rather, its whole being has been seized with dread; for it has experienced the fear of death, the absolute Master. In this feeling it is internally dissolved, trembled in every fibre of its being, and all that was solid in it has been shaken loose.<sup>72</sup>

It is difficult to avoid the impression that what really shakes off natural wantonness in Hegel's view is fear, and furthermore the ultimate fear of death, imposed by the other subject. Thus, following this particular clue one might think that for a *general* overcoming of immediate desire-orientation to take place it is necessary that all parties would feel fear for their life and would thereby have their natural solipsism "internally dissolved" or "shaken loose". This would mean that motivationally everyone would be in the situation of the bondsman. And assuming that there were no *external* agency of threat or coercion, and that all parties were at least largely in an equal situation, masterdom would have to be shared as well—hence the idea of everyone being *both* master *and* bondsman to everyone else. Rather than being moved by simple desire, everyone would thus be moved by the motive of self-preservation and fear, and this is what would make every one norm-obeying subjects.

But again, this does not seem to work too well as a construal of recognition that makes sense of what recognition does in Hegel's view. First, although the idea of fear for one's life might be better suited for making sense of how the kind of extreme solipsism or wantonness Hegel is after in his description of 'desire' might be overcome than Brandom's idea of instrumentalisation is,

also on the phobic account the ultimate locus of motivation still remains purely egoistic: it is the motive of self-preservation without which there would be nothing to fear in a death-threat in the first place. If this is all there is to the motivational element of interpersonal recognition, then again it is quite difficult to see recognition as being a central element of the essence of the life-form of human persons whose actualisation is a vocation for them—or in other words as an *ethical* ideal or principle.<sup>73</sup> Analogically with the instrumentalist view, also on the phobic view the *intersubjective* relation never develops into an *interpersonal* relation where subjects are in each other's perspectives *more than* mere threats, and whereby they form a genuine 'we'. Again, that seems hardly ideal, and thus the phobic account does not seem to grasp adequately what Hegel was after.

## VII. Recognition as personifying mediation

What is recognition then if it is to have all of the characteristics and functions that it has for Hegel? In the final version of his *Encyclopaedia* Philosophy of Spirit, Hegel describes the fully unfolded state of mutual recognition that he calls "universal self-consciousness" as follows.

Universal self-consciousness is the *affirmative* knowing of oneself in another self, where each has absolute independence, yet, in virtue of the negation of its immediacy or desire, does not separate itself from the other. It is universal and objective and has real universality as mutuality so that it knows itself recognised in a free other, and knows this in so far as it recognizes the other and knows it *free*.<sup>74</sup>

In the Addition to this paragraph we can read further that this "result of the struggle of recognition" has been drawn (*herbeigeführt*) via the "concept of spirit". This confirms that Hegel thinks of recognition here—in the sub-chapter on "Universal self-consciousness," right after the sub-chapter on the unequal relationship illustrated by the figures of the master and bondsman—in terms of what he says about the concept of spirit in the introduction to Philosophy of Spirit.<sup>75</sup> Three interconnected issues have to be thematised first to make sense of what exactly Hegel is after: *freedom*, *affirmation* and *significance*.

First, the *freedom* of the other is here not a pre-given object to which recognition would merely be a response.<sup>76</sup> Rather, A's recognising B as free is A's *making* B free and only insofar as A makes B free by recognition, can B make A free by recognition. Even if it is not impossible for A or B to have the relevant cognitive attitudes towards B or A, only mutuality of cognitive attitudes establishes full-blown concrete interpersonal freedom. This involves no magical acts of giving the other new causal powers; rather, the state of mutual recognition simply is a relationship of intentionalities that instantiates concrete freedom as mutual conscious-being with oneself in one another.

Secondly, attitudes of recognition are "*affirmative*" of the other in ways in which neither seeing the other in instrumental lights nor fearing the other is. Whereas instrumentalisation involves a subsumation of the other's intentionality into a means for one's particular pre-given ends, and whereas fear involves a subsumation of the other's intentionality as a threat within the space of significance delimited by one's general pre-given end of self-preservation, recognition in Hegel's sense involves an affirmation of the intentionality of the other in a way in which it becomes constitutive of one's ends and thus one's practical intentionality at large. It is due to this affirmation of B's intentionality by A that B can "know"<sup>77</sup> itself (meaning its intentionality) in A (meaning affirmed by A's intentionality), and vice versa. This is what Hegel means by writing that "universal self-consciousness" as mutual recognition is "affirmative knowing" of oneself in the other: one knows oneself affirmed by another whom one similarly affirms. Another way in which he puts this is that subjects "count" (*gelten*) for each other,<sup>78</sup> which is what allows both "to realise" themselves in or through each other's consciousness.<sup>79</sup>

Thirdly, the attitudes of recognition between subjects are ways of attributing the other, or seeing the other in light of, unique *significances* that nothing else has in their perspectives. It is through subjects mutually attributing each other such *affirmative significances*—in light of which they "count" to each other in ways in which nothing else does—that the *intersubjective* relationship instantiates concrete freedom and is an *interpersonal* relationship. Humans become and are, and thus "realise" themselves, as persons by having cognitive attitudes towards each other that are affirming of the other by viewing the other in light of significances whereby he counts as a person for one. It is an essential element of the 'person-making' *psychological* constitution of a subject

that it/she sees other subjects in light of 'person-making' significances—one is not a person if one does not have others in view as persons.<sup>80</sup> It is by recognising each other, in the sense of seeing each other in light of such affirmative significances that subjects are 'I's (and thou's) constituting a 'we', as Hegel put it in the 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*. One cannot put too much emphasis on this point since for Hegel this is *the basic structure of the realm of spirit*.

Recognition thus equals with what we could call 'personification' and hence I call this view—which I claim to be Hegel's view—the *personalist* view of recognition. It is through mutual *recognition as personification* that human subjects actualise or "realise" themselves in the sense of actualising their essence which is personhood.

We are now in a position to start articulating in detail the core ideas of both Hegel's *holism* about the constitution of persons and (the rest of) their social and institutional world, as well as of his *normative essentialism* about the life-form of human persons as a whole. Generally speaking, it is by having attitudes of recognition towards each other that subjects develop socially mediated structures of intentionality that are both constitutive of themselves as persons, and constitutive of the social and institutional world in general. Therefore the phenomenon of *interpersonal recognition is the core of Hegel's social ontological holism*. Further, the degree to which the personalising interpersonal attitudes of recognition are effective in the overall intentionality of subjects is the degree that their interrelations actualise the essence of the life-form—and this is central for the essence's being actualised more generally as well. Therefore *interpersonal recognition is also the core of Hegel's normative essentialism about the human life-form*.

Now, interpersonal relations of recognition have two dimensions which Hegel does not distinguish very clearly from each other, but which need to be distinguished in order to grasp what exactly he is talking about. The two dimensions which I call the *deontological* and the *axiological* correspond to two different attitudes of recognition which I call *respect* and *love*, respectively.<sup>81</sup> Both dimensions are present in Hegel's illustrative fable of the master and bondsman, and even if we have to be careful not to confuse the quasi-empirical details of the illustration with the structural moments that are decisive, it is probably illuminating to discuss the two dimensions partly by reference to the fable. Let us start from the deontological dimension.

### *Recognition as respect*

In discussing the phobic view of recognition we already caught a glimpse of a currently widely spread *deontological* discourse about spirit and freedom in relation to recognition. For Pinkard Hegelian freedom is essentially about collective self-legislation, or co-authority, of shared social norms. Freedom is here understood as autonomy in the sense of living under laws of one's own authorisation and the idea is that this can only take place *collectively* among subjects who *recognise each other as co-authorities*. The figure of the "master" represents thus the figure of the other whose will I recognise as authoritative on me in that I live by norms of his willing; and when everyone is recognised as "master" by everyone else, everyone lives under collectively self-authorised norms. Subjects thus make themselves collectively free by recognising each other as authorities. This is an important idea since it arguably is a fundamental difference between animals that are not persons and persons that the latter's being is thoroughly organised by social norms. Social norms are constitutive of the very 'form' or structure of the life of spiritual beings or persons by being constitutive of their intentionality, and more exactly of both the theoretical and the practical aspects of it.

As to the *theoretical* side, it is by learning to organise its experiences in terms of empirical concepts that the subject begins to grasp the world epistemically in terms of structures that transcend the immediacy of the relevance-structure determined by wanton desire. In Hegel's terminology, this is what is at issue in the transition from mere immediate sensuous consciousness (*sinnliche Bewusstsein*) to perception (*Wahrnehmung*).<sup>82</sup> In perception the world is organised in terms of empirical concepts, and it is in virtue of these that the epistemic subject can find structures of its own thinking instantiated in the world and thus 'itself' in the world. Importantly for us, this is a matter of interpersonality since empirical concepts are embodied in a natural language, and administered, as to their content, by a collective of language-users recognising each other as co-authorities of correct word-usage.<sup>83</sup> Concrete freedom in the epistemic sense of being with oneself in objects of knowledge is hence constitutively dependent on collective norm-administration that requires recognition between administrators.

As to the *practical* side, shared administration of conceptually organised epistemic world-view is only possible among subjects who also pacify and

organise their practical intentionalities and therefore concrete co-existence by collectively authorised and administered *practical* norms. This similarly requires recognition between co-authorities or -administrators. Importantly, neither the norms of theoretical nor of practical intentionality are merely external demands on subjects. Much of them are internalised or embodied through habituation into a “second nature” which is mostly effective in persons without explicit awareness or reflection.<sup>84</sup> This means that persons on the one hand, and the normative structures—or institutions—of their shared social life on the other hand are not separate realities. Rather, *persons are embodiments of social institutions*. Yet, this does not mean that persons are therefore determined or unfree, since norms and institutions are dependent on persons for their authorisation and administration and since persons can, under the right circumstances, be concretely free in the norms and institutions that structure their being.<sup>85</sup>

But what does *respect* have to do with all of this? Above we considered the possibility that it is mutual *fear* that represents the will of others in subjects and makes them norm-obeying beings. As we saw, although this view is not completely unmotivated it is also faced with severe problems as in account of what Hegel is after. Not only would it be very strange to think of mutual fear as a central element of the essence of the life-form in a sense in which it is also vocation or ethical ideal. Moreover, this also seems highly one-sided as an account of what makes the volition of others embodied in social norms subjectively authoritative for persons and thus distinguishes persons motivationally from mere wantons in the deontological dimension.<sup>86</sup> Especially in the case of semantic and other social norms of theoretical intentionality it would seem rather simplifying to think that we take each other as authoritative of them exclusively out of fear. On the other hand, Hegel does give fear a role in the transition from nature to spirit, and it also seems unrealistic to think that fear has *nothing* to do with what makes humans norm-obeying creatures.

Hegel's normative essentialism provides a solution. *Both fear and* the ‘personalising’ cognitive attitude of respect can be included in an account of the right kind of mutual mediation of intentionalities by thinking them as opposite ends of a scale. Whereas fear is a way of the will of another being ‘authoritative’ for a subject, which is furthest from the normative essence of the life-form, respect is the way of this being the case whereby the normative

essence is actualised in the deontological dimension of interpersonal relations. More exactly, mutual respect is the way of mutual authorisation which fully instantiates concrete freedom as mutual conscious-being in one another. Most authority-relations instantiate concrete freedom less than fully, which means that fear for others plays some motivational role in them.

What exactly is then the difference between fear and respect as intersubjective attitudes? Hegel rarely uses the word 'respect' (*Respekt* or *Achtung*), nor does he clarify the conceptual distinction at stake here too explicitly, but let me suggest a way of rational reconstruction. The decisive difference is that whereas one fears the other because of, or "for the sake of" something else—in the extreme case for one's life—one does not respect the other because of something else. That is, the motivating impetus of respect does not stem from some other end, but is *intrinsic* to the attitude. This is the radical sense in which the recognitive attitude of respect is an affirmation of the other: it is *being moved* by the other's volition *intrinsically*, independently of further considerations or motivations. By being intrinsically moved by each other's will subjects mutually "affirm" each other as underived or original sources of authority.<sup>87</sup> This brings about a mutual mediation of volitions in virtue of which subjects can also find themselves in each other in a way that makes them concretely free with regard to each other: I know my will as having intrinsic authority on your will, and vice versa. This is what makes our relationship genuinely *interpersonal* on the deontological dimension and makes us partners in a genuine 'we'.

Thinking of fear and respect as opposite ends of a scale enables one to think of the constitution of social norms and institutions through the practical attitudes of subjects in a way that both allows for variation in the quality of the attitudes and also grasps these constitutive attitudes as having an immanent ideal or normative essence. We can hence say that although accepting (and internalising) norms for merely prudential reasons such as the ultimate fear of death can be constitutive of (at least some) norms and institutions, in merely grudgingly accepting norms and institutions one is not concretely free in them, just as one is not concretely free in any other factors that merely present limitations on or conditions for the realisation of one's pre-given ends.<sup>88</sup>

In terms of Hegel's illustration, although the bondsman is a norm-oriented creature, he is not concretely free in the norms that structure his existence.

Concrete freedom in, or with regard to, norms and institutions requires that one has genuine authority on them and can thus relate to them as instantiations of one's own will. Even in a state of shared mutual mastery and slavery the attitude constitutive of norm-acceptance is still fear, which does not enable subjects to be fully free with regard to each other and therefore also not with regard to the norms and institutions whereby they live. It is only to the extent that the relevant subjects have mutual respect whereby they mutually count for each other as original sources of authority (that is, as persons) that this can take place.

### *Recognition as love*

The above account of concrete freedom and personhood as constituted by mutual recognition as respect is, however, only a partial account of Hegel's holism and normative essentialism in social ontology. As much as the deontological dimension of norms, authority and administration has been at the centre of the recent wave of Hegel-reception in the United States—most prominently by Brandom, Pinkard and Robert Pippin—it is still a one-sided take on what Hegel is after. Indeed, the idea that Hegel's concept of spirit could be grasped exclusively in terms of a deontological discourse of rules or norms and their collective administration is explicitly contrary to one of the most important elements of Hegel's thought running through his career: his rejection of Kantian 'legalism' as the exclusive framework in which to think of morals, rationality and freedom, and his supplementation or substitution of it with a fuller account including an axiological dimension as well.<sup>89</sup>

The concept of recognition is at the very core of the implementation of this programmatic idea of Hegel's in that it covers *both* the deontological dimension of mutual respect, *and* the axiological dimension of mutual love. It is often said that the concept of love had a central importance for Hegel in his early writings, and that it lost this position in his later work. This is true, yet it does not mean that love lost all of its foundational significance for the later Hegel. Strikingly, when Hegel in his late *Encyclopaedia* talks of "universal self-consciousness", the state of mutual recognition that is, he always mentions love.<sup>90</sup> Even if only in passing, in the relevant passages Hegel clearly uses love as an example of the actualisation of the structure of concrete freedom in intersubjective relationships—or in other words of interpersonal recognition.<sup>91</sup>

My claim is that in order to make good sense of what is going on in these passages love has to be understood systematically as a recognitive attitude alongside respect, and as having an important role in fulfilling *at least* function (b) that recognition has for Hegel (see p. 170–171). In short: it is not enough for the full actualisation of concrete freedom that subjects respect each other as co-authors of a space of shared (epistemic and practical) norms, and it is questionable whether without the slightest degree of mutual love they could even have mutual respect (instead of just mutual fear). *Further*, supposing that it is unlikely that *any* stable system of social norms could be based on fear or other prudential motives alone, without the slightest hint of *intrinsic* interpersonal motivation, and supposing that the intrinsic motivating attitude of respect is, in practice, impossible in complete absence of the intrinsically motivating attitude of love, it maybe even impossible (a) to get from nature to spirit—that is, to establish a stable form of co-existence above animality—at all wholly without love. Let me try to substantiate these claims.

The inadequacy of an exclusively deontological reconstruction of what Hegel is after is rather obvious in his illustrative story of the master and the bondsman. What is very important in the story is the coming about of a *care- or concern-structure* in which the subject is worried about its future and prepares for it. Hegel writes:

The crude destruction of the immediate object [defining of animal wantonness, H.I.] is replaced by the acquisition, preservation and formation of it [...]—the form of universality in the satisfaction of need is an enduring means and a solicitude caring for and securing future.<sup>92</sup>

What Hegel is talking about here, is the replacement of the immediacy of wantonness by a temporally extended concern for self (or self-love, to borrow Harry Frankfurt)—a practical self-relation which is simultaneously a new kind of temporally extended practical relation to objectivity. For Hegel and many of those influenced by him such as Marx this introduces the theme of *work*, which Marx thought of as *the* essential feature of the human life-form distinguishing it from animal ones. Caring about one's future satisfaction of needs and thus about oneself involves "acquisition, preservation and formation" of objects. Importantly, Hegel depicts this new form of future-oriented practical intentionality—involving a means-end-structure, or representations

of non-present future ends and instruments for achieving or securing them—as having its origin in the intersubjective encounter.

Whereas in the 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel focuses almost exclusively on the cultivating effects of the master-bondsman-relation on the bondsman, in the mature Philosophy of Spirit he puts more emphasis on, or makes clearer also, the cultivating effect of the relationship on the master. Immediately before the passage quoted above Hegel writes that since also the bondsman, as “the means of masterdom,” has to “preserved alive,” the master and bondsman are *united by* “needs and the concern for their satisfaction”.<sup>93</sup> Not only is the bondsman concerned about the well-being of the master out of fear, also the master is concerned about the well-being of the bondsman for instrumental reasons. The needs and concerns for their future satisfaction of both the master and the bondsman become thus intertwined. What Hegel does here is to describe the future-oriented practical intentionality replacing immediate wanton desire as involving an intersubjective mediation from the start. Abstracting from the quasi-empirical details of the illustrative story, what reason could Hegel possibly have to do so? That is, why should we think that a future-oriented practical intentionality requires or involves some kind of intersubjective mediation from the start?

One perfectly good reason to think this way is the fact that most likely anything but the most rudimentary capacity to *represent* non-prevailing states of affairs, and thereby future, is a social achievement. Why? Because it requires conceptually organised capacities of representation. ‘Representation’ (*Vorstellung*)<sup>94</sup> is Hegel’s general name for the psychological operations responsible for the form of theoretical intentionality that he calls perception (*Wahrnehmung*). Essential for all of these is that they involve a subsumation of the givenness of senses under general concepts (*allgemeine Vorstellung*) which requires memory (for associating past and present sensations), and makes possible phenomena such as “hope and fear,” which are modes of representing future. In his mature Philosophy of Nature Hegel writes:

[The] dimensions [of past and future, H.I.] do not occur in nature [...] as *subsistent* differences; they are necessary only in subjective representation, in memory and in fear or hope.<sup>95</sup>

In other words, past and future, as “subsistent differences” which means constitutive of the present, are there only *for* subjects capable of cross-temporal representation and in Hegel’s view this involves a cross-temporal *care*-structure in which future states of affairs *matter*. There is any point in having representations about the future only if future is given in the present as something one can be *fearful or hopeful* about. This is the case within the perspective of subjects with a temporally extended concern for themselves. As to the argument for the inherent sociality of this form of intentionality the decisive issue is that it requires (save perhaps the most rudimentary modes) *language* as the medium and reservoir of conceptual operations<sup>96</sup>, and that language is dependent on the intersubjective practice of administration of conceptual or semantic norms.<sup>97</sup> Hence, the concept-language-norm-administration-involving nature of representative capacities does support Hegel’s way of describing future-oriented practical intentionality as a social phenomenon from the start.

Yet, Hegel is clearly after something more than this. If this would be the whole story about the intersubjective mediation of future-oriented intentionality characteristic of human persons, it would still leave their concern- or care-structure fundamentally egoistic and the axiological dimension of their practical intentionality with regard to each other merely prudential. In Hegel’s illustration both the master and the bondsman care intrinsically only about their own future, and merely prudentially or instrumentally about the future of the other. Both have thus love for themselves (and are therefore persons in Frankfurt’s terms)—yet they do not have love for each other.

It is through mutual love for each other whereby subjects affirm each other’s intentionality so that their care- or concern-structures become mutually constitutive in a way that is an instantiation of concrete freedom. Whereas the master and the bondsman both only care about the well-being of the other instrumentally, each for one’s own sake, mutually loving persons both care about the well-being of the other *intrinsically*, each for the *other’s* own sake. The recognitive attitude of love for the other is an unconditional affirmation of the other, not as an original source of authority, but as an irreducible perspective of concerns and thus as an original source of value. Loving the other involves a mediation or ‘triangulation’ of perspectives of concerns, analogically to how respecting the other involves a mediation or triangulation of perspectives of authority.

What happens in a state of mutual love is thus that the subjects' temporal perspectives of "fear and hope" are mutually mediated and "caring for and securing future" becomes a joint project where *I* am intrinsically motivated to work also for *your* and therefore for *our* future, and the same goes for you. The 'we' is here not merely a bond constituted by prudential or egoistic motives, as in the relationship of the master and the bondsman, but rather a unity of practical intentionalities where the concerns of both (or all) parties are equally important in sculpting the world in axiological terms in the perspective of both. When both know that the other has (at least some) love for one, each is self-conscious in the other by finding one's concerns affirmed by the loving other who has internalised them as constitutive of his own concerns.<sup>98</sup>

Analogically with fear and respect on the deontological dimension, Hegel's normative essentialism allows one to conceive of instrumentalisation and other prudential motives on the one hand, and love on the other hand as opposite ends of a scale of attitudes constitutive of the mediation of practical intentionalities on the axiological dimension. Thereby we can think of sociality in the constitution of the axiological features of the world for persons (their ends, constituents of ends, things and states with positive or negative instrumental value) and thus in their motivation-structures in a way that both allows for variation in the quality of the constitutive intersubjective attitudes and also grasps these as having an immanent ideal or normative essence.

As to the question whether it is possible to get from nature to spirit at all wholly without love, or in other words whether love is essential for the life-form of human persons not only (b) as an immanent ideal but also (a) as a necessary condition (see p. 170), we should acknowledge at least that there is a genuine question. Thinkers as different as George Herbert Mead and Talcott Parsons have thought that the success of a life-form driven by a purely egoistic (more than wanton) concern-structures is unlikely.<sup>99</sup> One reason to think this way is the comparative cognitive complexity of mediation of care-structures (and they have to be somehow mediated in shared co-existence in any case) in exclusively prudential terms, in comparison to a mediation based at least in part on intrinsic concern for the needs and well-being of others. The latter is cognitively simpler since reduces the need for the kind of (tacit or explicit) deliberation involved in taking the concerns of others into account in one's own concerns prudentially.

Put simply: life is immensely more complicated if anyone only helps anyone, or cooperates, when it seems all things considered the prudential thing for oneself to do, than it is if subjects are at least sometimes moved by each other's needs intrinsically, without any further considerations. The more cognitively demanding the simplest forms of co-existence (say, between mothers and their offspring) are, the less likely they are to succeed under conditions of cognitive finitude. This does not prove the strict necessity of love for the life-form of human persons, but it does at least suggest that humans should be extremely intelligent to navigate a completely loveless social world where any motivation for interaction would be conditional, if not on explicit calculation of personal advantage, at least on trust that such calculation would favour interacting. There is, further, the question raised above whether *respect* or intrinsic motivation by the will of others is possible in complete lack of love or intrinsic motivation by the well-being of others. If it is not, then love is hardly any less important for the constitution of the social and institutional world of human persons than respect is.<sup>100</sup>

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To be clear, the details presented above of what exactly recognition in Hegel's sense is, based on what he thinks it does and the fact that he thinks of it as an instantiation of concrete freedom as self-consciousness in other subjects, are not something Hegel himself spells out lucidly anywhere. In the Self-consciousness-chapter of both the published and lectured versions of his mature Philosophy of Subjective Spirit he tends to talk of the deontological and the axiological dimensions without a clear distinction, even though distinguishing them is necessary for making clear sense of the totality of what he says. Similarly, he often conflates the interpersonal forms of recognition with a recognition or acknowledgement of the deontic or institutional powers of the other, which easily leads to an obfuscation of the constitutive role of interpersonal recognition for norms and institutions.<sup>101</sup>

This is all symptomatic of the fact that Hegel mainly focuses on the fairly abstract structural features of concrete freedom as self-consciousness in other subjects. He is much less focused—even in the illustrative story of the master and bondsman—on clarifying *what exactly* the interpersonal attitudes of recognition constitutive of universal self-consciousness have to be and how exactly they relate to the closely connected intersubjective motives of fear and

instrumentalisation (that is, instrumental valuing) of the other. These are issues we have just tried to clarify, drawing on Hegel's own statements and conceptual resources.

### VIII. Actualising the normative essence

We should now have a grasp of the basic ideas and principles of Hegel's holism and normative essentialism in social ontology. Let us return to the idea that may be the most difficult of all to swallow: the *self-realisation* of the essence of spirit or the human life-form. What sense can we make of this idea?

A central issue here is the *constitutive self-reflexivity* of the life-form in question, or in other words the fact that what persons take themselves to be is partly constitutive of what they are.<sup>102</sup> Applied to essentialism, the point is the answer to the question 'what do we take ourselves to be essentially?' is partly constitutive of the answer to the question 'what are we essentially?'<sup>103</sup> This does not mean that anyone can individually make oneself essentially this or that by the simple act of thinking that this is what one essentially is. And even if people have collectively much greater capacities for self-definition, even collectively they do not have a magical power to make themselves essentially something simply by entertaining thoughts or beliefs about themselves. The point is rather that collectively taking something as essential to us is constitutive of what we are through being an *ideal* towards which we are oriented in practice. This is the sense in which the essence of the human life-form is not simply a given "determination," but a "vocation" (the German word '*Bestimmung*' combines both these meanings) for humans in Hegel's view. It is because what humans collectively take themselves to be essentially is (thereby) a vocation for them, that the essence has whatever tendency it has to self-actualisation.

The above example of using artifacts is illuminating here. The life-form in general can be thought of as the totality of all the real practices that persons engage in collectively. Or, as Hegel puts it, it is the "universal work [...] the activity of everyone".<sup>104</sup> As in the case of the particular practice focused on chairs and sitting, also in the case of the totality of all practices, 'taking' something as essentially something should be understood in the sense of 'common sense' that is not merely 'in the heads' of the participants,

but is an 'objective' form of thinking at work in practice. What works in practice is never completely up to grabs but depends on numerous factors many of which are simply unchangeable (say, the law of gravitation) or at least relatively stable and slow to change (say, the average shape of human backsides). Common sense about normative essences is constantly put to test in practice by such factors. If we are going to talk sensibly about thinking about or taking something as the essence of the human life-form as constitutive of it's being the essence, then 'thinking or taking' has to be understood exactly in this sense: as common sense at work and tested in the collective life of humanity at large.

Thought so, Hegel's global actualist normative essentialism about the human life-form involves the claim that concrete freedom is a self-actualising essence in being an immanent ideal actually at work in the totality of human practices. Hence, what he means with 'concrete freedom' should be part of more or less universally shared practice-constituting common sense. Can such a bold claim be validated with evidence? What kind of evidence would be appropriate? Or to put it the other way around, what kind of evidence would refute it? These are obviously large questions and I will only make a few suggestive remarks concerning them.

To start with, claiming that mutual recognition (which is the central instantiation of concrete freedom) is an immanent ideal of all interpersonal relations is perhaps not as outrageous as at least sweeping rejections of normative essentialism would make it seem. A good way of construing the claim is to say that to the extent that any human relationship or practice does not actualise interpersonal recognition it is less than ideal in ways that are accessible to normal participants, or are part of their common sense.

The common sense quality of recognition and its absence is made robust by the fact that the goodness of recognition and the badness of its absence is *both functional and ethical* in nature. This is what the figures of the master and the bondsman illustrate well. As to the deontological dimension, to the extent that their relationship is founded on coercion and fear, rather than on mutual authorisation of its terms or norms by both (or all) parties respecting each other as co-authorities, the relationship is inherently unstable and vulnerable to violent collapse or revolution due to contingent changes in the equation of power. Any moderately intelligent slave-owner or dictator will be able to tell this much.

This *functional* deficiency of relationships and practices grounded on coercion and fear, rather than shared authority, is hardly independent of their being *ethically* deficient or pathological in ways that are robustly commonsensical. If anything is a more or less universally comprehensible, clearly moral or ethical experience for more or less psychologically normal persons, then the experience that others do not respect one as having authority on the norms or terms of co-existence (even potentially, as adults do with regard to children), but force one to obey their will. It is the more or less universally human obviousness of this fact that explains why there is a tendency in slave-owning societies towards the often seriously self-deceptive and delusive attempt to try to imagine or discursively construe the slaves in general as by their nature less than full psychological persons in the sense of lacking a serious moral perspective, or at least as incapable of sharing authority and therefore as being in need of external control. In other words, there is a tendency among slave-owners to try to imagine or construe the slaves as either essentially different from oneself and one's peers, or then as inherently deficient in their capacity to actualise the essence that one shares with them. It is no news that when common sense collides with strong enough interests, the former does not always prevail. Yet, abolitionists rarely need to perform particularly demanding intellectual acrobatics to point out the self-deceptive nature of such exercises of imagination or construction.

Lack of recognition and therefore concrete freedom on the deontological dimension of interpersonal relationships is tied to lack of concrete freedom with regard to norms and institutions: if I am not attributed authority on institutions by others and therefore do not have it, I do not find my will instantiated in them. On the other hand, if I am the sole authority of institutions (a slave-master or dictator), I do find my will instantiated in the institutions, but they are not properly other to, or independent of me. For me they are not made of genuine norms or laws at all, and to that extent I am therefore not a norm-governed being. Even norms and institutions based on *mutual* threat and fear do not actualise concrete freedom since they bind individuals mostly in the way of a hostile or alien otherness.

Somewhat analogically on the axiological dimension, to the extent that relationships and practices are characterised by no or merely instrumental concern, for the life or well-being of other participants, they are functionally unstable, and this is partly due to their being ethically deficient

in a robustly commonsensical way. There are tendencies of thinking—impressed by aspects of modern economics and related theoretical enterprises—that pure egoism is a sufficient motivational foundation for an organisation of human co-existence, but they cannot boast of a particularly wide global intuitive appeal. One reason why the idea is not convincing, when said aloud, is its commonsensical ethical reprehensibility: most people would find social life based on pure egoism as hardly worth living, and certainly not worth sacrificing much for.<sup>105</sup> Again, if anything is a more or less universally comprehensible clearly moral or ethical experience, then that others do not care about one or one's well-being at all, or care about it purely instrumentally. From another point of view, it is part of well-established common sense among humanity widely spread across cultures that life will be lonely and miserable if one has no intrinsic concern for anyone else except for oneself. If anything has been thoroughly tested in practice for as long as human memory and written record extends, then this. Whatever the details of one's favourite theoretical account of this robustly commonsensical truth, they clearly have to do with, if not unchangeable, at least extremely slowly changing facts about the constitution of human persons.

Also on the axiological dimension, lack of recognition and therefore of concrete freedom is tied to lack of concrete freedom with regard to the socially constituted world more generally. The less people care about each other's well-being intrinsically, the less it shows in their actions that mould and structure the social world. Since in a finite world egoists have to limit their spheres of egoistic activity with regard to each other, each will find his or her needs or claims of happiness and well-being directly met or affirmed by only that part of the world which belongs to his or her own respective sphere, whereas elsewhere they are met or affirmed only "with a price"—only if someone else gains a personal advantage by meeting them. There is a clear sense in which people can find their needs and claims of happiness affirmed by, and therefore be self-conscious in, items of the world that are built or made available to meet their needs and claims without (or at least not merely with) an expectation of compensation, a sense in which they will not find themselves affirmed in items they have to buy. The latter do not exist for my sake, but for the sake of the instrumental value I have as a needy being for the one selling.<sup>106</sup>

All in all, there seem to be at least some grounds for arguing for a rather robustly universal commonsensicality of the thought that human relations and practices are non-ideal to the degree that they do not instantiate interpersonal recognition. Yet, this necessary component of the self-reflective and self-constitutive essentialism about the human life-form in Hegel's sense of course also has to be compatible with a historical variability of human societies: not always and everywhere has it been thought that any relationship is non-ideal or deficient to the extent that it does not instantiate recognition, or that anyone's life is non-ideal to the extent that she is not concretely free with regard to others or with regard the social and institutional world. It would probably be too simple to describe this *merely* in terms of collective self-deception convenient for the prevailing masters.

As Hegel puts it in the introduction to his (posthumously edited and published) lectures on philosophy of history, the Orientals "knew" only that "one is free," the Greeks and Romans "knew" that "some are free," and first the "German nations," under the influence of Christianity, "attained the consciousness" that all are free, or in other words that "man, as man is free, that it is the freedom of spirit which constitutes his essence". What is interesting in this statement are not so much the debatable historical details, but the importance of "knowing" or "consciousness" that one is free for being free. Hegel seems to be saying that it is (at least partly) because the Orientals *did not know* that they are all free, that they *were not all free*; similarly it is because the slave-owning Greeks did not know that all are free, that their slaves were not free; finally it is because the German nations gained consciousness of universal freedom that they became actually free.<sup>107</sup>

"Consciousness" and "knowing" (*Wissen*) have both very broad meanings for Hegel, standing basically for any intentional state with content in the object-form.<sup>108</sup> Thus, in this context they could in principle stand *either* for knowing or being conscious of (the fact) that x is free, where this is the appropriate epistemic response to the independent fact that x is free, *or* for willing that x is free where this can be part of making it the case that x is free. I suggest that *both* construals grasp an aspect of what Hegel is after.

On the one hand, "knowing" or "consciousness" of freedom as the essence of man is in Hegel's view constitutive of humans' becoming free through its being introduced, as he writes, as "a principle" "in worldly affairs," by being

“applied” in the world and thereby leading slowly to a “cultivation” of states, governments and constitutions. In other words, freedom as the essence of humanity is actualised as it slowly becomes practice-constituting common sense on a broad front. In this sense it involves an aspect of willing. (Since this does not happen overnight, as if a sudden change of mind, “slavery did not cease immediately on the reception of Christianity”).<sup>109</sup>

On the other hand, even if consciousness of freedom being the essence of humanity is constitutive of the *actualisation* of the essence, this consciousness is also responsive to independent facts about humanity that are part of what makes it the case that freedom *is* their essence in the sense of an immanent ideal. In short: freedom did *not* become the essence of the human life-form only when humans came up with (originally religious) representations that it is their essence. Again, this is something Hegel illustrates with the figures of the lord and the slave, which he uses as an *ahistorical* image of the dysfunctionality and tendency to self-overcoming of intersubjective relations that do not actualise concrete freedom.

Hegel is very well aware of the fact that it will make a difference to social life when people become reflectively conscious about important facts about social life, or in other words when (religious or other) cultural representations of and models for thinking about them become available. Yet, even such representations will change social life only gradually, and at least in the long run they can only do this by being responsive to partly independent and even if not unchanging, at least very slowly changing facts about what they represent. For Hegel, the actualisation of the essence of the human life-form, the core of all progress in history, is an actualisation of *given potentials*. These potentials need not be thought of as in some implausible sense *eternal* (to be traced back to the Big Bang and beyond), yet they are very slow to change and therefore fairly resistant to historical variation, including deliberate engineering. No wonder, we can barely even imagine what it would mean to think of a mode of co-existence based exclusively on mutual fear and/or instrumentalisation as a practice-immanent ideal of both functionally and ethically good human societies.<sup>110</sup>

On the other hand, Hegel understood perfectly well that distorting cultural representations or ideologies have the capacity to obstruct common sense from grasping the essence and immanent ideal of human affairs, and

therefore the capacity to support modes of social life that for outsiders or later generations are staggeringly obviously far from ideal. Sometimes, those not in the grips of the representations will judge such modes of social life 'inhuman', which is to say so far from the essence of the life-form of human persons that they approach the blurry boundaries of what belongs to that form at all.<sup>111</sup>

As for the importance of Christianity for Hegel, it is illuminating to note that both authority and love are attributes of the Christian God, and that Hegel's philosophical reinterpretation, involving a systematic reduction of the Christian trinity to one of its components—'spirit'—makes authority and love essential attributes of humanity, or of human life that actualises its essence. It is not that Hegel uncritically adopts certain Christian dogmas as the backbone of his social ontology, but rather that he thinks they provide metaphorical representations of essential structures of the life-form of human persons, the non-metaphorical representation of which is the task of philosophy.<sup>112</sup>

## Conclusion

What is the contemporary relevance of Hegel's social ontology? As with all genuine classics in philosophy, such a question will have many answers. I have suggested that currently it might be useful in providing means for a general reorientation in social ontology towards a more holistic and in-depth approach, where the social constitution of persons and thereby the most fundamental levels of the constitution of the social and institutional world in general would become a serious topic of philosophical investigation.

As for Hegel's normative essentialism, I am not convinced that it has been so far understood well enough for a conclusive judgment about its viability to be passed. The main reason why I believe it too is an aspect of Hegel's social ontology that has relevance today is that it is a conceptual strategy that is aimed at getting at the most fundamental practice-immanent convictions or intuitions of common sense about what makes forms of human co-existence good. It is a haunting fact—haunting because so much in the current landscape of philosophy speaks against taking it seriously—that the strongest moral or ethical intuitions we arguably share about human affairs tend to be articulated in normative essentialist terms. I am referring to the expressions

that something is 'inhuman', 'inhumane', or 'genuinely or truly human', and so forth. If one is not at all willing to consider the possibility that there might be something serious behind such expression, something which they *correctly* express in normative essentialist terms, then one is unlikely to find a reassessment of the viability of normative essentialism in social philosophy very interesting. On the other hand, if one has even a nagging suspicion that there actually might be something worth a philosophical reconstruction in such expressions, or the intuitions they express,<sup>113</sup> then taking a fresh look at what Hegel was really on about with his normative essentialism in social ontology is, in my view at least, not at all a bad idea.

There is of course a major (even if nowadays almost obsolete) stream of thought where normative essentialism, in various, more or less well articulated guises used to be taken seriously. This is the dispersed tradition of humanist Marxism, the story of which begins with the young Karl Marx.<sup>114</sup> Marx may not have read all the right texts from Hegel, and he may have read what he read idiosyncratically, but he certainly had an eye both for Hegel's holism as well as his Aristotelian normative essentialism. In terms of how I have spelled out the fundamentals of these in this article, three facts about Marx's own creative appropriation of Hegel are worth mentioning briefly.

1. What Marx means by '*Entfremdung*' (variously translated as 'alienation' or 'estrangement') can be reconstructed as the opposite of what Hegel means by 'concrete freedom' as conscious-being in otherness. Thus, overcoming alienation means actualising the essence of humanity which is concrete freedom. In Marx's terms this means actualising the human 'species-being'.
2. Marx radically disagrees with the institutional details of Hegel's Philosophy of Objective Spirit. Perhaps most importantly, whereas Hegel sees private property as an instantiation of concrete freedom, Marx sees private ownership (especially of means of production) as the main factor leading to alienation. Here the general idea of concrete freedom and its opposite does not, as such, determine which one is the right view (remember the point about 'necessary contingency'). My discussion of how lack of recognition in the axiological dimension is conducive to the needs and claims of happiness of persons not being affirmed by the social and institutional world (since in the world of egoists most things come with a price-tag) was already a

concretization Hegel's principle of concrete freedom that drifts to Marx's general direction. Whether this, all things considered, is the right direction to go, and how far it is good to go, will not be decided simply on conceptual grounds, but by a myriad empirical things that depend on time and place. Social philosophy with emancipatory interest, engaged with concrete details, can only be its "own time [and place] comprehended in thoughts".

3. Whereas those who read Hegel predominantly in light of Kantian legalism in philosophy—that is, in terms of the deontological discourse of autonomy as collective self-authorisation of norms—tend to lose sight of the axiological dimension of Hegel's project (and thereby the recognitive aspects of what really moves or matters to persons), the young Marx one-sidedly focuses on the axiological dimension of love<sup>115</sup> and loses from sight the deontological dimension. This makes his social ontology defective with regard to social norms and institutions and obstructs him from grasping clearly the difference between alienated and non-alienated relations to them. Since persons themselves are embodiments of social norms and institutions, this is a serious theoretical flaw with potentially devastating practical consequences.

As the huge influence of Hegel's thought (with all the battles, distortions and misunderstandings that belong to its reception-history) testifies, philosophy is *de facto* not merely descriptive of the world, but also changes it by becoming part of the reservoir of cultural representations whereby humans collectively try to articulate to themselves what they hold, or what is, essential to their being. Social ontology is therefore, by its nature, not a harmless enterprise.<sup>116</sup> It depends on historically varying empirical details whether the consequences of flawed philosophical conceptualisations are more serious than the consequences of a widespread lack of philosophical articulation of the most fundamental facts about human persons and their life-form.<sup>117</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> J. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, London, Penguin, 1995, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, ed. J. Stewart, *The Hegel Myths and Legends*, Chicago, Northwestern University Press, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> 'Constituting', and 'constitution' can of course mean many things. Here I am assuming that 'constitution' in the relevant sense is not merely a logical relation, as

when we say that a block of marble constitutes a statue under suitable conditions (see L. Rudder Baker, *Persons and Bodies: A Constitution View*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000). The ‘constitution’ of the entities, relations and so forth of the social and institutional world—arguably on any plausible account—involves some kind of *activity* by suitable kinds of subjects. For instance, pieces of paper only ‘constitute’ a dollar bill (in the logical sense) when suitable kinds of subjects ‘constitute’ them (in the activity-sense) as such by treating them as such. In the case of persons this is especially clear: the relevant conditions under which something ‘constitutes’ a person include several kinds of ‘constitutive’ activities, not only by other persons, but also by the person in question. In more than one way persons are persons by making themselves persons. For more on this, see H. Ikäheimo, “Recognizing Persons,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, vol. 14, no. 5–6. 2007, pp. 224–247. See also A. Laitinen, “Constitution of persons,” in eds. H. Ikäheimo, J. Kotkavirta, A. Laitinen & P. Lyyra *Personhood—Workshop papers of the Conference ‘Dimensions of Personhood’*, Publications in Philosophy 68, Jyväskylä, University of Jyväskylä, 2004, for a critique of the formula ‘x constitutes a person’. I basically agree with Laitinen’s critique.

<sup>4</sup> This is not to be understood in the simple “attributivist” sense that all there is to being a person is to be attributed personhood (by attitudes, discourses or whatever). In contrast, this is all there is to being, say, money (*mutatis mutandis*). What I am saying is also meant to be compatible with the possibility that some facts about persons that are independent of sociality are constitutive of personhood.

<sup>5</sup> When it comes to saying something about the kinds of individual subjects that their theories imply or require, some leading contemporary social ontologists, such as Margaret Gilbert and Raimo Tuomela, adopt the methodological abstraction of social contract theories and take the existence of fully developed and socialised persons as given. Tuomela expresses this as follows (R. Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality: The Shared Point of View*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 6): “conceptually we start with a full notion of a human being as a person”. He does say this about the constitution of persons in his most recent book: “This book relies on the conception of human beings as persons in the sense of the ‘framework of agency’ that assumes that (normal) persons are thinking, experiencing, feeling, and acting beings capable of communication, cooperation, and following rules and norms.” (*ibid.*, p. 6); “the capacity and motivation for sharing intentional states is an evolved central aspect of being a person” (*ibid.*, p. 231). These constitutive capacities are however not a topic, but a presupposition of Tuomela’s social ontology (or “philosophy of sociality” to use his own term). In Gilbert’s view “the concept of an individual person with his own goals, and so on, does not require for its analysis a concept of a collectivity itself unanalysable in terms of persons and their noncollectivity-involving properties.” (M. Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1989, pp. 435) Gilbert’s paradigmatic

example of a social phenomenon is two full-fledged persons walking together, where these can be conceived as “congenital Crusoes” (Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, p. 59; see also Gilbert, “Walking Together: A Paradigmatic Social Phenomenon,” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 15, 1990). Other leading contemporary social ontologists, such as John Searle, content themselves with the evolutionally obvious fact that the subjective capacities of individual needed for building and maintaining a world of social and institutional facts or structures collectively have to be capacities that animals can have developed. (See Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*; see also H. Rakoczy & M. Tomasello, “The Ontogeny of Social Ontology: Steps to Shared Intentionality and Status Functions,” ed. S. Tsohatzidis *Intentional Acts and Institutional Facts: Essays on John Searle's Social Ontology*, Berlin, Springer, 2007, pp. 113–139, for an argument that Searle reads collective phenomena much too liberally in nature, thereby neglecting fundamental differences between the social ontology of humans and other animals. I am of course not claiming that *nothing* useful in this regard has been written by contemporary authors. See, for instance, Philip Pettit's *The Common Mind*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993, for an argument for the (in Pettit's view contingent) sociality of mindedness.

<sup>6</sup> B. Preston, *The Stuff of Life: Towards a Philosophy of Material Culture*, (book-manuscript), Chapter 3, contains a thorough critique of Tuomela and Gilbert from this point of view.

<sup>7</sup> Hegel-scholars often say that translating ‘*Geist*’ as ‘mind’ is misleading. The way in which Anthony Crisafi and Shaun Gallagher (“Hegel and the extended mind,” *AI and Society*, 25, 2010, pp. 123–129) use Hegel's concept of objective *Geist* in the extended mind-debate suggests that it may be less misleading than often thought. I will use however ‘spirit’ throughout the text.

<sup>8</sup> See P. Stekeler-Weithofer, “Persons and Practices,” in H. Ikäheimo & A. Laitinen, *Dimensions of Personhood*, Exeter, Imprint Academic, 2007, pp. 174–198.

<sup>9</sup> In this paper I abstract from the question whether non-human persons are a real possibility. I think it is (see Ikäheimo, “Recognizing Persons”). Yet, it may be an empirical fact that there are currently no persons among non-human animals (see Ikäheimo, “Is ‘Recognition’ in the Sense of Intrinsic Motivational Altruism Necessary for Pre-Linguistic Communicative Pointing,” eds. W. Christensen, E. Schier, J. Sutton *ASCS09—Proceedings of the Australasian Society for Cognitive Science*, Macquarie Centre for Cognitive Science, 2010, [www.maccs.mq.edu.au/news/conferences/2009/ASCS2009/ikaheimo.html](http://www.maccs.mq.edu.au/news/conferences/2009/ASCS2009/ikaheimo.html)).

<sup>10</sup> My usage of ‘personhood’ is not meant to follow Hegel's usage of ‘*Persönlichkeit*’, but to resonate with a wide variety of classic and contemporary ways of using the term.

<sup>11</sup> To be fair, elements of the received view of Hegel's concept of spirit are not merely philosopher's folklore, but also put forth in many serious interpretations of Hegel's

philosophy. One of the most famous of such interpretations is Charles Taylor's *Hegel*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975. Taylor's main mistake in his in many ways admirable book is to presuppose a pre-given notion of what 'spirit' means—in Taylor's view a "cosmic spirit" that "posits the world" (*ibid.*, chapter 3)—instead of simply trying to make sense, without preconceptions, of what it has to mean if it is a title for what is actually discussed in Hegel's *Philosophy of Spirit*.

<sup>12</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, translated with editorial comments M. J. Petry, Dordrecht, Reidel, 1978–1979 [HPSS], Volume I, p. 83.

<sup>13</sup> Hegel's Encyclopaedic system as a whole consists of Logic, Philosophy of Nature and Philosophy of Spirit. Philosophy of Spirit consists of Philosophy of Subjective Spirit, Philosophy of Objective Spirit, and Philosophy of Absolute Spirit. Philosophy of Subjective Spirit has similarly three parts: Anthropology, Phenomenology and Psychology.

<sup>14</sup> This particular caricature of Hegel has been reproduced over and over again. A recent version is by Hans-Johann Glock in an otherwise very useful book (H.-J. Glock, *What is Analytic Philosophy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 25): "The German idealists tried to overcome [...] tensions [inherent in Kant's transcendental idealism] by taking idealism to extremes. The subject furnishes not just the form of cognition, but also its content. Reality is a manifestation of a spiritual principle which transcends individual minds, such as Hegel's 'spirit'. Since reality is itself entirely mental, it can be fully grasped by the mind. Philosophy once more turns into a super-science which encompasses all other disciplines. All genuine knowledge is a priori, since reason can derive even apparently contingent facts through the method of 'dialectic', which was rehabilitated in the face of Kant's strictures." Further: "Naturalists à la Quine, Kantian or Wittgensteinian anti-naturalists and even proponents of essentialist metaphysics à la Kripke reject the ultra-rationalist Hegelian idea that philosophy can pronounce a priori on the nature of the world, independently of the special sciences." (*ibid.*, p. 224) Although the relation of contingency and necessity in Hegel is a matter of considerable debate, no serious Hegel-scholar who has any real knowledge about how Hegel actually goes about with his topics in the *Philosophy of Nature*, or *Philosophy of Spirit*, would claim that Hegel really tries to deduce "even apparently contingent facts" a priori. As the late Michael John Petry, one of the best experts ever on Hegel's relation to the sciences, has shown in painstaking detail in his editions of Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit* [HPSS], Hegel was highly erudite in the sciences of his time, and far from the stereotypical armchair-speculator who thinks he can pronounce truths about the world completely "independently of the special sciences". There are numerous places where Hegel explicitly emphasises the importance of the sciences for a philosophical comprehension of the world, or ridicules those who demand an a priori deduction of its details. Further, even if Hegel does reject the Kantian thought that the world

“in itself” is strictly inaccessible to knowledge, he does not do this by postulating that “reality itself is entirely mental”. Hegel does think that spirit can grasp nature, but this does not mean that nature itself is spiritual or “mental”. Rather it means that nature is in principle knowable through disciplined scientific and philosophical inquiry. At the same time however Hegel is critical of any suggestion that the sciences could do wholly without philosophy. For him the boundary between the sciences and philosophy is more a matter of degree than one of a clear-cut demarcation. On my reading, Hegel would have been in agreement with Quine’s rejection of the analytic/synthetic distinction, and thereby of a clear demarcation between philosophy on the one hand and empirical sciences on the other. Against appearance, I do not think that this claim is incompatible with what Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer is after in his contribution to this volume: one can *both* accept that structural descriptions are not mere empirical generalisations, and *also* accept that they come in various degrees of abstraction.

<sup>15</sup> I say “in principle,” since it is arguable that these two texts differ from each other in significant ways, not merely in the sense of the one being an extended version of the other. See D. Henrich, “Logical Form and Real Totality: The Authentic Conceptual Form of Hegel’s Concept of the State,” in R. Pippin & O. Höffe, *Hegel on Ethics and Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

<sup>16</sup> D. Stederoth, *Hegels Philosophie des subjektiven Geistes*, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 2001, chapter 2 contains a helpful discussion in this theme.

<sup>17</sup> A familiar experience to readers of Hegel is that one has to struggle even to make sense of what exactly is the issue that Hegel is talking about in a given passage in the first place. This is at least partly because Hegel almost always has several things going on in a given passage.

<sup>18</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen Wood, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991 [EPR], p. 21.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>20</sup> In short, one should not, and does not need to, worry about, say, the monarch, the estates, or other similar details of Hegel’s institutional design in *Philosophy of Objective Spirit*, but rather focus on the more abstract levels of conceptualisation where one is likely to find more generally valid insights about the interconnection of the constitution of persons and the constitution of the (rest of the) social and institutional world. One can similarly abstract from Hegel’s own idiosyncrasies of perspective belonging to the more concrete levels of description, such as his antiquated views about the natural differences between men and women translating into differences in psychological constitution and appropriate social role (HPSS, §397; EPR, §166 ).

<sup>21</sup> ‘Holism’ is not to be read as suggesting that in Hegel’s view the individual is determined by the social ‘whole’, but merely suggesting that Hegel approaches the constitution of persons and the constitution of the (rest of the) social and institutional world as an interconnected whole. This, as such, involves yet no claim concerning to

what extent, or how one or the other element of this whole is ‘determined’ by the other. Cf. Pettit, *The Common Mind*, chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>22</sup> I am thinking of political and critical theory especially. On essentialism in the beginning of the left-Hegelian tradition, see M. Quante, “Recognition as the Social Grammar of Species Being in Marx”, in this volume.

<sup>23</sup> In heated discussions such details get easily confused so that someone may, for instance, end up defending global anti-essentialism, even though his or her real worry concerns essentialism about something in particular. In principle, there is no pressing need to extend ones commitment to anti-essentialism, say, to trees or chairs, if essentialism about humans or persons is what one in fact worried about—and mostly it is essentialism about humans or persons that raises worries. Instead of simply condemning essentialism flat out, it is usually a good advice to reflect carefully on which form of essentialism, about what exactly, and why exactly, one finds problematic, as well as which form of anti-essentialism, about what exactly, and why exactly one wants to subscribe to.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. the subtitle of John Searle’s most recent book *Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010.

<sup>25</sup> It is of course possible to be a normative essentialist without subscribing to this teleological idea.

<sup>26</sup> A house would be the traditional Aristotelian example of a usable artefact. Note that not all usable things are artifacts, nor are all artifacts usable. We use natural entities as well, and we can produce things not to be used for anything.

<sup>27</sup> Does this mean that it is strictly *impossible* that there are chair-designers who do not think it is essential to chairs to be good to sit on, or who do not have an idea of what makes something good to sit on? Perhaps not. The normative essentialist conceptualist strategy does not stipulate necessary and sufficient conditions for something’s being x, but rather focuses on the essence or ideal of x which is determined by what works best in real practices. The question “how far” from the essence something has to be so that it ceases to be x altogether has usually no definite answer in practice. In social ontology the usefulness of conceptualising the world in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions is often less than clear. See, for instance, Michael Bratman’s stipulation of what he calls “shared cooperative activity (SCA)” in M. Bratman ‘Shared Cooperative Activity’, *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 2, 1992, pp. 327–41. If and only if something fulfils the conditions stipulated by Bratman, it is what he calls SCA. Whether picking out *exactly* SCA’s in the world has much practical value is debatable. My view is that normative essentialism is, as a rule, the more useful conceptual strategy in social ontology since it grasps how the social world is actually structured.

<sup>28</sup> Wittgensteinians might doubt that all sittable chairs have to share any single feature, but this is not a challenge to the argument since it only concerns the general

feature or property of sittability, not its constituents. The real life challenge of denying that sittability is essential to chairs would be to convince people of the idea that being sittable is merely an accidental feature of chairs. Note that we are not debating whether *being a chair* is an essential property of all those things that are chairs. Suffice it to say that I do not believe there is a perspective-independent answer to that question. What is essential in that sense depends on what is relevant from the point of view of a particular practice such as sitting or, say, atom physics.

<sup>29</sup> A counter-argument: Talking of chairs and other usable artifacts in essentialist terms covers from view issues of power. For instance, the fact that chairs and other usable artifacts are made for people of average size and functionality makes people of different sizes and functionality 'disabled' with regard to the material culture of usable artifacts which structures so much of what we are actually able to do. This is not a matter of essences but of power of some people over others, and discussing it in essentialist terms only covers up the issues of power involved. A reply: Saying that the essences of chairs and similar things are determined by social practices is perfectly compatible with the point of the counter-argument and thus it is not a counter-argument at all. The matter of power is the matter of whose authority and needs count in the structuration of the relevant practices, which determine the essences. Essentialism on items of the social and institutional world should not be confused with *naturalisation or reification* of them.

<sup>30</sup> Note that there are two senses of 'constitution' at play here: 1. the physical construction chairs, 2. the taking or treating of chairs as chairs in real practices.

<sup>31</sup> Let me address one further potential point of critique, which is the observation that different chairs (or, as I would rather say, different things called 'chair') can serve different functions. Some can be for show, some for sitting for short periods, some for maintaining good posture, some are meant to be uncomfortable so that sitters do not fall in sleep (say, in a Church) or stay too long (say, at McDonalds), others are meant to impress your friends or function as investment, and so on. But this is merely saying that actually not all of the things called 'chairs' have the same essential property or properties. Yet, it is true of each of these things that it has *some* essential properties determined by its function in some real practice or practices. Of each of them it is true that it can do its job better or worse as an exemplar of what it is. That the same thing can be a very good 'getting-rid-of-customers-once-they've-paid-chair' and a very bad 'enjoy-an-afternoon-with-your-family-chair' shows that essences are relative to practice and that the same physical thing can be included in different practices. Hence, conceiving all things called 'chairs' as having the same general essential property of 'sittability' is an idealisation. Yet, such idealisations are themselves part of how the social world is actually organised—by serving the need for different human practices (such as making money from corn and fat on the one hand, and raising families

on the other) to be mutually compatible enough, or to enable a sufficient degree of commonness of common sense needed for well-enough-functioning co-existence. Complex modern societies are characterized by multiple practices and essences being at work in almost any situation. Yet, there are practical limitations to how dispersed or mutually antagonistic they can be so that organised, peaceful co-existence is still possible. I thank Arto Laitinen and Paul Formosa for pressing me on these issues and Formosa for examples.

<sup>32</sup> Note that this is far from saying that usable artifacts are what they are simply by virtue of their *creator's intentions*, as in R. Dipert, *Artifacts, Art Works, and Agency*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1993.

<sup>33</sup> Here (a) is a commitment to actualist essentialism in general, (b)-(c) comprise the further commitment to its normative version, and (d) the further commitment to teleology shared by Aristotle and Hegel.

<sup>34</sup> Dieter Henrich ("Logical form and real totality") argues that the principle of *sylogism* (understood in an ontological sense unique to Hegel) is a central structuring principle of Philosophy of Spirit. This is very clear also in Hegel's discussion of recognition, especially in the chapter on 'Lordship and Bondage' in the 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977 [PS], §§178–196. In what follows, I will abstract from this fact, yet intend my discussion to be compatible with it.

<sup>35</sup> Some interpreters view absolute negation as the basic principle of Hegel's philosophy in general. See, for example, eds. C. Butler & C. Seiler, *Hegel's Letters*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984, p. 18. On absolute negation, spirit and freedom, see HPSS, §§381–382; on absolute negation in the relationship of the master and the bondsman, see PS, §187, §191; on absolute negation as the essence of "self-consciousness," see §194.

<sup>36</sup> Hegel's critique of negative freedom of course only bites in cases where *y* in the idea of 'x's being free from determination by *y*' really is something that is not a merely contingent, but a necessary determinant of *x*. Think of outer and inner nature, other people and social institutions. One cannot be abstractly free from these factors and still lead a life as (and *be*, since for living beings being is living) an embodied, social subject, such as human persons essentially are.

<sup>37</sup> One example is the solar system, where each body is determined as what it is by not being any of the others and by being influenced by each of them. The influence a heavenly bodies on another is not an alien influence since it is only by virtue of these mutual influences that the bodies are what they are as members of a system (sun, planets, moons and so forth). Similarly, in an animal organism each organ is and functions as what it is by virtue of mutual 'non-alien' determination by all the other organs.

With the introduction of consciousness or intentionality in Philosophy of Spirit concrete freedom gains a radically new meaning however, since there the relata in question are relata of a subject-object-relation.

<sup>38</sup> HPSS, §§413–415.

<sup>39</sup> HPSS, §§ 413–423, §§ 424–437 and §§ 413–439 respectively.

<sup>40</sup> This fact has been a constant source of fundamental misunderstanding among readers since there is a natural tendency to think that 'self-consciousness' in Hegel means more or less what it usually means in philosophy. See, for instance K. Cramer, "Bewusstsein und Selbstbewusstsein; Vorschläge zur Rekonstruktion der systematischen Bedeutung einer Behauptung in §424 der Berliner Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften," in D. Henrich, *Hegels philosophische Psychologie*, Bonn, Bouvier, 1979, and my critical discussion of Cramer in H. Ikäheimo, *Self-consciousness and Intersubjectivity—A Study of Hegel's Encyclopaedia Philosophy of Subjective Spirit (1830)*, Publications in Philosophy, Jyväskylä, University of Jyväskylä, 2000, pp. 15–19 and 41–47. (Available in the internet: <http://mq.academia.edu/HeikkiIkäheimo/Books>). S. Jenkins, "Hegel's Concept of Desire," in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2009, pp. 103–130 is a recent example of this misunderstanding, but one could mention numerous other examples.

<sup>41</sup> Hegel discusses the corresponding psychological processes in the chapter "Theoretical spirit" (HPSS, §§ 445–468). For some of the details of this correspondence, see H. Ikäheimo, "On the role of intersubjectivity in Hegel's Encyclopaedic Phenomenology and Psychology," *The Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*, Nos. 49/50, 2004. The best existing account of Hegel's epistemology in Philosophy of Spirit that I know is C. Halbig, *Objektives Denken: Erkenntnistheorie und Philosophy of Mind in Hegels System*, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Fromman-Holzboog, 2001.

<sup>42</sup> Hegel is a conceptual realist who maintains that reality instantiates conceptual structures, but this is not to be confused with the claim that all of reality is somehow 'mental'. However, in speaking of 'realism', 'antirealism', 'idealism' and so forth, one needs to be clear on which realms of what there is one is talking about. The social and institutional world is of course in many ways 'mental' in the sense of *mind-dependent*, whereas nature is not (except where it is moulded by human action).

<sup>43</sup> HPSS, §§424–437.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, §§426–429. This is what the first or the two "oughts" (*Sollen*) of practical feeling (*Gefühl*) in *ibid.*, §472 is about. See also Brandom's contribution to this volume on "erotic significance".

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, §426.

<sup>46</sup> Understanding fully the structure of the primitive desiring intentionality requires taking a look at what Hegel writes about the animal world-relation in Philosophy of

Nature. On this, see H. Ikäheimo, 'Animal Consciousness in Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit', forthcoming in *Hegel-Jahrbuch*.

<sup>47</sup> 'Drive' (*Trieb*) is Hegel's general term for the teleological urge of the human life-form. He talks of the drive of spirit to cognize objectivity (HPSS, §416 Addition), the drive of self-consciousness to actualise what it is implicitly (*ibid.*, §425), the drive to knowledge (*ibid.*, §443 Add.), the drive to the good and the true (G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, H. S. Harris, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1991, §225), and so on.

<sup>48</sup> See EPR, §4 on the connection of the "theoretical" and "practical attitude".

<sup>49</sup> One of the central senses of Hegel's enigmatic phrase "all consciousness is self-consciousness" (HPSS, §424) is that self-consciousness in otherness is the essence and therefore immanent ideal of all intentionality. See also *ibid.*, 416 Add., where Hegel talks of the "abstract certainty" that spirit has, on the one hand, of "being with itself"—in primitive practical consciousness—and of the "exactly opposite" certainty of the "otherness" of the object—in primitive theoretical consciousness. The overcoming of this contradiction in *being with oneself in otherness*—both in cultivated theoretical and cultivated practical consciousness—is the ideal or telos of intentionality, one which there is a "drive" to actualise.

<sup>50</sup> One could also simply say 'the life-form of persons', but since Hegel did not entertain the possibility of other animal species overcoming mere naturality, and also since it nicely translates the idea of 'humans *insofar as they are not merely natural*', I use the expression 'human persons'.

<sup>51</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III, Naturphilosophie und Philosophie des Geistes*, ed. R.-P. Horstmann, Hamburg, Meiner, 1987, pp. 197–198

<sup>52</sup> PS, §177.

<sup>53</sup> The 'I' in this formula is often read as standing for a collective subject. This allows for two alternatives: either understanding the 'I' as a real thinking and willing subject (which means agreeing with the jokes about Hegel we started with), or in some ontologically less harmful, more metaphorical sense. I have nothing against the latter alternative, except that even it does not sit well with Hegel's *systematic* concept of the I in the mature *Encyclopedia Phenomenology*, which is unambiguously a concept applying only to singular human persons. In any case, whether the 'we' in question is conceived of in some metaphorical sense as an 'I' itself or not, it consists of singular flesh and blood human subjects that are I's and thus by recognising each other—and this is the ontologically decisive phenomenon. I am grateful to Carl-Göran Heidegren and Andrew Chitty for helpful exchanges on this issue. I borrow the idea of talking of *I's and thous* from Heidegren.

<sup>54</sup> In contrast to principles (1) and (2), this principle (3) only has this one application or instantiation—in intersubjective relationships that is.

<sup>55</sup> Michael Theunissen, Jürgen Habermas and others have argued that this is indicative of a decisive devaluing in Hegel's part of the concept of recognition in his later work. For critiques of this view, see R. R. Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997; and Ikäheimo, "On the role of intersubjectivity".

<sup>56</sup> See G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1827–8)*, trans. R. R. Williams, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007 [LPS], 60, 66–67; and HPSS, §§ 377–384. On spirit, humanity and concrete freedom, see A. Chitty, "Hegel and Marx," forthcoming in *The Blackwell Companion to Hegel*.

<sup>57</sup> A natural object can instantiate human will by being worked on, by being made someone's property, or receiving a function (and thus functional essence) in human practices, but then it is not a purely natural object anymore.

<sup>58</sup> HPSS, §427, Addition.

<sup>59</sup> See H. Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," *Journal of Philosophy*, 68, 1971, pp. 5–20.

<sup>60</sup> In Ikäheimo, "On the role of intersubjectivity" I argue that in Philosophy of Subjective Spirit 'desire' as a practical mode of intentionality corresponds to 'sensuous consciousness' as a theoretical mode of intentionality, for which the object is an immediate "here and now" without past or future. For more on the structure of objectivity dictated by immediate desire-orientation, see Ikäheimo, 'Consciousness before recognition', and P. Redding, *Hegel's Hermeneutics*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1996, 105.

<sup>61</sup> Although *Sensuous consciousness* as the epistemic complement of desire is formally a 'theoretical' mode of intentionality, any more elaborate theoretical grasp of the world is obstructed by pure desire-orientation. This is what Hegel means by saying that "theoretical conduct begins with the inhibition of desire" in G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*, Volume 1, ed. M. J. Petry, London, George Allen and Unwin [HPN], p. 198, line 29.

<sup>62</sup> In other words, although the pure wanton is an epistemically extremely good tracker of what is relevant in its environment for the satisfaction of its limited needs, it is epistemically completely dumbfounded by anything else—assuming that anything else manages to penetrate into its one-track consciousness.

<sup>63</sup> HPSS, §§429–430.

<sup>64</sup> R. R. Williams' *Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1992 chapter 12, clarifies the confusion, prevalent especially in twentieth century French philosophy.

<sup>65</sup> Mutuality, symmetry and equality are not exactly the same thing, but here it should be enough just to make a note of this.

<sup>66</sup> It is not possible here to chart and scrutinise the features of a symmetric or equal intersubjective state which would combine *both* intersubjective instrumentalisation *and* intersubjective fear. I invite the reader to think through possibilities not explicitly considered here. See also Stekeler-Weithofer's contribution to this collection, p. 103.

<sup>67</sup> Saying that the significance of the other in what Brandom calls recognition in this article is "authority" seems like stretching the meaning of the word quite a bit. From the point of view of the desiring subject it is as significant to see the other desiring subject to die in agony and thereby provide information (as any objective state of event may 'provide' information) of what is poison as it is to see it as flourishing and thereby provide information of what is food. What is at stake in "simple recognition" is certainly informative usefulness, but it is less than clear what this has to do with authoritativeness.

<sup>68</sup> See M. Tomasello, "Why Don't Apes Point?," in N. J. Enfield & S. C. Levinson, *Roots of Human Sociality*, Oxford, Berg, 2006, pp. 508–509.

<sup>69</sup> Thus, on the one hand, Brandom's primitive desiring subjects are already more complex than Hegel's, and, on the other hand, his recognitively constituted subjects are more primitive than Hegel's.

<sup>70</sup> T. Pinkard, *German Philosophy 1760–1860: The Legacy of Idealism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 283.

<sup>71</sup> See, for instance, G. H. von Wright, "Determinism and the Study of Man," in eds. J. Manninen & R. Tuomela, *Essays on Explanation and Understanding*, Dordrecht, Reidel, 1976. Sanctions can take many forms, but since it is agreed that humans cannot live without other humans, the virtual death-threat of social exclusion is always looming in the imaginary space of social-pressure accounts. Hence the Hegelian fear of death is a relevant figure of thought for them.

<sup>72</sup> PS, §194.

<sup>73</sup> That is, assuming that it is the case that Hegel's view of a good society is decisively anti-Hobbesian. In "Natural Impurities in Spirit? Hegelianism Between Kant and Hobbes" (forthcoming in *Parrhesia*) I suggest that distinguishing Hegel clearly from Hobbes requires being clear about the motivational element of the attitudes of recognition. This is an issue that in my view contemporary neo-Hegelians have not focussed on adequately.

<sup>74</sup> HPSS, §436. Emphasis H.I.

<sup>75</sup> I do not know any discussion that clearly connects Hegel's statements about the concept of spirit in the introduction to his mature Philosophy of Spirit with his statements about recognition in the Self-consciousness-chapter in the same text. In lack of clear awareness of this connection, the image can linger on that recognition is largely irrelevant for the constitution of spirit in Hegel's late work.

<sup>76</sup> In A. Chitty, "Hegel and Marx" recognition of the other appears as merely *responsive* to the freedom of the other, as if a theoretical or epistemic response to a pre-given fact. As far as I can see, my reconstruction of recognition as *constitutive* of concrete interpersonal freedom fits better with the rest of what Chitty says in his extremely useful article.

<sup>77</sup> "Knowing" (*Wissen*) is a term with a very general meaning for Hegel. In Griesheim's notes to Hegel's lectures on Phenomenology from the summer term 1825 (in HPSS, Volume 3, p. 274) we read: "the state in which an independent object is posited as sublated is called knowing". By "posited as sublated" Hegel means simply 'having in view as an intentional object'. Thus, in the broadest sense "knowing" simply means having something in view as an object of one's consciousness—whether theoretical or practical.

<sup>78</sup> LPS, 194.

<sup>79</sup> "The consciousness of the other is now the basis, the material, the space in which I realise myself." (HPSS, Volume 3, p. 333.)

<sup>80</sup> For more on the relationship of person-making psychological capacities and interpersonal person-making significances, see Ikäheimo, "Recognizing persons."

<sup>81</sup> That there are more than one attitude of recognition is originally Axel Honneth's insight. See A. Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral and Political Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995.

<sup>82</sup> HPSS, §§420–421.

<sup>83</sup> See R. Brandom, "Some Pragmatic Themes in Hegel's Idealism: Negotiation and Administration in Hegel's Account of the Structure and Content of Conceptual Norms," *European Journal of Philosophy*, 7:2, 1999, pp. 164–189. The importance of Brandom's work in clarifying this idea is by no means diminished by the problems that his account involves with regard to the motivational issues in recognition. See also Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer's constructive critique of Brandom, and Italo Testa's discussion of the difference between Brandom's earlier and more recent models of pragmatics, in their respective contributions to this volume.

<sup>84</sup> See the chapter on habit in HPSS, §§409–410.

<sup>85</sup> This is a parade example of a case where the concept of concrete freedom really bites. The idea of complete negative or abstract *freedom from social norms* reduces to the absurdity of freedom from what one is, namely a person. Real freedom with regard to social norms has to be grasped in terms of the relationship that persons have to them, which is not neutral as to the content of those norms.

<sup>86</sup> Hegel's shows no interest in the question (much discussed after Wittgenstein) whether it would be *in principle* possible to be a norm-oriented, or "rule-following" subject independently of others. His interest is in describing human

persons as we know them—as beings in whose being norm-orientation *is* a social or intersubjective matter.

<sup>87</sup> There is a robust sense of *receptivity* in this: we do not attribute the significance of an original source of authority to each other willfully. Rather, the attitude that does this is itself a way of *being moved* by the other.

<sup>88</sup> On Searle's account (in Searle, *Making the Social World*, p. 8) the practical attitudes of "acceptance or recognition" constitutive of institutions go "all the way from enthusiastic endorsement to grudging acknowledgement, even the acknowledgement that one is simply helpless to do anything about, or reject, the institutions in which one finds oneself." A less 'liberal' or more strongly social or ethical view would have it that mere helpless acceptance of power arrangements does not make them institutions at all. For one such view, see Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality*, p. 194. In contrast, the Hegelian route allows one to think of strong ethicality as an immanent ideal of institutions, while simultaneously being non-committal on whether it is a necessary condition of something's being an institution in the first place. See M. Tomasello, *Why We Cooperate*, Cambridge, The MIT Press, 2009, p. 38 for the claim that even the earliest participation of children in norm-governed interaction involves genuine social normativity based on mutual respect and mutual authorship, rather than either simply on fear or on expectation of personal gain. Without being able to go into detail, in my view the most important elements of Hegel's conception of 'spirit' or the human life-form are supported by Tomasello's empirical work in anthropology and primatology.

<sup>89</sup> I am not taking any stance here on whether Hegel was fair to Kant. Rather, I am suggesting that in its one-sided emphasis on norms, authority and so on much of contemporary neo-Hegelianism in fact exemplifies aspects of the kind of legalism Hegel wanted to overcome.

<sup>90</sup> See HPSS, §436; HPSS, Volume 3, 333 (line 19: "If we speak of right, ethicality, love"; line 25: "Benevolence or love [...]"); LPS, 194 ("in love and friendship").

<sup>91</sup> See especially LPS, p. 194. See also Robert R. Williams' discussion of love in Hegel's *Philosophy of Spirit* in Williams' introduction to LPS, p. 23–24.

<sup>92</sup> HPSS, §434.

<sup>93</sup> *idem*.

<sup>94</sup> HPSS, §§451–464.

<sup>95</sup> HPN, §259, Remark, p. 233. For more on this, see my article "The Temporality of Hegel's Concrete Subject," forthcoming in *Critical Horizons*.

<sup>96</sup> HPSS, §§457–463.

<sup>97</sup> Hegel's spills no ink in discussing this explicitly, but it is a rather obvious implication of his discussion of the *conventionality* of the relation of the signifier and signified, in *ibid.*, §§457–459.

<sup>98</sup> This is not to say that interpersonal attitudes are all there is to the sociality of value-structures, but only that the former is the ontological backbone of anything's having desire-transcending value for persons.

<sup>99</sup> G. H. Mead, *Mind, Self and Society*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1962, chapter 37; Talcott Parsons, "Prolegomena to a Theory of Social Institutions," *American Sociological Review*, vol. 55, no. 3, 1990, p. 330.

<sup>100</sup> In Ikäheimo, "Is 'recognition' in the sense of intrinsic motivational altruism necessary for pre-linguistic communicative pointing?" eds. W. Christensen, E. Schier, J. Sutton, *ASCS09: Proceedings of the Australasian Society for Cognitive Science*, Sydney, Macquarie Centre for Cognitive Science, <http://www.maccs.mq.edu.au/news/conferences/2009/ASCS2009/html/ikaheimo.html>) I present considerations for the claim that the recognitive attitudes of respect and love are part of the explanation why human infants, but no other animals, are capable of engaging in the pre-linguistic communicative practice of pointing. This supports Stekeler-Weithofer's claim (in his contribution to this volume) that shared pointing and therefore object-reference requires recognition in a strong ethical sense. If this is true, and if it is true that without learning shared object-reference in pointing-practices it is also impossible to learn symbolic communication or language, then all forms of mindedness dependent on language among humans are genetically dependent on love and/or respect. To resort to evolutionary argumentation (a mode of argumentation unavailable in Hegel's time), a completely 'Machiavellian' social life-form in which not only being moved by the well-being of others but also being moved by their will or 'authority' rests exclusively on prudential considerations seems less likely to be viable in the long term than one in which at least part of these intersubjective motivations are intrinsic. This is because the intrinsic motivations of respect and love bring about a radical unburdening of cognitive resources to be used for collectively useful purposes. If this is so, then it would not be surprising if respect and love would not be only immanent ideals of our life-form, but also necessary for the existence of its less than ideal instantiations. It maybe that even really bad, in the sense of extremely loveless and disrespecting, modes of social existence could not prevail among humans without at least some supporting love and respect somewhere up- or downstream.

<sup>101</sup> Hegel's discussion of contract in *EPR*, §§72–81 is especially ambiguous, if not confused in this regard: Hegel does not distinguish in it between interpersonal recognition of the other as having authority on the norms of the relationship on the one hand, and acknowledgement of the other as bearer of deontic or institutional powers (rights, duties) entailed by the norms on the other hand. On the distinction between the interpersonal and the institutional, see Ikäheimo, "Recognizing persons".

A further source of confusion is that Hegel's talk of 'love' conflates important distinctions. These include the distinction between love as a recognitive attitude on the one hand, and 'love' as a concrete interpersonal relationship instantiating that attitude on the other hand, as well as the distinction between the affective element and the cognitive content of the recognitive attitude of love.

<sup>102</sup> See Brandom's discussion of "essentially self-conscious creatures" in "The Structure of Desire and Recognition", in this collection.

<sup>103</sup> These thoughts are influenced by Arto Laitinen's discussion of the various senses of the question "what are we essentially?" in Laitinen, "Constitution and Persons".

<sup>104</sup> PS, §438. See Stekeler-Weithofer's article in this collection, p. 98.

<sup>105</sup> See Brandom's notes on the importance of sacrifice for essentially self-conscious beings in "The Structure of Desire and Recognition", in this collection, pp. 227–230.

<sup>106</sup> As the reader may notice, we have already started drifting to a direction that is in detail not quite Hegel's, by using his own conceptual arsenal. I shall return to this in the conclusion. See Quante, "Recognition as the Social Grammar of Species Being in Marx," section 4.2.

<sup>107</sup> All citations in this paragraph from G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. by J. Sibree, Kitchener, Batoche Books, 2001, p. 32.

<sup>108</sup> See note 77.

<sup>109</sup> Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 32

<sup>110</sup> Would it help to meet a representative of another culture who maintained that mutual fear and instrumentalisation are functionally and ethically good and that mutual respect and love are functionally and ethically bad for human co-existence? Only if one could make sense of what the other means by saying so.

<sup>111</sup> It is a further question how *representations* according to which all is well in a society can mingle with inarticulate (because lacking cultural representations) *feelings* by its members that something is wrong (perhaps even horribly so). The power of ideologies is limited by the resistance of what actually works well in human practices and this is not independent of deep-rooted ethical convictions that are not infinitely malleable. I am suggesting, in the spirit of Hegel's normative essentialism, that the reason why lack of recognition in the sense of lack of respect and love tends to engender feelings of something's being wrong has to do with common sense about what is functionally and ethically good in human co-existence. Moral feelings engendered by experiences of lack of recognition are at the centre of Axel Honneth's work on recognition. See, especially, Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*; and my constructive critique of Honneth's approach in H. Ikäheimo, "A Vital Human Need: Recognition as Inclusion in Personhood," *European Journal of Political Theory*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2009, 31–45.

<sup>112</sup> This, on my reading, is the core of Hegel's cunning philosophical construal of John 4: 24: "God is essentially spirit" (HPSS, p. 58). This section of the article has been

influenced by my reading of Paul Redding's and Michael Quante's contributions to this collection.

<sup>113</sup> Raimond Gaita's work (such as R. Gaita, *A Common Humanity: Thinking About Love & Truth & Justice*, Melbourne, Text, 1999) is one potent source of infection with such suspicions.

<sup>114</sup> See M. Quante, "Recognition as the Social Grammar of Species Being in Marx." On the Hegel-Marx-connection, see also Chitty, "Hegel and Marx".

<sup>115</sup> On love in the social philosophy of the young Marx, see D. Brudney, "Producing for Others," in eds. H.-C. Schmidt am Busch & C. Zurn, *The Philosophy of Recognition: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2010, 151–188. On the influences of the young Marx's understanding of Hegel, such as Feuerbach., see Quante, "Recognition as the Social Grammar of Species Being" and Chitty, "Hegel and Marx".

<sup>116</sup> For more on this, see M. Quante, "On the Limits of Construction and Individualism in Social Ontology," in eds. E. Lagerspetz, H. Ikäheimo & J. Kotkavirta, *On The Nature of Social and Institutional Reality*, Jyväskylä, SoPhi, 2001.

<sup>117</sup> My thanks are due to Paul Formosa, Arto Laitinen, Ming-Chen Lo, Michael Monahan, Douglas Robinson and Titus Stahl for helpful comments to an earlier version of this text. This may be the right place also to acknowledge my debt to Michael Quante and Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer, whose influence on my thought goes much deeper than testified by the footnotes. I am of course alone responsible for everything said in this text.



## Chapter Seven

# The Relevance of Hegel's "Absolute Spirit" to Social Normativity

Paul Redding

### Introduction

Around the turn of the Twentieth Century, Wilhelm Dilthey, in characterising the humanistic disciplines as "*Geisteswissenschaften*," sciences of "spirit" (*Geist*) as opposed to those of "nature" (*Naturwissenschaften*), appealed to Hegel's notion of *objective spirit* (*objektiver Geist*).<sup>1</sup> However for Dilthey, a neo-Kantian, Hegel's concept had to be disentangled from what was considered the unsupportable metaphysical system within which Hegel had presented it. In contrast, Dilthey gave the notion a broadly epistemological significance by correlating it with a distinct type of "understanding" peculiar to the *Geisteswissenschaften*.

Dilthey had extended to the human sciences in general the idea of a peculiarly "hermeneutic" approach to the linguistic disciplines forged by in the early Nineteenth Century by F. D. E. Schleiermacher. While the *Naturwissenschaften* were rightly concerned with

explaining (*erklären*) phenomena in terms of causal laws, the *Geisteswissenschaften* aimed at understanding (*verstehen*) the *meaning* expressed in actions and other expressions of social life, not just linguistic ones. Here Dilthey thought he was making explicit what was present in the historiography of the romantic “historical school” stemming from the work of Leopold von Ranke, and this approach, rather than Hegel’s *metaphysical* one, would stand as the exemplar of an anti-naturalistic approach to history: “Today we can no longer retain the presuppositions on which Hegel based this concept [of objective spirit]. He constructed communities from the universal, rational will. Today we must start from the reality of life ... Hegel constructed metaphysically; we analyse the given.”<sup>2</sup>

Dilthey found the notion of *objektiver Geist* fruitful for capturing the idea that the human sciences examined societies in terms of the specific cultural and meaningful practices and institutions within which the psychological capacities of individual agents developed. While cultural systems were the expressions of life-forms that were ultimately grounded in human nature, humanistic understanding could not be reduced to the sorts of explanation that ultimately applied to the natural world. Cultural life was, rather, characterised in ways that seem broadly similar to those explored more recently in terms of the idea of normative or rule-following “forms of life” commonly associated with the later Wittgenstein. For example, while a human action *qua* physical event—in an oft-repeated example, the raising of an individual’s right arm—may be potentially explainable in the way that applies to any other natural event, the same event described as a conscious and intentional *action*—that of *voting* for a particular motion in a meeting, say—invokes other non-physically reducible considerations. To take this case, it is impossible to say *what voting is*, without referring to the practices of culturally variable institutions concerned with collective decision making.

As John Searle has pointed out, for such meaningful intentional actions, a physical event X will only “count as” an instance of an action Y if there exist the relevant background institutions which can be thought of as “systems of constitutive rules ... of the form ‘X counts as Y in context C.’”<sup>3</sup> Stressing the normative or “rule-following” patterns manifested and their non-reducibility to *mere* nomological regularity invokes a distinction that might be likened to Kant’s distinction between acting “in accordance with laws,” and acting “in accordance with the representation of laws.”<sup>4</sup> However, Kant’s position on

rule-following here is commonly taken as overly rationalistic and individualistic, and a solution to this problem is often seen to lie in an appeal, as had been made by Hegel, to the fundamentally *social* nature of the "rules" in question. To be a rule-following agent is to have been inducted into *communal* rule-following practices, and to hold oneself to a rule presupposes that one *already* belongs to a community of rule-following agents *by* whom one's transgressions are likely to be corrected. In Hegelian terms, to be a rule-following agent presupposed one's belonging to a realm of "*Sittlichkeit*" structured by communal conventions ("*Sitten*").

For Dilthey, the need to liberate Hegel's idea of *objectiver Geist* from his systematic metaphysics meant extracting it from his tripartite classification of spirit into its "subjective," "objective," and, crucially, "*absolute*" forms. It was "absolute spirit"—often taken simply as a synonym for "God"—that showed Hegel's commitment to a pre-Kantian dogmatic, and in particular, *spiritualistic*, metaphysics. Thus "what Hegel distinguished from objective spirit as absolute spirit, namely art, religion and philosophy" had *itself* to be brought back under the concept of *objective* spirit.<sup>5</sup> The problems inherent in this "historicist" move, however, are well known, with the normative philosophical framework presupposed by the investigator itself seemingly reduced in relativistic fashion to the status of mere expression of that investigator's particular "worldview" (*Weltanschauung*). Later in the Twentieth Century, Hans-Georg Gadamer, in his celebrated *Truth and Method*, would attempt to circumvent such relativistic problems by once again returning to Hegel, claiming to find in Hegel's *integrative* approach to historical knowledge an alternative to the merely "reconstructive" conception that Dilthey had inherited from Schleiermacher and Ranke and that was responsible for the problems of a relativistic historicism.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, like Dilthey, Gadamer too ultimately endorsed *Kant's* critical philosophy against Hegel's imputed pre-critical "spiritualistic" metaphysics.<sup>7</sup>

In the last twenty years, however, the picture of Hegel as pre-critical "dogmatic" metaphysician that had been accepted by both Dilthey and Gadamer has come under considerable challenge. Rather than being an object of a Kantian type critique, Hegel, it is commonly argued, is properly viewed as having developed Kant's critique of dogmatic metaphysics, turning it against residual "dogmatic" elements within Kant's own version of critical philosophy.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, among the revisionist Hegelians some have seized upon

aspects of Hegel's approach that are crucial to those Hegel-inflected aspects of Gadamer's critique of Dilthey's historicism—Hegel's notion of "recognition" conceived as an intersubjective dynamic process separating the human from the natural realm and constitutive of the very substance of *Geist* itself.<sup>9</sup> We can ask: might it not be the case that this notion can *also* be used to relieve even the conception of *absolute* spirit of some of the charges of a pre-critical "spiritualistic" ontology? The possibility of an affirmative answer is what I will be suggesting in this essay.

In Section 1 I examine Hegel's conception of recognition in the light of a generally hermeneutic approach to social life, contrasting the normative dimension of Hegel's approach to social life that flows from the central role he gives to recognition with Dilthey's more empiricist transformation of Hegel's "objective spirit." I then attempt to divest Hegel's idea of *absolute* spirit from the taint of pre-critical spiritualistic metaphysics by drawing on Robert Brandom's recent attempts to capture Hegel's concept of recognition. Parallels between Brandom's idea of the cognitive core of philosophical life itself and Hegel's conception of philosophy as a form of absolute spirit emerge when we consider (in Section 2) Hegel's specific treatment of *Stoicism* as a form of philosophical life. But the fate of Stoicism in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* reveals a very different attitude to the relation of philosophy to religion to anything consistent with Brandom's approach. Surely *this*, it might be argued, shows Hegel's ultimate entrapment within a traditional spiritualistic ontology. To try to answer this, in the final section I focus specifically on what Hegel's approach to religion (specifically Christianity) implies for his metaphysical commitments. Once more I try to show how Hegel's key concept of recognition is used to free even his *theology* from unwanted pre-critical forms of metaphysics, and that here, as elsewhere, Hegel's thought is fundamentally Kantian. But following hints in Kant, I suggest that Hegel may still have much to teach us about the constitutive normative functions of social life, and that these lessons are to be found in those parts of his theory that Dilthey had been most eager to abandon.

## **I. Recognition, Social Ontology and Hegel's Metaphysics**

Hegel's idea of the role played by "recognition" in the constitution of human or "spiritual" life is probably most familiar from the well-known discussion

of the "master–slave dialectic" in Chapter 4 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.<sup>10</sup> Here it is clear that in Hegel's parable the micro-society made up of a master and his slave is meant as a model of a primitive form of political life *qua* "spiritual" rather than "natural" existence. We might say that while for Aristotle a slave is fundamentally a slave by nature,<sup>11</sup> for Hegel to be a slave is to accept a *normative social role*. That is, rather than instantiating natural kinds, master and slave occupy opposed *normative statuses* with crude but clearly defined "rights" and "obligations": in short, the master has the right to demand of the slave whatever he wants, the slave has the duty to oblige, a duty grounded in an initial commitment to become the master's slave in exchange for his life. "Anerkennung," recognition or acknowledgement, is at the core of this form of life: to *be* a slave is to recognise or acknowledge another *as* a master, and to be acknowledged in turn by him as his slave; and to *be* a master is to be acknowledged as such by another whom one treats in turn as a slave.

Acknowledgement is thereby *self*-acknowledgement, as is signaled by the fact that Hegel's account of *Anerkennung* emerges as a solution to the problematic status of *self-consciousness*. In contrast to the mere biological beings of natural life, slaves and masters thereby exist "for themselves" and not just "in themselves," and they can be "for themselves" only because they each exist "for another."<sup>12</sup>

Dilthey had conceived of individuals as the "bearers [Träger]" of the normative social roles that they occupied, and *as* such bearers they could not be understood as merely natural or biological entities. But for Hegel, however, the relation of the subject to the social role borne is not so straight-forward. To be the occupant of a social role—to be a rule-follower—will require the ability to recognise what material item is to count *as* an instance of some culturally defined identity: a slave will need to be able to recognise a particular individual *as* his master, to recognise and act on the expressions of his will, and so on, and the "counts as" relation clearly suggests a role for concepts here. It is not surprising then that Hegel, following Kant, takes the capacity involved as a conceptual one, as for Kant concepts *are* effectively such rules. And again following Kant, Hegel will link the conceptual capacity of humans to their *freedom*, to their capacity to, to some degree, transcend or become independent of the domination of nature to which they nevertheless belong. But this dual belonging to both nature and *Geist* in turn for Hegel introduces a tension into the relationship between master and slave.

At the surface level the master “recognises” the slave as mere *means* to his will: the slave is treated as a being entirely mired within the dumb objectivity of nature and bereft of the independence that conceptual thought promises. Conversely, the master recognises *himself*, and is recognised by his slave, as one-sidedly *independent*—as a quasi-omnipotent will to which the world, mediated by the slave’s service, necessarily bends. But at a deeper level, independence and dependence cannot be distributed between master and slave in this way: recognition must be *symmetrical*. The master cannot be *recognised* by a merely dependent object, recognition must come from a self-conscious subject capable of conceptual thought and the independence from nature that this brings with it. Thus, this form of life will play out a dialectic that will contain lessons for both master and slave. The slave must come to recognise his own degree of independence from the world, and he will do this by recognising himself as the agent responsible for the transformed products of his labour. And from *his own* dependence on the *work* of the slave, the master will conversely learn the hard truth that his purported unilateral independence ultimately is shown to be a sham. The asymmetrical relation of master and slave, contradicting the essential reciprocity of recognition, will be undone, and this form of life will collapse and be replaced by another.

The contradictoriness and self-transcendence of this specific form of recognition that emerges in the discussion of “self-consciousness” in chapter 4 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is typical of the way that Hegel treats all finite “shapes” of consciousness, self-consciousness and spirit in that work, and such a gap between the overt form of a recognitive relation and its underlying character must be problematic for any Diltheian or Rankean conception of “objective spirit” which accepts particular forms of life as “givens” and as intelligible in their own terms. Thus Hegel can appeal to an essential reciprocity that will render an empirical institution like slavery intrinsically *contradictory*, with such contradictions working to undermine any finite shape of spirit that is simply given in history. It is just *this* mechanism that is at the heart of Hegel’s teleological conception of human history as a process in which such “contradictions” are progressively eliminated or somehow resolved within succeeding forms of life, but the romantic historiographical tradition to which Dilthey was trying to give epistemological support rejected any whiff of any such “metaphysically” grounded historical teleology.

Hegel's discussion of the way that forms of self-consciousness have essential natures to which their bearers are somehow meant, but may fail, to live up recalls Aristotle's normative idea of essences and the teleological dimension of their realisation, but a stress on the Aristotelian shape of Hegel's thought on these and other matters should not obscure the genuinely *Kantian* dimension to Hegel's approach.<sup>13</sup> As in Kant's account of the basic normative operations of the mind, Hegel thinks of cognitive norms as immanent to the mind's own operations, or to "thought" itself, but he rejects the individualism of Kant's approach, and thinks of these norms as fundamentally *socially* based and historically evolving by a process within which norms which, at a certain stage of development are *implicit* to social practices, are made progressively *explicit* and available to conscious reflection. This development is conceived of as rational because the specific contradictions plaguing any particular stage are removed with the transition to the next.

Of course there have been many attempts—the most famous being that of Marx—to recoup *something* of Hegel's teleological account of the realisation of "reason in history" by uncoupling the dynamics of social life from any concept of absolute spirit, and it is not difficult to appreciate the motivations for this. Hegel commonly describes this development of thought in religious terms as a process in which "absolute spirit" itself—God—becomes progressively *self-conscious*. Thus, "absolute spirit" is not just a *name* for particular "spiritual products"—art, religion and philosophy—it is the medium for the full realisation of God himself. Thus in his series of lectures on philosophy of religion given at the University of Berlin in 1827 Hegel claims that "the content of philosophy, its need and interest, is wholly in common with that of religion. The object of religion, like that of philosophy, is the eternal truth, God and nothing but God and the explication of God."<sup>14</sup> But we must keep in mind that, like Kant, Hegel takes religious language as a symbolic or metaphorical form of representation of what can be more completely expressed in philosophy *conceptually*,<sup>15</sup> and so it is far from clear that Hegel has anything like a *spiritually realist* concept of God. And if this continuity between Hegel and Kant at the level of *theology* is added to the purported continuity of their "idealist" critiques of traditional metaphysics, we might start to see how the worries that Dilthey shared with others about Hegel's metaphysically constructivist approach might dissolve.

Recent revisionist readings of Hegel, like the more epistemologically “Diltheian” ones, typically draw on parallels between Hegel’s concept of spirit and considerations of socially based rule-following, but in ways that draw analogies around the theme of the self-correcting proclivities of socially embodied reasoning. One version of this reading of Hegel is that found in the approach of Robert Brandom which, on examination, may be particularly apt for thinking about *absolute* spirit from a recognitive point of view.<sup>16</sup>

Wittgenstein’s idea of the interlacing of “language games” with “forms of life” has suggested to many something like Hegel’s idea of “objective spirit”: indeed, one may think of Wittgenstein’s famous example of the “builders’ language game”<sup>17</sup> as somewhat analogous to what is sketched in Hegel’s micro-community of master and slave. However, a more *systematically rationalist* Hegelian tone characterises Robert Brandom’s development of an approach to the language-game idea found in the work of Wilfrid Sellars from the mid-twentieth century.<sup>18</sup> Sellars had conceived of the human world as irreducibly normative (“fraught with ought”) but, in line with his scientific realism, had rejected any idea of some extra-human legislator *responsible* for those norms. Similarly for Brandom, all rational norms are immanent within social life and to be understood as “instituted” and “administered” by human agents themselves in the course of their participation within the core linguistic practices of life. The core practices of this instituting and administering are the *making of assertions* and the *giving of justifications* for those assertions in the face of an interlocutor’s demand for justification. These interactions are, for Brandom, fundamentally *recognitive* in Hegel’s sense: in addressing another one *recognises* that other (and, reflectively, oneself) as subject to the same norms from which one speaks, and so one recognises that other as entitled to *hold oneself* to the norms as one holds them.

According to this picture, when I make a claim to another, I acknowledge them as entitled to raise the question of *my* entitlement to the claim by questioning its justification, and when that question is raised my appropriate response will be to give the other *reasons* for the claim in question. Standardly, to give such a reason will be to appeal to some *further* claim from which the original claim can be “materially” (non-formally) inferred.<sup>19</sup> If another asks after my entitlement to the claim *that it will soon rain*, I might, for example, offer the further claim that *dark clouds are overhead*. To converse, then, is to

deal in commitments and entitlements. To assert is to commit oneself to the fact of one's entitlement to the assertion, and further, to commit oneself to the array of further claims that might be *inferred* from the initial claim. In short, to make an assertion is to place the *propositional content* claimed in what Sellars referred to as the "space of reasons." This is a "normative" space in that all the relevant inferential connections hold in virtue of the implicit norms of our linguistic practices.

In Hegelian fashion, Brandom, following Sellars, focuses on the *self-correcting* propensities of our discourse. In the process of justifying a claim the justifying *norm itself* can be made explicit: for example, invoking the dark clouds overhead can be used to justify the claim that it will rain if it is accepted that *as a rule*, dark overhead clouds accompany rain, but this norm can *itself* be questioned. In this way, the norms initially *implicit* in the discursive practice can be made *explicit*, challenged, improved, replaced, and so on. In Hegelian terms we might say that the practice itself thereby becomes *more self-conscious*.

The "language games" that Brandom has in mind are highly abstract forms of interactions within which the participants are effectively pared down to being considered as mere bearers of particular recognised entitlements and commitments. If one were to look to concrete exemplars of such interactions one might look to the practice of philosophy itself. For his part, Hegel does not often talk explicitly *about* philosophy *as* a realm of public self-reflective culture, but it becomes apparent in his discussion of the forms of self-consciousness in Chapter 4 of the *Phenomenology* that follow the discussion on the master and slave as he there discusses the distinctly *philosophical* forms of self-consciousness, "stoicism" and "scepticism," and following these, an explicitly *religious one*, "the unhappy consciousness." Hegel's account of *stoicism* as a form of self-consciousness, and of the more general form of recognition at the heart of the stoic language game bears interesting analogies to Brandom's account of the dynamics of human rational life.

## **2. Stoicism and the Philosophical Subject as Abstract Bearer of Rational Rights and Duties**

The place of Stoicism in the development of philosophy in the ancient world is particularly significant for Hegel. In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*,

Hegel is far more appreciative of the “speculative” approach of Plato and Aristotle than of any later periods of Greek philosophy, nevertheless he complains about both Plato and Aristotle in a way that echoes Kant’s complaint about Aristotle’s *unsystematic* approach to the categories.<sup>20</sup> The approaches of both, he says, “are not in the form of a system” and “the nature of the speculative has not been explicitly brought to consciousness as the notion ... not set forth as the universal, from which the particular was developed.”<sup>21</sup> Thus at the end of classical period of ancient philosophy the need remained for “the whole extent of what is known [to] appear as one organisation of the notion,” and this need was addressed in the “second period” of ancient philosophy comprising the approaches of Stoicism, Epicureanism and Skepticism. However, in this period the speculative character of the thought of the first period has now been lost, the new approaches being marked by the formalistic “understanding” rather than speculative “reason.”<sup>22</sup> This is reflected in how the philosophies of the second period all focus, in some way, on the issue of a principle or “criterion” for judgement. For the Stoic, this criterion was to be found in pure thinking itself, and the Stoic believed that by conforming to it the thinking subject could raise him or herself “into this abstract independence” and attain the freedom of the *sage*.<sup>23</sup>

In Chapter 4 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Stoicism is treated as a form of self-consciousness in which the polarities of dependence and independence that were separated in the slave and his master are brought into a single self-consciousness, “an I which has the otherness within itself.”<sup>24</sup> Moreover, while the cognitive lives of master and slave were articulated by concepts that were “pictured or figuratively conceived,”<sup>25</sup> in Stoicism self-consciousness “is aware of itself as essential being, a being which *thinks* or is free self-consciousness.” Thus the Stoic “holds something to be essentially important, or true and good only in so far as it *thinks* it to be such.”<sup>26</sup> And while the slave had achieved freedom by working on and transforming objects of the external world, the Stoic has withdrawn interest from this world and works upon and transforms his or her own *self*, thus initiating an approach to philosophy as “*Bildung*” or, as we might say, culture and self-cultivation.<sup>27</sup>

With this stance, then, the Stoic embodies at the level of individual *intention* the very project of philosophy that is enacted in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*—the elevation of consciousness to the realm of pure thought or *science*. Hegel is

concerned with the issue of the form of *Sittlichkeit* or objective spirit within which a form of self-consciousness can arise. While Stoicism had first appeared in Greece, its renunciation of the immediate concerns of external reality had given it a relative independence from the practical world of the polis that had allowed it to be transplanted to Rome: "As a universal form of the World-Spirit, Stoicism could only appear on the scene in a time of universal fear and bondage, but also a time of a universal culture [*einer allgemeinen Bildung*] which had raised the shaping of character [*das Bilden*] to the level of thought."<sup>28</sup>

This *relocatability* of certain cultural products will be essential for art, religion and philosophy *qua* forms of absolute spirit, distinguishing them from other objectifications of spirit. As Gadamer stresses, for Hegel the products of aesthetico-religious culture of the polis were for later ages like "beautiful fruits torn from the tree."<sup>29</sup> As such they have been torn from the forms of life that gave them significance. However, it is the very fact that such fruits can be re-incorporated into the lives of later, very *different* forms of community, that for Gadamer shows the inadequacy of any historicist approach which sees them as *merely* expressing the essence of the particular societies from which they arose, and so reducing their significance to their functioning within the "objective Spirit" from which they came.<sup>30</sup> We might say then that it is the relocatability of the material expressions of absolute spirit that allow them to function within a *universal* rather than local culture and that this feature will depend upon the presence of some form of enduring representational media within which such "fruits" can be preserved.<sup>31</sup> In the case of a culture's *linguistic* expressions, this medium, as Gadamer stresses, will be *writing*,<sup>32</sup> a medium for philosophising that will become important for the Stoic.

In Hegel's *Phenomenology*, while *we* (readers or "phenomenological viewers") can see a necessary link between the individualism of the Stoic and the type of atomised society in which Stoicism emerged as a form of self-consciousness, the Stoic *himself* misunderstands this as independence from social and political life *per se*, indeed, as an indifference to the existence of others *as such*. "This consciousness accordingly has a negative attitude towards the lord and bondsman relationship. [...] [I]ts aim is to be free and to maintain that lifeless indifference which steadfastly withdraws from the bustle of existence ... into the simple essentiality of thought."<sup>33</sup> However, while the Stoic may not grasp

his or her dependence *as a thinker* on the recognition of others, this essential link is confirmed later in the *Phenomenology* when, in the context of a discussion of spirit, Hegel refers back to the analysis of Stoic self-consciousness linking it to “legal status.”

Towards the end of the first section of Chapter 6, “Spirit,” headed “The True Spirit. The Ethical Order [*Sittlichkeit*],” Hegel discusses the emergence within Rome of “legal status [*Rechtzustand*]” or “personality,” the conception of the individual as a bearer of abstract rights, and he connects this notion to the earlier discussion of Stoicism.

Personality, then, has stepped out of the life of the ethical substance. It is the independence of consciousness, an independence which has *actual* validity. The non-actual thought of it which came from renouncing the *actual* world appeared earlier as the *Stoical* self-consciousness. Just as this proceeded from lordship and bondage, as the immediate existence of self-consciousness, so personality has proceeded from the immediate life of Spirit, which is the universal dominating will of all, and equally their service of obedience. What was for Stoicism only the *abstraction* of an *intrinsic* reality is now an *actual* world. Stoicism is nothing else but the consciousness which reduces to its abstract form the principle of legal status, an independence that lacks the life of Spirit.<sup>34</sup>

We are surely meant to take this link between legal status and Stoicism seriously. Legal status is here examined in the context of the spirit of a particular type of society: that of Rome. Earlier in this chapter Hegel had discussed the *immediate* nature of Greek “*Sittlichkeit*” suggesting that there any individual gained their identity from the complex of recognitively supported particular roles that articulated life in the polis. *Qua* occupant of legal status, however, an individual is no longer so recognised as a *specific* member of the community but simply as an abstract bearer of rights. The connection to the theme of recognition is all too apparent here, as the concept had originated with Fichte’s theorisation of legal status.<sup>35</sup> The claim that “Stoicism is nothing else but the consciousness which reduces to its abstract form the principle of legal status,” I suggest, can be taken as implying two things. First, that the relevant “rights” that are constitutive for the identity of the Stoic consist not of property in the external world but something more abstract: as the Stoic identifies himself as *thinker*, his “property,” we might say, consist of his own *thoughts*.

Next, although the Stoic takes this to be an individual affair, the fact that the "form" of this relation between the Stoic and his thoughts is that found in legal right implies that the Stoic's status *as a thinker* must be dependent on the *recognition* of other thinkers. His proper thoughts are the ones to which he is *rationally entitled*.

We in fact encounter just this idea in the context of modern epistemology when the justification of belief is discussed in terms of the notion of epistemic "entitlement," the notion central to Brandom's account of the pragmatics of the rational "language games" found in philosophy. An interlocutor, in challenging the assertion of a speaker and in demanding its justification, is thus asking after the grounds that would "entitle" the speaker to the claim to which the speaker has committed him or herself in the assertion. That Hegel has something like this recognitive basis of epistemic entitlement in mind in discussing the Stoics is further suggested by its thematisation of the opposition between Stoicism and Skepticism over the issue of the criterion itself—a dialectic that results in the collapse of this "second period" of ancient philosophy. The Stoic, who believes that *thought* is the way at getting at what is true encounters the opposing view of the Skeptic, who rejects the idea of "a 'criterion of truth as such,'" and only accepts a criterion for plausibility.<sup>36</sup>

The Stoic of course thinks of the philosophical cultivation of the self as an individual affair, but this is only because it is an activity grounded in a type of public culture that gives expression to the type of individualistically conceived personal identity found in Rome but not easily available in Greece. Hegel captures the difference by saying that the *Sittlichkeit* that was found in immediate form in Greek society has undergone "alienation [*Entfremdung*]." While all forms of society are, in their non-reducibility to nature, in some sense "constructed [*gebildet*]," in the Roman world "spirit constructs for itself [*bildet sich*] not merely a world, but a world that is double, divided and self-opposed."<sup>37</sup> The most obvious way in which this "divided and self-opposed" character of the objective spirit of Roman society will be expressed is in the other-worldly nature of Christianity that was to gain a grip there. But there is another more general sense in which the Roman world exhibits this doubling of its elements, and this is directly connected with the Stoic theme of self-cultivation.

The Stoic attempts to construct or form himself (*bildet sich*) into a pure thinker, thereby totally transcending the determinations of his given, natural self. But the type of self-alienation after which the Stoic strives is, as Hegel comments later in a different context, only completely achievable in *language*. “Language ... alone expresses the ‘I’. The ‘I’ is this particular ‘I’—but equally the *universal* ‘I’; its manifesting is also at once this externalisation and vanishing of *this* particular ‘I’, and as a result the ‘I’ remains in its universality.”<sup>38</sup> The Stoic is not exempt from recognitive intersubjective relations, they are just less visible, mediated by the subject’s linguistic traces. The project of self-cultivation relies on cultural resources that provide the tools with which this project can be undertaken—tools belonging to the realm of relocatable cultural products such as philosophical and other forms of literature which flourished in the period in question. In the later discussion of language Hegel notes that “in the world of ethical order [*Sittlichkeit*], in *law* and *command*, and in the actual world, in *counsel* only, language has the essence for its content; but here it has for its content the form itself, the form which language itself is, and is authoritative as *language*.”<sup>39</sup> What Hegel seems to mean with the first part of this sentence is that as it functions within immediate social interactions, language gives a form to a content that is given to it *from* the world of social interaction itself. Explicit expressions of “law” and “command,” for example, receive their *authority* from the normative status of the person who utters the words. But in a society in which spirit is itself self-alienated, language *too* becomes alienated from the practices otherwise informing it in the sense that linguistic texts can seemingly maintain their authority in isolation from the original speaker.

Recently Pierre Hadot has pointed to just this form of alienable written text functioning within Stoic practices of self-cultivation in commenting upon the ancient literary form of *hypomnemata*. Epictetus encouraged “lovers of wisdom” to write down, re-read and mediate upon their thoughts,<sup>40</sup> the point of this activity being to “liberate oneself from one’s individuality” by one’s being able later to hold one’s behaviour to such thoughts in subjectively tumultuous times.<sup>41</sup> As Hadot points out, “when one formulates one’s personal acts in writing, one is taken up by the machinery of reason, logic and universality.” While the thoughts so set down were “usually the dogmas of the school’s founding members,” it is clear that the authority of those written thoughts did not *derive* from those founders, but derived from the

fact that they were taken as having achieved the objectivity of the Stoic criterion. In Hegel's words, they were authoritative "as *language*."

On Hegel's account, the very conditions that had allowed a public philosophical culture to flourish in the Greco-Roman world had also effectively prevented it from developing: Stoicism, like the linked notion of "legal status," was restricted by an ultimately empty formalism that had its basis in the political structure of the Roman world in which power had come to be invested in a single individual. While a creation of the Roman world, the idea of legal status was to remain there largely empty because it lacked a practical form of life within which the ascription of such a status could play a significant and organic role. Much later, a form of *Sittlichkeit*, "civil society," would develop around the emerging *modern* economy, but in Rome any "content" which could fill such rights "belong[ed] to an autonomous power ... which [was] arbitrary and capricious"—the emperor himself.<sup>42</sup> We might relate this to the bare formalism of the Stoic's conceptions of reason and truth that had led to an inability to reply to the equally formal *sceptical* challenge; uncoupled from the powers involved in *transforming the world* in work, that is, the context of the development of the slave's cognitive powers, the Stoics' determination of the criterion of rationality could only remain abstract and formal. This abstraction and formality even affected the Stoic conception of the sage: "The wise man is specially skilful in dialectic we are told by the Stoics, for all things, both physical and ethical, are perceived through a knowledge of logic. But thus they have ascribed this perception to a subject, *without stating who this wise man is*."<sup>43</sup> The Christians, of course, had no trouble in saying who *their* equivalent to the "wise man" was.

For Hegel Greco-Roman philosophy and early Christianity were in a complex relation. Hegel stresses the importance of the philosophical culture that allowed the church fathers to

elaborat[e] the Christian religion in thinking knowledge ... We know that the Fathers were men of great philosophical culture, and that they introduced Philosophy, and more especially Neo-Platonic philosophy, into the Church; in this way they worked out a Christian system by which the first mode in which Christianity was manifested in the world was supplemented, for system was not present in this first manifestation.<sup>44</sup>

Hegel rarely mentions Augustine, but the Bishop of Hippo surely provides a particularly good model for the “unhappy consciousness” who succeeds Stoic and Skeptical self-consciousnesses in chapter 4 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.<sup>45</sup> And this former teacher of rhetoric and reader of the Neoplatonists and Cicero was surely the type of *cultivated* church father that Hegel has in mind. Augustine, according to a recent biographer, “lived much of his life sunk in an ocean of books, books he made and books that made him and books that made the world for him.”<sup>46</sup>

### 3. Philosophy and Religion as Shapes of Absolute Spirit

The church fathers are important for Hegel because they introduced *philosophy* into a faith-based religion, and *a religion* into late Greek philosophy, and doing so transformed the structure of *both*. With respect to the relation of religion to philosophy, Hegel, as we have seen, effectively follows Kant: while the medium of philosophy is conceptual, the religious mode of representation is a fundamentally metaphorical or allegorical *picture language* (*Vorstellungen*), in which an “inner meaning” is attributed to a content given in images or sensory intuition. In the case of Christianity, such an allegorical meaning was assigned to the facts of the life of a particular human being, Jesus. When we say “that God has begotten a son,” says Hegel, “we know quite well that this is only an image.”<sup>47</sup>

In the anthropomorphic “artistic” religions of Greece, the gods had been depicted with human form in statues, and then in specifically *linguistic* products such as epics and tragic dramas, but an internal dialectic of the tragic form eventually converted it into the effectively *secular* art form of comedy.<sup>48</sup> In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* Hegel comments that Greek religion had been both “too much” and “too little” anthropomorphic: “too much, because immediate qualities, forms, actions, are taken up into the divine; too little, because man is not divine as man, but only as a far-away form and not as ‘this’, and subjective man.”<sup>49</sup> But in Trinitarian Christianity God was not simply depicted in human form, he was regarded to be *this* particular man, Jesus, both “son of God” and “son of man.” It was the triune structure that Christian myth gave to the absolute that made it continuous with the Neoplatonic phase of Greek philosophy that Hegel describes as having succeeded skepticism. Neo-platonism had further developed the idea from Stoic physics

of a world-pervading spirit or "*nous*" by making it concrete *and* by giving it a trinary "hypostatic" differentiation, as in Plotinus' hypostases of "the One," "*nous*," and "*psyche*." However, "in spite of their profound and true speculation, the Neo-Platonists still had not proved their doctrine that the Trinity is the truth, for there is lacking to it the form of inward necessity."<sup>50</sup> This was only to be achieved in Christianity: "To [the Neoplatonists] spirit is thus not individual spirit; and this deficiency is made good through Christianity, in which spirit is found as actual, present spirit, immediately existent in the world here and now, and the absolute spirit is known in the immediate presence as man."<sup>51</sup> Of course, this deficiency was made good only in the mode of a *religious* "picturing" representation, but the church fathers had also created a *philosophical* religion, and Christianity was destined to be pulled into the classic dialectic between faith and knowledge—*Vorstellungen* and concept—that would come to a head in the Enlightenment. While in the revealed religion of early Christianity spirit had "attained its true *shape*," there "the shape itself and the picture-thought [were] still the unvanquished aspect from which Spirit must pass over into the Notion."<sup>52</sup>

All in all, we can see from Hegel's discussion of the passage from ancient philosophy and religion to the philosophical religion of the church fathers that "Absolute Spirit" is, like other dimensions of spirit, fundamentally recognitive in its nature. In the objectifications of the anthropomorphic "artistic religion" [*künstliche Religion*] of the Greeks, the shape of spirit was depicted in the form of a self "through the creative activity of consciousness whereby this [consciousness] beholds in its object its act or the self."<sup>53</sup> This anthropomorphic form given to the representation of spirit was extended and radicalised in Christianity with the idea of an historically actual being, Jesus, recognised as both man and God. This doctrine was soon to pose problems for Christianity's philosophical side, the seeming contradiction contained in this idea causing recurrent attempts throughout the history of Christianity to reject the Trinitarian idea.<sup>54</sup> With his own logical interpretation of the Trinitarian doctrine, Hegel understood the abstract opposition between the first two persons of the Trinity, the "Father" and the "Son," as resolved in the "third person," the "Holy Spirit," immanent within the religious community itself.<sup>55</sup> The actual historical figure of Jesus, the "son of man," could only *be* the "son of God" in virtue of the fact that he was so *recognised* by the members of this community. Jesus thus lived on ("arose from the dead") within the scripturally encoded

collective memory of the religious community—continued to exist within its literary culture, we might say—as an exemplification of the highest life.

Thus the complex symbolic structure of Christianity, *qua* type of collective artwork, presents within the form of *Vorstellungen* a truth pertaining to spirit in both subjective and objective forms.<sup>56</sup> Spirit is essentially self-alienating, in a way demonstrated both at the individual level with the process of self-cultivation, and the level of collective culture itself, when concrete social norms are made explicit in symbolic productions allowing their further criticism and change. The self-alienation that God “the father” must undergo *to be* God symbolises this, as does the self-sacrifice of his “son.”<sup>57</sup>

Relying on an analogy between the human mind and the Trinity traceable to the church fathers, Hegel could take the triune structure of the Christian God as a symbolically articulated model for the recognitive constitution of the finite mind (subjective spirit). As the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be cashed out in any substance-based metaphysics (*qua* substances God could only be one or three, not both), so too does Hegel’s conception of the recognitively constituted finite mind resist being understood as any type of *substance*—spiritual *or* material. The free individual subject, as Hegel puts it, confounding any substantialist conception of the self, is “at home with itself” (*bei sich*) only when “in another” (*im anderen*).<sup>58</sup> The Diltheian more *functionalistic* approach to the self where the natural self is the *bearer* of socially defined normative roles comes close to Hegel’s theory, but can only capture that “immediate” relation of individual organism to social role characteristic of pre-Christian forms of life like that of the polis. But even if we take Hegel’s personifications of absolute spirit as instances of essentially metaphorical expressions for the presentation of his recognitive theory of self-consciousness, we still might ask to what his continued use of such metaphors commit him. Why does Hegel insist on giving religion the status it has rather than, like other secular thinkers of the Enlightenment, reducing it to “superstition”?<sup>59</sup> Another way of posing this question is to ask: Why cannot the symbolic expressions characteristic of religion be regarded as entirely replaceable by the abstract conceptuality of secular thought?

Hegel’s appeals to religion are typically associated with the charge of “abstract formalism” that he brings against “the understanding,” and those presuppose his own “speculative” approach to reason and logic. This is the

charge that he brings against both the Stoics of the Greco-Roman world and Kant's transcendental idealism: both reduce the speculative reason of Plato and Aristotle to "the understanding." While Kant warns of the fact that the pursuit of thought *beyond* the bounds of the empirically bound "understanding" leads to antinomies and contradictions, Hegel appears to *embrace* the contradictions so generated as it will be the *resolution* of such contradiction that will allow reason to progress in its self-correcting manner. Hegel clearly sees his own version of speculative philosophy as correcting problems within the stance of Kant's formalist "understanding," but he also typically appeals to religion, despite the limitations of its picture-language, as addressing and overcoming these same shortcomings. We might glimpse his reasons for this if we return to the problems facing the Stoic, and comparing them with a modern version of the same configuration of self-consciousness.

The internalisation of the opposition between master and slave is clearly reflected in the Stoic practice of the writing of *hypomnemata* as is brought out in Pierre Hadot's comments on the *Meditations* of the Stoic, Marcus Aurelius. For Marcus, he notes, the writer's ego is "situated at the level of Reason, exhorting the soul." That is, in composing his texts Marcus writes from the position of rational thought with the text meant as a device for holding his future behaviour to reason's dictates. Hadot's comparison of Marcus' *Meditations* with the *Soliloquies* of Augustine is instructive here. In contrast to Marcus, says Hadot, "Augustine's ego takes the place of the soul *listening* to Reason."<sup>60</sup> Such a reluctance to speak from the position of reason itself is typical of the "unhappy consciousness," who locates reason in a transcendent source, God, and adopts rather the Christian's stance of "faith [*Glauben*]." As we have seen, for Hegel the unhappy consciousness' stance initially overcomes the problem of the abstraction and formalism of Stoicism, at least in relation to giving a content to the life of the "good" man. But "unhappy consciousness" reproduces the same abstract *asymmetry* between independent (God) and dependent (man) that characterised the master-slave relation that had been internalised by the Stoic. This abstract opposition between *norm* and *individual subjected to the norm* continues to plague such forms of self-consciousness.

The Stoic's problem of *simultaneously* being its own master and slave reappears at the end of Chapter 6 of the *Phenomenology* in Hegel's discussion of

“the beautiful soul” who is *certain* of the purity of his own motivations and who dismisses other’s interpretations of his actions as misunderstandings or the result of evil intentions. That is, the beautiful soul is a form of self-consciousness who still must learn that spirit is instantiated *not* in individuals *per se*, who can only ever be finite *self-contradictory* instantiations of it, but in historically developing networks of recognitively linked individuals. The beautiful soul thus has to face the “hard-hearted judge” who can break the immediacy of the beautiful soul’s convictions, however the hard-hearted judge in judging from the position of reason faces the same problem faced by the beautiful soul. The judge must therefore acknowledge and confess to his own finitude and seek forgiveness from the subject being judged. *Mutual* confession and forgiveness is therefore the only relation that solves the problem. Here Hegel comments that the reconciling word is “the *objectively* existent Spirit, which beholds the pure knowledge of itself *qua* universal essence, in its opposite ... a reciprocal recognition which is *absolute* Spirit.”<sup>61</sup> The “reconciling *Yea*, in which the two ‘I’s let go their antithetical *existence*” is in fact God’s self-manifestation “in the midst of those who know themselves in the form of pure knowledge.”<sup>62</sup>

Hegel’s insistence on *forgiveness* here introduces a shape of recognition that might be difficult to articulate with Brandom’s somewhat legalistic model of “deontic scorekeeping,”<sup>63</sup> and seems to signal a different way of thinking about the *intransigence* of our natural determinations in relation to the normative demands that we otherwise face. Besides *holding each other* (and ourselves) to the norms, we must be prepared to *forgive* certain transgressions of others (and ourselves) as well. Given that we are entitled to hold others to the norms, this means in some sense being prepared to *forego*, or at least not insist on, our entitlements. This seems to signal a conception of community that is deeper than and presupposed by the type of recognitive interactions based on “entitlements” and “commitments.”<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, it still might be thought that we could accommodate this idea within a recognitive account of ethical life without using Hegel’s symbolic form of expression when he identifies the “speaker” here as God. And yet for Hegel there does seem to be more at stake here than just a discardable figure of speech. Some of Hegel’s more romantic contemporaries had claimed that the type of “metaphysical” claims that Kant had disavowed *could* be made, but only *indirectly* and *poetically*, with figures of speech, irony, and so on. Despite his

antipathy to much of the romantic program, there seems to be a degree of the same idea in Hegel too: although Hegel claims that the medium of philosophy is *conceptual* thought, his idea of "conceptual," at least in relation to more commonplace understandings, seems to have absorbed elements that others would consign to the *symbolic* types of thinking found in religion and art. But rather than to explore the vast question of Hegel's "speculative" thought further here, it aids us to look to Kant, because Kant *too* insists that in certain contexts we can do no other than to adopt a symbolic form of thought and understand a "voice" that we might otherwise take as *our own* (and it which in some sense can only *be* our own) as being the voice of another: the "voice of God." And what appears to be at issue here concerns how we are to think of the very processes in which the norms of all life are *instituted* and *administered*.

Certain Hegelian critics of Kant have pointed to a dilemma that they see facing Kant's account of rule following. For Terry Pinkard Kant faces a paradox—the "Kantian paradox"—in that the morally autonomous individual is conceived as "being subject only to those laws it gives itself." That is, Kant seems to require an agent "to split himself in two, to 'double' himself—in effect, for 'me' to issue a law to myself that 'I' could then use as a reason to apply the law to myself."<sup>65</sup> The basic idea is that it is incoherent to regard the norms to which any subject holds herself as at the same time *legislated* by the subject: they must be regarded as immanent within the rule-governed social life to which that subject belongs. But there is evidence that Kant himself had become aware of the "Kantian paradox," and that he appeals to the symbolic forms of presentation found in religion as part of an effort to address the problem.

In Kant's very latest writings he resumes a theme from his earlier practical philosophy concerning the moral necessity of "postulating" God, but the reason for this seem to have changed. The role of the idea of God is now reduced to a bare minimum: one must relate to the moral law as if it is God's command, *despite the fact* that it is actually one's own.

The categorical imperative does not presuppose a supremely commanding substance which would be outside me, but is, rather a command or prohibition of *my own reason*. Notwithstanding this, it is nevertheless *to be regarded as* proceeding from a being who has irresistible power over all.<sup>66</sup>

That the moral law needs a *voice* is a function of the fact that it is presented to us in the form of an imperative: a command needs a commander. Evidence that Kant's paradoxical idea that a command that one issues to oneself must be treated *as if* it is the "voice of God" forms a response to the "Kantian Paradox" is suggested by what Kant says in *Perpetual Peace* concerning the quasi-logical problem facing a ruler purporting to hold itself to rules that that ruler has itself legislated: "The legislator can unite in one and the same person his function as legislative and as executor of his will just as little as the universal of the major premiss in a syllogism can also be the subsumption of the particular under the universal in the minor."<sup>67</sup> In *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* Kant appeals to the Trinitarian imagery of the separation of three "persons" in one God in terms of this need to separate the different normative functions involved, functions like those of Brandom's *instituting* and *administering* activities.<sup>68</sup> Without this theological "distinction of personalities," Kant notes, the pure moral religion would "run the danger of degenerating into an anthropomorphic servile faith because of the human propensity to think of the Divinity as a human authority (who does not usually separate in his rule [the parts of] this threefold quality but rather often mixes or interchanges them)."<sup>69</sup> Something like this idea, I suggest, stands behind Hegel's similar approach to the role of religious *Vorstellungen*.

From the early modern period, the idea that the normativity of the social world flowed from God's legislation had started to be challenged by the idea that those norms were somehow the results of collective *human willing*. Kant's conception of the moral law at first glance looks to be a version of this, but Kant is concerned about the propensity of such an approach to fall into the trap of thinking of each subject as a type of unitary substance which can simultaneously legislate norms and subject itself to those norms. In doing so he anticipates Hegel's later objection, and significantly, both invoke the Trinitarian conception of God to challenge the implicitly substantialist conception of the self that is presupposed by modern secular view. In Hegel this takes the form of an appeal to the *logical* truth behind or presented in what, from the point of view of the "understanding," are the *illogical* ideas of the Trinity and of the incarnation of God in man. "God," the locus of the norms to which we hold ourselves, in some sense only exists in virtue of *our* recognition of that God and the norms "he" commands. But God and his laws can neither be thought of simply as "our" creation, along the lines pursued later

by Feuerbach and others. Besides suggesting something like a collective version of the "Kantian paradox," such a view suggests that subjects are substances that somehow pre-exist the recognitive relations within which they find themselves, and have natures of which their gods may be merely projections. But Hegel is equally idealist in his approach to "men" and "man" as he is to "gods" and "God," no such entities can be conceived as pre-existing their "recognition" within these complex patterns of interaction that he labels "*Geist*," interactions mediated by representations of both men and gods.

How to conceive of the normative structure of social life in the absence of the traditional metaphysical idea of God has been one of the most compelling questions facing modern thought, and Hegel's conception of the relation of "subjective" and "objective" figures of spirit have been suggestive to those, like Dilthey, trying to find non-naturalistic but otherwise modern, secular conceptions of human subjectivity. However, not only might it be that Hegel has still much to teach us about the subjects and their lives within a normative social ontology, it may also be the case that some of his most important insights reside in those aspects of his approach to "spirit" that have often been dismissed out of hand.<sup>70</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, W. Dilthey, "The Construction of the Historical World in the Human Sciences," in *Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. H. P. Rickman, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976, especially pp. 191–195.

<sup>2</sup> Dilthey, *Selected Writings*, p. 194.

<sup>3</sup> J. Searle, *Speech Acts*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1969, p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> I. Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. M. Gregor, intro. Christine M. Korsgaard, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> Dilthey, *Selected Writings*, p. 194.

<sup>6</sup> H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, second revised edition, translation revised by J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall, London, Continuum, 2004. On Gadamer's appeal to Hegel over Schleiermacher, see Part I, 2, 2 (D) in "Reconstruction and integration as hermeneutic tasks."

<sup>7</sup> See for example, his comments in *Truth and Method*, "Foreword to the Second Edition," p. xxxiii.

<sup>8</sup> The main proponents of the post-Kantian reading of Hegel I have in mind are Robert Pippin and Terry Pinkard. See, for example, R. B. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism:*

*The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, and T. Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

<sup>9</sup> For Gadamer, see in particular his treatment of the I-Thou relation in *Truth and Method*, pp. 352–55.

<sup>10</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977, §§166–230.

<sup>11</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. H. Rackham, Cambridge, Mass., Loeb Classical Library, 1998, 1254 b 15–20.

<sup>12</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §§ 175–7. For an explication of the relations involved, see my “The Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: The Dialectic of Lord and Bondsman in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*,” in ed. F. C. Beiser, *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth Century Philosophy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Allegra de Laurentiis puts it well when she describes Hegel’s approach as a “modern, critical version of Scholastic realism.” See A. de Laurentiis, “Absolute Knowing,” in ed. K. R. Westphal, *The Blackwell Guide to Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Chichester, Wiley–Blackwell, 2009, p. 246.

<sup>14</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: One-volume Edition, The Lectures of 1827*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988, p. 78. Similarly, he says in his lectures on aesthetics that philosophy “has no other object but God and so is essentially rational theology” (*Hegel’s Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, Oxford, Clarendon Press, vol 1, 1975, p. 149). Philosophy, along with art and religion, belongs to what he refers to as “Absolute Spirit,” and these three realms having this same content—God—“differ only in the forms in which they bring home to consciousness their object, the Absolute” (*ibid*).

<sup>15</sup> Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 144–161.

<sup>16</sup> For the inferentialist semantics that forms the background to Brandom’s reading of Hegel see R. B. Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1994. For the application of the approach to Hegel, see his *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2002, chs 6 & 7.

<sup>17</sup> L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford, Blackwell, 1963, § 2.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, W. Sellars, “Language, Rules and Behavior,” in ed. S. Hook, *John Dewey: Philosopher of Science and Freedom*, New York, Dial Press, 1950, reprinted in W. Sellars, *Pure Pragmatics and Possible Worlds: The Early Essays of Wilfrid Sellars*, ed. and intro. by J. F. Sicha, Atascadero, Ridgeview, 1980. On Brandom’s development of Sellars’ pragmatic approach to language see my *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, ch. 2.

<sup>19</sup> On the notion of material inference see Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, pp. 6–9.

<sup>20</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. and trans. P. Guyer and A. W. Wood, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, A81/B107.

<sup>21</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3 volumes, trans. E. S. Haldane, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, vol. 2, 1995, p. 229.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 232.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 234. Hegel discusses the Stoic's appeal to the criterion of the cataleptic impression (*phantasia kataleptiki*) at p. 250.

<sup>24</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §199.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, §197.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, §198.

<sup>27</sup> Recently this aspect of Greco-Roman philosophy has been stressed by Pierre Hadot in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. and intro. A. I. Davidson, trans. M. Chase, Oxford, Blackwell, 1995.

<sup>28</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §199, translation modified. Compare "the Stoic philosophy was particularly at home in the Roman world." Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol 2, p. 278.

<sup>29</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §753, quoted in Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 160.

<sup>30</sup> This is at the core of Gadamer's return to Hegel's "integrative" approach to historiography over Schleiermacher's "reconstructive" approach.

<sup>31</sup> See Hegel, "The statues are now only stones from which the living soul has flown, just as the hymns are words from which belief has gone." *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 753. The crucial fact nevertheless is that we have and find meaning in such dead stones and words.

<sup>32</sup> Kant broaches the issue of the difference that the existence of sacred texts makes to forms of religious faith in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, in I. Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, trans. and ed. A. W. Wood and G. di Giovanni, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 162n.

<sup>33</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §199.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, §479.

<sup>35</sup> J. G. Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*, ed. F. Neuhouser, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000. Effectively this is the way that Hegel would later theorise abstract property rights in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*.

<sup>36</sup> In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* Hegel expands this dialectic to include the Epicurean. We have already seen from the first three chapters of the *Phenomenology* that the Stoic's attempt to specify the "cataleptic impression" as a criterion for certain knowledge must surely fail. For a helpful account of the role of the problem of the criterion in Hegel's *Phenomenology* see K. R. Westphal, "Hegel's Phenomenological

Method and Analysis of Consciousness” in ed. Westphal, *The Blackwell Guide to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*.

<sup>37</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §486.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, §508. The centrality of language for exploring questions of the “I” had been made thematic by critical engagement with Fichte's philosophy by the “Jena Romantics” in the 1790s.

<sup>39</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §508.

<sup>40</sup> Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, p. 195.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>42</sup> Thus in the ancient world “consciousness of right, therefore, in regards to its actual validity, experiences this rather as the loss of its reality and its complete inessentiality.” Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §480, translation modified.

<sup>43</sup> Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol 2, p. 256 (italics added). Earlier, Hegel attributes this criticism of not saying who the wise man is to Cicero (p. 251). Significantly, Kant, in “The Ideal of Pure Reason” in the Transcendental Dialectic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, gives the Stoic sage as an example of such an “ideal” which “serves as the *original image* for the thoroughgoing determination of the copy” against which we can compare and judge ourselves. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A569/B597. As Hegel finds the Stoic's non-speculative restriction to the understanding in Kant as well, Cicero's criticism might be taken as applying to Kant's moral philosophy as well.

<sup>44</sup> Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol 3, p. 11.

<sup>45</sup> That Augustine is the model for “unhappy consciousness” is posited by Henry Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, 2 vols, Indianapolis, Hackett, vol. 1, 1997, p. 395, and Stephen Crites, *Dialectic and Gospel in the Development of Hegel's Thinking*, University Park, Pa., Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998, p. 294.

<sup>46</sup> J. J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: A New Biography*, New York, Harper Perennial, 2006, p. 120.

<sup>47</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, one-volume edition, The Lectures of 1827*, p. 146.

<sup>48</sup> Moreover, the specifically religious “picture-language” elements had begun to be forced out of the tragedies by the demands of the philosophers. “The expulsion of such shadowy, insubstantial picture-thoughts which was demanded by the philosophers of antiquity thus already beings in [Greek] tragedy in general.” Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §741. Comedy is thus the religious analogue to philosophical scepticism: “What this self-consciousness beholds is that whatever the form of essentiality over against it, is instead dissolved in it—in its thinking, its existence, and its action—and is at its mercy.” §747. See also §753.

<sup>49</sup> Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol 3, p. 4.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, vol 3, pp. 1–2.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §683.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.* The idea of recognition of oneself in the product of one's creative labours was, of course, established in Hegel's discussion of the labour of the slave.

<sup>54</sup> Early the doctrine had been rejected by Arius (ca 250–336 CE) and his followers, who were denounced as heretics at the First Council of Nicaea in 325. In the early modern period it was similarly rejected by Faustus Socinus (1539–1604) and his followers. The antitrinitarian movement later became generally known as "Unitarianism."

<sup>55</sup> Hegel's attempt to reconcile the Trinitarian doctrine with his own logic was complex and changing. See, for example, P. C. Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 85–9. The attempt to resolve the Christian Trinitarian structure with that of logic had to some degree been anticipated by Leibniz in his attempt to exempt the Trinitarian doctrine from contradiction. See in particular Maria Rosa Antognazza's important study, *Leibniz on the Trinity and the Incarnation: Reason and Revelation in the Seventeenth Century*, trans. Gerald Parks, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2007.

<sup>56</sup> Augustine had regarded the subjective mind as mirroring, in a finite way, the triune structure of God, an idea revived in Leibniz's drawing of the analogy between the way the self-aware mind is both divided (as subject and object of knowledge) and yet one. Hegel, in his recognitive account of self-consciousness, also regards the structure of self-consciousness as manifesting this triune structure.

<sup>57</sup> I am indebted here to conversations with Paolo Diego Bubbio who has stressed to me the centrality of the figure of "sacrifice" in Hegel's systematic thought.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part 1 of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W A Suchting, and H. S. Harris, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1991, § 24, addition 2, and *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. A. W. Wood, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, § 7 addition. Significantly, being consciously "in another" is what is missing from Stoic self-consciousness. For the Stoic: "In thinking, I *am free*, because I am not in an *other*, but remain simply and solely in communication with myself." Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 197.

<sup>59</sup> For his part Brandom is clear about those parts of the historical Hegel that can be discarded as mere inessential accumulations reflecting historically contingent circumstances—a policy that might indeed be extended to the role Hegel gives to religion.

<sup>60</sup> P. Hadot, *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*, trans. M. Chase, Cambridge, MA., Harvard University Press, 1998, p. 33 (emphasis added). Thus in the *Soliloquies*, Augustine reports a "voice" speaking to him while reflectively examining his thoughts: "was it I who was speaking, or someone, either outside me or within me, I do not know." Quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §670.

<sup>62</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §671.

<sup>63</sup> I have developed this idea in “Hegel, Fichte and the Pragmatic Context of Moral Judgment,” in ed. E. Hammer, *German Idealism: Contemporary Perspectives*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2007.

<sup>64</sup> In Hegel’s *Outlines of a Philosophy of Right*, the “rights based” community of civil society thus presupposes the differently structured community of the family.

<sup>65</sup> T. Pinkard, “Subjects, Objects, and Normativity: What Is It Like To Be an Agent?,” in eds. K. Ameriks and J. Stolzenberg, *International Yearbook of German Idealism*, vol 1, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 2003, p. 210. Pinkard continues: “However, splitting the agent in two *per se* does nothing to solve the problem, since such a view cannot adjudicate which of the two sides of the same agent is to have priority over the other; it cannot, that is, show how splitting myself in two somehow ‘binds’ one of my parts because of legislation enacted by the other.” (*ibid.*) Pinkard adds that “Wittgenstein’s arguments about private languages and rule-following only reinforce such a view.” Pinkard’s Hegel solves Kant’s problem with a move to the “sociality of reason,” conceived by Pinkard in terms broadly similar to those of Brandom. See especially, *Hegel’s Phenomenology*. A similar Hegel inspired criticism of Kant is made by William Bristow in *Hegel and the Transformation of Philosophical Critique*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.

<sup>66</sup> Kant, *Opus postumum*, p. 211, both emphases added. On Kant’s later conception of God see especially E. Förster, *Kant’s Final Synthesis: An Essay on the Opus Postumum*, Cambridge, Mass., Cambridge University Press, 2000, ch. 5.

<sup>67</sup> Kant, “Perpetual Peace” in *Kant on History*, trans. L. W. Beck, Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1963, p. 96. It is this quasi-logical point that is behind Kant’s treatment of the “separation of powers.”

<sup>68</sup> Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, pp. 166–7.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, p. 167.

<sup>70</sup> I am grateful to Heikki Ikäheimo for helpful comments on an earlier version of this chapter.

Chapter Eight

## **Recognition as the Social Grammar of Species Being in Marx**

Michael Quante

### **I. Introduction**

This contribution is dedicated to the analysis of two central categories in the philosophy of Karl Marx, as he develops or expounds them in the *Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts*. In order to explicate these categories of “species being” and “recognition” it is necessary to briefly account for the model of action and the conception of recognition Marx takes as a basis. After this it will be shown that the Marxian conception of estrangement relies on the conception of species being. In light of the constitutive function of cognitive processes, the essentialism connected with Marx’s conception suggests reading it as an evaluative philosophical anthropology.

Although this paper is mainly exegetical in character it is at the same time of systematic relevance. Firstly, Marx’s conception of alienation is still prominent in contemporary

critical social philosophy but it is mostly overlooked that his conception of recognition is the main evaluative resource in its background. Secondly, there are two difficulties in contemporary social (and political) philosophy, which are better understood when Marx's 'solution' (and its deficits) has been carefully examined: The close connection of essentialist and evaluative notions in Marx's social ontology on the one hand and his 'solution' to the problem of the relation between individual and species on the other hand. Thirdly, making visible where and why Marx's solution to the estrangement embedded in the social grammar of modernity uses a too strong evaluative ideal still provides an important lesson for contemporary critical social theory.

## 2. "Objectification" and "estrangement" in outline

The state of estrangement as it occurs in political economy expresses, according to Marx, nothing else but the fact

that the object which labour produces—confronts it as *something alien*, as a *power independent* of the producer. The product of labour is labour which has been embodied in an object, which has become material: it is the *objectification* of labour. Labour's realisation is its objectification. (272)<sup>1</sup>

Although Marx talks here only about labour, this passage reflects his general theory of action. In connection with Hegel's concept of action Marx advocates a theory of objectification: In intentional action a subjective end (what is intended) is objectified to an objective, accomplished end (the result of the action).<sup>2</sup> In contrast to Hegel, the production of a material object dominates Marx's model of action, but the bringing about of a fact by means of action can also be captured within Marx's conception. The result of an action is the objectivisation of features intended by the agent, and Marx assumes that this product resulting from the action has only those properties that were intended in the process of action. Through the transformation from the subjective to the objective mode the result of the action at the same time gains an independence which comprises the possibility that it opposes the agent as alien or even hostile. The human being, as an objective species being, can only act in the form of objectivisation, so that its species nature implies alienation and the possibility of estrangement.

Furthermore, Marx reconstructs, once again in the tradition of Hegel, the processes of self-knowledge on the basis of the objectification-model of action: In order for a subject to attribute a property to itself, it must first alienate this property into a product, and then, in a second step, reappropriate this alienation by way of identification with the product. To achieve this, the subject must realise that the product is the result of its own action, which requires appropriate epistemic and social circumstances. On this assumption, alienation forms a part of self-realisation and recognition is an essential part of the social grammar of species being.

If the human being does not succeed in realising its essence through its action, this is a case of estrangement. This can be understood as failed alienation of essential properties and, according to Marx, comprises four dimensions:

- the estrangement of the worker from the product,
- the estrangement of the worker from the act of producing,
- the estrangement of the worker from the species being,
- the estrangement of the worker from the other human being.

In line with the premise that nothing can be part of the result of an action which has not been intended in the process of acting, Marx reduces the first dimension of estrangement to the second. He draws a connection to the third and fourth dimensions by assuming that the human being is essentially an objective species being, which realises itself through productive activity. If the given social structure of production is inadequate for self-realisation, then the self-realisation of its own species cannot be successful so that the estranged act of production is at the same time an estrangement of the worker from its own species being. Due to further assumptions, which we will explain in detail in the next section, the relation between the worker and his own species being is manifested in relationships to other human beings, so that the third and fourth dimensions of estrangement are inextricably connected.

In the *Manuscripts* and in the *Mill-Excerpts*, Marx presumes that the institutions of private property, market and wage labour systematically thwart the realisation of the essence of the human being, so that this social status is to be characterised as estrangement. In order to be able to explicate this diagnosis, Marx refers to a conception of the species being which—as our analysis in the next section will show—contains a recognitive relation as its evaluative criterion.

### 3. The conception of the species being

The concept of estrangement depends on the objectification-model of action, which is at the centre of the conception of the species being. Without the premise that the human being is an objective species being, Marx could not account for the connection between the first two and the last two aspects of estrangement. But what does Marx mean by his claim that the human being is an objective species being? This question can best be addressed by dividing it into two sub-questions:

(Q1) What are the metaphysical implications of Marx's theory?

(Q2) What are the ethical implications of Marx's theory?

In order to answer (Q1) it will be helpful to turn to the contexts of Marx's theory within the history of ideas.<sup>3</sup>

#### 3.1 Contexts in the history of ideas<sup>4</sup>

It is quite certain that Marx's use of the concept of species at the time of writing the *Manuscripts* and the *Mill-Excerpts* immediately follows Ludwig Feuerbach and Moses Hess. Yet, the influence of Hegel is also relevant with respect to this issue for three reasons: first, Hegel is generally important for the development of Marx's theory, second, Feuerbach's philosophy is influenced by Hegel, and third, Marx had studied Hegel's philosophy of nature intensively during the preparation of his dissertation.

##### 3.1.1 Hegel

Marx's first source of reference is Hegel's analysis of species relationships at the end of his philosophy of nature. Here Hegel is concerned among other issues, and to the exclusion of social aspects, with the sexual reproduction of the species by means of the behaviour of the exemplars (Hegel is mainly thinking of higher mammals), but also with the learning processes of the individuals, as well as with their death. In § 369 of the 1830 edition of his *Encyclopedia*, Hegel writes about the relationship between the sexes:

This primary diremption of the genus into species, and the further determination of these species into the immediately exclusive being-for-self of singularity, is merely a negative and hostile attitude towards others. However, the genus is to the same extent singularity, as an essentially affirmative

self-relatedness within the genus. In this self-relatedness, the singularity is an exclusive individual opposed to another of its kind, continues itself in this *other*, and is sensible of itself within *it*. This relationship is [a; M. Q.] *process* which begins with a *need*, for while the individual as a singular being is not adequate to the immanent genus, it is at the same time the identical self-relation of the genus in a *single* unity. It therefore *feels* this deficiency. Consequently, the genus is present in the individual as a strain opposed to the inadequacy of its single actuality; it is present as an urge to attain its sentience in the other of its genus, to integrate itself through union with this other, and by means of this mediation to bring the genus into existence by linking itself into it. This constitutes *generation* [Beggattung; M.Q.]<sup>5</sup>.

For Hegel, the species is only effective in and through the behaviour of the individuals. But the behaviour of the exemplars is to be captured philosophically only as an expression of the species. Since the species represents the universal character or the essence of the individuals, Hegel takes this to reveal an active unity of the universal character of the species on the one hand and the particular of the individuals' behaviour on the other. In this context of the philosophy of nature the individual is deficient with respect to the species, and it can compensate this deficit only through the relationship to another individual of its species.

In the case of the human being, it is in virtue of its self-consciousness and the epistemic and practical capacities connected therewith, that this relationship between universal and particular comes to the consciousness of the single exemplar: The single self-conscious human being is a unity that is for itself of the species universality and particular individuality. According to Hegel, this unity can only exist as spirit, that is in the sphere of social institutions (objective spirit) and cultural media (absolute spirit). With this, the ontological interdependence relationships are essentially more complex in Hegel's social and legal philosophy than in the philosophy of nature. At the same time, this increase of complexity induces a multitude of possible ethical constellations that are not crucial to the philosophy of nature.

### 3.1.2 Feuerbach

For the human being, the own species is, as Feuerbach and Marx are going to say, a theoretical and practical matter: man's species being is—as Marx says—“universal”. With respect to the theoretical dimension of the species

relationship, Feuerbach follows suit with Hegel's conception, and Marx does not diverge on this point. In virtue of its cognitive capacities, the human being is able to become aware of its own essence as well as of the essence of all other things qua concepts. In line with his critique of religion and, later stated more generally, of ideology, Feuerbach amends the practical dimension of the relationship between human beings and their species being. Where Hegel had developed a differentiated conception of spirit that recognised not just anthropological aspects and social institutions, but also art, religion and philosophy as media of self-interpretation and as legitimate ways of realising this character of species, Feuerbach shifts the whole discourse into the anthropological and social realms.<sup>6</sup> As a consequence, the differentiated relationship between the single individual and the species Hegel conceived of is altered towards a dominance of the species. And what is more, already in Feuerbach, albeit in a rudimentary fashion, we find the idea that the species being of the human being must develop and realise itself in a process of historical progress.

Yet, before finding a place in Marx's conception, these four tendencies

- the dominance of the species
- the dominance of the anthropological and social relationship
- the dominance of the practical relationship
- the historicisation of essence

were given a more elaborate form in the work of Moses Hess, with whom Marx collaborated intensively during the time of writing the *Manuscripts*.

### 3.1.3 Hess

The writings of Moses Hess, born in 1812, can be read as the first manifestos of socialist thought in Germany. Even before Weitling, Hess had 'discovered' the proletariat as the force that is of the utmost meaning for the philosophy of history since it will overcome estrangement. Hess rejects Hegel's idealism and presupposes the unity of idea and matter. In 1842 Hess writes contributions for the *Rheinische Zeitung*, whose editor at the time was Marx, in which he develops his conception of species being and takes a succinctly communist position.

The consequent historico-philosophical dimension of the theory of species being that Hess developed between 1840 and 1845, together with his claim

that this species being primarily realises itself in its practical social activity, had a sustaining influence on Marx.<sup>7</sup> The sublation of the existing estrangement is only possible through the abolition of private property, of the state and all its institutions. Their place is taken by a utopia of social unity and harmony, which adapts ideas of the utopian Charles Fourier and categorically excludes the mutual instrumentalisation of human beings. Hess declares the spontaneously harmonic and conscious collaboration of human beings that is established free from coercion by the state as the determination of the essence of the species being and thus as the end of history. The theoretical dimension of the relationship between individual and species is here treated as subordinate to the practical dimension and the core of the realisation of the species is one-sidedly incurred on the species: The single human being becomes, in contrast to Hegel's or Feuerbach's understanding, merely an exemplar.

The Marxian model of species being can be understood as a synthesis of three sources: of Feuerbach's anthropological conception, of Hess' vision of social unity, and of the objectification-model of action adapted from Hegel. With Hegel, Marx subscribes to the epistemological subject-object-model in order to conceptualise the necessity of estrangement. With Feuerbach, he thinks of the individual anthropological and theoretical dimension of species being as a subordinate aspect of the primarily social species being. And with Hess, he criticises private ownership of means of production, wage labour and the existence of a legal state as the expression of estrangement that is to be replaced by immediate or consciously planned and rationally comprehended cooperation. Furthermore, Marx joins Hess in thinking historically in terms of a necessary process of the development of the essence, where this history proceeds through crises and through the forming of contraries.

### 3.2 *Metaphysical Aspects*

Having embedded the Marxian conception in its immediate historical context, I now turn to the metaphysical aspects of the theory of species being. Here I proceed in three steps. I will reconstruct the essentialism of Marx's conception of species being (3.2.1), the social ontological relations contained therein (3.2.2), and the relationship between species being and estrangement, which is the historico-philosophical dimension of Marx's theory (3.2.3).

### 3.2.1 *Essentialism*

Marx cannot formulate his conceptions of the species being and of estrangement without essentialist assumptions.<sup>8</sup> By essentialism I mean here the claim that one can distinguish between essential and inessential properties of an entity, that is, between those properties that constitute the essence of an entity and those that do not. Roughly stated, an essential property *F* is one that an entity *x* of a certain kind must have in order to be an entity of this kind.

The human species being presents the complex case of an entity that changes across time, and with respect to which one can distinguish between actual and potential properties. If an entity *x* has not developed one of its properties at time *t*, and if this property belongs to its essence, then—in so far as it is a normal exemplar of the species—it has this property potentialiter. If such an entity *x* cannot realise its essence, that is, at least one of its essential properties due to actual circumstances, then it is estranged from its essence in the sense of being kept from developing a potential.

According to Marx, the human being qua species being is an entity for which it is essential to have beliefs about its own essential properties. Now the following case can occur: *x* cannot realise its own essence, for *x* has a wrong conception of its own essence; here we have a specific form of estrangement on the level of the self-conception of one's own essence. On the level of social and material realisation, estrangement is then, on Marx's view, coupled with such an inadequate self-interpretation. Both dimensions of estrangement are then mutually dependent: Wrong self-interpretations can lead to (or at least stabilise) wrong social relationships and wrong social circumstances can yield wrong self-interpretations.

The term "wrong" can be interpreted here essentialistically or ethically, and there is—prima facie—only a short step from essentialist conceptions to ethical positions concerning human nature. It is appropriate to read the *Manuscripts* as an ethically moulded theory of an Aristotelian type, by attributing to Marx the claim that the realisation of the essence of a human being is at the same time an ethically meaningful good.<sup>9</sup> Yet, Marx's theoretical attempt is not differentiated enough to be thoroughly compelling, nor does Marx explicitly commit himself to this Aristotelian principle anywhere.

In fact, Marx's conception of estrangement would obviously only commit him to an ethical theory if it were impossible to detach essentialism from ethical

claims. Yet, there are two versions of essentialism that do not involve such an ethical implication. The first of these is a historico-philosophical essentialism which conceives historical processes as realisations of the essential properties of entities across time. This view can be based on general metaphysical premises without necessarily involving ethical premises. A second option is a scientific essentialism which is also free from ethical assumptions if it is based on the purely ontological and methodological claim that the natural sciences reveal the truth about the real things and their essential properties. These two versions of essentialism do not render the aristoteleanising reading of Marx's theory compelling. There are, however, other conceptual resources in Marx's theory that increase the plausibility of an ethical reading.

### 3.2.2 *The social ontological model: individual and species*

Talking of the human being as a species being raises the question about how the theory at hand conceives of the relation between species and exemplar, whether in terms of universal and instance, type and token or set/class and element. Each of the mentioned ways of conceiving the *relata* expresses a different view about the relations sought for and carries different ontological commitments. Furthermore, in the realm of social phenomena these different grammars can have ethical consequences. Marx's distinction between the third and the fourth dimension of estrangement is drawn significantly less clearly than is the distinction between the other three. He writes: "An immediate consequence of the fact that man is estranged from the product of his labour, from his life activity, from his species-being is the *estrangement of man from man*. When man confronts himself, he confronts the *other man*." (277)

According to Marx, the fourth dimension of estrangement follows "immediately" from the first three as a "consequence". The term "immediate" makes unmistakably clear that the realisation of this consequence does not need a further inference and therefore no further premise. To understand this, we must clarify how Marx conceives the relationship between the relations  $R_1$  (the relation between the individual human being and the species being) and  $R_2$  (the relation between individual human beings). Marx repeats his claim "that man's relation to himself only becomes for him *objective* and *actual* through his relation to the other man." (278)

This claim is to be found in a passage, where it is first applied to estrangement, but then the following more general claim is made: "The estrangement

of man, and in fact every relationship in which man [stands] to himself, is realised and expressed only in the relationship in which a man stands to other men." (277)

If one understands the estrangement of the human being from its species being as self-estrangement and thereby as a self-relation, then it follows from the claim that  $R_1$  is realised in and through the relationship between individual human beings. Along these lines one can understand the following strong claim by Marx: "In fact, the proposition that man's species-nature is estranged from him means that one man is estranged from the other, as each of them is from man's essential nature." (277)

However, these reflections still leave four points underdetermined:

1. What is the relation between the human individual and its species being?
2. What is the ontological status of the species being?
3. What is the relationship between  $R_1$  (human being – species) and  $R_2$  (human being – human being)?
4. What is the relationship between the social ontological and the evaluative-normative dimensions?

Answering these four questions requires an analysis of the ethical implications of the model. But before I turn to this theme, I want to explain briefly why Marx's conception of species being has a historico-philosophical dimension.

### 3.2.3 *Species Being and Estrangement: Philosophy of History*

By virtue of its idealist premises Marx's theory necessarily has a historico-philosophical dimension. This necessity results from the objectification-model of action in connection with the fact that Marx uses this model to account for the epistemic activities of knowing and self-knowing.<sup>10</sup> In the background of this account is the essentialist premise according to which the human species being is, first, oriented towards self-realisation, and, secondly, possesses self-knowledge of its own essences in virtue of the universal character of the human being qua self-consciousness. But if the human being can know its own essence only by making it an object for itself through action, then alienation is necessarily involved in self-realisation. At the same time, this opens the possibility of estrangement, if adequate self-realisation fails. If one grants Marx that the human being is estranged at his time, then it holds factually

that overcoming estrangement is a necessary intermediate step towards the realisation of the human being as species being under the actual preconditions. But one could ask whether it would not also have been possible that the human being as a species being had found a form of alienation straight away which would have counted as an adequate realisation of its essence and thereby also as adequate self-understanding. The possibility of estrangement would then still be part of alienation, but it would not have been realised factually.

If one bears in mind Marx's aim to explicate the conceptually necessary connections between the phenomena, then it is clear that Marx is not content with the recourse to the factum of estrangement. From his philosophical premises he must establish the necessity of this estrangement taking place in such a way that its sublation is not at the same time rendered impossible. In 1844, Marx has no solution to this problem within his own theory. He can no more affirmatively adapt justifications that are based on the structure of self-consciousness, for these are precluded through the Feuerbachian turn. He must substantiate his philosophical construction in a way that is compatible with his new self-understanding and his methodological assumptions.

#### **4. Recognition as the Social Grammar of Species Being**

Let us now turn to (Q2): What are the ethical implications of Marx's theory? Here I claim that the concept of recognition is a crucial resource for explicating the ethical implication asked for. After a short look at Hegel (4.1), on whose philosophy Marx draws in a complicated fashion, I will show how Marx uses recognition as a standard for critique (4.2) and as the central element in his positive counter-proposal (4.3).

##### **4.1 *Hegel on Recognition***

Already in his years in Jena Hegel offers an analysis of self-consciousness that is based on a theory of recognition; there the concept of recognition additionally takes the role of a fundamental ethical principle. In the *Jenaer Systementwürfe*, composed between 1803 and 1806, Hegel made the principle of recognition, understood in this twofold systematic function (as an

ontological and an ethical principle), the basis of his practical philosophy.<sup>11</sup> But these texts were unpublished and unknown during Marx's lifetime.<sup>12</sup>

The primary text to which Marx could refer for the principle of recognition is therefore the fourth chapter of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, which contains not only the thesis concerning the social constitution of self-consciousness but also the sections on the master-slave-dialectics that Marx-scholarship regards as central points of reference for Marx's understanding of Hegel. An adequate interpretation of Hegel's theory of recognition crucially requires clarifying the overarching aim of the *Phenomenology*, which goes significantly beyond practical philosophy of a theory of social conflict. A concise analysis of the way Marx adapts Hegel's theory of recognition for his own theoretic purposes has to account for Hegel's conception in the context of the *Phenomenology*, and it has to clarify what exactly Marx takes over, what he dismisses and what he—consciously or unconsciously—modifies.

In Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, which was published in 1820 as part of the mature system, it is not the concept of recognition that plays the role of an organising principle for practical philosophy but rather the concept of will. But recognitive relations do play a crucial role in several aspects of Hegel's theory of the will: Hegel claims, for example, that one cannot be an agent without the recognition of others. Furthermore, Hegel analyses relationships of intersubjective recognition in the context of his explication of social phenomena (paradigmatically in the part on Abstract Right, for example contract, exchange and value). Although Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is no more a practical philosophy of recognition, it is in this text, which Marx also knew very well, that Marx finds various ideas which he could recur to for his conception of recognition. Whether consciously or unconsciously, Marx blinds out that Hegel's overarching theoretical aims diverge between the *Phenomenology* and the *Philosophy of Right*. Since this is prevalent in the analyses of the respective phenomena and the functioning of recognition, a detailed analysis of the way Marx takes over, criticises or modifies Hegel's theory of recognition should not lose sight of these differences.

In this contribution only those elements of Hegel's theory can be mentioned which Marx draws on without further differentiation. This is relevant for the following two reasons: On the one hand, the twofold systematic role of "recognition" as an evaluative and constitutive principle explains why Marx

immediately connects social-ontological and anthropological with evaluative-normative aspects in the conception of species being. And on the other hand, it is, for example, the context of the analyses of contract, value and exchange that are based on a theory of recognition, as Hegel undertakes them in his explication of abstract right that explains why Marx can use these analyses as a normative standard for making visible the estrangement of contemporary political economy. At the same time, taking into account the original context of Hegel's theory helps to understand why Marx can integrate the principle of recognition as a central element into his positive conception of a not-estranged state of affairs.

#### 4.2 *Recognition as the basis for an evaluative critique*

One of Marx's premises in the *Mill-Excerpts* (pp. 211–228) is that money is the estranged objectification of species being:

The essence of money is not, in the first place, that property is alienated in it, but that the *mediating activity* or movement, the *human*, social act by which man's products mutually complement one another, is *estranged* from man and becomes the attribute of money, a *material being* outside man. (212)

Through transferring properties of the activity to the product "man regards his will, his activity and his relation to other men as a power independent of him and them." (212)

In this passage Marx already formulates his positive account: "instead of man himself being the mediator for man," (212) which is then presented in more detail at the end of the *Mill-Excerpts* (compare 4.3 below). Furthermore, this passage contains an explicit transfer of the familiar Feuerbachian critique of religion to the economic relationships under the conditions of division of labour, private property and wage labour, as well as the thought that private property "must" (212) develop into the monetary system. The source of estrangement is thereby not directly topical, since private property is already a form of estrangement. But the "must" shows that Marx thinks here of a necessary development. Another passage, which I would like to quote in this connection, is interesting, because here Marx introduces the category of value in a way that reveals the conceptual background of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. Since the category of value also plays a decisive role in the *Capital*, this

analysis based on a Hegelian theory of intersubjectivity is central for Marx, because Hegel<sup>13</sup> regards interactive relationships in abstract right as mediated by (or through) things:

The mediating process between men engaged in exchange is not a social or human process, not *human relationship*, it is the *abstract relationship* of private property to private property, and the expression of this *abstract* relationship is *value*, whose actual existence as value constitutes *money*. Since men engaged in exchange do not relate to each other as men, *things* lose the significance of human, personal property. (212 f.)

In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel explicitly says that the agreement between two persons in the contract is a “unity of two, recognizing each other as free” (“*Einheit zweier sich anerkennender als freier*”); at the same time, as Hegel continues, such “recognition” is “only this abstract unity” (“*Anerkennung (...) nur diese abstrakte Einheit*”).<sup>14</sup>

Marx could not know these marginal notes, since the editions that were published in his lifetime did not contain them. But he extracted from Hegel’s main text that the social interaction between the parties to a contract that is mediated by (or through) things constitutes a specific form of recognition. In contrast to Hegel, who claimed this to be the ontological basis and the basis of the validity of abstract right, Marx takes this as an expression of an estranged-estranging interaction in which human beings become estranged from one another and from the species being:

*Exchange* or *barter* is therefore the social act, the species-act, the community, the social intercourse and integration of men within *private ownership*, and therefore the external, *alienated* species-act. It is just for this reason that it appears as *barter*. For this reason, likewise, it is the opposite of the *social* relationship. (219)

For Marx, Hegel’s pure form of recognition is estrangement. According to Marx, this becomes apparent in Hegel’s conception of abstract right as recognition, which takes shape essentially through private ownership. Against this, as will become clear in the following, Marx sets his anthropological alternative. If one were to find recognition in Hegel only with regard to relationships pertaining to private law, then Marx’s critique would not be unjustified, but Marx either was not aware of or he left aside the other models of recognition

in Hegel's philosophy. The positive conception of recognition that Marx poses against Hegel's analysis of private ownership also follows a Hegelian model: But it was via Feuerbach that the recognition of love found its way to Marx. Property law organises, and here we have to agree with Marx, all social relations via ownership and leaves no room for intersubjective relations. And Hegel's model, as it is presented in the *Philosophy of Right*, is particularly apt for Marx's critique, since Hegel locates the origin of the recognition of abstract right in the relationship between person and thing as ownership.<sup>15</sup>

Having shown that exchange is a cognitive relationship, in which the human being's character as species being is objectified in an estranged way, Marx explicates, towards the end of the *Mill-Excerpts*, the estranged-estranging cognitive relation under the conditions of private ownership, wage labour and division of labour in more detail (pp. 225–227), before he concludes with a brief sketch of his counter-utopia (pp. 227 ff.).

In doing so, Marx makes some simplifying assumptions: *A* and *B* each produce  $P_1$  and  $P_2$  (no internal division of labour), exchange them directly (no mediation by money) and respectively for their own consumption (no intermediate transaction). In the following, this situation is depicted from *A*'s perspective (assuming that *B*'s perspective is symmetric).

*Step One: A produces  $P_1$ .*

- *A* produces  $P_1$  with the intention not to consume  $P_1$  himself, but to exchange it for  $P_2$ .
- *A* wants to purchase  $P_2$  for the satisfaction of his own need.
- *A* wants that *B* exchanges  $P_2$  for  $P_1$ .
- *A* believes that *B* needs  $P_1$ .
- *A* believes that *B* will only give him  $P_2$  if *B* receives  $P_1$  from *A*.
- *A* gives  $P_1$  to *B* with the intention to receive  $P_2$  for his own satisfaction of needs.

*Step Two: A exchanges with B.*

In this exchange *B*'s need for  $P_1$  is not the purpose of *A*'s action. That *B* needs  $P_1$  is what *A* believes, but it is not part of the volitional component of his action intention. In the act of exchange *A* recognises *B* exclusively as the proprietor of  $P_2$ , and not as a being with a justified need for  $P_1$ . That *B* needs  $P_1$  is no motive for *A* to give  $P_1$  to *B*. *A*'s sole motive rather is to receive  $P_2$  for the satisfaction of his own need. *A* has produced  $P_1$ —in anticipation of the

exchange—only with the intention of using it as a means for satisfying his own need for  $P_2$ . Although the fact that  $B$  needs  $P_1$  is a necessary precondition for realising this intention and is presumed by  $A$ , this does not lead  $A$  to regard  $B$ 's neediness as a motive for his production of  $P_1$ .

Marx analyses this situation from the first-person-perspective as follows<sup>16</sup>:

[1] I have produced for myself and not for you, just as you have produced for yourself and not for me. In itself, the result of my production has as little connection with you as the result of your production has directly with me. That is to say, our production is not man's production for man as a man, i.e., it is not *social* production. Neither of us, therefore, as a man stands in a relation of enjoyment to the other's product. As men, we do not exist as far as our respective products are concerned. Hence our exchange, too, cannot be the mediating process by which it is confirmed that my product is [for] you, because it is an *objectification* of your own nature, your need. For it is not *man's nature* that forms the link between the products we make for one another. Exchange can only set in *motion*, only confirm, the *character* of the relation which each of us has in regard to his own product, and therefore to the product of the other. Each of us sees in his product only the objectification of his *own* selfish need, and therefore in the product of the other the objectification of a *different* selfish need, independent of him and alien to him.

Explanation:  $P_2$  has no immediate relation to  $A$ , since  $P_2$  is  $B$ 's property and can only be obtained by  $A$  through exchange. The production of  $P_1$  is a production by the proprietor  $A$  for the proprietor  $B$ , and not the production of the human species being  $A$  for the human species being  $B$  (the neediness of  $B$  is not the purpose of  $A$ 's production, and therefore  $A$ 's calculus does not include  $B$  "as a man"). Because of this structure the species being that is the human being is not realised in the exchange, since this would only be realised if  $A$  made  $B$ 's neediness for  $P_1$  the purpose of his production of  $P_1$ . If  $A$  had intended the satisfaction of  $B$ 's need, then the interaction between  $A$  and  $B$ , who would have mutually realised their nature through satisfying the other's need for the sake of this neediness, would have been an objectification of "man's nature."

Marx's thought is based on the following premise: If  $X$  needs  $Y$ , then  $Y$  belongs to  $X$ 's nature. So if  $A$  needs something that  $B$  produces,  $B$ 's production

is part of the realisation of  $A$ 's nature. The human species being can only realise itself through the social interaction on the level of material reproduction. But this is not achieved in our exchange situation, because the necessary social grammar, that is the mutual recognition of the other's neediness (in the sense of the Purpose of production and exchange) is not given.

Next, Marx points out that in the act of exchange nothing can be objectified which has not already been objectified in the act of production itself through the intentions of the single agents. This is how Marx wants to counter the objection that possibly something is objectified in the exchange (or in other forms of collective action) which cannot be reduced to the intentions of the single agents that participate in the collective action. This thesis, directed against "invisible-hand"-explanation, comes down to this: within Marx's objectification model collective action must be reducible to the intentions of the single agents.

Marx continues by pointing out that the form that is realised in the exchange is not adequate to the human species being.  $A$ 's non-recognition of  $B$ 's neediness (and vice versa) does not imply that this neediness does not exist. According to the essentialist assumption this neediness is rather the expression and manifestation of the human species being. But this essential bond is perverted in the estranged state of exchange; Marx describes this as instrumentalisation and heteronomy:

[2] As a man you have, of course, a human relation to my product: you have *need* of my product. Hence it exists for you as an object of your desire and your will. But your need, your desire, your will, are powerless as regards my product. That means, therefore, that your *human* nature, which accordingly is bound to stand in intimate relation to my human production, is not your *power* over this production, your possession of it, for it is not the *specific character*, not the *power*, of man's nature that is recognised in my production. They [your need, your desire, etc.] constitute rather the *tie* which makes you dependent on me, because they put you in a position of dependence on my product. Far from being the *means* which would give you *power* over my production, they are instead the *means* for giving me power over you.

One could object to Marx's analysis by saying that  $A$  does take  $B$ 's need for  $P_1$  into account when he produces  $P_1$ , whereby this aspect is also objectified in

the product. Marx replies by pointing out that  $A$  produces  $P_1$  with the aim of receiving  $P_2$ . Thus  $P_1$  is not the actual goal of  $A$ 's activity (which is why  $A$  estranges himself in this activity). And  $B$ ,  $B$ 's activity and  $B$ 's need are only means  $A$  employs to obtain  $P_2$ . There is a mesh between the intentions and actions of  $A$  and  $B$  that can in fact only function, because  $A$  and  $B$  participate in the human species being, that is, they cannot realise their nature without the other. But  $A$  and  $B$  thereby aim only at their own individual utility, which they thus want to realise as easily and completely as possible. This is why, according to Marx, it is structurally implied by this form of cooperation that  $A$  and  $B$  seek to deceive one another. What seems to be cooperation to their mutual advantage, is in Marx's view the instrumentalisation of the other in the pursuit of one's own advantage.

[3] When I produce *more* of an object than I myself can directly use, my *surplus* production is cunningly *calculated* for your need. It is only in *appearance* that I produce a surplus of this object. In reality I produce a *different* object, the object of your production, which I intend to exchange against this surplus, an exchange which in my mind I have already completed. The *social* relation in which I stand to you, my labour for your need, is therefore also a mere *semblance*, and our completing each other is likewise a mere *semblance*, the basis of which is mutual plundering. The intention of *plundering*, of *deception*, is necessarily present in the background, for since our exchange is a selfish one, on your side as on mine, and since the selfishness of each seeks to get the better of that of the other, we necessarily seek to deceive each other.

In the state of exchange  $A$  and  $B$  recognise each other as private proprietors of their respective products. Thus, one could again object,  $B$  is free after all not to exchange his product for  $A$ 's. Marx concedes this by saying that  $A$ 's strategy can only be successful if  $B$  in fact recognises the power of  $P_1$ , that is, if  $B$  consents to the exchange, because he needs  $P_1$  for the satisfaction of his need. Since in this exchange this recognition takes place on both sides, the strategy of mutual overreaching constitutes a struggle for recognition such that  $A$  fights for  $B$  to recognise the power of  $A$ 's product (and vice versa). In Marx's own words:

[4] It is true though, that the power which I attribute to my object over yours requires your *recognition* in order to become a real power. Our mutual recognition of the respective powers of our objects, however, is a struggle, and

in a struggle the victor is the one who has more energy, force, insight, or adroitness. If I have sufficient physical force, I plunder you directly. If physical force cannot be used, we try to impose on each other by bluff, and the more adroit overreaches the other. For the *totality* of the relationship, it is a matter of chance who overreaches whom. The *ideal, intended* overreaching takes place on both sides; i.e., each in his own judgement has overreached the other.

Here Marx uses Hegel's famous image of the struggle for recognition in order to analyse the estranged-estranging interaction between *A* and *B*, while he does not only reconstruct the perspectives of the participants, but also the overall structure of the interaction: This struggle for recognition is a symmetrical relation and it does not matter for its functioning who of the two protagonists wins out (or whether they exchange equivalently, which is also a possible outcome). According to Marx, the structurally characteristic feature is the mediacy of the social interaction, which comes about by means of the products that are being exchanged and therewith, as their source, by means of *A*'s and *B*'s respective acts of production.

[5] On both sides, therefore, exchange is necessarily mediated by the *object* which each side produces and possesses. The ideal relationship to the respective objects of our production is, of course, our mutual need. But the *real, true* relationship, which *actually* occurs and takes effect, is only the mutually *exclusive possession* of our respective products. What gives your need of my article its *value, worth* and *effect* for me is solely your *object*, the *equivalent* of my object. Our respective products, therefore, are the *means*, the *mediator*, the *instrument*, the *acknowledged power* of our mutual needs. Your *demand* and the *equivalent of your possession*, therefore, are for me terms that are *equal in significance* and validity, and your demand only acquires a *meaning*, owing to having an effect, when it has meaning and effect in relation to me. As a mere human being without this instrument your demand is an unsatisfied aspiration on your part and an idea that does not exist for me. As a human being, therefore, you stand in no relationship to my object, because *I myself* have no human relationship to it. But the *means* is the *true power* over an object and therefore we mutually regard our products as the *power* of each of us over the other and over himself. That is to say, our own product has risen up against us; it seemed to be our property, but in fact we are its property. We ourselves are excluded from *true* property because our *property* excludes other men.

Without  $A$ 's and  $B$ 's neediness there would be no exchange. Yet,  $B$ 's neediness is not  $A$ 's motive for producing and giving away  $P_1$ , but it is only the aim of receiving  $P_1$  in order to satisfy their own need. If  $C$ , who also needs  $P_1$ , but does not offer any product, were to ask  $A$  for  $P_1$ , just because he has the corresponding need, then this would be an instance of breaking the rule of the game:

[6] The only intelligible language in which we converse with one another consists of our objects in their relation to each other. We would not understand a human language and it would remain without effect. By one side it would be recognised and felt as being a request, an entreaty, and therefore a *humiliation*, and consequently uttered with a feeling of shame, of degradation. By the other side it would be regarded as *impudence* or *lunacy* and rejected as such. We are to such an extent estranged from man's essential nature that the direct language of this essential nature seems to us a *violation of human dignity*, whereas the estranged language of material values seems to be the well-justified assertion of human dignity that is self-confident and conscious of itself.

In this passage, Marx analyses the psychic consequences of  $C$ 's request on the condition that  $A$  and  $C$  orient themselves by the grammar of private ownership.  $C$  must humiliate himself and cannot behave as an equal, independent and free supplier or demander. In his own eyes,  $C$  cannot fulfil the norms he recognises.  $A$  will experience  $C$ 's request as a breach of a rule and as an imposition, since he is asked to desist from his private interest which is the primary motive for his production. Actually, as Marx says in anticipation of his own ethical conception, human dignity consists in neediness being recognised for its own sake and the neediness of another being the immediate, intrinsic motive of interaction. In the sphere of private ownership and exchange this dignity is perverted into its opposite and lies precisely in the independence of being a proprietor or a participator in the market. The moral accomplishment lies in not being "pulled over the barrel" by the exchange partner because of one's neediness; so it lies in not becoming the slave of one's needs. Marx highlights this last aspect by explicitly alluding to Hegel's concept of recognition.

[7] Although in your eyes your product is an *instrument*, a *means*, for taking possession of my product and thus for satisfying your need; yet in my eyes it

is the *purpose* of our exchange. For me, you are rather the means and instrument for producing this object that is my aim, just as conversely you stand in the same relationship to my object. But 1) each of us actually *behaves* in the way he is regarded by the other. You have actually made yourself the means, the instrument, the producer of *your* own object in order to gain possession of mine; 2) your own object is for you only the *sensuously perceptible covering*, the *hidden shape*, of my object; for its production *signifies* and seeks to *express* the *acquisition* of my object. In fact, therefore, you have become for yourself a *means*, an *instrument* of your object, of which your desire is the *servant*, and you have performed menial services in order that the object shall never again do a favour to your desire. If then our mutual thralldom to the object at the beginning of the process is now seen to be in reality the relationship between *master* and *slave*, that is merely the *crude* and *frank* expression of our *essential* relationship.

Our *mutual* value is for us the *value* of our mutual objects. Hence for us man himself is mutually of *no value*.

This passage is insightful as a sort of conclusion of the analysis for three reasons. First, Marx's analysis shows clear parallels to Hegel's analysis of the concept of recognition in the *Phenomenology* (1.); second, we here find an application of the constellation within the theory of recognition that Hegel had developed as the dialectic of master and slave (2.); and third, Marx's adaptation of the master-slave-dialectic shows that he was much closer to Hegel's analysis than many Marxists' exegetic reconstruction of this correlation in later time allows (3.).

(1.) In analogy to Hegel's argument in the *Phenomenology*, Marx works here with the perspectives of the participating agents and of the philosopher who analyses these perspectives and the interaction between the participants.

On the first level Marx elaborates that *A* sees  $P_1$  as an instrument or as a means which *A* uses in taking *B*'s need into account in order to receive  $P_2$ , which is for *A* the end of the exchange. *B* instead sees in  $P_1$  precisely the end of the exchange (as well as in the satisfaction of his own need). In this, *B* uses *A*, who is for himself the end of the exchange, only as an instrument or a means to reach his own ends. *A* and *B* take opposite stances towards the products  $P_1$  and  $P_2$ , towards themselves and their needs: one's need is only an instrument or a means for the other.

On the second level Marx elaborates that both *A* and *B* are right about their interpretation of the other's actions, but that they are wrong about their self-interpretation. *B* sees *A*, who views himself as an end, as an instrument/means. In producing  $P_1$  *A* reduces himself to an instrument/means, since he produces  $P_1$  only as an instrument/means for the exchange. Thus the production of  $P_1$  is not an immediate realisation of an intrinsic end (in virtue of the symmetry of the relation, the same holds for *B*). Both are right in instrumentalising the other, for this adequately reflects the other's relation to one's own production and one's own activity.

(2.) Now Marx deepens his analysis of *A*'s self-relationship that manifests itself in this form of production. Here he employs the master-slave-dialectic from Hegel's *Phenomenology*. It is important to notice that *A* makes *his own need* the slave of  $P_1$ : The master-slave-relationship is at this point not an intersubjective constellation between *A* and *B*, but an intrasubjective constellation that is equally manifest in *A* and *B*. This claim is plausible in so far as the slave in Hegel's analysis of self-consciousness is productive, where he does not work for the satisfaction of his own need, but for the satisfaction of the master's needs. The slave must not make demands regarding his needs and may not conceive of the product as the end for satisfying his own need. Marx's analysis indicates that *A* and *B*, in their productions, both take the slavish stance of renouncing their needs and of self-instrumentalisation. Precisely this attitude is expressed adequately in the perspective of the other, while the protagonists—according to Marx—systematically misunderstand themselves. This puts Marx's very close to Hegel's analysis in which master and slave primarily stand for self-relationships within the structure of self-consciousness and in which they only secondarily stand for social roles. These self-relationships must, in accordance with Hegel's and Marx's objectification-conception, be objectified, so that the protagonists can consciously appropriate this structure.

(3.) This is why Marx can say that the social relationship of lordship and bondage is the first "crude" manifestation of this self-relationship. Roughly put, it is, once again following Hegel, characterised as distributing the functions of both protagonists being instrument/means and end at the same time, as social roles to *A* and *B* respectively. Marx now wants to show, and here he critically departs from Hegel, that the abolition of bondage in a legal order

that is a symmetrical cognitive structure counts only as a sublation of the surface or the appearance of the contradictory self-relationship and not as the resolution of this contradiction. For in the legal framework of exchange the conflict-laden roles of master and slave are only embedded in the self-relationships of *A* and *B*, but not sublated. The ingenuous lordship is refined in the legal state of private ownership, wage labour and exchange, but it is essentially preserved in the 'deep' grammar of these social institutions.

The aim of Marx's analysis is clear: The seeming sublations of social injustice by means of the development of private ownership and law (or of morals and the state etc.) are only 'ideological' sublations that do not advance to the source of the real self-contradiction, to self-estrangement. Thus internalisation cannot be sublation in the sense of an ethically adequate self-distancing and partial self-instrumentalisation whose stabilisation needs ethics, morals, law, political institutions as well as the media of cultural self-interpretation such as art, religion or philosophy (which, altogether, is Hegel's answer). Marx must instead ask for a sublation of this self-estrangement in the immediate activity of *A* and *B* as well as in the direct interaction between them. As we shall presently see, this is exactly the vanishing point of the positive counter-utopia Marx develops subsequent to this analysis of the estranged state.

### 4.3 Recognition as an evaluative counter-proposal

There are without a doubt many passages in the *Manuscripts* that can be read as an ethical argumentation, if one conceives the emphasis of nature and the essentialism of the species being like an Aristotelian. This reading is evaluative, since the should-be of the essentialist ontology entails a should-act in the perspective of the participants who realise their essence. But this ontologically grounded ethical imperative raises the fundamental problem whether such an ethics can sufficiently integrate the value of individual autonomy. Let us take a look at the famous passage towards the end of the *Mill-Excerpts*:

[8] Let us suppose that we had carried out production as human beings. Each of us would have *in two different ways affirmed* himself and the other person. 1) In my *production* I would have objectified my *individuality*, its *specific character*, and therefore enjoyed not only an individual *manifestation*

*of my life* during the activity, but also when looking at the object I would have the individual pleasure of knowing my personality to be *objective, visible to the senses* and hence a power *beyond all doubt*. 2) In your enjoyment or use of my product I would have the *direct* enjoyment both of being conscious of having satisfied a *human* need by my work, that is, of having objectified *man's* essential nature, and of having thus created an object corresponding to the need of another *man's* essential nature. 3) I would have been for you the *mediator* between you and the species, and therefore would become recognised and felt by you yourself as a completion of your own essential nature and as a necessary part of yourself, and consequently would know myself to be confirmed both in your thought and your love. 4) In the individual expression of my life I would have directly created your expression of your life, and therefore in my individual activity I would have directly *confirmed* and *realised* my true nature, my *human* nature, my *communal* nature.

Our products would be so many mirrors in which we saw reflected our essential nature. This relationship would moreover be reciprocal; what occurs on my side has also to occur on yours.

[9] Let us review the various factors as seen in our supposition: My work would be a *free manifestation of life*, hence an *enjoyment of life*. Presupposing private property, my work is an *alienation of life*, for I work *in order to live*, in order to obtain for myself the *means* of life. My work is *not* my life.

Secondly, the *specific nature* of my individuality, therefore, would be affirmed in my labour, since the latter would be an affirmation of my *individual* life. Labour therefore would be *true, active property*. Presupposing private property, my individuality is alienated to such a degree that this *activity* is instead *hateful* to me, a *torment*, and rather the *semblance* of an activity. Hence, too, it is only a *forced* activity and one imposed on me only through an *external* fortuitous need, *not* through an *inner, essential* one.

My labour can appear in my object only as what it is. It cannot appear as something which by its nature it is *not*. Hence it appears only as the expression of my *loss of self* and of my *powerlessness* that is objective, sensuously perceptible, obvious and therefore put beyond all doubt.

Marx's account is based on two premises: First, it shall hold that we produced "as human beings," and second, there shall be a symmetrical relation: "what occurs on my side has also to occur on yours."

Once again Marx depicts this recognitive relation, in a first step, from the viewpoints of the participants, where he can restrict himself—due to the presupposed (!) symmetry—to one of the perspectives he formulates in the first person singular. In the second part of this passage he takes the perspective of the philosopher who analyses this recognitive relation for us as it is present in and for itself.

At the beginning, Marx says that in a not-estranged production “(e)ach of us would have *in two different ways affirmed* himself and the other person.” This reveals four aspects that—at least *prima facie*—are covered by the list contained in the quotation. However, some questions also arise. Thus it is, for instance, unclear whether “two” here refers to the distinction between individual and species or to that between process and result, that is, between producing and product, or to both. Let us try to shed some light on the text by explicating the structure of [8].

(1) In the production, the individuality/specific character of *A* objectifies itself; therefore (a) *A* has enjoyed his individual manifestation of his life during the activity and (b) knows in the product his personality to be objective, visible to the sense and hence as a power beyond all doubt.

*A* also realises in this production (activity & product) his own specific character as a human individual.

(2) In *B*’s enjoyment/use of *A*’s product, *A* immediately has the enjoyment, both of being conscious of having satisfied (*B*’s) human need by his (*A*’s) work, that is, of having objectified man’s essential nature, and of having thus created an object corresponding to the need of another man’s (= *B*’s) essential nature.

*A* realises his species being by objectifying human nature.

(3) {*A* is conscious of the following;}<sup>17</sup> *A* has been the mediator between *B* and the species, and therefore becomes recognised and felt by *B* as a completion of *B*’s own essential nature and as a necessary part of *B*, and consequently *A* knows himself to be confirmed both in *B*’s thought and *B*’s love.

*A* helps *B* to realise *B*’s species being, and *A* is known and recognised by *B* as this mediator; and *A* knows that *B* so recognises him. This means that *A* objectifies his own species nature and makes it an object of his consciousness in *B*’s recognition.

(4) {*A* is conscious of the following:} In the individual expression of his life *A* has directly created *B*'s expression of his (= *B*'s) life, and therefore in his individual activity *A* has immediately confirmed and realised his true nature, his human nature, his communal nature.

*A* helps *B* to realise his (= *B*'s) individuality (*B*'s individual enjoyment), so that *A* realises his individual and his species being (= his true, human nature) in this activity.

This holds on condition that *B* really enjoys *A*'s product and at the same time performs the recognition *A* assumes. On the additional precondition of the symmetric mutuality of this interaction *B* also succeeds in realising his true, human nature. *A* and *B* thereby fulfil the structure of recognition which Hegel had developed in his *Phenomenology* as the full realisation of self-consciousness: "They recognise themselves as mutually recognising each other."<sup>18</sup>

Subsequently (in [9]), Marx announces an analysis of this structure of recognition from the philosophical standpoint: "Let us review the various factors as seen in our supposition." In doing so, he contrasts the non-estranged structure with the estranged structure of an exchange action under the conditions of private ownership and market, as he had analysed it before. He contraposes "free manifestation of life" and "alienation of life," "true, active property" and "private property," and "external fortuitous need" and "inner, essential" need. These contrapositions remain vague and underdetermined as to their positive side; at this stage of the development of his theory Marx is not able to precisely grasp the "moments" of the structure of recognition philosophically and fill them with content. It remains to say that Marx works with the Hegelian categories of "*Wesen*," "*Erscheinung*," and "*Schein*," so that his essentialism takes a specifically Hegelian shape. With the statement "My labour can appear in my object only as what it is. It cannot appear as something which by its essence<sup>19</sup> it is *not*" Marx does not just refer to the objectification-model of action, but he uses "essence" in a sense that does not exclude changes in the course of a (historical) development. The topic here is the essence of labour in its estranged form as it manifests itself at one point in time and not the invariant essence of labour in its historical guises behind these different manifestations. This connection of teleological development

and essentialism distinguishes Marx's from other essentialist conceptions. But the positive counter-proposal Marx offers remains a negative utopia in which all social interaction are conceptualised on the model of an immediate and completely non-instrumental relation between two individuals.<sup>20</sup>

## 5. Conclusion: Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Marx

The passages from the *Manuscripts* and the *Mill-Excerpts* we have analysed contain the ontological claim that a solitary individual cannot realise its species being. For this it depends rather on a constitutive contribution by at least one other individual of its species. This ontological unity is realised only within the social grammar of non-estranged co-production: A knows and feels that B is a necessary part of his own nature. For this realisation more is needed than just a causal connection. Rather, social cooperation must be associated with the right attitude of the participants on the level of the interpretation of self and other.<sup>21</sup> This attitude consists in the recognition of the other as the needy being that is the human being, as well as in love as expression of the recognition of the fact that the other, through his activity, enables oneself to realise one's species being. Both the act of production and the act of consumption of A and B are necessary components of the adequate realisation of the species being, which Marx determines only negatively as the absence of means-end-inversions and as the exclusion of any indirect mediation (by private ownership, market or wage labour).

Embedded in the ontological dimension of mutual dependence as moments of the objective species being which realises itself in the production, there is the demand for the adequate individual perspective on this ontological dimension and for the appropriate stance towards the others' needs. This presupposition can be interpreted as an implicit ethical norm; at the same time one can consult the condition of symmetry in order to give a right-based normative justification of the claims that are grounded in the ontological interconnection between individuals as species beings.<sup>22</sup> On this reading the Marxian metaphysics of species implies an ethical theory that is not threatened by the idea that the required structure of recognition will, possibly in view of the adequate social organisation of coexistence, turn out to be an epiphenomenon. Even though the ethical consciousness may be dependent

on the apt social organisation, the appropriate ethical consciousness nevertheless remains a necessary component of the adequate realisation of the species being. Therefore in Marx's view the realisation of the essence of man requires social grammar.<sup>23</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> All references directly given in the text without further qualification refer to K. Marx & F. Engels, *Collected Works, Volume 3: Marx and Engels 1843–1844*, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1975. Although this translation has many weaknesses I have used it since it is the most widespread in the English literature. Where ever I have altered the text, I have made this explicit. Throughout this paper key notions of Marx are translated as follows: "*Vergegenständlichung*" as "objectivication," "*Entäußerung*" as "alienation", "*Entfremdung*" as "estrangement," "*gegenständliches Gattungswesen*" as "objective species being," "*entfremdete Arbeit*" as "estranged labour" and "*Privateigentum*" as "private property." The strict terminological distinction between "alienation" and "estrangement" has been made by the translators of the English edition; the reader should bear in mind that in Marx' text the corresponding concepts aren't kept distinct in such a strict way as the translators' decision might suggest.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed analysis of this see M. Quante, *Hegel's Concept of Action*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004 and "Kommentar", in K. Marx, *Ökonomisch-Philosophische Manuskripte*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp Verlag, 2009, pp. 209–411; see also E.M. Lange, *Das Prinzip Arbeit*, Frankfurt, Ullstein, 1980.

<sup>3</sup> See also W. Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999 and M. Quante, "After Hegel. The Realization of Philosophy through Action", in *Routledge Companion to 19th Century Philosophy*, ed. D. Moyar, London, Routledge, 2010, pp. 197–237.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed analysis see M. Quante, "After Hegel".

<sup>5</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature. Volume Three: Organics*, London, George Allen and Unwin LTD, 1970, pp. 172–173; this text was edited and translated by M. J. Petry; emphasis in the text follows the third edition of the German original.

<sup>6</sup> See also D. Brudney, *Marx's Attempt to leave Philosophy*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1998 and D. Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> See also Z. Rosen, *Moses Hess und Karl Marx*, Hamburg, Christians, 1983.

<sup>8</sup> See also A. Wood, *Karl Marx*, London, Routledge, 1981; S. Meikle, *Essentialism in the thought of Karl Marx*, London, Duckworth, 1985 and W.P. Archibald, *Marx and the Missing Link: Human Nature*, Atlantic Highlands, Humanities Press, 1989.

<sup>9</sup> See R.T. Sweet, *Marx, Morality and the Virtue of Beneficence*, Lanham, University Press of America, 2002, and Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx*.

<sup>10</sup> Marx found this model in Hegel's account of self-consciousness; for details see M. Quante, "The Pure Notion of Recognition", in *The Philosophy of Recognition: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. H.-C. Schmidt am Busch & C. F. Zurn, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2010, pp. 89–106.

<sup>11</sup> See G.W.F. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe I*, Hamburg, Meiner, 1986 and *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*, Hamburg, Meiner, 1987.

<sup>12</sup> See L. Siep, *Anerkennung als Prinzip der praktischen Philosophie*, Freiburg, Alber, 1979.

<sup>13</sup> See § 113 of G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

<sup>14</sup> See Hegel's margins on § 72 of his *Elements*.

<sup>15</sup> See *Elements*, §§ 41–43.

<sup>16</sup> The quotes (marked by [] in the text) are from pp. 225–228.

<sup>17</sup> In the following sections I have added insertions in {} to make clear the argumentative structure of Marx's sentences. Furthermore underlinings are my emphasis and italics those of Marx's original.

<sup>18</sup> See § 184 of G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977.

<sup>19</sup> Translation altered since Marx uses Hegel's category "Wesen" in the original.

<sup>20</sup> See F. von Magnis, *Normative Voraussetzungen im Denken des jungen Marx (1843–1848)*, Freiburg, Alber, 1975.

<sup>21</sup> It is social *grammar*, including rules, norms and values as constitutive elements. This means that at the heart of Marx's philosophy of recognition we find an 'idealistic' element.

<sup>22</sup> There has been much discussion concerning Marx's theory of justice which mainly was concerned with his theory of exploitation and distribution; see A.E. Buchanan, *Marx and Justice*, Totowa, Rowman, 1982; R.T. Sweet, *Marx, Morality and the Virtue of Beneficence*; R.G. Peffer, *Marxism, Morality, and Social Justice*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990 and the papers in part I of eds. M. Cohen et al, *Marx, Justice, and History*, Princeton, Princeton University Press and the contributions to eds. K. Nielsen & S.C. Patten, *Marx and Morality* (= *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Supplementary Volume VII), Ontario, 1981. If my diagnosis in this paper is right, the source of Marx's theory of justice is in his conception of recognition. To justify this claim one must show that Marx's theory of value in *Capital* presupposes his conception of recognition, too. But this has to be left for another paper.

<sup>23</sup> I wish to thank David Schweikard for his comments on, and translation of, this essay.



## **Groups, Institutions, and Recognition**



## Chapter Nine

# Mutual Recognition and Some Related Phenomena

Margaret Gilbert

### Introduction

In this paper I discuss three important, distinct phenomena. In my terminology, one is *common knowledge of co-presence*. Another is *mutual recognition*. I shall spend the most time on that. The third phenomenon is *joint attention*. As we shall see, common knowledge of co-presence is essential to mutual recognition; this, in turn, is essential to joint attention.<sup>1</sup>

There is reason to say that only with mutual recognition do we arrive at genuine *sociality*. Further, one can argue that such recognition constitutes the simplest form of existence of a *social group* in an important, central sense. Whether or not these points are correct, the occurrence of mutual recognition is of great practical, and theoretical, significance.

I start with three preliminary points. First, the phrases “common knowledge,” “mutual recognition,” and “joint attention” have all been defined differently by different authors. I am not concerned to argue that one or another definition is to be preferred. I believe that the phenomena I characterize

through my own definitions are important and want, simply, to focus on them.

Second, the phrase “mutual recognition” is often associated with Hegel. So it is worth saying at the outset that my discussion will not attempt to engage with his work. I shall have something to say about some important passages in the work of one of Hegel’s interpreters, Charles Taylor. These passages in Taylor’s work had a significant impact on my own thinking.<sup>2</sup>

Third, this discussion is not intended to be highly fine-grained. It is more of a sketch. My aim is roughly to specify the phenomena in question, to emphasize their distinctness and to discuss some of the relations between them.

## **I. Common Knowledge of Co-Presence**

I start with common knowledge of co-presence. Consider this—very humdrum—situation.

Two women find themselves briefly walking alongside one another on the pavement in a certain town. There has been no communication, by word or gesture, between them, nor is there any in what follows. One is walking faster and soon draws ahead of the other.

This is the kind of situation in which all of the following conditions are satisfied, the participants being here referred to as “A” and “B”:

- (1) A and B are currently physically close to one another. For the sake of a label I shall say that A and B are *co-present*.
- (2) It is entirely out in the open between A and B that (1) is true.
- (3) A and B both realize that (1) and (2) are true.

Some clarificatory notes on the above are now in order. In the example, the parties are walking side by side. I take it that they are at least peripherally visible to one another. Such visibility is not a necessary feature of cases of the type I have in mind. The parties might be audible to each other though not visible.

It is not clear that the parties must naturally be describable as “being in the same place.” It may be better then to say, in clause (1), that A and B are

“physically manifest” to one another, rather than that they are “physically close” to one another, insofar as the latter suggests more strongly than the former that they are “in the same place.”<sup>3</sup>

What is it for something to be “entirely out in the open” between A and B? This is not the place to investigate all of the possible developments of this idea. So, for now, the following may suffice.<sup>4</sup>

First, it is reasonable to assume that, in the situation described, A and B both have enough evidence from experience to be sure that A and B are co-present. Of course neither need know “who the other is,” in terms of his (or her) name, station in life, and so on, but each has evidence that justifies his certainty that he and the other person, *whoever that person is*, are co-present.<sup>5</sup> In addition, each has enough evidence to be sure that each has the evidence just noted. And so on.

In saying this I do not mean to imply that either A or B is capable of contemplating an enormous number of propositions about what each has evidence for, let alone an infinite number of such propositions. Rather, each has evidence from which he could infer that any one of the pertinent propositions is true, given the principles of reasoning to which he adheres, and absent any restrictions on the processing of information such as memory or reasoning capacity that prevent him from doing so.

According to condition (3), each must *realize* that it is entirely out in the open between A and B that they are co-present. He need not have articulated the point. He must, one might say, have “a sense” of the openness.

Let us suppose that a situation accords with the three conditions just sketched. I shall say, here, that there is then *common knowledge* between A and B that A and B are co-present. So much, for now, on the phenomenon I shall call *common knowledge of co-presence*. Of course there can be common knowledge between persons of facts other than their co-presence. For present purposes, however, that is the case I focus on.

## 2. Charles Taylor: Beyond Common Knowledge

Some while ago now Charles Taylor argued in various places for the existence of a type of situation that goes beyond common knowledge in the

sense explained in the last section.<sup>6</sup> He does not himself invoke common knowledge in precisely that sense, but his arguments apply to it, and I shall write as if he is speaking of it in what follows.

Taylor's focus is not common knowledge of co-presence, but more general. For instance, he considers common knowledge of the fact that the day is a hot one, or the fact that one of the parties is not enjoying the opera.

The central example in one of Taylor's discussions involves two strangers traveling on a train on a hot day. One turns to the other and says "Whew, it's hot!" This, Taylor points out, does not tell the other anything that was not previously common knowledge between them. Certainly it was already common knowledge between them that it was hot.

To invoke the French phrase Taylor prefers for what *is* achieved by the speaker's utterance, the fact that it is hot in the train compartment is now *entre nous*.<sup>7</sup> Alternatively, in terms of other locutions he uses, the fact that it is hot today is now "in public space," "for us," within the purview of a "common vantage point."

What is it, though, for something to be "*entre nous*," "in public space," and so on? What precisely is achieved, in the example, by the one character's saying to the other "Whew! It's hot!"?

Taylor himself explicitly rejects an answer in terms of communication, where this is conceived of as the transmission or attempted transmission of states of knowledge or belief and where nothing but individual knowers and believers are involved. I don't think Taylor wishes to deny that such transmission is or may be part of the story when such scenarios occur. What he wants to emphasize is that something else goes on.<sup>8</sup>

As Taylor sees it, and as he emphasizes several times, an exchange like that in his example does not only place certain matters before us, in public space.<sup>9</sup> It *founds* or *constitutes* that space—or a particular part of that space. In his conception, then, public space is constructed, not discovered. To say this is still not to explain what public space is.

In the discussion on which I am drawing, Taylor focuses on the power of *language* to "found public space" or to "place certain matters before us." And, clearly, a linguistic act may perform the transformation—whatever precisely

it is—that Taylor wishes to place before his readers. He allows, however, that this transformation may occur through any mode of “expression”—where expression need not be linguistic. Thus one party might turn to the other and, catching his eye, ostentatiously—as we say—wipe the perspiration off his face.<sup>10</sup> These points, though helpful, also leave open the question as to what it is for something to be *entre nous*, in public space.

Taylor’s discussion is an important one. It is necessary to go beyond it, however, to get a better grasp of what is at issue. Taylor makes both a negative and a positive point. The negative point is clear enough. If we want to understand what “Whew, it’s hot!” achieves we must go beyond the idea that its being hot, or the speaker’s being hot is common knowledge between the speakers. As he puts it in one place, here alluding to *our awareness* of some fact:

We completely miss the point if we remain with the monological model of the subject, and think of all states of awareness, knowledge, belief, attending to, as ultimately explicable as states of individuals. So that our being aware of X is always analyzable without remainder into my being aware of X and your being aware of X. The first person plural is seen here as an abbreviated version of a truth-functional connective.

What I am arguing here is that this analysis is terribly mistaken; that it misses the crucial distinction between what is *entre nous* and what is not.<sup>11</sup>

It is the positive point—the introduction of “what is *entre nous*”—that demands further clarification. Indeed, unless and until it is clarified and seen to be correct the negative point may, of course, seem more problematic. I return to Taylor’s discussion shortly. I first introduce the phenomenon I shall refer to as *mutual recognition*.

### 3. Mutual Recognition

#### 3.1. An Example

I start with a humdrum example.<sup>12</sup> I was sitting at a table in the Merton Street Library in Oxford, reading a book. I noticed that someone had come to my table and had sat down opposite me. I took it that it was now common knowledge between this person and myself that he and I were sitting at this

very table. However, we had not yet communicated in any way. At a certain point, I looked up and gazed at him until he too looked up. I caught his eye (as we say); we looked at each other. I nodded towards him and briefly smiled; he did also. We then returned to our respective concerns and had no further interaction. What went on here?

### 3.2. *Mutual Recognition Defined*

In terms to be explained, I suggest that, crucially, this man and I made it the case that *we were jointly committed to recognize as a body that he and I were co-present*. This is at least a good provisional description of a situation in which mutual recognition as I understand it has occurred.<sup>13</sup>

Something must be said about *joint commitment*.<sup>14</sup> One who invokes *joint* commitment in the sense I have in mind allows that just as an individual can commit himself, by forming a decision, for instance, so two or more individuals can commit themselves *as one*. For this to happen, something must be expressed by each of the would-be parties, namely, his *personal readiness* jointly with the rest to commit them all in a particular way. Further, these expressions must be common knowledge between the parties.

My proposal about the Merton Street Library case, then, is that it fulfilled these conditions with respect to the joint commitment referred to. As I understand it, these two conditions are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for them to be jointly committed in the way in question.

As to the notion of *recognizing*, in this context, I take this to be a more or less enduring state like believing, as opposed to an event like noticing. What I am calling “mutual recognition,” meanwhile, is an event, one that occurs precisely when the joint commitment in question is established.<sup>15</sup>

To say that mutual recognition is an event, is not to deny that it has normative consequences, consequences that extend through time. I say more about this shortly.

Quite generally, when I say that A and B are jointly committed to *recognize that p as a body*, for some proposition, p, I mean roughly this: they are jointly committed to emulate as far as possible, by virtue of their several actions with respect to one another, a single, embodied individual that recognizes that p. To put the point another way, they are committed to act (and talk) in

relation to one another as if they are, literally, “of one mind” with respect to the recognition that p.

I take it that a *joint commitment to recognize as a body* that, say, Kant was a great philosopher, does not require the parties personally to recognize that Kant has this stature. They may, or they may not personally recognize this; their joint commitment, meanwhile, relates to their public actions, including their communications, rather than to their personal judgments. That is just as well. There is little doubt that one can generally, at will, “act the part” of one who recognizes that Kant is a great philosopher, either in cooperation with another or on one’s own. It is at least not so clear that one can personally recognize this at will.

When there is mutual recognition, then, what is required of the parties from the point of view of the constitutive joint commitment is certain public actions, including communicative actions, rather than private thoughts. It is in their public actions with respect to one another that they must attempt together to emulate as far as possible a single, embodied individual that recognizes that they are co-present or were co-present at the time in question. In the alternative formulation, they must act as if they are literally “of one mind” with respect to the recognition that p.<sup>16</sup>

So, in the Merton Street Library case, the joint commitment there established required among other things that if I were to see the man in question again, on a later occasion, I do not say to him “You were in the library, then?” in a surprised tone. Of course I might end up saying this, if I do not realize at the later time that I am speaking to the man who was in the library then, or if I have forgotten the whole incident. I might also end up saying this had the following interchange transpired in the interim. After our moment of mutual recognition, the man in question comes up to me and says, with a meaningful wink “You did not see me here this afternoon,” to which I reply, “Oh, fine!” This new interchange may be understood as rescinding of the initial joint commitment, thus effacing all of the requirements that still flow from it.<sup>17</sup>

In what follows I am going to assume that mutual recognition as I have defined it is a regular occurrence—to put it mildly—and that the Merton Street Library case is an example of such mutual recognition. I now say more about mutual recognition in this sense.

### 3.3. Taylor's *Entre Nous*

I first briefly return to Charles Taylor's references to what is *entre nous*, "in public space," and so on. As I now explain, mutual recognition as I have defined it is a plausible context for talk—in French—of *nous*, and, therefore, of what is *entre nous*.

I have argued at length elsewhere that in a large class of cases in which people speak of what *we* are doing, thinking, or feeling this is best construed as referring to a joint commitment of an appropriate kind. I have in mind those cases in which it is not appropriate to construe what is being said in terms of what *we both*, or *we all*, are doing. Rather, we are doing it collectively. For those cases, a joint commitment interpretation recommends itself.

Those who are jointly committed to recognize as a body the co-presence of the parties, then, could properly describe their situation as follows: "We (collectively) recognize that you and I are co-present." This will not mean that you, on the one hand, recognize that you and I are co-present, and that I, on the other hand, recognize this. More generally, it cannot be broken down in terms of the way things are for me, on the one hand, and the way things are for you, on the other, because it is not about me, on the one hand, and you, on the other. It is about something else.

In saying "something else" I do not mean something whose existence is somehow independent of you and me. Of course it isn't. That "something else" is constituted by *you and me in a particular relationship*: that of joint commitment. This unifies us. It makes us *us*. For this particular kind of thing I have used the label "plural subject." According to my technical definition, those who are jointly committed to do X as a body constitute the *plural subject* of X-ing.<sup>18</sup>

Going back to Taylor's references to what is *entre nous*, consider about a joint commitment to recognize as a body that such-and-such is the case. Generalizing, if you and I are thus jointly committed, then the fact that such-and-such can plausibly be referred to as *entre nous*, in public space, and so on.

### 3.4. *Mutual Recognition and Social Groups*

I argued in *On Social Facts* that social groups, in a central sense of the term, are a matter of joint commitment: those who are jointly committed with one

another constitute a social group. If so, then those who mutually recognize one another constitute a social group—albeit one which may lack aims, values, or, in a word, character. Indeed, they constitute a fundamental kind of social group. Once people have mutually recognized one another, they have begun to pave the way for the creation of groups *with* character.<sup>19</sup>

In defining mutual recognition I have invoked a joint commitment to emulate as far as possible a single, embodied individual that recognizes the co-presence of the parties: in short, a joint commitment to recognize as a body this co-presence. I take it that a central use of the label “collective body” is to refer to social groups of the kind in question here.

It is worth pointing out that the content of the joint commitment required for mutual recognition does not involve the idea of a collective body. However, *once the parties are jointly committed in the way required for mutual recognition the parties constitute a collective body in what I take to be a standard sense of the phrase.*

### 3.5. *Pure and Mixed Cases of Mutual Recognition*

The Merton Street Library case is what one might think of as a pure or simple case of mutual recognition. I take it, however, that mutual recognition is often achieved as part and parcel of a wider achievement.

Thus someone who is approaching another on a town street might call out “Nice day!” and the other return “Yes, indeed!” Here two things may be achieved at one and the same time. First, they jointly commit to recognizing as a body that the two of them are co-present. Second, at one and the same time, they jointly commit to believing as a body that it’s a nice day.<sup>20</sup>

There are, then, both pure and (shall we say) mixed cases of mutual recognition. In the mixed cases mutual recognition is brought about at the same time that some other joint commitment is created for the parties.

### 3.6. *Presuppositions of Mutual Recognition*

What is presupposed by mutual recognition? One pertinent issue concerns the relationship of mutual recognition to previously established social conventions, norms, practices and so on.<sup>21</sup> In the Merton Street Library case, each person nods and smiles. This is a socially established procedure for creating

an instance of mutual recognition. A different procedure might have prevailed in their culture. In that case the parties might have behaved differently, each clearing his or her throat, perhaps, or clapping his or her hands.

How fundamental, then, can mutual recognition be? Can it take place between those who are not already parties to a social convention—total strangers who meet on a desert island, for instance?

This at least is clear: what one needs is some way of attracting the other person's attention, and then, or at the same time, engaging in whatever behavior will communicate one's readiness jointly to commit with the other to recognize as a body that you and he are co-present. It is not obvious that such behavior must follow socially established procedures or engage with previously established conventions.

It is plausible to argue, indeed, that social conventions themselves arise, in many cases at least, on a basis that involves mutual recognition. For instance, many conventions are set up by a face-to-face verbal agreement, which involves mutual recognition. Again, the establishment of the language in which the agreement was made may well have involved mutual recognition.

Though mutual recognition may not presuppose social convention, it presupposes something. It presupposes, for one, that the parties have the concept of joint commitment. The concept of joint commitment may well be a peculiarly human one, but some humans may lack it or have it in only an inchoate or imperfect form. Some of those who have been labeled "autistic" may be in this category.

My assumption is that most adult human beings have this concept. That is because it allows one plausibly to explain much of what human beings think and do. If this is so, it may well be common knowledge among adult human beings that by and large beings of their kind have the concept of joint commitment. When two or more mature human beings approach one another, then, it will be common knowledge that mutual recognition may well be possible. It may not happen, but it will make sense to attempt it.

Each of those who mutually recognize one another, in my sense, has expressed his readiness to be jointly committed in a certain way with the other.

Such expression presupposes at least the following: the other exists; the other is a being with the concept of joint commitment; the other is capable of co-creating with him a joint commitment. Thus I shall assume that where there is mutual recognition in my sense, in being jointly committed to recognizing as a body their co-presence as persons, the parties will be jointly committed to recognize as a body their co-presence as, at a minimum, beings capable of joint commitment.

### 3.7. *Mutual Recognition and Care, Concern, and Respect*

To what extent, if at all, does mutual recognition promote care and concern for each other, or mutual respect, among the parties? Off the cuff, one might think “None.” That may be a little too quick. Here are three observations that point in the other direction.

First, if we are jointly committed to recognize as a body our co-presence as beings capable of joint commitment, each of us is committed to see to it that *together* we constitute as far as possible a single body that recognizes this co-presence.<sup>22</sup> Thus one might argue that the situation involves certain safeguards for the parties. At the least, both parties are committed not to go ahead and render the other incapable of conformity to the joint commitment.<sup>23</sup> In a given case, this commitment may not be sufficient to determine the outcome, even for a fully rational agent. Though a joint commitment may “trump” certain other considerations in terms of what a proper responsiveness to relevant considerations requires, it does not trump all. In particular, certain moral considerations may trump it. Thus someone may enter a situation of mutual recognition with another, yet be prepared to kill him in self-defense, believing this to be morally justified in spite of the mutual recognition that has previously occurred.<sup>24</sup>

Second, one who has participated in an episode of mutual recognition, and then treats his opposite number in a way inappropriate to a being capable of mutual recognition in particular and joint commitment in general, has similarly failed to do what he is committed to doing. It would have to be argued, in amplification of this last point, that there are ways of treating such a being that are inappropriate to its nature, and that these are instances of uncaring, unconcerned, or disrespectful behavior. This can surely be done.

Third, as I have argued elsewhere, the parties to any joint commitment understand that they owe one another conformity to the commitment and have a corresponding right to conformity from the other. For these things can be inferred from the existence of the joint commitment itself.<sup>25</sup> Each is therefore not only constrained by the joint commitment in the way he would be given a standing personal decision to act in a certain way. He also understands that his not so acting would be a failure to respect the right of another. It is sometimes said that simply seeing another as having rights is a matter of respecting them.<sup>26</sup> In that case those who mutually recognize each other automatically respect one another.

There is, then, some basis for connecting this rather cognitive account of mutual recognition with behavior that is at least minimally caring, concerned and respectful of the parties concerned. That is harder to argue for the simpler situation in which there is only common knowledge of co-presence.

#### 4. Joint Attention

I turn now to my third topic: *joint attention*. In contemporary developmental psychology, there is a great deal of literature on what is called “joint attention.” One important source is the work of Michael Tomasello.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, there is some question as to precisely what is going on in paradigmatic situations of joint attention, and (relatedly) as to how “joint attention” should be defined.

Though developmentalists focus on parent-child interactions, it could be better to focus on adult-adult interactions to begin with, in working this out, since there are issues as to what precisely children are capable of at various young ages. That said, I start with a slightly abbreviated quotation from Tomasello as to the kind of situation he has in mind.

Suppose that a child is on the floor playing with a toy, but is also perceiving many other things in the room. An adult enters...and proceeds to join the child in her play with the toy. The joint attentional scene becomes those objects and activities that the child knows are part of the attentional focus of both herself and the adult, and they both know that this is their focus (...it is not joint attention if, by accident, they are both focused on the same thing but unaware of the partner).<sup>28</sup>

He concludes:

Joint attentional scenes...gain their identity and coherence from the child's and the adult's understandings of "what we are doing."<sup>29</sup>

Before the last quoted sentence, Tomasello was anxious to distinguish a situation of joint attention to some object (say) from each one's personally focusing on that object without awareness that the other was also focusing on it. Yet the last quoted sentence suggests something that goes beyond each one's focusing with awareness that both are focusing. It also goes beyond common knowledge between the parties that each one is focusing on the object. It suggests something that I have argued elsewhere: in referring to "what we are doing" one refers to a phenomenon involving joint commitment.

There is much to be said for analyzing acting together or, to use another common phrase, "joint, action" along such lines as these: the parties are jointly committed to intend as a body to do a certain thing and they act in accordance with that joint commitment. For them to be jointly committed to intend as a body to do the thing in question is, in more familiar terms, for *them* to intend to do that thing. Or so I have argued.<sup>30</sup>

Now suppose that a child, Claire, and her mother, Maureen, are playing with Claire's doll Teddy. As Maureen or Claire might put it: "We are playing with Teddy." One might say, then, that their focus is Teddy. Maureen (or Claire) might put this as follows: "We are attending to Teddy." One way of construing this, in parallel with my proposal about joint action would be this (from Maureen):

Claire and I are jointly committed to attend as a body to Teddy

What this means, as indicated earlier, is that they are jointly committed to constitute as far as possible a single body that attends to Teddy (and, in this case, plays with him).

I propose that joint attention, understood in terms of a joint commitment to attend as a body to some particular in the environment of the parties, is an important part of human life in society. Once we have gone beyond common knowledge of co-presence, and engaged in mutual recognition, we are ready jointly to attend to things, and to act upon those things together. Among other things, we are ready to create some kind of a group language, negotiating labels for particular things and kinds of things.<sup>31</sup> In short, we are ready to live recognizably human lives.<sup>32</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This article is a revised version of a paper published online in a Festschrift in honor of Wlodek Rabinowicz: M. Gilbert, "Mutual Recognition, Common Knowledge, and Joint Attention", <http://www.fil.lu.se/HommageaWlodek/site/papper/GilbertMargaret.pdf>. I thank Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen for their comments on that paper.

<sup>2</sup> See M. Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1989, p. ix.

<sup>3</sup> This paragraph responds to Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen (personal communication, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> There is a longer, more detailed discussion in Gilbert, *Social Facts*, esp. p. 185f. The classic philosophical sources on this topic are D. K. Lewis, *Convention: A Philosophical Study*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1969, and S. Schiffer, *Meaning*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1972. For a recent overview of the considerable and often highly technical literature see P. Vanderschraaf & Giacomo Sillari, "Common Knowledge," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/common-knowledge>.

<sup>5</sup> I assume here only a non-technical concept of "person," such as the participants in such a humdrum situation might apply.

<sup>6</sup> I have in mind, in particular, C. Taylor, "Critical notice: Jonathan Bennett's *Linguistic Behavior*," *Dialogue*, vol. 19, 1980, and C. Taylor, *Human Agency and Language*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, ch. 10, sec. 3. 1.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Taylor, *Human Agency*, p. 265: "the crucial distinction between what is *entre nous* and what is not."

<sup>8</sup> The writer-reader relationship may be a version of the situation on which Taylor focuses. The writer purports, implicitly or explicitly, to "address" the reader with his words. The reader is supposed to "get" what he is saying: but more than this. This is not just the transmission of information or pretend information (cf. Saul Kripke on pretense in fiction, *John Locke Lectures* 1973 (unpublished ms)). It is more like a conversation—if you like, it is a *would-be* conversation—in which one by one certain things are made "*entre nous*." (It is of course a one-sided conversation; the reader may have no way to say anything to the writer, as each will understand. The writer may be long dead.) So there is a style in which one might write "Now that we are agreed that ..." "Now we have seen that..." "Now it has been established [between us] that...", and a style in which one writes "You, dear reader..." and so on. And one can speak of a writer "drawing his reader's attention" to something. The flavor of such locutions is, I take it, to invoke something more like the creation of a common focus than the transmission of information from one mind to another.

<sup>9</sup> I say "exchange" though only one party seems to have spoken. It is best to construe Taylor's case as involving some form of acknowledgement on the part of the

person spoken to. Something like a brief “Yes, indeed,” or some concurring facial expression would suffice. If the other person was looking in the other direction and apparently deaf to the utterance, I take it that nothing would have been achieved—or, better, there would have been a failed attempt to achieve what the case with acknowledgement does achieve.

<sup>10</sup> Taylor’s example (p. 264) has one party both saying “Whew!” and also mopping his brow. It seems unnecessary, though, that any words be uttered in such a scenario. I doubt that Taylor would deny this.

<sup>11</sup> Taylor, *Human Agency*, p. 265.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Gilbert, *Social Facts*, pp. 217–218. The following discussion draws on *Social Facts*, pp. 217–219.

<sup>13</sup> In using the phrase “mutual recognition” here I follow my earlier usage, in *Social Facts*. As I explain later in the text, the phenomenon I have in mind could also aptly be referred to as *collective* recognition. This phenomenon is grounded in a communicative exchange whose immediate outcome it is. Introducing a more nuanced terminology one might refer to the exchange as such as “the process of mutual recognition,” and to its immediate outcome as “the state of mutual recognition.”

<sup>14</sup> I have written at length on this elsewhere. For a recent discussion see M. Gilbert, *A Theory of Political Obligation*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2006, ch. 7.

<sup>15</sup> Paragraph added in response to questions from Ikäheimo and Laitinen.

<sup>16</sup> Paragraph added in response to questions from Ikäheimo and Laitinen.

<sup>17</sup> As I understand joint commitments in general, they require the concurrence of all parties on their rescission, absent special background understandings.

<sup>18</sup> My choice of the phrase “plural subject” has had some unfortunate consequences. It seems to suggest to some people something metaphysically suspect, whereas I do not believe there is anything suspect in the idea of a number of jointly committed persons, which is all that the idea of a plural subject (in my sense) amounts to. I take the phrase to be apt in part because, roughly, I take the first person plural pronoun “we” in its “collective” uses, to presuppose the joint commitment of the members of the “we.”

<sup>19</sup> On joint commitment as fundamental to social groups, see *Social Facts*, ch. 4 and *Political Obligation*, esp. ch. 8.

<sup>20</sup> On collective belief, see for example the Introduction and various essays in M. Gilbert, *Living Together: Rationality, Sociality, and Obligation*, Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield, 1996.

<sup>21</sup> On social conventions, which I take to be a species of social rule, see Gilbert, *Social Facts*, ch. 6. On social rules, with special reference to H. L. A. Hart’s discussion in *The Concept of Law*, see M. Gilbert, *Sociality and Responsibility: New Essays in Plural Subject Theory*, Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield, 2000. I argue that social rules as conceived of in everyday life are joint commitment phenomena.

<sup>22</sup> This just spells out an entailment of the joint commitment in question.

<sup>23</sup> See my 1990 essay on marital relationships—“Fusion: Sketch of a ‘Contractual’ Model”—reprinted in *Living Together*. The pertinent passage is on p. 220.

<sup>24</sup> See *Political Obligation*, ch. 11. See also the third point in the text below.

<sup>25</sup> See Gilbert, *Sociality and Responsibility*; also Gilbert, *Political Obligation*, ch. 7.

<sup>26</sup> Joel Feinberg, “The Nature and Value of Rights,” *Journal of Value Inquiry*, 4, 1970, pp. 243–60, suggests this in a famous discussion.

<sup>27</sup> For example M. Tomasello, *The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2001. Another leading figure in these discussions is Simon Baron-Cohen.

<sup>28</sup> Tomasello, *Cultural Origins*, p. 98. Tomasello continues to write on this topic; I use these quotations as illustrations of one stance towards the phenomenon that has been adopted, and that might be attractive initially. I thank Michael Tomasello for discussion of joint attention on several occasions in Cracow and Leipzig.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> See for example *Social Facts*, ch. 4; *Living Together*, ch. 6. In the form of analysis of joint action just presented I begin with an account of our *intending* to do something (in terms of our being jointly committed to intend as a body to do that thing) and add that each of us acts in accordance with this joint commitment, to make up our joint action. An alternative, perhaps better, is to say simply that we are jointly committed to do (as a body) a certain thing. Then presumably we will also be jointly committed to intend as a body to do that thing, and will act in accordance with the latter joint commitment in order to do the thing in question.

<sup>31</sup> On group languages see Gilbert, *Social Facts*, ch.3, sec.6.

<sup>32</sup> A version of this essay was presented at the conference on social ontology and constitutive attitudes held in Helsinki, August 29–30, 2006. At the subsequent collective intentionality conference in the same place (August 31–2nd Sept), Clotilde Calabi of the University of Milan presented a paper “Joint Attention, Common Knowledge, and Ephemeral Groups” with significant points in common with this one. Calabi criticizes Christopher Peacocke’s recent account of joint attention (C. Peacocke, “Joint Attention: Its Nature, Reflexivity, and Relation to Common Knowledge,” in *Joint Attention: Communication and Other Minds*, eds. N. Eilan, C. Hoerl, T. McCormack, J. Roessler, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005), and draws on my published work to argue, congenially, for an approach to the topic similar to that proposed here.

## Chapter Ten

# Social Space and the Ontology of Recognition

Italo Testa

### I A Metaphor?

What are we talking about when we talk about recognition? My observations regard some expressions that are very often to be found in philosophical discourses inspired by the Hegelian theory of *Anerkennung*. For example it is claimed that theoretical and practical self-consciousness have an intersubjective structure insofar as they are constituted through recognitive interactions; or that right (*Recht*) is a recognitive phenomenon insofar as it presupposes diverse forms of reciprocal recognition between individuals. When we speak of recognitive constitution of the structure of self-consciousness or of social institutions such as right or the State, are we merely using vague and indefinite images or is this conceptual vocabulary to be taken seriously by theorists? The following observations by no means intend to resolve and exhaust the full extension of the theories of recognition but, rather, limit themselves to capturing a specific but important aspect of the question.

The problem I intend to deal with is, in particular, the following: if we take these manners of speaking seriously, then should we not maintain that they speak to us of the *mode of being* of some phenomena, that is, of how determinate aspects of their *ontology* are constituted through interaction?

## II Axes of Recognition

To get my bearings in the tangle of recognising, I shall preliminarily introduce a distinction between three axes or dimensions of recognition that converge in part with Paul Ricoeur's study.<sup>1</sup> We can thus distinguish between three dimensions of recognising:

1. *Reidentification*: identification and perceptual reidentification of objects on the part of a subject;
2. *Self-recognition*: relation to self of a subject, of a type that is both reidentificative and performative/attestative;
3. *Reciprocal recognition*: relation between two or more agents who coordinate their interaction by reciprocally identifying one another, attesting their identity and referring themselves to variously codified norms of behaviour (functional, implicit, informal, formal). The reciprocity of the relation has to be kept distinct from *symmetry* and from *equality*: symmetrical relations and relations between equals are simply two subsets of relations of reciprocal recognition.

## III Relational Structure of Recognition

When we speak of recognition, in these three senses, we always speak of it as some type of relation: relation between a subject and an object, self-relation of a subject, relation between two subjects; it appears, moreover, that we are dealing with intentional relations. Furthermore, the theories of recognition that I intend to discuss assume, in some sense of the term, the logical priority of the third axis (reciprocal recognition): it is assumed that the integration between the three dimensions of recognising comes about through the subsumption of the first and second levels in the third, that is, through the subsumption of reidentification of objects and self-recognition under reciprocal recognition. The constitutive function is in fact assigned to the third axis, that is, to the relations of reciprocal recognition: it is these relations that constitute

those holistic properties of the individual which we term theoretical and practical self-consciousness, as well as social realities such as right or the State. The relations that constitute these phenomena are understood, thus, as *relations of reciprocal dependence*.<sup>2</sup>

The subjects of such relations are not necessarily singular individuals: they may, as well, be social realities *sui generis* or even collective entities (families, clans, classes, States). Recognitive relations of dependence appear to presuppose the presence in individuals of powers or capacities that are constituted, enabled and exercised within the relation itself. And in this regard we ought to ask: a) whether the relations are simply enabling conditions of exercising powers already possessed; or b) whether they are co-constitutive (so that in the absence of such relations, these powers not only could not be exercised, but could not be developed or would end up by irremediably wasting away: on this view it is thus the recognitive relation of dependence that permits us to enable specific functions with which we are naturally endowed and then to develop them into powers or capacities);<sup>3</sup> or whether c) they create the powers *ex nihilo*.

#### **IV Socio-ontological Approach**

At this point I would like to frame the question I posed at the beginning somewhat more precisely. If we are not talking in vain when we speak of recognitive constitution

1. we are dealing with an *ontological question*;
2. we are dealing with a *question of social ontology*;
3. the question regards the very constitution of the *social space*.

This social-ontological approach could be put to the test of an interpretation of the Hegelian texts, for example of *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Here in fact Hegel assumes that certain social and institutional phenomena—holistic properties of individuals or social entities *sui generis*—are generated by free will; accordingly, he analyses this process of constitution in terms of the recognitive relations which are the infrastructure of the development and implementation of free will: this is the case with the legal, moral, ethical person, as well as with institutions of the family, of right, of civil society and of the State.<sup>4</sup>

But this exegetic question oversteps the bounds I have set myself. Rather, I would like to concentrate on the question of whether certain aspects of the theory of recognition can be translated into the terms of a socio-ontological paradigm: to do so, I shall make use of some conceptual tools derived from John Searle's *The Construction of Social Reality*.<sup>5</sup>

## V First Approximation

As a first approximation, we may attempt to translate the vocabulary of recognition into a socio-ontological paradigm in the following Searlean terms:

1. Certain holistic properties of individuals and social realities *sui generis* are social phenomena—ontologically subjective or, more precisely, *ontologically intersubjective*—insofar as they do not exist independently of the existence of a certain type of interaction: which is to say, they do not exist independently of a certain type of interaction characterised by recognitive relations.
2. Recognitive relations can be characterised in terms of rules.
3. Such rules are not limited to regulating already-existing phenomena or behaviour, but rather make new phenomena or behaviour possible; we refer, then, not to *regulative rules*, but rather to *constitutive rules* (such as the rules of chess) that have the following form: "X counts as Y in C".
4. The *recognitive powers* that individuals are enabled to exercise in an interaction are in the final analysis *deontic powers*, that is, powers that make it possible to regulate the interaction between individuals and that consist in the power to impose and/or to assume responsibilities, rights, obligations, titles, authorisations, permits.
5. Since deontic powers appear to imply the faculty of language essentially—we cannot impose rights or obligations without words, symbols, markers; furthermore, even if certain norms can be followed unconsciously, to be such it must in principle be possible for them to be made explicit linguistically by someone—the recognitive powers are themselves essentially linked to the linguistic faculty.

## VI Constitutive Powers

If, for the sake of argument, we grant that this translation is acceptable, we will have succeeded in three things: First, we have characterised recognition in wholly normative terms. Second, we have defined the ontology of

recognition as a normative ontology. Third, we have succeeded in assimilating recognitive powers to deontic powers.

In what follows I shall endeavour to make it clear whether this characterisation is satisfactory. In particular, the underlying questions in my analysis will be the following:

- a. what type of constitutive power—here understood as a power to constitute or concur in constituting some phenomena—are recognitive powers?
- b. does the nexus between recognition, language and interaction in human practice<sup>6</sup> really mean that recognitive powers and deontic powers can be assimilated?
- c. and do deontic powers necessarily have to be modelled on linguistic powers?

## VII Nonhuman Social Space

To tackle at least some of these questions I shall begin with the idea that sociality is not just a specifically human feature. The idea, which has a long tradition—from Aristotle to Hegel, to Marx and to contemporary sociobiology—has two aspects:

1. Other forms of animal life characterised by sociality exist. The tendency to cooperate is a natural trait of many species and is, at least, no less natural than the non-cooperative tendency; and, on the other hand, also the aggressive traits of animal behaviour are not in themselves antisocial but can depend on cooperative forms of social behaviour (rites of courtship, aggressiveness as a naturally selected trait of the dominant male that sacrifices itself for the group).
2. Human sociality is not a mere cultural construction but is a natural trait of our biological form of life. The cultural elaboration of sociality is itself in part a product of adaptation to the environment, and cultural differences of this kind can be found also in animal species.<sup>7</sup>

## VIII The Presuppositions of Social Facts

From this standpoint it is perfectly legitimate to speak of *nonhuman social spaces*. But I wish to tackle the problem directly in terms of social ontology. In fact also Searle admits that sociality is linked to biological nature and

maintains that also other animals have the power to constitute social facts. What, then, are the presuppositions of the constitution of not specifically human social spaces brought to light by Searle?

These presuppositions can be listed as follows:

1. interaction;
2. cooperation;
3. collective intentionality (desires, beliefs) as a medium of coordination of the cooperation;
4. capacity of assigning (that is attributing) functions to objects on the basis of their physical properties.<sup>8</sup>

On the basis of these presuppositions it is possible to understand, according to Searle, how in animal groups such social phenomena are constituted as, for example, the use of tools, cooperative behaviour in the raising of offspring, in hunting, in courtship and in coupling, the institution of hierarchical relations and of dominance, and so forth.

## **IX First Intermediate Observation**

Engaging in these forms of complex cooperative behaviour would not be possible without presupposing the capacity of sharing intentional states such as beliefs, desires and intentions. From this standpoint all facts that imply the shared intentionality of a plurality of agents are social facts. I do not intend to dwell here on the question of how such shared intentionality is to be understood: whether as an individual social entity of a new type (and whether Hegel asserted a thesis of this kind, as Searle accuses);<sup>9</sup> or, as Searle would have it, as a collective intentionality *sui generis*, biologically primitive but to be understood as a form that individual intentionality can assume rather than as a new type of individual entity; or, again, as reducible to the intentionality of individuals and to their reciprocal beliefs (“I believe that you believe that I believe that...”). What I wish to emphasize in this context is that, in fact, this shared intentionality intersects all the axes of recognition. In fact the agents, to be able to cooperate, have to:

1. recognise objects: be able, perceptively, to identify and reidentify the objects of the environment with which they interact;

2. recognise themselves: be capable of self-identification within the environment with which they interact and of attesting their own presence and role within cooperative behaviour;
3. recognise one another: identify and reidentify themselves as belonging to the same species, to the same herd, as sexual or cooperative partners; and regulate their own adaptation to the environment and their own cooperative behaviour on the basis of norms followed instinctually or learned through education.

The shared intentionality that is the basis of the constitution of social facts is thus most definitely entwined with recognitive relations even where it does not appear to be in the presence of the phenomenon of human linguistic self-consciousness. The intentional capacities that make social cooperation possible appear, moreover, to require recognitive capacities of a different kind. In the strong sense this thesis could mean that such recognitive capacities are essential for defining the intentional capacities of the cooperative agents. Here arises the further hypothesis—which I will discuss later—that reciprocal recognitive relations have priority and play a co-constitutive role not only in human self-conscious intentionality, but also in (individual and shared) animal intentionality. This, of course, would mean abandoning Searle's idea<sup>10</sup> that intentionality is constitutive with respect to social facts but is not, in its turn, a social fact (but is, rather, an intrinsic feature): indeed, on the basis of this further hypothesis intentionality itself would come to be co-constituted recognitively.

## **X Human Social Space**

At this point I would like to return to Searle, to try to see what he views as the basic presuppositions of the ontology of human social space. For Searle, the distinguishing feature of human social space is that it contains institutional facts—language, exchange, money, right, State—that are not to be found in other animal societies.<sup>11</sup> The necessary presuppositions for understanding the constitution of these institutional—and therefore specifically human—social facts are, for Searle, the following:

1. capacity of attributing functions through collective intentionality;
2. capacity of attributing *status* functions through collective intentionality: these are functions that an object cannot perform only in virtue of its physical features; such

causal features of the object can be necessary but are not sufficient to determine the function;

3. collective recognition: a status function exists as such insofar as it (its type or in certain cases its token) is (collectively or individually) accepted by the participants in the interaction (note that acceptance is not in itself free and rational and may come in degrees);
4. constitutive rules: social phenomena are constituted through rules that do not regularise preexisting behaviour but rather produce new behaviour;
5. deontic powers: the power of producing social phenomena through constitutive rules is thus presupposed. Such a power is here understood as a deontic one insofar as it is a matter of rights, obligations, authorisations etc;<sup>12</sup>
6. recognition/acceptance of deontic power: deontic power does not exist independently of collective recognition, of acceptance of its being in force;
7. linguistic powers: language is constitutive with respect to deontic power; furthermore, language is in its turn a social institution that plays a constitutive role with respect to other institutions.<sup>13</sup>

## **XI Second Intermediate Observation**

Let me now make some remarks that connect Searle's analysis to the theme of recognition, and show that these phenomena are found in animal interaction as well.

The first presupposition makes reference to a capacity that, if we look closely, is not limited to humans. The capacity of imposing functions on objects on the basis of their physical properties—for example the capacity to use certain objects as tools—can in fact play a role in animal cooperative behaviour and can be transmitted intergenerationally.<sup>14</sup> In these cases, then, one should be ready to say that the attributing of functions comes about through collective intentionality.<sup>15</sup>

The capacity of attributing a status function is not specifically human. Structures of rank, hierarchical relations of dominance, which are established in certain animal groups, presuppose the attributing of status functions—for example, the status of dominant male—that can be modified over time also through conflict. By the same token, the intrinsic nexus between status function and acceptance of that function—the fact that they are ontologically

dependent on recognition—is not specifically human (and since acceptance has different degrees, this does not imply the presupposition of free and rational nonhuman agents). Nor is the status of leader of the herd determined only by physical characteristics of the object on which it is imposed but has to be collectively accepted to be such, and in this regard situations of cognitive conflict are possible.

The status function attributed to certain individuals is connected with the exercise of powers of imposing certain forms of behaviour on other individuals, in terms of obligations, responsibilities, authorisations. Such powers cannot be assimilated to brute force—even though they may make use of it—since they do presuppose some form of acceptance in order to be exercised.<sup>16</sup> We might speak here of a lower threshold of *deontic constitutive powers*. Since the attributing of status functions follows the form “X counts as Y in C,” it could be maintained, as regards lower-threshold constitutive powers connected with the exercise of such status functions, that they refer to constitutive rules.

## **XII Collective Intentionality and Recognition**

In general, with regard to Searle, my strategy has been to show that cognitive phenomena, which he isolates at the level of human interaction, are, rather, in part proper to animal interaction as well. Furthermore, this gives rise to the fact that cognitive relations play a constitutive role much broader than the one they in fact assume in Searle’s theory of acceptance. This, moreover, could have consequences as far as the very conception of individual and collective intentionality is concerned, since it could be assumed that at least the collective form of animal intentionality is constituted cognitively through the cognitive powers with which individuals are naturally endowed and which are activated and develop in interaction. Cognitive relations would thus be a sort of middle term between collective intentionality and individual intentionality: and the latter may itself not be intelligible independently of collective intentionality and of its cognitive constitution, but rather mediated by it. In this sense the notion of recognition would serve to render intelligible the very notion of intentionality. And this could be a starting point also on the path to a noncircular explanation of the intentionality

that is accompanied by linguistic self-consciousness: the thesis for which individual self-consciousness would be a holistic property constituted through recognitive relations.

### **XIII Consequences: the Recognitive Background**

At this point I would like to draw some conclusions that derive from the preceding analyses:

1. The recognitive relations mediated by language are a subset of recognitive relations as a whole.
2. Nonlinguistic recognitive relations are constitutive of social phenomena.
3. Hence recognitive powers do not coincide with linguistic powers.
4. Recognitive relations are not wholly normative, at least in the sense of linguistic normativity. If there is a sense in speaking of behaviour guided by norms in the case of animal cooperative behaviour, then it is in a different sense of normativity—namely of natural functional norms that have different degrees. (These can range from homeostatic capacities of interacting with the environment and organising it on one's own scale, to instinctual norms of cooperation, up to norms that have been learned but that cannot be made linguistically explicit, in the current state, by the participants in an interaction, and that presuppose some kind of acceptance, even if not a free and rational one—in contrast with social norms requiring free acknowledgement).
5. Hence recognitive powers are not in themselves deontic powers in the sense understood by Searle and Brandom,<sup>17</sup> or deontic powers cannot be assimilated *tout court* to linguistic powers as nonlinguistic constitutive rules do exist.

These conclusions can be generalised by asserting that:

6. Some recognitive capacities are first natural possessions common to human beings and to other animal species.
7. Recognition that is culturally acquired, mediated by language and self-conscious, presupposes the existence of nonreflexive 'lower' recognitive capacities and would be impossible without them.
8. Reflexive and linguistic forms of recognition can themselves be exercised insofar as, through repetition and practice, they come to be incorporated in an immediate and nonreflexive form and thus come to function as second nature, out of habit: being

the result of a process of development and social construction does not prevent them from acting as second nature, that is with a spontaneity and immediacy analogous to that of the simply instinctual and genetically programmed first natural processes. As Hegel maintained: “Thinking, too, however free and active in its own pure element it becomes, no less requires habit and familiarity (this impromptuity or form of immediacy) ... It is through this habit that I come to realize my existence as a thinking being. Even here, in this spontaneity of self-centered thought, there is a partnership of soul and body (hence, want of habit and too-long-continued thinking cause headache)”.<sup>18</sup>

In *The Construction of Social Reality* Searle broached the notion of “background,” by which he means that set of capacities, that is of dispositions, abilities, practical tendencies and nonintentional—or protointentional—uses which permit intentional states to function and which consist in a set of causal structures.<sup>19</sup> In reference to that notion, we can now maintain that the intentional and reflexive structures of recognition presuppose a set of nonreflexive and protointentional recognitive structures as a causal condition of their functioning. The notion of recognition, then, must in my view be included in the background: that is, recognition is operative not only in reflexive attitudes but also in their background; this also accounts for the cognitive function, noted by Searle himself, by which the aspect of familiarity with which non-pathological forms of consciousness present themselves would be a function of the capacities of the background.<sup>20</sup> The background in fact makes recognitive familiarity with aspects of the world possible precisely insofar as it is constituted by recognitive capacities—both merely first natural ones, that is genetically programmed and instinctual capacities, and second natural ones, that is capacities shaped through cultural habituation<sup>21</sup>—that function in an immediate way and that are thus endowed with causal power.<sup>22</sup>

#### **XIV Approaches to Recognition**

What, then, is the legitimate approach to the phenomenon of recognition? I shall endeavour to show that there are a number of legitimate approaches, each one of which takes into consideration an aspect of the phenomenon. I find illegitimate, however, the approach that, absolutising one of these levels, ends up denying the phenomenon in its complexity and thus distorting it.

1. *Naturalistic approach.* It is most definitely legitimate to study the phenomenon of recognition from a naturalistic standpoint. After all, it is a fact connected with our biological first nature that we are endowed with recognitive capacities, both with the lower capacities and with the higher ones connected with language. It is a fact of *first nature* by which we avail ourselves of an organism and functions that, when developed socially through education and stabilised through habit, allow us to avail ourselves of certain capacities with the immediacy of a *second nature*. The interweaving of recognitive *first and second nature* constitutes the background of all human practices.
2. *Anthropological approach.* Even though recognitive functions and capacities are in part shared with other animals, they find in human beings a notable increase in degree that makes us *strong recognisers*. In some respects we may think of a qualitative leap that, however, is produced by a quantitative increase, and that allows us to deploy linguistic, reflexive and normative capacities. Thus an anthropological approach, designed to discover the sense in which recognition is the fundamental constitutive need of human nature, is legitimate: it is the idea expressed by Hegel, that “*Man is recognition*” (“*Der Mensch ist Anerkennung*”),<sup>23</sup> both in the sense of that which he is to begin with—Hegel himself knew that there are first natural recognitive capacities that we share with animals<sup>24</sup>—and in the sense of that which he has to become, by developing those forms of normative, reflexive, and linguistic self-conscious recognition that are important for the constitution of the institutional sphere of spirit.
3. *Ontological approach.* The characterisation of human nature in recognitive terms can also be understood as an ontological characterisation regarding man’s mode of being, which is to say, as an *ontology of the human*. On the other hand, in light of the breadth of the phenomenon of recognition that we have envisioned, it is also clear that the ontological role played by recognitive powers is wider than a mere ontology of the human and regards more generally an *ontology of sociality*.
4. *Pragmatic approach.* The ontological function of recognitive powers cannot itself be defined independently of a pragmatic analysis of the interaction of social agents. Here, we have the problem of how this pragmatics of recognition is to be modeled. Since at a certain level recognitive powers intersect with deontic powers, it follows that (a) certain recognitive phenomena, even if not all of them, will have to be examined in the framework of a normative pragmatics; and (b) furthermore the normative pragmatics adequate to analyse the phenomenon will not always be a pragmatics modelled on linguistic norms, if we assume the sensibleness of the idea that natural or prelinguistic norms of interaction can exist.

## **XV On Brandom's Pragmatics: Model I**

The necessity of an integration of the various approaches can be exemplified through a critical analysis of some features of Robert Brandom's philosophical conception. Brandom has utilised the pragmatico-normative model of deontic "score-keeping"<sup>25</sup>—which as such is a model to explain how the assigning and undertaking of deontic commitments in language games comes about—to clarify the structure of recognitive interaction. To that end, in his article "Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel's Idealism" (1999) Brandom began by drawing up a model (which I shall call *model I*) in which recognitive powers are assimilated to linguistic-type deontic powers and thus come to mark a sharp discontinuity between animality and humanity on the one hand and between naturalness and normativity on the other. Furthermore, in Brandom's model normative pragmatics is, rather, a model for semantic analysis and is not linked up with a socio-ontological conception, even though this step can be easily taken on the basis of the presuppositions of *Making it Explicit*. Finally, from the fact that normative pragmatics is also detached from a naturalistic and anthropological approach, it follows that in Brandom's position individual deontic powers are reduced to socially authorised formal powers and appear to have no basis in the nature and in the ontology of individuals and of their functions and capacities. In the final analysis the pragmatics of deontic score-keeping appears to analyse a certain class of recognitive interactions, but cannot in itself account for the recognitive powers that make them possible: since, if it too were to explain the constitution of the phenomenon of linguistic self-consciousness, it would leave the nexus between deontic authority and the recognitive capacities of individuals presupposed and unexplained. (Could just anyone be socially authorised to exercise the deontic power of recognising norms, or are there certain characteristics—abilities, dispositions to develop capacities—that have to be satisfied by the beings that can exercise this status?)

## **XVI On Brandom's Pragmatics: Model II**

Some of these difficulties appear to be tackled by Brandom in his more recent article "The Structure of Desire and Recognition," included in this collection, in which he develops a new model—which I shall call *model II*—for analysing recognition that is rather different from *model I*. Here, Brandom reconstructs

the transition, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, from desire (*Begierde*) to self-consciousness. The phenomenon of self-consciousness is now explained as a reflexive form of recognition that results from the application of the triadic structure of desiring consciousness to itself. The structure of desiring consciousness can be analysed into (i) an attitude toward the object—for example hunger; (ii) a responsive activity motivated by that attitude—eating; and (iii) a significance—responding to the object by treating it in a certain way, that is attributing it the significance of *food*. Desiring consciousness is thus understood as a sort of erotic awareness—a form of primitive intentionality—that carries out a certain type of practical classification/evaluation of the environment.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, this desiring consciousness is conceived by Brandom as a disposition to respond differentially to objects and is distinguished from mere behavioral dispositions to react in a certain way—for example, iron’s disposition to react to a humid environment by rusting—insofar as the assessment of the effect of the action and thus of the reliability of the response can modify the attitude and the activities of the agent in case the object does not satisfy the desire (for example *if* the object classified as food leads to poisoning). This practical classification would thus not have a deterministic but rather a hypothetical-dispositional character. Recognitive powers, resulting from the reflexive self-application of that causal structure, would thus appear to be conceived as second-order dispositions—dispositions to endorse the dispositions of others—that imply a change in the first-order dispositions and thus the endorsement of a normative attitude. In this sense Brandom’s *model II* defines “simple recognition” as the disposition to attribute to the other the significance of desiring consciousness—which already implies the second-order disposition to endorse the normative authority of the other’s desire—and “robust recognition” as the disposition to attribute to the other a desiring consciousness capable in turn of recognising—which in turn implies the second-order disposition to endorse the normative authority of its recognitions. Even though the notion of desiring consciousness is of a naturalistic type, the transition from it to reflexive self-consciousness is nonetheless interpreted by Brandom in a sense that postulates, as in *model I*, a discontinuity between natural dispositions and cultural dispositions of a normative type. The problem of the relationship between recognitive capacities and deontic authority seems to remain unresolved, as does the need—which *model II* would appear to take into greater consideration—to give a base to recognitive powers in the nature and in the ontology of individuals.

In my view a broaching of the categories of first and second nature would be profitable here for an understanding of the relation between the two levels of awareness and their relative dispositions. The second-order dispositions could in fact be conceived on the Hegelian model of habit *qua* second nature. This ought to be accompanied by a broaching of the distinction, already employed by Hegel in his Jena writings, of two levels of recognition (first natural and second natural or spiritual recognition) whose dialectic can—in my opinion—more adequately describe the complex relation between first and second nature.<sup>27</sup> The very notion of normativity would prove to be modified in this new framework, since the second-nature normativity of simple and robust recognition (spiritual recognition, in Hegelian terms) ought to be understood as the development of a functional type of natural normativity, to which would thus correspond a form of first-nature recognition; furthermore, a non-dualistic approach would be reinforced by the fact that second nature habituation is not only a human phenomenon and can thus be conceived as something that occurs also within the animal kingdom (and this for Hegelian reasons too).<sup>28</sup> To the different levels of awareness ought to correspond also different levels of normativity, according to an idea that, at bottom, is also closer to the overall design of Hegelian *Naturphilosophie*, in which the *concept* to which an organism has to adequate itself is the natural norm that it has to satisfy, that is its intrinsic functional norm.<sup>29</sup> Brandom, by contrast, in placing normativity on the merely historico-cultural side, does not even fully account for that evaluative activity—the monitoring of the effects of one’s actions that may lead to a change in one’s attitudes—which is already intrinsic in his notion of desiring consciousness and which in Hegelian *Naturphilosophie* has its antecedent in *Gefühl*.<sup>30</sup> At this point, however, cognitive powers themselves should no longer be modeled *tout court* on linguistic-type deontic powers: under this aspect *model I* appears to be in conflict with some consequences that, as we see it, could be dealt with by *model II*. In conclusion, note that if the practical classification—the assigning of functions—has a basis in the agents’ natural dispositions, then it is part of their objective ontological constitution: and this also reopens the question—which goes back to the Hegelian critique of Kantian teleological judgement, and which constitutes the basis of the idea that there is also a functional type of natural normativity—of whether functions are only subjectively attributed—as Searle and Brandom insist—or whether they are constitutive aspects of reality independent of such attributions.

## **XVII Perception or Attribution? Realism or Constructivism?**

There is, then, a further question that concerns the analysis of cognitive interactions and thus also the pragmatics of recognition. I am referring to the alternative between the attributive and the perceptive models that appear to comprise many formulations of such analysis, lining up with one model or with the other.<sup>31</sup> The alternatives can be formulated as follows:

1. *Perceptive model*: recognising consists in reacting to properties already given and perceived as real.
2. *Attributive model*: it is the act of attributing such properties that constitutes them as such. The act of attribution confers or attributes a property that was not there before.

The alternatives could be translated in epistemological terms into:

- a. *Realism*: the properties of cognitive phenomena are real properties of objects, that is properties that exist independently of social construction.
- b. *Constructivism*: cognitive properties are constructed socially.

Brandom's first model appears to position itself in the second family, which in its radical versions can give rise to versions à la Goffmann. But then also Brandom's second model, despite its recourse to the notion of disposition—which contains the idea that one is disposed to react to something—appears to line up on the constructivist side. In fact cognitive dispositions are according to Brandom dispositions to perform attributions<sup>32</sup>—dispositions to attribute to something the status of normative agent—and are not commensurate with properties of the objects to which one reacts. Searle's model, too, would appear to come within this family, insofar as it claims that status functions are imposed on objects: but, here, there is a great deal more to be said. We also note how the alternative between the two models generates a sort of *paradox of recognition* analogous to Euthyphro's paradox:<sup>33</sup> Is something X because it is *recognised* as X, or is something recognised as X because *it is X*?

## **XVIII Limits of the Alternative**

The truth of the matter is that the alternative is poorly framed. To delve into the question we need to bring out some of the limits of each position.

1. *Limits of the attributive approach.* This approach in the first place does not appear to be applied equally to all recognitive phenomena, and in particular to those that run along the axis of perceptive identification and that appear to presuppose a reaction to properties that are at least perceived as real. On the other hand this axis is always intersected by the other two axes of self-recognition and of reciprocal recognition. And this cannot but have some consequence for the definition of the conditions of appropriateness of recognition also along the second and third axes: even though attestation and social construction have great effect here, the attribution of status is itself never detached from the arising of forms of immediate recognition in the form both of first-nature recognition (if erotic awareness is part of the metaphysical structure of certain entities, as Brandom appears to claim<sup>34</sup>, then also *simple recognition* and *robust recognition* are reactions to properties given and perceived as real) and in the second-nature form of *seeing as* (for example, I cannot attribute you with a social stigma or a privilege without also seeing you as something already determined—this or that individual, person, human being and so on—on which I impose this and that other function).<sup>35</sup>

In the second place, at least some ways of understanding the attributive approach in a strong constructivist and anti-realistic sense seem rather implausible. We have to observe that the idea that individual recognitive powers have constitutive character and contribute to the constitution of social phenomena *does not mean* that it is the singular act with which I as an individual impose a status, confer a property, that creates *ex nihilo* that property itself: it is the recognitive relations produced through individual powers and incorporated in the second nature of the habits of interaction that are constitutive. Furthermore, the individuals that with their constitutive powers intervene to constitute social phenomena—including such phenomena as self-consciousness and the legal person—also perceive these traits as real, as characteristics of the world, through their perceptive powers. Even if such individuals were systematically mistaken in observing these characteristics as real—as the constructivist may argue—their subjective constitutive powers would be nevertheless objective features of them as living, first natural beings, and would deploy processes and relations of systematic mistake that come to exist objectively in the world. Thus, the being of the features so produced depends not only on the appropriate subjective attitudes but also on appropriate objective features of the world, since on the one hand the being

of these attitudes depends itself on the appropriate, objective properties of those first natural individuals, and on the other hand the attributive activity is always confronted with already given (even if partly imposed) properties of the objects.

2. *Limits of the perceptive approach.* The perceptive approach, on the other hand does not appear capable of giving a full account of recognitive phenomena in which an essential role is played by *performance* itself, by the added value of the very act of recognising: the will to self-attestation, the modalities of expression of the recognition of others play an influential role in determining the characteristics of what comes to be recognised and the quality of the relation (for example in self-recognition, which is always also production of one's own identity). In recognition, the reaction to what is there—even if not in all cases—is also an act through which what is there proves to be further determined, specified, expressed.

## **XIX An Expressivist Model?**

In conclusion I would like to explore the hypothesis that an expressivist model of recognition, if adequately conceived, can contribute to solving the paradox. In this sense recognitive powers—at least those that follow the second and third axes—ought to be understood first of all as expressive powers: and the ontologically constitutive character of recognition itself ought to be linked up with expressive powers and with their imaginative roots. From this standpoint it may be claimed that:

1. There are individual powers, connected with first-nature natural endowments that are enabled and exercised through social interaction, on the basis of an educational context.
2. Unconscious recognitive interaction, in which these powers are developed and exercised, contributes to the constitution of higher-level recognitive phenomena of a self-conscious and linguistic type.
3. Recognition is an expressive labour of determination and making explicit of the implicit: in this sense it is always the expression of something that is given but in an indeterminate form and whose determination is not independent of the labour of determination; the expressive labour consists in this contribution to the ontological determination of aspects of reality rather than in a *creatio ex nihilo*. This, in

the final analysis, would be an expressivist ontology, that is an ontological model that incorporates the expressive work of determination as a feature that is both subjective and objective.

## XX Epistemological Realism

We can also venture a response, then, to the alternative between realism and constructivism. Nothing, in fact, obliges us to link the perceptive model to some form of ontological realism. The fact that we perceive certain traits of persons and of society as real, and the very fact that such traits are objectively accessible, does not in itself justify the assumption of some extended ontological realism on the basis of which all these realities would be in themselves metaphysically determined independently of social interaction. The fact that many properties are not independent of collective intentionality and of recognitive interactions—their ontological intersubjectivity—is perfectly compatible with a form of epistemological realism, on the basis of which these properties are experienced as real by individuals or, in Searle's terms, are epistemologically objective. The ontological intersubjectivity of such properties clearly does not mean that they depend for their existence on the recognitive acts of an isolated subject. But this has also to mean that, if we speak of epistemological realism in the proper sense, individuals, whose recognitive powers concur in constituting social phenomena, have to be able to perceive, individually, the so-constituted phenomena as real. Hence the intentional constitution of reality through recognitive attribution—which comes about for the most part at the level of collective and unconscious intentionality, or at the level of a social productive imagination—is compatible with the idea that we really perceive the aspects of social reality so constituted.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See P. Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2007. For the classification of recognition see also A. Margalit, "Recognition II: Recognizing the Brother and the Other," *Aristotelian Society Supplementary*, vol. 75, 2001, pp. 127–139; H. Ikäheimo, "On the Genus and Species of Recognition," *Inquiry*, vol. 45, no. 4, 2002, pp. 447–462.

<sup>2</sup> See M. Quante and D. Schweikard, "'... die Bestimmung der Individuen ist, ein allgemeines Leben zu führen.' La struttura metafisica della filosofia sociale di Hegel," in *Hegel e le scienze sociali*, eds. A. Bellan and I. Testa, *Quaderni di Teoria Sociale*, no. 5, 2005, pp. 221–250.

<sup>3</sup> See M. Nussbaum, "Aristotelian Social Democracy," in *Liberalism and the Good*, eds. B. Douglass, G. M. Mara and H. S. Richardson, New York, Routledge, 1990, pp. 203–252.

<sup>4</sup> For an analysis in this direction see Quante and Schweikard, "'... die Bestimmung der Individuen ist, ein allgemeines Leben zu führen.'"

<sup>5</sup> J. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, London, Penguin, 1995 (second edition 1996).

<sup>6</sup> See J. Habermas, "Arbeit und Interaktion. Bemerkungen zu Hegels Jenser *Philosophie des Geistes*," in *Natur und Geschichte. Karl Löwith zum 70. Geburtstag*, eds. H. Braun and M. Riedel, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1967, pp. 132–155.

<sup>7</sup> See R.D. Masters, *The Nature of Politics*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1989.

<sup>8</sup> See Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, chap. 1.

<sup>9</sup> See *ibid.*, chap. 1, p. 25: "the idea that there exists some Hegelian world spirit [...] a super mind floating over individual minds."

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, chap. 1.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, chap. 2.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, chap. 4.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, chap. 3.

<sup>14</sup> See W. Krummer, *Primate societies*, Chicago, Aldine, 1971, p. 188 (quoted also by Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, p. 40) on potato-washing in salt water as an established tradition between Japanese macaques. On tool use in animal cooperative behaviour see B. Beck, *Animal Tool Behavior*, New York, Garland, 1980. Many studies show evidence of intergenerational transmission of tool use in animals such as macaques, crows, dolphins. Recent literature seems to demonstrate that genetic and ecological explanation for this behaviour is at least in some cases inadequate and that a social explanation is further required. Thus intergenerational transmission would be also cultural transmission. See for example M. Krützen et al., "Cultural Transmission of Tool Use in Bottlenose Dolphins," *PNAS*, vol. 102, no. 25, 2005, pp. 8939–8943, on wild bottlenose dolphins who use sponges as foraging tools. There seems to be evidence that sponging has an almost exclusive social transmission within a single matriline from mother to female offspring.

<sup>15</sup> This does not mean that every attribution of a function should in itself imply collective intentionality. Of course a lonely animal individual could occasionally come to attribute new functions to physical objects and hence discover new tools. But those

tools that come into use in the animal group, and are further transmitted intergenerationally, would already imply, according to the model, some kind of collective intentionality at work.

<sup>16</sup> Apparently more economical explanations that seek to understand these phenomena in terms of physiological conditioning through pain induced by the one who is physically stronger, seem to lose sight of the cognitive aspect of status attribution—the internal link between status and acceptance—which is central to the phenomenon itself to be explained and also accompanies the behavioral reactions of fear and pain and their physiological correlates.

<sup>17</sup> See R.B. Brandom, “Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel’s Idealism. Negotiation and Administration in Hegel’s Account of the Structure and Content of Conceptual Norms,” *European Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1999, pp. 164–189.

<sup>18</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830)*, eds. W. Bonsiepen and H.-C. Lucas, in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 20, Hamburg, Felix Meiner, 1992, § 410; *Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind*, trans. W. Wallace and A.V. Miller, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 143.

<sup>19</sup> Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, chap. 6.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>21</sup> Note that if one assumes that social intergenerational transmission and cultural variation are traits of some nonhuman animal groups—as argued in the above mentioned case of tool use in bottlenose dolphins—then second nature capacities should not coincide with higher normative and linguistic capacities, since they should encompass also lower capacities—such as the ones required for tool use—that are nevertheless culturally developed.

<sup>22</sup> On the relation between the notion of second nature and the theory of social space see in particular I. Testa, “Nature and Recognition. Hegel and the Social Space,” *Critical Horizons*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*. p. 215.

<sup>24</sup> On mate-recognition between animals see for example G.W.F. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III. Naturphilosophie und Philosophie des Geistes*, ed. R.-P. Horstmann, in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 8, Hamburg, Felix Meiner, 1968, p. 73. First natural cognitive capacities are presupposed in the *Phenomenology* by the desiring consciousnesses who struggle to achieve free self-consciousness; to do so, they must be already first naturally endowed with cognitive capacities of reidentification of objects in space and time, of performative self-reference, and of reciprocal interaction, encompassing all the three axes or dimensions of recognition listed above in paragraph 2. For a more detailed reading along these lines of the pre-phenomenological writings and of the Self-Consciousness chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* see I. Testa, *La natura del riconoscimento. Riconoscimento naturale e ontologia sociale in Hegel*, Milano, Mimesis, 2010;

Testa, "Selbstbewusstsein und zweite Natur," in *Hegels Phaenomenologie des Geistes. Ein kooperatives Kommentar*, eds. K. Vieweg and W. Welsch, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 2008, pp. 286–307.

<sup>25</sup> See R.B. Brandom, *Making it Explicit*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1994.

<sup>26</sup> Note that the imposition of functions of which Searle speaks (*The Construction of Social Reality*, pp. 15–23) is a form of practical classification—in the broad sense of 'practical' used by Brandom, a sense that encompasses Searle's distinction between agentive and non-agentive functions—since the imposition of functions on objects implies that they are assigned relative to the interests of users and observers; imposition of function is thus an assignment of values: and linguistic meanings are for Searle just another type of values imposed on objects.

<sup>27</sup> On first natural and second natural recognition see Testa, "Hegel and the Social Space"; on first and second nature see also Testa, "Criticism from within Nature: The Dialectic between First and Second Nature from McDowell to Adorno," *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2007, pp. 473–497.

<sup>28</sup> In the *Encyclopedia habit (Gewohnheit)* is introduced first in the treatment of the feeling soul (§ 409)—at a level, then, that is not yet specifically human, but proper more in general to living and animal nature.

<sup>29</sup> See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830)*, § 352 Z.

<sup>30</sup> *Gefühl* is a representation that contains evaluative information, under the form of sensations of the pleasant and the unpleasant, about the conformity between what an organism is and what it ought to be according to its intrinsic norm, and which thus makes reference to a natural level of normativity: see Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830)*, § 356–359 and § 399–402.

<sup>31</sup> On the alternative between these two models see the discussion between Ikäheimo, "On the Genus and Species of Recognition"; A. Laitinen, "Interpersonal Recognition: A Response to Value or a Precondition of Personhood?," *Inquiry*, vol. 45, no. 4, 2002, pp. 463–478; and A. Honneth, "Der Grund der Anerkennung. Eine Erwiderung auf kritische Rückfragen. Nachwort," in *Kampf um Anerkennung. Mit einem neuen Nachwort*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 2004, pp. 303–341.

<sup>32</sup> See Brandom, "The Structure of Desire and Recognition."

<sup>33</sup> See Laitinen, "Interpersonal Recognition."

<sup>34</sup> See Brandom, "The Structure of Desire and Recognition."

<sup>35</sup> See A. Margalit, *The Decent Society*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1996.

## Chapter Eleven

# **Recognition, Acknowledgement, and Acceptance**

Arto Laitinen

The idea that recognition is central in the formation and constitution not only of individual persons and their various features, but also of groups and societies and their various features, and of social, institutional and normative reality as a whole, is a very ambitious one. For example Robert Brandom, Robert Pippin, and in a qualified sense Heikki Ikäheimo, seem to defend a project like that, drawing on Hegel.<sup>1</sup> The project is ambitious as it sees the whole normatively structured reality as collectively and historically bootstrapped into existence. Put shortly, the idea is that the realm of nature differs from the normatively structured social reality that Hegel calls “spirit” (both subjective and objective) in a simple way neatly to be captured with the idea of recognition. The outlook is broadly similar in spirit to the attempts of Margaret Gilbert, John Searle, Raimo Tuomela and others to articulate analytically the structures of social and institutional reality, although in a different vocabulary.<sup>2</sup> The main difference of emphasis is that the Hegelian approaches tend to stress the kind of sociality that is at stake in the constitution

of individual persons (but remain rather inarticulate about groups as loci of commitments), whereas the latter often focus on further aspects of sociality, such as group agency, or emergence of institutional reality, and typically presuppose full-fledged individual agents. The Ambitious View holds that *the same process of recognition* provides an adequate explanation of the constitution of both individual persons and social and institutional reality.

I am a friend of such an Ambitious View, but will suggest some critical qualifications to it. Two are worth stressing. First, I try to show that while mutual recognition between persons creates a layer of sociality of some kind, it is not sufficient for the emergence of group agents. Secondly, I wish to challenge in two ways the assumption that institutional reality coincides with normative reality. While institutional reality paradigmatically does come with novel desire-independent reasons, institutional reality is not created in a normative vacuum. There are (for example epistemic or moral) reasons, oughts, rights and obligations that exist in a pre-institutional and attitude-independent manner. Furthermore, creation of institutional reality always brings about *further* normative implications: acceptance-dependent institutional reality (of the kind analyzed by Searle and Tuomela) always also instantiates acceptance-*independent* evaluative and normative features, and “acknowledging” the normative relevance of such independent features is different from the constitutive “acceptance” needed for the very existence of the institutions. Thus there seems to be normative surplus both prior to institutional reality, and as a contingent accompaniment to the emergence of institutions. This is not to challenge the idea that institutional reality typically comes with an intended range of novel institutional reasons and norms, but only the idea that normativity fully coincides with such institutionality.

In this chapter I distinguish between a) recognition of persons, b) normative acknowledgement and c) institution-creating acceptance. All of these go beyond a fourth, merely descriptive sense of the word “recognition,” namely identification or re-identification of something as something, although such identification often is intertwined with the forms of recognition I am interested in here (indeed, I suggest below e.g. that an identificatory belief that someone is a person is one of the four aspects of full-fledged recognition of the other as a person).<sup>3</sup>

Given all the qualifications made here, the reader may wonder whether, with friends like this, the Ambitious View needs any enemies. But there is a decisive

difference: a less friendly approach would reject the idea wholesale, whereas the approach outlined in this essay preserves and defends the idea in a qualified and nuanced form. I naturally think this is the best service one can do to the Ambitious View.

## I. “Taking” the other as a person

I will start with the core case of interpersonal recognition, or recognizing other persons, namely that of “taking the other as a person.”<sup>4</sup> This can pretty straightforwardly be distinguished from the other types of recognition to be discussed in sections 3 and 4 below, as there the object of recognition will be something like reasons or institutions. Here both the recognizer and the recognized one are persons, who can mutually recognize each other horizontally as it were. I should note however that I do not think that “taking the other as a person” captures *all* there is to (horizontal) recognition between recognizers. One way in which this core idea of “taking the other as a person” is limited is that arguably also groups can be recognizers and recognizees in the relevant sense, and recognizing groups need not be a matter of holding them as persons. Of course, for groups to count as “recognizers” they must be group agents capable of having attitudes. I find it misleading to call group agents “persons” mainly because of the close connection between personhood and a stringent right to life. It seems to me there’s often nothing intrinsically wrong – over and above the instrumental or constitutive effects to the lives of individuals – in annihilating groups at will. Another limitation is that in addition to the universal recognition of the other as a person in general, recognition can be a matter of regarding the other as a certain kind of person (with a certain institutional status, or with some attitude-independent normative significance, or with some attitude-dependent normative significance), and also as a certain person (to whom one is attached). Elsewhere I have given more detailed accounts of these, as well as of the ontological and developmental significance of recognition for human personhood.<sup>5</sup> Here I leave these complications aside and focus on the core case of taking or treating someone as a person, in order to distinguish it from normative acknowledgement and institutive acceptance, and to analyze the kind of attitude in question.

In taking and treating, or for short, taking, the other as a person, the “taking” in question can be analysed in four steps.

First, the “taking” can be (R1) a *Belief* that the other is a person, an agent or a judge fit to be held responsible, or that he or she has such and such features and abilities. Given that the abilities central to rational and responsible agency or thinking are pretty complex, such “overall” belief is dependent on beliefs concerning particular abilities. Further, beliefs in abilities and dispositions involve generalizations based on a limited number of manifestations, so that the belief-element in taking the other as a person is quite interesting as such.<sup>6</sup> It involves taking the other as *capable* in various ways.

Arguably the concept of a person is a cluster-concept, depending on a cluster of features such as rationality, sociality, self-consciousness, and responsible and moral agency.<sup>7</sup> If the distinction between persons and other things would not matter, it would not be likely that there is a unifying concept that covers such features. But as the distinction seems to matter, taking someone as a person seems to rely on some kind of characterization which unites such features. One candidate for uniting these is Carol Rovane’s view of persons as agents capable of “agency-regarding relations,” that is, capable of *influencing* each other *without hindering* each other’s agency.<sup>8</sup> One can influence without hindering for example through rational influence, communication.<sup>9</sup> Rovane makes no suggestions concerning whether and when persons *ought* to engage in agency-regarding relations, it is just that agents capable of doing so are classified as persons.<sup>10</sup> I will rely here on Rovane’s idea, which will prove useful in cashing out the further aspects of recognizing persons.

Such a *Belief* (R1) that the other is a person and rationally influenceable is presupposed by and manifested in various forms of agency-*disregardful* action such as coercion, deceit, lying and rational manipulation. For this reason, many authors add that genuinely “recognizing” someone as a person is not merely a matter of beliefs (or indeed, that it is not a matter of beliefs at all; see below).

What can be added can be (R2) a quite uncontroversial *Moral Opinion* that it at least matters ethically whether and when we engage in agency-regarding relations, or perhaps (R3) *Willingness* (either selfish or not) to refrain from acting wrongly, and to respond adequately to the normatively relevant features of the other, including such normative powers as the authority to sanction or make commitments, and perhaps a further condition (R4) that such willingness is not selfish, but based on the right kind of *Attitudes* such as genuine respect or genuine concern or solidarity.

**Table 1:** Aspects of taking someone as a person

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R<sub>1</sub> *Belief* that the other is a person, and can engage in agency-regarding relations.

R<sub>2</sub> *Moral Opinion* that the choice whether and when to engage with persons is ethically significant.

R<sub>3</sub> *Willingness* to refrain from wronging the other person, and to respond adequately to the normatively relevant features of the other (regardless of whether the willingness is ultimately selfish or not).

R<sub>4</sub> Unselfish *Recognitive Attitudes* explaining such willingness; such as genuine respect or genuine concern or solidarity.

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Various actions, non-verbal expressions and verbal communications either *manifest* such recognition (if “recognizing” is a matter of forming or having attitudes) or *constitute* or establish such recognition (if what recognition is, is a matter of actions, expressions or relations). As such, both these options are equally plausible, but it will help in formulating some questions, if we stipulate that recognizing is a matter of having the *attitudes*, whereas actions and (verbal and nonverbal) expressions merely make such attitudes manifest. Actions are a test of whether one genuinely has the attitudes, but on the other hand, acting merely *as if* one has the attitudes is not the same as having the attitudes. Note that on this stipulated view (that recognition is a matter of attitudes), merely *recognizing* someone as a person, so understood, falls short of *engaging or interacting* with the person.<sup>11</sup> This will be relevant in what follows.

Whether we focus on full-fledged recognition (meeting R1–R4), or a less demanding version (Meeting only R1–R3), it is intuitively speaking *mutual* when

M1) each has the attitudes in question and when further,

M2) each knows or reasonably assumes that (M1)

M3) each knows or reasonably assumes that (M2) *etc.*<sup>12</sup>

The reason for having the clause “reasonably assumes” is to leave room for the idea explored below, that two people may in some sense *mutually* recognize each other, even though this mutual recognition is not even expressed, and there is no interaction. In such cases, *knowledge* might be too demanding, but mutual reasonable assumptions may nonetheless point to a significant

phenomenon, which we might lose out of sight, if we make mutuality too demanding.

The way I have analysed the attitudes into four kinds R1–R4 is not innocent, but anticipates later discussions. Carol Rovane has suggested that persons are “agents capable of engaging in agency-regarding relations” and in order to keep this ethically *uncontroversial*, she has avoided making claims that they *ought* to engage in such relations. But to keep it ethically *important*, she has made the claim that the agents find it at least an “ethically significant decision” whether and when to engage in agency-regarding relations. In all but very exceptional cases, denying this ethical significance will be *hypocritical*.<sup>13</sup>

The formulations R1 and R2 try to capture these points by Rovane and are related to the sense in which strangers, or all persons, may recognize each others by default. They may also anticipate that they get reciprocal recognition from the others, and thus be trustful and assume that the other has these attitudes. Indeed, it is reasonable to assume that persons generally have  $R_1$  and  $R_2$  (Belief and Moral Opinion), given how minimal and uncontroversial they are. The Moral Opinion is meant to be compatible with almost any substantive moral theory or view around, as the opinion is merely that how one regards other persons is *ethically significant*. (It certainly leaves room for a view that other things can be ethically significant as well).<sup>14</sup> Thus, following Rovane, uncontroversiality is the reason to have R1 & R2 separately from the richer, thicker attitudes.

Against R1 one can entertain the challenge that “taking the other as a person” is not a matter of beliefs at all, but rather a Wittgensteinian “attitude towards the soul” of some other kind.<sup>15</sup> I would agree that the attitudes of R4 type, such as respect, are indeed attitudes towards persons and are not literally beliefs.<sup>16</sup> But that does not show that there are no beliefs involved in recognizing someone as a person. It is unlikely that someone possessing the concept of a person would not have ordinary beliefs about which things are persons and which are not.

Beliefs are propositional attitudes, related to e.g. the proposition “Jones is a person.” This proposition can clearly be backed up by evidence of various kinds: unlike humans in a vegetative state, this human manifestly engages in all sorts of reasons-responsive activities, including ones which presuppose

that he conceives of himself as a self-conscious being. So there is plenty of evidence for the belief that he is a clear case of a person.

Once we distinguish the belief that someone is a person from further cognitive attitudes of R4-type, such as respect, and grant that the attitude of respect need not be a belief, there seems little reason to deny that ordinary beliefs are relevant to recognition. The cognitive attitudes seem to be conditional on the beliefs. One typically ceases to respect X as a person, if one ceases to believe that X is a person.

It is especially in the context of skeptical doubt of the existence of other minds in general, that the Wittgensteinian response has a point. The skeptical doubt suggests that perhaps all the evidence concerning all other minds is radically misleading.<sup>17</sup> It may well be that a Wittgensteinian attitude towards a soul, or attitude towards a world is the final word against skeptical doubt, but that does not mean that we do not have ordinary beliefs and ordinary evidence for someone's personhood in the non-skeptical contexts.

The *Willingness* (R3) in question is here formulated quite broadly, covering both what "overall" would be a case of wronging the other (as stressed by Scanlon), or what would be a normatively relevant response to a range of features that the other has (as stressed by J. Raz among others).

The reason to separate *Willingness* and *Genuine Cognitive Attitudes* (R3 & R4) is that one can in principle do the right acts for bad, selfish motives. R3 focuses only on willingness to act rightly, or do what one ought, or respond to a range of reasons, and ignores the motives. T. M. Scanlon's approach to mutual recognition stresses the moral rightness and wrongness for acts and makes the point that the relationship of mutual recognition is a key to the "good" kind of motivation to be moral – for the sake of the others.<sup>18</sup>

The degree of *Willingness* depends greatly on the institutions, on the attitudinal climate, on the presence of others and so on: it may be too costly in terms of social consequences to violate against others. And so, to assume by default that any stranger is in fact willing to avoid acting wrongly is quite reasonable in *some* social and attitudinal settings. This need not have much to do with any assumptions of how virtuous a character the stranger has, but just with the credibility of the institutionally and socially created guarantees and sanctioning systems.<sup>19</sup>

There may be a feeling that such sanction-based willingness is not yet “genuine recognition.” This relates to the distinction between rightness of acts and goodness of motives. When one for example saves someone from drowning, but does this for a selfish motive, the act itself was the right thing to do, but it has no “moral worth” because done for a selfish motive.<sup>20</sup> In the same way, we can say that acts have second-personal “recognitional worth” when they are done for motives, or accompanied by attitudes, which constitute “genuine recognition” of the other (R4).

There are arguably different variants of recognitive attitudes. If so, different recognitive attitudes are partly individuated by the range of reasons or concerns that they are responsive to. Such attitudes consist partly in responsiveness to reasons of some range. For example, *overall respect* partly consists in acknowledging that there is a strong and important reason not to “wrong the other.”<sup>21</sup> *Respect for autonomy* consists in acknowledging there is reason to protect and honour the other’s autonomous choices – even when they are (on one’s own view) substantively mistaken. *Basic concern* or care partly consists in giving the other’s well-being intrinsic weight in one’s practical reasoning and in caring strongly about severe obstacles to it.<sup>22</sup> *Esteem* partly consists in acknowledging the normative relevance of merits etc. Concerning all these variants it holds that it is impossible to have such recognitive attitudes and not be responsive to (what one takes to be) reasons in the range that partly distinguishes that attitude from others. (But the point in distinguishing R3 and R4 is that it is possible to be responsive to such reasons also without the attitudes—if one has other motivations that make one responsive to them). It is precisely such forms of genuine recognition that are relevant for one’s self-relations, and therefore it is not at all surprising that in theories of recognition much attention is paid to the phenomena of respect, esteem and love, and the elements of R1-R3 are not that often noted.<sup>23</sup>

## **2. Is mutual recognition between individuals necessary, sufficient, paradigmatic or desirable for group agency?**

This subsection asks how such Mutual Recognition (MR) between individuals relates to a more full-fledged group phenomenon of group agency and addresses the questions whether MR is necessary, sufficient, desirable and

paradigmatic concerning it. I defend the view that although it is desirable and paradigmatic, and necessary in all but most exotic cases, it is nonetheless not sufficient. Thus this is a friendly qualification of the Ambitious View, which holds that the same process constitutes the person and the group at one stroke.<sup>24</sup> This section suggests that although mutual recognition suffices for sociality of *some* kind, it takes more to create group agents than recognizing persons. The punch line is that mutual recognition as taking the others as persons is necessary for the individuals to be recognized accountable units of commitments and responsibilities, but as such it does not create collectivities or groups as integrated units of group commitments and responsibilities.

I will illustrate this with the help of Margaret Gilbert's (1989) plural subject account. The general points I make are not dependent on the details of her account, but will stand on any theories of group agency, which see groups as loci of commitments of their own. In what follows I make a number of observations and claims, and point out two harder problems.

### *Paradigmatic?*

One observation is that paradigm cases of group agency are among paradigm cases of mutual recognition. This can be seen by noting how concrete relationships and groups are shaped by the attitudes that constitute mutual recognition, or by thinking about the 'point' of mutual recognition. Let me quote Carol Rovane:

We generally take for granted that persons are set apart from other things by the fact that they recognize themselves as persons and, moreover, that they mutually recognize each other as persons – which is to say, they mutually recognize one another as things that recognize both their own and one another's personhood. This capacity for mutual recognition among persons is essential to a whole range of distinctively interpersonal relations. For example, such mutual recognition comes to into play whenever persons converse, argue, cooperate, compete or hold one another responsible.<sup>25</sup>

One can say that the *point* of the lives of persons is in worthwhile activities and relationships, and worthwhile group agency manifests both of these, and mutual recognition facilitates that. Mutual recognition is in a sense the core of

such groups or interpersonal relations. All aspects of recognition of persons (R1–R4) shape the concrete relations between persons. One could put this in inferentialist terms—all sorts of things follow from taking the other as a person.

When agents stand in this abstract relation of mutual recognition, this enters into their concrete epistemic relations; for when they achieve social knowledge of one another—that is, of their rational points of view and the intentional episodes that comprise them—they achieve mutual knowledge of one another as agents who have, and also apprehend that they have, a common nature as agents who are rational, reflective and social. If this were not so, then mutual knowledge among such would not afford the possibility of rational influence among them. If they are to engage in such influence, they must recognize one another as agents who have the requisite rational and reflective capacities to grasp the normative force of reasons, and they must also recognize one another as agents who have the requisite social capacities to get reasons across to one another.<sup>26</sup>

In a similar fashion, Scanlon writes (about levels R3 and R4) that although friendship goes beyond mere respect between persons, it

involves recognition of the friend as a separate person with moral standing—as someone to whom justification is owed in his or her own right, not merely in virtue of being a friend. A person who saw only friends as having this status would therefore not have friends in the sense that I am describing: their moral standing would be too dependent on the contingent fact of his affection. There would, for example, be something unnerving about a ‘friend’ who would steal a kidney for you if you needed one. ... what it implies about the ‘friend’s’ view of your right to your own body parts [is that]: he would not steal them, but that is only because he happens to like you. ... What the kidney example brings out is that friendship also requires us to recognize our friends as having moral standing as persons, independent of our friendship, which also places limits on our behaviour.<sup>27</sup>

When mutual recognition is the “living core” of groups or relationships, we have a paradigm case of actualised mutual recognition, or what Hegelians would call the structure of “being oneself in another.” That is, actual groups or relationships provide a paradigm case of mutual recognition.

*Not sufficient?*

Although paradigm cases of group agency or of acting together are no doubt among the paradigm cases of interpersonal recognition, one can note that *there are further conditions for genuine group agency than merely that the persons recognize each other*. This is so even in the case of ephemeral groups such as two people taking a walk together.

According to Margaret Gilbert's plural subject theory, such further conditions include i) the willed unity condition, ii) expression condition, and iii) common knowledge condition.

Let me quote Gilbert to make the point (i):

[T]he basic condition on social group existence involves everyone in volunteering his part in a special kind of unity: a unity of wills. Let us call this the willed unity connection.<sup>28</sup>

One might say that one who expresses quasi-readiness to do A in C in effect *volunteers his will* for a pool of wills to be set up so that in certain circumstances, that pool will be dedicated to a certain end. His understanding is that *just in case his so volunteering is matched* by that of the relevant others, etc., *the pool will be so set up*.<sup>29</sup>

When one wills a certain kind of unity, one can do so for many reasons, one can even be forced to do it (as Gilbert notes). There is however one kind of motivation, a kind of "recognitive attitude" (level R4) that is germane here: "associative willing" because of an intrinsic "associative desire." One wills a certain kind of unity, or certain kind of interaction, for no further reason than that it is desirable.

The second and third conditions come to fore in this quote:

There is what might be called [ii] the expression condition (each must have manifested his willingness for unity openly\* to the others) and [iii] the common knowledge condition (this manifestation of willingness must be common knowledge).<sup>30</sup>

In Gilbert's theory, meeting these conditions has ontological, normative and epistemic consequences: iv) a plural subject, or a group, is formed and comes to existence, v) new directed obligations (and positions of accountability) are

created, and vi) all members will recognize that such a group exists, when it does. Again, let me quote her view on these points, respectively:

[iv] According to plural subject theory, society, or the human social group proper, begins at the moment that plural subjects are formed. At that moment, a set of social or associational obligations are undertaken by the populace in question. They could not form a group, did they not consciously undertake these obligations.<sup>31</sup>

[v] It follows from the equation of social groups with plural subjects that group membership is not 'normatively neutral'. That is, one cannot see oneself as being a member of a group (or that 'we are doing such-and-such', etcetera) and regard this as implying nothing for the way the conduct should go. However, it does not follow from this that members of all groups must jointly accept some fiat of the form 'members are to do action A in circumstances C'. That is, it does not follow that every group must have a convention. Nor must it have a law, custom, or tradition.<sup>32</sup>

[vi] I note that a corollary of my account of social groups is what may called the *recognition corollary*: all of the members will recognize that the group exists, when it does. Alternatively, all will think of these people as 'us\*'.<sup>33</sup>

Naturally, if the conditions (i–iii) are not met, these consequences (iv–vi) don't follow. So, clearly, mutual recognition is not sufficient, as there can be mutual recognition without conditions i–iii.

That is, when these further conditions (i–iii) are not met, we do not have group agency, but may nonetheless have cases of MR. Perhaps A decides to opt out from the unity of wills, or perhaps A's willingness doesn't get expressed, or perhaps it doesn't get to be an object of common knowledge. If any of these is the case, a new group with A in it has failed to come to existence. Nonetheless A and the others may take each others as persons in a full sense of the term.

If this is possible, then mutual recognition and plural subjecthood are not coextensive. There are cases covered by MR and not by plural subjecthood. For example, people can deliberate and decide not to form a group. Perhaps they deliberate on whether to start a shared project, and decide not to do it. That does not mean that from then onwards they no longer regard each other as persons. They may not become each other's partners in crime, but that

does not mean they will automatically be each other's targets of crime either. Even in cases where the reason why the parties do not continue further interaction, is that they just don't get along too well, or just don't like each other, they may nonetheless have genuine respect and esteem for each other, and may genuinely wish them very good lives, they just do not want to share these aspects of their lives in a groupish manner.

And even more pointedly, one can opt out from group formation for reasons of genuine respect or genuine concern. There are what could be called "*agency-regarding omissions*" (entailed by Carol Rovane's point that the decision whether and when to engage with others is an ethically significant choice). When person A decides not to interact with B, the reason may be for example respect for B's privacy. And B may decide to do likewise. So there may be cases where it is precisely because of mutual recognition, that a group is *not* formed. A different kind of reason would be given by respect for or protection of third parties, like a decision not to join a lynch mob. These considerations strengthen the conclusion that MR is not sufficient for group-formation. (I will revisit this question below because of a theoretical complication in apparent tension with this view).

### *Desirable?*

In some other cases, genuine respect or concern may however demand that one does indeed join a group, or engage with the other in a group-forming way. An everyday example could be a case where someone addresses you, not impolitely. In most cases, it would be wrong to ignore it and go on as if it did not happen. At least in cases where the stakes are high, say, when a person is in danger, and it takes two persons to get him or her out of the danger, and the person asks you to help him in it. To give a cartoonish example, a tree has fallen on a person, and from below the trunk you hear the person's polite "excuse me! together we could lift this trunk." One no doubt owes it to the person to help, and has a so called "directed" obligation to help, over and above any directed obligations that memberships create.<sup>34</sup>

Thus genuine respect may sometimes dictate a decision not to join a group and sometimes a decision to join a group. But in most cases it is optional: one can decide either way. But even in such cases, respect rules out some *manners or ways* of engaging with others.<sup>35</sup> The same goes for other recognitive attitudes.

We can observe that the quality of the social fabric may depend on people acting out of genuine recognitive attitudes, such as solidarity and respect. So clearly the answer to the question whether full-fledged MR is desirable in relation to group-phenomena is a resounding “yes!”. Thus it seems that MR is paradigmatic, and desirable, but not sufficient for plural subjecthood, because there are further conditions. Is it necessary?

### *Necessary?*

Could there be cases of group agency without (genuine) mutual recognition? Is mutual recognition strictly necessary? We have seen that paradigm cases are no doubt characterized by attitudes from R1 to R4, at least to some degree, but could there be exceptional cases where these are not present? Arguably there could be, at least cases where Genuine Attitudes (R4) are missing, (say, in various selfish interactions). Two purely self-interested parties may cooperate, form collective commitments, and refrain from acting wrongly.

There can also be cases where Willingness (R3) is missing to some degree: think of all the cases of abuse, where the partners nonetheless keep on acting “together” in some sense, or perhaps cases of the so called Stockholm syndrome where hijacked people start to sympathize with the hi-jackers (who have shown blatant lack of willingness to refrain from wronging the victims). The abuses and hi-jackings are clear behavioural evidence for less than perfect Willingness, but in these cases there may nonetheless be genuine cases of acting together.

Arguably it is very reasonable to assume that R2 and R1 are had by any stranger anyone is likely to meet. But there may well be exceptions. Could those exceptional people take part in acting together?

Perhaps (R2) might be missing in some relations fraught by very deep stereotypical distortion, and perhaps even some aspects of (R1) could be missing from most elliptical cases of master-slave relations, and nonetheless a master and his living rational tool, slave, carrying a table together might be a case of acting together, joint action. The master may think that the slave is remarkably influenceable rationally, and coercible, but nonetheless the master does not believe that the slave is *a person*, and does not have any respect for the normative status of the slave.

Nonetheless, in acting together or forming a group the other must be regarded as someone who has a will, and whose will counts and is necessary for a commitment to be collective, shared or joint, so it is safe to say that (R1) cannot *fully* be missing if there is to be a group agency. The other must be classified in one way or another, and their capabilities must be assumed in the initiatives for joint action. In the most elliptical cases it is perhaps not necessary that the participants recognize each other as *persons*, while it is of course necessary that the participants are agents, and are recognized as agents.<sup>36</sup> But given that these will be quite extreme cases, it is more informative to say that mutual recognition *is* indeed necessary for group agency except in such extreme exceptional cases.

*Is interaction or communication necessary for mutual recognition?*

Above it was pointed out that deliberation can lead to a decision not to engage in further joint activity. Nonetheless the parties may have genuine respect for one another, and there is mutual recognition. But is it however so that to bring about a relationship of MR, there has to be some interaction, engagement?

Although MR need not lead to *further* mutual engagement, perhaps the establishment of MR *is* already a case of mutual engagement. And perhaps this means that there is a plural subject, and a full-fledged group after all in all cases of MR. So we have to reconsider whether MR is sufficient for group-formation.

It seems that the *locus classicus*, namely Hegel's *Phenomenology*, suggests that mutual engagement is at issue. Hegel writes about the process which leads to mutual recognition that "it is indivisibly the action of one as well as of the other."<sup>37</sup>

Margaret Gilbert's example of what she calls "mutual recognition" seems to be along the same lines. In what she calls the Merton Street Library-case the interaction is quite minimal:

I caught his eye (as we say); we looked at each other. I nodded and smiled briefly; he did also. We then returned to our respective concerns and had no further interactions.<sup>38</sup>

I am not sure whether it is better to say that such brief “acknowledgement of co-presence” is already a phenomenon with a plural subject, or whether it is a pre-stage, relevant in the further formation of one. Usually, when there is a group, the members know there is a group, but perhaps here one might have doubts. And usually, when there is a group, some associative obligations are created, but here it is not clear there are any, over and above the obligations the parties have to each other independently of such brief interaction. So it is not clear that there is a plural subject, because it is not clear whether members know there is one, and it is not clear whether new obligations are created. (But if such a group would then take up some goal for example, or start a conversation, then conditions of plural subjecthood would be clearly met.) Be that as it may, it certainly *is* a clear case of mutual recognition (in the sense outlined above), and of the type which is expressed in engaging with the other. Indeed, paradigmatic cases of mutual recognition are ones involving expression and engagement.

What I wish to turn to now is the possibility that there are also cases of established mutual recognition, which clearly are not cases of group agency, because there is no mutual engagement at all. There is a tension between the everyday observation that people clearly can mutually recognize each other and decide not to engage in any joint projects, and the more theoretical complication that perhaps recognition, in order to be mutual, must be expressed and perhaps such expressions are sufficient for a plural subject or group agent to be formed. These pull into different directions concerning the question whether MR is sufficient for plural subjecthood. If there are cases of mutual recognition without expressions and mutual engagement, then this theoretical complication is removed, and we can re-establish that MR, at least in some of its forms, is not sufficient for plural subjecthood, but at most creates mere “quasi-groups.”

If it turns out that such unexpressed mutual recognition can take place, then further questions can be asked: does Gilbert’s characterization of groups fit also such “quasi-groups”? For example, are there new directed obligations, and do the members know that they are members of a group? To anticipate, the answers will turn out to be that instead of knowledge there are merely reasonable (true) assumptions, and although there are *directed* obligations, they are not *associative*, but are there independently of the “quasi-group.”

It does indeed seem that the conditions of mutual recognition *can* be met in the absence of expressions. A case where two strangers pass by, and both bring to the situation a certain basic package of default assumptions about persons and humans in general and routinely “apply” them to any stranger (and revise their view only afterwards if challenged), the conditions of MR of some basic kind are satisfied. They are satisfied even *without* the kinds of other-directed expressions that take place in Gilbert’s Merton Street Library case.

A and B may be, say, strangers who perceive each others, but do not notice that both perceive each other, or perhaps they notice this but do not greet each other because they haven’t met before and the context is somewhat impersonal. Can we say that they nonetheless mutually recognize each other as persons?

Before providing the answer it might be good to see what is at stake: why does any of this matter? First, it helps to settle the question whether mutual recognition between individuals is sufficient for group-formation. Second, the reasons to apply such default assumptions are both *ethical* and *epistemic*: it might be insulting to withhold such default attitudes, or wait for evidence. It would be undignifying, disrespectful, insulting to assume that B might as well be a moral monster (not having any Willingness at all), if B has done nothing to deserve it. Lack of trust can be experienced as lack of respect in many situations. But there are variations to this of course: some situations are such that B ought not trust anyone by default, and some persons just are quite “distrusting” in general, so there’s nothing personal about not being trusted by them. The epistemic reason is simply that in many situations, the assumptions are likely to be true. There are also other points: in many places, in urban circumstances, it is impossible to “acknowledge co-presence”; it might be counter-productive to *express* that one respects the other’s privacy; it might be quite comical to have to express that I take you to be a person (R1); but what *does* need expression and reassurance are the states of Willingness and Genuine Recognitive Attitudes and assumptions concerning them. Although one may not *know* about the other’s attitudes, *true, reasonable assumptions* seem to be what we need to “be and feel at home” in the social world. By extension, analysing an encounter of strangers may be helpful further in understanding the kind of recognitive ties between people who are spatially separated and not co-present (but may affect each others’ lives through their choices).

I will stipulate that that we have a case of successful *mutual* recognition even without engagement or expressions, if

- M1) A and B have the relevant attitudes,
- M2) A and B reasonably assume that M1,
- M3) A and B reasonably assume that M2.

Let us take first a *moderate case* where the attitudes in question are the Belief, Moral Opinion and Willingness ( $R_1$ - $R_3$ ). Assumption that such attitudes are widely held is quite reasonable (at least given certain social settings which publicly promote Willingness). Belief and Moral Opinion can reasonably be taken for granted. Assumptions concerning individual strangers are not likely to be “personalized,” but depend on general default assumptions concerning anyone in general, in light of which new situations are perceived.

So, here’s the account of default generalized mutual recognition (see clauses 1–5), and personalized mutual recognition without expressions (see clauses 1–7). First, person A has a general belief, moral opinion and dispositional willingness concerning *persons in general*. That is:

1. A believes that persons have such and such capacities,
2. A has the moral opinion that it is ethically significant how to treat persons,
3. A is willing to refrain from wronging persons.

Further, A makes a general, default assumption about humans:

4. A assumes in advance that any human beings that A encounters in everyday circumstances are persons, and to whom 1–3 thus apply,
5. A assumes in advance that any human person that A encounters in everyday circumstances will have attitudes 1–4 as well.

To any particular individual B that A perceives, A invariably applies these default assumptions (even before any evidence concerning the relevant capacities of persons) until there is reason to revise them.

6. A assumes that B is among those humans who are persons, and thus has such and such capacities and assumes this is ethically significant and A is willing to refrain from wronging B,
7. A assumes that B makes similar assumptions about A and is thus willing (for selfish or non-selfish reasons) to refrain from wronging A.

There is *mutual unexpressed recognition* between A and B, if both have 6 and 7 when they perceive each other (and make, at least implicitly, the reasonable assumptions that the others do so as well). And there is *mutual "generalized recognition"* between A and any unperceived person C, if both have 1–5.

More *advanced* cases would include genuine recognitional attitudes ( $R_4$ ), but knowledge concerning such attitudes is much trickier, and far-reaching default assumptions concerning them may be less warranted. Moreover, much depends on the attitude in question: some basic respect may be very widespread, but love of singled out individuals is by definition limited.

The analysis must not lead to an overly rosy picture of human motivation: there clearly are wars and crimes, and cases of intolerance and injustice, and people are greedy, vain, bigotistic and hungry for power. No doubt, genuine recognitive attitudes are present in such cases as well, maybe as acknowledged but overridden *prima facie* considerations, or maybe in overly limited forms (although no doubt everyone respects at least someone at least a little). Such limited allegiances and sympathies make it impossible for many people (say, coloured people in the company of racists) to assume that *they* are respected by this and this person (who may well be a racist).

### *What kinds of groups emerge from mutual recognition as persons?*

The Ambitious View holds that mutual recognition of recognizers can by the same token be creative of society, social union, community or groups. For example Brandom and Habermas suggest that the same process that constitutes subjects or individuals is at the same time crucial for the formation of a community. And indeed, they are right that a one-to-one *relation* of mutual recognition is necessarily created between the mutually recognizing partners.

Nonetheless, caution is needed: how is something *more* than a one-to-one relationship created? To get to a group agent, there are further conditions (above we discussed Gilbert's analysis of them), including the idea of a group as a locus of commitments. Further, how do we get to a bigger group than a pair? By definition, for every individual there's a "community" or a set of individuals which consists of all the "contacts" or "recognizees" or "relationship-partners" of that individual, and which is constituted via the relations of MR that that individual participates in. There is a *different* "contact-group" for

each individual, at least intensionally, even in cases where exactly the same members are members in many groups of this sort. A and B can be “C’s friends” or “C’s contacts” whether or not A and B know or are willing to recognize each others. So there are as many “contact groups” as there are individuals. Brandom’s definition for a community seems to be of this sort, centering on one individual: “a normative recognitive community of those recognized by and who recognize *that normative subject*”<sup>39</sup>. It seems that *this* kind of community is not a significant thing over and above the one-to-one relationships on which it supervenes. For example, it is of great help for an author to have commentators who take a critical look at a text before it is published. It is the author’s text, and everyone’s comments are their own. The benefits to the author consist of the sum of the individual comments. There’s a qualitative leap to the idea that all of the people involved decide to make collective commitments, and for example co-author a joint paper. Unless there are such collective commitments, it is not clear whether there is a genuine community over and above the individuals (commentators) in relation to the single author in question.

We can further think of the group of all persons, the whole humanity, as a *moral community*. The kind of mutual recognition relevant to that is the kind of *generalized* recognition, which can be assumed simply on the basis of belonging to a group (human beings) that others presumably regard as persons.<sup>40</sup> One need not have any direct specific attitudes towards some particular person at all, and nonetheless one counts as recognizing him or her as a person, thanks to the open-ended commitment to recognize everyone. This kind of community is arguably constituted by generalized unexpressed default recognition. But, to repeat, these two kinds of communities (the set of someone’s contact persons, or the set of all persons) which are directly created by MR, are very different from group agents. Group agents are centers of commitments of their own, whereas these groups constituted by mutual recognition between individuals are not.

### **3. Acknowledgement and Normativity: Reasons, Values, and Principles<sup>41</sup>**

Acknowledgement of reasons, oughts, values or principles as valid differs from recognition of persons in various ways—for one thing, the former do not have a self-relation and are not able experience misrecognition,

like persons are.<sup>42</sup> In this section I will briefly discuss first responsiveness to particular situation-specific reasons and oughts, and then responsiveness to general moral values and principles.

### *Recognizing reasons and normative shapes of situations*

We live in a moral space or “practical reality,” in which we encounter concrete moral demands and reasons for action, which often move us to act. The idea is that normative demands and requirements need not be explicitly stated by other agents, but the demands and requirements are generated by situations, which have a “normative shape.”

A reason is a fact that “speaks in favour of” or “favours” doing something. The relevant favouring-relation can be seen as a three-place relation between a fact, an agent and an act. For example, that a person is drowning is a reason for me to help him. Thus “that he is drowning” is a descriptive, normatively significant fact, whereas “‘that he is drowning’ is a reason for me to help him” is a normative fact.<sup>43</sup> (Many other features, such as “it is Tuesday” are often normatively completely irrelevant in the situation). Together, various relevant features of the situation can make it the case that some action is required, or called for.

In the process of acknowledging such reasons for action, we can analytically distinguish four steps: (AR1) identification of the descriptive features, judgement that something is descriptively the case; (AR2) recognition of the normative features, judgement that thanks to the descriptive features, there are such and such reasons, and one ought overall to do such and such; (AR3) motivationally effective “endorsement” of such normative implications; and finally (AR4) formation of an intention.<sup>44</sup> The point in distinguishing these is to distinguish various ways of failing to respond to reasons adequately. The validity of the requirements seems independent of our responses in any of these ways. A failure to adequately respond to a situation can be a matter of not recognizing the descriptive features, or judging wrongly their normative relevance, or failing to be motivated accordingly (say, because of listlessness, or weakness of the will, or more general amorality).

Reasons of course do not care whether they are recognized or not, but there is a corresponding list of failures in *interpersonal* recognition. Cases of misrecognition of persons may be failures to notice the other’s descriptive features,

or to recognize the related normative claims, or, more dramatically, a failure to care about the recognized reasons. The last type of failure is definitely more insulting than the first one. The failures of the second type, concerning the normative claims, can further be of three kinds. It can be a matter of total ignorance of that type of reasons at all (one has not grasped the relevant reason or principle at all; say, one does not realize that holding in esteem is a proper response to achievements or merits). Secondly, it can be a matter of systematic bias in applying the principle (say, one does not believe that women's achievements *could* be any good and thus one is blinded by prejudice). Thirdly, it could just be a relatively isolated situation-specific blunder due to lack of attention. Of these, total ignorance may *de facto* be most harmful, but it seems that often misrecognition of the second type, of systematic bias, feels more deeply insulting. This is probably because it seems more arbitrarily discriminating, whereas the first type is just a case of ignorance. Thus, it seems that cases in which there is room for immanent criticism of the recognizer's views, feel most hurtful to the recognizee.

### *Recognizing fundamental values and principles*

Is the ultimate validity of general values and principles dependent on our acknowledging them? Or is the relevance of acknowledgement more a matter of enabling these principles to make a difference in our actions? Further, do our endorsements have a legitimate selective role (in case there are optional values and principles)?

A crucial distinction concerning both values and principles is the distinction between what is *categorically* valid or binding, independently of the contingent ends and pursuits of individuals (or communities), and what is merely *optional*.<sup>45</sup> Different theories take different principles and values to be categorical (some take none), but arguably for example principles related to the status of persons are categorical, whereas values internal to various optional practices (such as arts, sports, sciences) are optional for any individual or community. Engaging in any of them can be constitutive of human flourishing, but there is a huge variety of such optional practices which are roughly equally good.<sup>46</sup>

Various theories (e.g. certain constructivists, historicists and norm-expressivists) claim that the validity of moral principles and values is dependent on

actual acknowledgement or endorsement, by individuals or communities. On this view, there are no categorically valid reasons, independently of endorsements. This means that two descriptively exactly similar situations may differ in the reasons for action they embody, if in one situation the relevant participants have recognized some principle but not in the other.<sup>47</sup> As such, there is nothing mysterious in this. Everyone agrees that positive law functions that way: of two descriptively similar situations, in the first something is a crime and in the second it is not a crime, because the legislation has been changed in the meantime.<sup>48</sup> The question is whether we can make sense of similar changes in “moral legislation”? (or “epistemic legislation”: do we have reasons to believe what we perceive only if such a perception-friendly norm has been legislated?).

The constructivist suggestion is that moral principles are dependent on actual acknowledgement just like law is dependent on actual legislative events. To be practicable, this picture of morality must be pretty general, analogous to law: it must be general principles, or systems of principles, that are acknowledged. The event of the acknowledgment of the principle “sends normative messages” to all relevant situations (just like legislation does), governing what is right and what is wrong. For realists about principles however, the principles are valid even when not actually recognized. They seem to *merit* acknowledgement, and while it may be to some degree up to us to acknowledge them or not, the *meriting* seems to be beyond our doing. (And of course, for particularists, there are no principles in the relevant sense, all there is to morality and practical reason is related to the normative shape of situations).

Even if realists are right in this and the ultimate validity of principles does not be dependent on recognition, nevertheless the social acceptance of a principle, or value, remains relevant. Values or principles can make a difference only when recognized. In the case of optional values, endorsement and adoption of certain goals makes a difference in another sense as well: because there is no categorical demand to pursue an optional end, it is only if we adopt them as ends, that we have reasons to act in ways that subserve that end.

There seem to be three stages in such “acknowledgement” of general values and principles. The steps need not but may be divorced from one another in different cases. We can first of all distinguish (AP1) mere cognition,

or “identification” or initial awareness of the candidate value or principle in question. As a second step, (AP2) there are judgements concerning the validity of the principle or value: does it merit acceptance? (This is the crucial difference to the kind of acceptance to be discussed in the next section—the heart of acknowledgement of principles is one’s judgement whether something *merits* acceptance). A third (often simultaneous) step is (AP3) the motivationally effective endorsement of the principle or value. One endorses a value in this sense if one is moved by it, or cares about it, or gives it a role in one’s orientation in life and in one’s behavioural dispositions. This is a matter of being committed or attached to a value or a principle. Without such endorsements, the principles would not move the agents to act (although there may of course be external sanctions which may move the agents).

Again, values and principles are not entities that could care whether they are recognized or not. But interpersonal recognition is implied in acknowledgement of values and principles, in two ways. First, in debates about values, the prestige and identity of the “recognizers” who accept certain values, is at stake. But further, those “recognizees” who fall under the principles or values in questions have their status at stake.

Strictly speaking, even for those recognizees who have such a stake, success in such struggles does not quite amount to interpersonal recognition proper. What is still needed are situation-specific judgements, and one may encounter biases there, or it could be that one is being ignored totally. Thus, acknowledging relevant principles seems to be a mere precondition, albeit a hugely important one, of actual interpersonal recognition. If someone does not acknowledge the values and principles in question, it already guarantees that interpersonal recognition will be inadequate. (This is in parallel to the kind of “generalized recognition,” and its lack, discussed above).

Others’ endorsements of values and principles matter to me in terms of how well integrated, non-alienated and “at home” I feel among the fellow actors (who are after all potential threats as well as benign co-operators). It matters to me that the depth-structure of their worldview is “decentered” in such a way that the basic moral standing of all persons is taken for granted, even if it turns out that I never end up in actual interaction with them. This speaks in favour of some kind of generalism (as opposed to particularism): it is not only situation-specific judgements that matter. Public expressions of

endorsements of general rights and values may matter, independently of judgements in situations.

If I know that a person X endorses some ideology, which does not permit treating me and my likes as persons, but classifies us as subhuman, I can legitimately feel offended even though the person X has no thoughts about me in particular. He has made an implicit statement concerning me as well, and I am well justified in taking it personally. Conversely, if a person acknowledges some general norms of universal recognition, and is (to my knowledge) reasonably trustworthy, I can assume that she recognizes me accordingly. If she is generally nice to people, and takes the rights of persons for granted, it is not likely that she will do something cruel and unusual when she meets *me*, given that it is not hard to identify me physically as a human person. This kind of “inferred recognition” can go further. I can perhaps assume that indeed most people in my society are like that person. I can feel relaxed, and at home and recognized in the social world. Moreover, the fact that the state endorses laws and institutions, which *guarantee* people’s equal standing, is relevant in this respect. Such pre-emptive measures matter even in cases where one does not in fact encounter situations where the guarantees are in fact needed.

#### 4. Acceptance and Institutions

A third sense of “recognition” is relevant in relation to the core questions of social ontology: What is the fundamental nature of social reality? What kinds of things are money, property, governments, nations, marriages, cocktail parties, and football games? In pursuing these questions, John Searle, Raimo Tuomela and others have noted that *collective intentionality, acceptance or recognition* has a central role. Institutions are created by imposing status functions, and the statuses require collective acceptance of recognition. In this subsection I contrast briefly recognition in this Searlean sense with the other senses of recognition discussed in the other sections. (I cannot discuss at all the collective nature of such acceptance or recognition). One central point is that new institutions create new possibilities for recognition and misrecognition of individuals (and groups), and further, acceptance of institutions has a complex relationship to the acknowledgement of a range of desire-independent reasons that the institution purports as genuine reasons.

Searle points out that “humans have the capacity to impose functions on objects and people where the objects and the people cannot perform the functions solely in virtue of their physical structure. The performance of the function requires that there be a collectively recognized status that the person or object has, and it is only in virtue of that status that the person or object can perform the function in question.”<sup>49</sup> As examples, Searle cites a piece of private property, the president of the United States, a twenty-dollar bill, and a professor in university. In a world where such institutions exist, it is possible to do a great number of things that are impossible in a world void of institutions. Status functions carry “deontic powers”, “rights, duties, obligations, requirements, permissions, authorizations, entitlements, and so on,” and provide people with desire-independent reasons for action.<sup>50</sup> For example, possession of a twenty dollar note brings its owner the right to acquire goods for sale for that price, and a good reason not to throw that particular piece of paper in the dustbin, and an obligation for others not to take that piece of paper without permission.

Searle writes that for the status functions to “actually work” (or presumably, even for them to exist), there must be “collective acceptance or recognition of the object or person as having that status.”<sup>51</sup> Searle notes that he uses the term “recognition” to stress that *approval* of the institutional fact is not intended, mere grudging acceptance “that one is simply helpless to do anything about, or reject, the institutions in which one finds oneself” is enough. Indeed, an institutional arrangement can (unfortunately) persist even if no-one approves of it, and even if everyone thinks that it ought not exist, if for example for reasons of fear or external benefit, everyone nonetheless continues to act so as to keep it in existence. It can simply be that attempting to gather the political will to change it might be too costly for anyone, so that no-one happens to have sufficient motivation to try—and the grudging acceptance will be enough to keep the institution in existence.<sup>52</sup> Most of the time Searle seems to think that recognition of the institution is a matter of at least grudging acceptance of it as valid, but sometimes he gives the impression that merely “going along” (without any acceptance of it as valid) is enough for recognition of the relevant kind. I hope to clarify this in what follows.<sup>53</sup>

Unlike Searle, I will use the word “acceptance” for this idea, to distinguish it from the other things called “recognition”—but I agree that acceptance in this

sense need not be a case of approval.<sup>54</sup> Acceptance means roughly readiness to use the accepted proposition (say “shops are open on Sundays”) as a premise in one’s reasoning, including practical reasoning leading to formation of intentions.<sup>55</sup> In a full-fledged case of acceptance, one accepts it as a *normative* premise, whereas in less full-fledged cases, acceptance as descriptive premise only is at stake. By a “normative premise” I mean a premise of the kind “if p, you have a *reason* to A,” or “if p, you *ought* to A.” By a “descriptive premise” I mean a premise of the kind “p is the case.”

Even if one objects to the fact that shops are open on Sundays, but acts on the descriptive premise that they are, one in some sense “accepts” that shops are open on Sundays. There may be a range of externally related practical reasons for which the existence of an institution might be a descriptive premise (say, if one likes a peaceful walk on Sundays, it might be best to avoid the shopping area because the shops will be open). There is however a range of behaviours only made possible by the very constitutive rules of the institution: in this case, going shopping on Sundays. This typically involves further acknowledging a range of reasons, rights and obligations as valid *normative* premises: the right of the shopkeeper to open the doors, the obligation of the workers to show up on Sundays, and so on. One can hold that an institution ought not be in force, and nonetheless acknowledge that once in force, the claims that the institution purports to be valid, *are* indeed valid. It is part and parcel of the institution that it purports certain considerations as valid reasons—and it is an element of fully accepting the institution *as valid* (not merely observing that it is in force, exists, and is thus employable as a descriptive premise) that one acknowledges the validity of those intrinsically related reasons, and is prepared to use them as normative premises. Thus, full-fledged acceptance seems to include acknowledgement of *institutionally created* normative considerations and using them as normative premises.<sup>56</sup>

It is, however, important to distinguish this from approval, as Searle points out. A rule may be in force and valid, because generally *accepted* as being in force and valid, even though no-one acknowledges it as *meriting* acceptance—it may have evaluative features which make it a lousy rule, but for the time being changing it may be too costly for contingent reasons. The participants may even plan to change the rule whenever there’s a suitable meeting, or voting, or whatever procedure, that can bring such a change about. It may even

be common knowledge that a rule in force is not generally approved by the constituency. Approval may have an important *external* function of making the norm more stable and sustainable, but evaluative approval as such is not *constitutive* of its being in force or valid.

We may thus distinguish different elements of acceptance of institutions or rules or norms; let me run through these in the light of the observations already made. The fifth element is not a necessary feature, and the first three fall short of full-fledged acceptance.

We can start from (AI 1) the mere identification of some candidate rule, and understanding of its content inferentially, in terms of what the rule would say about hypothetical situations. It is of special relevance to understand the novel range of behaviours that the constitutive rules make possible. Such understanding is a prerequisite for the ability to follow the rule, but naturally is not yet sufficient for the acceptance of a rule. Indeed, in deliberating about which candidate rule or institution it would be best to have, some understanding of the contents of the candidate rules is required—and naturally at that stage there's no belief that the rule is in force.

A more central attitude then is (AI 2) the cognitive acceptance, belief, or "recognition" that the rule is in force (in some social and historical context) and thus that a related institution exists (in that context), and at least *purports* to give institutionally created reasons for action. This can be a matter of detached, sociological observation. The existence of the institution or rule can be used as a descriptive premise in one's theoretical and practical reasoning—one can accept it as a true description of one's social surrounds (as in the example that if one likes a peaceful walk on Sundays, it might be best to avoid the shopping area because the shops will be open). As such, this is equally a prerequisite to protests against an institution.

One may believe, and hold as a descriptive premise, e.g. that an institution of arranged marriage is in force (AI 2), and accept that one ought to marry whomever one's parents choose, thus accepting it as a normative premise (what will be called AI 4 below). Or, one may decide *not* to accept it as a normative premise, and instead decide to fight publicly against the institution. In that case as well, one will have the same belief-element and descriptive premise that an institution of arranged marriage is in force (AI 2), but one does not accept that as a normative premise (thus AI 4 does not hold).

It is thus a different type of judgement to grant or accept that some institution is in force or exists, than to acknowledge that the institution is valid, or generates *genuine* reasons. One may well be in the position of accepting cognitively, believing, that such and such is an institution in force, and yet denying that this gives one good reasons to act accordingly. One can think of some putative institutional aspect as “null,” “disqualified,” normatively “out of bounds”—like in football, any movements of the ball after the referee has stopped the play by blowing the whistle are neither here nor there, they have no institutional status. One can protest against the institution of arranged marriage as a whole by claiming that parents do *not* have a normative say on whom their children marry—their opinion is merely private opinion which does not generate binding reasons, and thus carry no institutional normative significance. (Typically, however, even imperfect institutions do have normative implications, and instead of merely disregarding them, one has weighty reasons to take the institution into account and perhaps try to change it in procedurally legitimate ways.)

A closely related attitude, which also falls short of full fledged acceptance, is (AI 3) the *willingness* to engage in the range of behaviours made possible by the constitutive rules of an institution—willingness to “go along” and act in ways which reinforce the institution. Analogously to the way in which the willingness relevant for recognition of persons may depend on “wrong kind of reasons,” one’s willing participation in the range of behaviours made possible by the institution need *not* be based on accepting the institutional reasons as genuine normative premises. Rather, upon understanding what the institutions enable and require (AI 1), and upon believing that the institution exists (AI 2), one may accept these merely as descriptive premises, and is (for whatever reasons) willing to act in ways that the institutions enable and require. There may be prudential, instrumental and other external reasons for “going along,” and continued acceptance as a descriptive premise, even when one does not acknowledge that the rule *merits* acceptance, or that the rule is valid. One may simply have other reasons to conform to the rule, even when one thinks that the putative reasons that the institution generates are void. Say, one may decide to marry the person of one’s parents’ choice because one is in love with that person and does not want to embarrass one’s parents—despite one’s strong convictions that there is reason to publicly protest against the institution and the fact that one is a more credible critic if one does not conform to it.

The central attitude is the full-blown *acceptance of the institution as valid* in the sense that the purported institutionally created reasons are indeed valid reasons and employable as normative premises (AI 4). Such full-fledged acceptance of an institution involves acknowledgement of a range of reasons (the reasons that the institution purports to be valid) as valid, analogously to the way in which full-fledged *recognition as a person* involves acknowledging a range of reasons of valid (the range is different with different recognitive attitudes, such as esteem, respect for autonomy *etc.*, as we saw above). Such acceptance AI 4 includes normative acknowledgement of the *institutionally created* reasons as valid. Other varieties of valid reasons may not need institutions in order to exist, and indeed, any institutions will have further contingent features whose normative acknowledgement isn't constitutive of the existence of the institution.

Typically, an assessment of the *procedural* legitimacy of the way the rules in question came to existence—whether they were a result of (collective) exercise of genuine normative powers—is crucial to the assessment of whether some rule is valid or not. The relevant kind of evaluation concerns the way the institution or rule came to existence—especially in cases of procedures like democracy, which have authority partly independently of the content of the resulting rules. Out of respect for one's fellow citizens as “co-authors” of the shared norms, and out of respect for the “group reasons” thus collectively accepted one must respect the results of the majority rule.<sup>57</sup> By contrast, further substantive approval is not necessary.<sup>58</sup> Even if the legislated rules are lousy, they may have authority if legislated in the right way, as long as they are not blatant violations of rights or exceed the limits of the institutional authority in other ways.<sup>59</sup> Judgements on whether the institution acts within its authority inform one's overall normative acknowledgement of the purported reasons, rights and obligations as either genuine or not, and thus one's practical acceptance of the rules as *normative* premises in one's practical reasoning, leading one disposed to act accordingly (instead of protesting against, or ignoring the rule).

From the central attitude of acceptance of an institution as valid, one can thus distinguish various further evaluative stances of approval or disapproval (AI 5) towards the institution: evaluation of the institution's or rule's good- or bad-making features, making the institution either worthwhile and useful

or its opposite. Whenever some institution exists, it will have evaluative features and normatively relevant features such as how just or beneficial to well-being or solidary or efficient it is, and these evaluative and normative features are not results of specific exercises of normative powers, but normative implications of the descriptive features of the institutions. If the features are not good enough, one may disapprove of the institution substantively. Such approval or disapproval goes beyond constitutive acceptance, although it is a case of normative acknowledgement.

The view that Searle and Tuomela put forward is in a nutshell that it is collective acceptance of the full-fledged type AI 4 that is needed for the existence of institutions; further approval (AI 5) isn't necessary, and mere acceptance as descriptive premise (AI 2) is not enough—at least for the creation of an institution. It may be sufficient for the existence of the institution, once created, that people merely “go along” and are willing perform institutional acts and reinforce the constitutive rules in question, even if they think that the institution has lost all its validity (AI 3). But in the paradigm cases, full-fledged acceptance, in a collective form, is what keeps an institution in existence.

The cognitive acceptance that some institution is in force (AI 2) is however a necessary presupposition of engaging in relevant behaviours (AI 3) and of full acceptance (AI 4) of institutionally created reasons. Typically, public and easily available evidence tells one whether an institution is in force or not, thus providing reasons for cognitive acceptance or belief. Even if one would wish or hope that some other kind of institution would be in force, it is no use pretending that it is, if it isn't. Suppose that one wishes that there be a heavy income taxation in force, to facilitate social justice. If there is no such taxation scheme, it is no use pretending there is—in this case, there is no way one can pay such taxes oneself without the institutional prerequisites, or without relevant constitutive rules. So (veridical) cognitive acceptance of something as being in force is crucial for the further step. One cannot have acceptance of an institution's validity (AI 4) without cognitive acceptance of its existence (AI 2)—without it, one is merely acting *as if* the institution is in force, which is often impossible given the role of constitutive rules. One can of course acknowledge a variety of pre-institutional reasons as valid independently of the institution, but accepting institutionally created reasons as valid entails accepting that the institution exists in the sense of being in force.

The nature of acceptance has many highly interesting aspects, and one could study in more detail for example possible tensions between acceptance of general rules and acceptance of individual cases, and how these tensions figure in struggles for recognition between persons (there may be a publicly accepted rule, which is in practice applied in a systematically biased way), or the nature of the groups or collectives that do the collective accepting, and the constitutive element of interpersonal recognition for the existence of such groups. My aim in this section has been only to point out some differences between acknowledging something as normatively valid, and accepting that some institution is in force.

All in all, in this chapter I have tried to analyse the nature of recognition, acknowledgement and acceptance, and to show (against what I called the Ambitious View) that recognition of persons is not as such sufficient for creation of group agents, and that acknowledgement of reasons differs from acceptance of institution (for example in the way that the institutional reality is sensitive to what is in fact accepted, whereas acknowledgement judges what would merit acceptance). Nonetheless, there is a healthy core to the idea that recognition of persons and acknowledgement of reasons are central in the constitution of social reality of groups and institutions: mutual recognition between persons is desirable, paradigmatic and (in all except exotic cases) necessary for group agency; and the core sense of accepting institutions as existing and valid involves acknowledging a range of institutionally created reasons as valid. Thus the Ambitious View is on the right tracks, but needs to accommodate further distinctions of the kind suggested here.<sup>60</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. R. Brandom, *Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009, and Chapter One above; R. Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, and Chapter Two above, H. Ikäheimo, "Recognizing Persons," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 2007, Vol. 14, No. 5–6 and Chapter Five above. The central qualification by Ikäheimo is the distinction between the institutional deontic statuses which are collectively administered and the interpersonal axiological significances, which are more personal and attitude-dependent. I find this distinction a step in the right direction,

but I think it still conflates many distinctions. We need to distinguish three things: first, agent-relative significances (e.g. in attachments of various sorts) and the agent-relative reasons they create; second, institutional statuses (based on acceptance) and the institutional reasons they create, and third, attitude-independently valid reasons, oughts and values (to be acknowledged). Furthermore, the “deontic” is more tightly connected to the “axiological”: the properties of “being of value” and “having reason-giving features” are intimately connected. This is lost in an assumption that the deontic features are instituted, whereas axiological features are not.

<sup>2</sup> The notion of “recognition” has not been central for them and thus they would not subscribe to what I call here the Ambitious View. See M. Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, London, Routledge, 1989; M. Gilbert, *A Theory of Political Obligation: Membership, Commitment, and the Bonds of Society*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006; J. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, New York, Free Press, 1995; J. Searle, *Making The Social World. The Structure of Human Civilization*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010; R. Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Social Practices. A Collective Acceptance View*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002; R. Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality. The Shared Point of View*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007. Gilbert uses the notion of “mutual recognition” for a specific phenomenon, discussed below, and Searle has in his recent book stressed that the word recognition is better than acceptance in that it does not connote approval; also discussed below. Philip Pettit, in *A Theory of Freedom*, Oxford, Polity Press, 2001, discusses briefly also Honnethian recognition between persons, as applied to groups.

<sup>3</sup> For an analysis of interpersonal recognition, normative acknowledgement and mere identification, see H. Ikäheimo & A. Laitinen “Analyzing Recognition: Identification, Acknowledgement and Recognitive Attitudes Towards Persons” in Bert van den Brink & David Owen (eds.) *Recognition and Power*, New York, Cambridge UP, 33–56. There we do not discuss the relationship between institution-creating acceptance and normative acknowledgement, nor the role that interpersonal recognition may have for emergence of group agents.

<sup>4</sup> Heikki Ikäheimo has called this the “genus” of recognition, or the genus of recognitive attitudes to be precise. H. Ikäheimo, “On the Genus and Species of Recognition,” *Inquiry* 45 (4), 2002, 447–462.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. A. Laitinen, “On the Scope of ‘Recognition’: The Role of Adequate Regard and Mutuality,” in eds. H-C Schmidt am Busch and C. F. Zurn *The Philosophy of Recognition: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Lanham, MD, Lexington Books, 2009, 319–342; A. Laitinen, “Interpersonal Recognition - A Response to Value or a Precondition of Personhood?,” *Inquiry*, vol. 45, no. 4, 2002, 463–478. These papers develop the ideas of the central text behind the recent interest on recognition, Axel Honneth, *A Struggle for Recognition*, Oxford, Polity Press, 1995.

<sup>6</sup> See e.g. Ricoeur's view on the kind of "attestation" involved in regarding oneself to be capable of such and such. P. Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> See A. Laitinen, "Sorting Out Aspects of Personhood: Capacities, Normativity and Recognition," *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 14 (5–6), 2007, 248–270, and A. Laitinen & H. Ikäheimo (eds.), *Dimensions of Personhood*, Exeter, Imprint Academic, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> C. Rovane, *The Bounds of Agency: An Essay in Revisionary Metaphysics*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998.

<sup>9</sup> The idea of "agency-regarding relations" captures two aspects of personhood: first, that of persons as moral "patients," as holding a moral standing so that certain ways of treating them are wrong. Second, that of persons as active responsible "agents" capable of taking and treating others in right and wrong ways. The latter covers the idea stressed by Brandom and others that persons are criticisable, responsible for their commitments, and possible authorities on some matters. It is nonetheless worth stressing that granting others *actual* co-authority on some matters (e.g. on what kinds of collective commitments to make) goes further than merely taking them to be persons. Also, mutually regarding each other as in principle *capable* of judging and evaluating critically each other's beliefs or intentions does not mean that such critical engagement is normatively appropriate (it may not be the other's "business" so to speak).

<sup>10</sup> Rovane holds that the agency in question can be realized by groups equally well as by individual humans—indeed she holds that there can be group persons. Note however that there may be important differences between the range of characteristic of human agents and the range of characteristics of group agents which make an important normative difference (e.g. the kind of vulnerability, mortality and capacity of self-conscious relation towards death and suffering that characterizes human beings, and the artificial nature of the "life" of groups make a difference in that individuals may have a right to avoid certain ways of dying and suffering, that groups do not have).

<sup>11</sup> Thus Gilbert's, Merton Street Library case, *On Social Facts*, pp. 217–218 (see also Chapter Nine above) is on this view an *expression* of recognizing.

<sup>12</sup> However, the experience of getting recognition has an inbuilt mutuality or two-sidedness: A can recognize getting recognition from B only insofar as A recognizes B as a giver of recognition. I discuss this in "On the Scope of 'Recognition'."

<sup>13</sup> Rovane, *The Bounds of Agency*, pp. 65–125.

<sup>14</sup> Rovane holds that agents who can engage in agency-regarding relations can mutually recognize each other as such, that is, "as givers and receivers of regard for agency." (*The Bounds of Agency*, p. 48). She adds that "it is an essential part of this mutual recognition among agents who can engage in agency-regarding relations that they mutually recognize one another as facing the same choice concerning whether

and when to engage in such relations—and furthermore, they must mutually recognize that it is, for them, an ethically significant choice” (*ibid.*, pp. 48–9). Rovane notes (*ibid.*, p. 124) that Gewirth and Habermas draw more substantive ethical conclusions from this, Rovane simply points out that the choice is ethically significant. I think she is right to leave room for various ways to proceed.

<sup>15</sup> L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 1953, p. 178.

<sup>16</sup> See e.g. Larry May on racist attitudes: “there is a difference between those who have mere thoughts or beliefs and those who have attitudes. Attitudes involve dispositions to behave in certain ways,” L. May, *The Socially Responsive Self*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 50.

<sup>17</sup> In *that* context the evidence for our beliefs that someone is a normally functioning person and not a human being in a vegetative state loses its force, because the point is precisely to doubt such evidence. Such skeptical doubt is similar to the scepticism concerning the outer world.

<sup>18</sup> T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, Cambridge, Mass., Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998; A. Laitinen, “Recognition, Needs and Wrongness: Two Approaches,” *European Journal of Political Theory*, 2009, pp. 13–30.

<sup>19</sup> The relevance of distinguishing clauses (R3) and (R4) will show up in the discussion of *unexpressed* recognition: it is reasonable to assume that any stranger you encounter in the normal circumstances not only has the attitudes R1 and R2, but depending on the existing practices, cultural climate, institutions, laws *etc.*, also fulfils R3, for selfish reasons if not for other. The presence of such institutions, and other people, makes (R3) often a *very* reasonable assumption concerning, say, murders, and more or less reasonable assumption concerning, say, racist slurs. So the reasonability of assuming that one is safe in those respects depends very much on broader arrangements than the attitudes of the individual in question.

<sup>20</sup> W. D. Ross, *The Right and the Good*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1930.

<sup>21</sup> Scanlon, *What We Owe*, Laitinen “Two Approaches.”

<sup>22</sup> A. Mason, *Community, Solidarity and Belonging: Levels of Community and Their Normative Significance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 27.

<sup>23</sup> Honneth, *Struggle for Recognition*.

<sup>24</sup> See e.g. Brandom, *Reason in Philosophy*, p. 70: “So the process that synthesizes an apperceiving normative subject, one who can *commit* himself in judgment and action, become responsible cognitively and practically, is a *social* process of reciprocal recognition that at the same time synthesizes a normative recognitive community of those recognized *by* and who recognize that normative subject: a community bound together by reciprocal relations of authority over and responsibility to each other.” Pippin, in *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy*, p. 125 discusses how “an ethical being (*sittliches Wesen*),

a rights-bearing, morally responsible member of modern ethical life and the modern state” is constituted in relations of recognition and adds in a note that “what Hegel calls a *sittliches Wesen* has much in common with what has come to be called (after Margaret Gilbert [in her *On Social Facts*]) a ‘plural subject.’” Charles Taylor’s interpretation of Hegel seems to be along the same lines, when he writes that for Hegel “some of our actions are those of communities” in *Human Agency and Language*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985 p. 94. See also Habermas, “Individuation through Socialization” in *Postmetaphysical Thinking. Philosophical Essays*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1992, pp 149–204. For a contrasting view, see K. Westphal, *Hegel’s Epistemology. A Philosophical Introduction to the Phenomenology of Spirit*, Cambridge, Mass., Hackett Publishing, 2003, pp. 113–114 who contrasts Hegel’s social epistemology (and the role that linguistic and cognitive communities play as the context for individual subjects) with Gilbert’s “corporate” epistemology (concerning the beliefs and commitments of groups and corporations).

<sup>25</sup> Rovane, *The Bounds of Agency*, p. 48.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>27</sup> Scanlon, *What We Owe*, p. 165. Similarly, Paul Ricoeur writes about the difference of mutual recognition from any form of fusional union, whether in love or friendship: “A just distance is maintained at the heart of mutuality, a just distance that integrates respect into intimacy.” Ricoeur, *Course*, p. 263.

<sup>28</sup> Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, p. 222.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p. 223.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p. 415.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p. 415.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 223.

<sup>34</sup> Assuming that forming a group brings obligations to existence (say, in this case relative to coordinating the efforts to move the trunk), there is an interesting structure here that one has a *pre-associative* directed obligation to take on a directed *associative* obligation. It is a bit like a case where one not only ought to do something, but also ought to promise to do it (say, you ought to promise to go and help your friend paint the roof so he can make arrangements relying on you to be there). This is complex, but not paradoxical.

<sup>35</sup> Compare with Scanlon and the kidney case mentioned above, *What We Owe*, p. 164–165.

<sup>36</sup> Larry May suggested (in conversation) that members of secret networks aiming at a conspiracy do not mutually recognize each other—they do not know who the other members are, and yet they act together. But as long as they have the correct reasonable assumption that everyone is a person, they seem to recognize each others as

persons. Gilbert's analysis may rule out the master-slave dyad from being a plural subject, at least insofar as the master does not acknowledge any directed obligations towards the slave. But it may well be that the master in fact *has* the obligations—merely refusing to acknowledge them does not make them go away.

<sup>37</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1977, §183.

<sup>38</sup> Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, pp. 217–8

<sup>39</sup> Brandom, *Reason in Philosophy*, p. 70, italics added. For brief discussion, see A. Laitinen "Review: Reason in Philosophy," in *Metapsychology Online Review*, 2010 vol. 14, no. 29.

<sup>40</sup> The ideal of mutual respect is central at one-to-one level—what one owes to the other. But at a more general level, we can grasp the idea of the whole moral community and the question of distribution of responsibilities: everyone has a special responsibility for leading their own lives. Everyone has a special responsibility not to violate deontological side-constraints. But anyone as a member of a moral community has a responsibility to criticize and try to prevent *anyone* from oppressing anyone else—a violation towards *one* is a violation towards *anyone*. There is a special dynamics between the violator and the victim *to whom* the violator owes an apology, moral repair and compensation, but it is also significant to note the dynamics between the violator and the whole moral community which ultimately has the right to punish.

<sup>41</sup> This subsection is based on A. Laitinen "Interpersonal Recognition and Responsiveness to Relevant Differences," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2006, pp. 47–70.

<sup>42</sup> Nonetheless, these two phenomena are closely intertwined. What I have elsewhere called a "response-model" of interpersonal recognition presupposes that normatively relevant features that persons have give us reasons to treat others in certain ways, and holds that adequate recognition of persons is a matter of adequate responsiveness to such evaluative features, which come in many varieties. Some such features are had by persons alone (say, capacity for democratic self-rule), some are shared with other bearers of evaluative and normative features (such as capacity to feel pain). Some are generated by group-memberships and institutional statuses (such as reasons to respect someone as having an office in an institution) some are independent (such as reasons to refrain from harming others). To get a full picture of interpersonal recognition, we must have a view of acknowledging and responding to such reason-giving features.

<sup>43</sup> D. Parfit, "Reasons and Motivation," *The Aristotelian Society Supplement* 77, 1997, 99–130.

<sup>44</sup> For closer examination of these, see Laitinen "Relevant Differences." These are in details very different from the elements involved in recognizing persons (R1–R4) discussed above, but the common feature is that the first step is a descriptive

identification of something as a person (R1), or as a state of affairs (AR1). The core of acknowledgement is the normative judgement and motivational endorsement (AR2–AR3), whereas the core of recognition is the recognitive attitude proper (R4).

<sup>45</sup> For example, the universal principles and values related to personhood, equality, well-being, justice, truth, duties of keeping promises, treatment of animals and nature may be such categorical considerations. Rival cultures are really rival when it comes to disagreements concerning such categorically valid considerations. Yet there is room for the idea that different cultures present different selections of in principle valid, but optional values and principles. In such cases, there is no real rivalry between different cultures. Thus, the distinction between categorical and optional is reflected in two kinds of differences between cultures: there are real, regrettable disagreements about categorical values, and a recommendable plurality and diversity of different lifestyles, based on different “selections” of optional values.

<sup>46</sup> The distinction between categorical and optional is slightly different from “valid independently of recognition” and “valid when recognized.” It is possible to recognize that the values embodied by opera are in principle valid, without motivationally endorsing them and pursuing them oneself. Thus, the validity of both categorical and optional principles and values could be independent of recognition. But one has to be realist to be able to hold that categorical values really are categorical independently of *any* actual endorsements—but it may well be that the endorsements need not be merely the agent’s, so that social endorsements may make it the case that something is categorical for the individual.

<sup>47</sup> If this difference in endorsements is taken to be a further descriptive feature, then supervenience is preserved.

<sup>48</sup> Thus, there is no strict supervenience on the descriptive features of a situation, and its “legal properties,” unless one counts the constitutive attitudes to the supervenience base.

<sup>49</sup> Searle, *Making the Social World*, p. 7.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 9–10.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>52</sup> Compare to the notion of “acceptance” implicit in toleration: toleration combines practical acceptance with negative evaluation.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Searle, *Making the Social World*, p. 58: “Of what does collective recognition consist? ... What it requires is that each participant accepts the existence and *validity* of money in the belief that there is mutual acceptance on the part of the others” (italics added), and p. 57: “it marks a continuum that goes all the way from enthusiastic endorsement to *just going along* with the structure” (italics added). I take it that just “going along” does not require taking as valid in the sense of accepting as a normative premise.

<sup>54</sup> Like Searle, I will alternate freely between accepting an institution or rule, accepting a person or object as a possessor of a deontic status, and accepting propositions or (institutional) facts. Ultimately, the connections between these ways of speaking should be analysed more closely.

<sup>55</sup> Raimo Tuomela has analysed “acceptance” in great detail, as covering for both doxastic and conative commitments (which both are relevant for action), and distinguishing between acceptance action and acceptance states. In his view, “Acceptances as states (*viz.*, as states normally resulting from acceptance action) are basically dispositions to act in accordance with the contents of those states, these contents serving as reasons for those actions.” Tuomela, “Collective Acceptance, Social Institutions, and Social Reality,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, vol. 62, no. 1, 2003, p. 125.

<sup>56</sup> Of course, one’s acknowledgement may be half-hearted, as analysed above in the section on acknowledgement of reasons, and one may not be moved all the way to acting accordingly—possibly because strong prudential and instrumental reasons are against doing so. But half-hearted acknowledgement does not differ *in kind* from enthusiastic one—just in degree of intensity.

<sup>57</sup> On “group reasons,” see Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality*.

<sup>58</sup> Having such normative powers may depend on institutionally generated statuses, for example the parliament may have legislative powers, which in turn depends in complex ways on the acceptance of the parliamentary system. But it may also be a case of pre-institutional “natural” normative powers such as the “natural” power to participate in collective commitments. (Note that it is in practice possible to accept a candidate rule as being in force even if the way it is arrived at is not procedurally legitimate: it may simply be a very worthwhile and useful rule and come to be generally accepted.)

<sup>59</sup> See T. Christiano, *The Constitution of Equality: Democratic Authority and its Limits*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008. Questions of civil disobedience or questions where one must follow one’s own “conscience” are related to these limits of authority.

<sup>60</sup> I would like to thank the participants of the colloquium “Social Ontology and Constitutive Attitudes” in Helsinki, 29th–30th August 2006, for valuable feedback, as well as Heikki Ikäheimo, Raimo Tuomela, Maj Tuomela, Kaarlo Miller, Raul Hakli, Mikko Salmela, Pekka Mäkelä and Matti Heinonen for chances to discuss some of these points in more detail.



## Chapter Twelve

# **Institutional Power, Collective Acceptance, and Recognition**

Titus Stahl

### **I. Introduction**

To think about the institutional reality of any given society is always also to think about the relations of power by which it is characterised. Almost all institutions involve mechanisms which bring people to both do what they would not do in the absence of the institution and to do what does not always serve their interests.<sup>1</sup>

That institutions involve power is thus not a surprising claim. Raimo Tuomela and Wolfgang Balzer describe social institutions as “a type of collective activity in which some forms of sanction or pressure are present,”<sup>2</sup> Jon Elster describes institutions as rule-enforcing mechanisms,<sup>3</sup> and John R. Searle even argues that it is the point of having institutional facts in most cases to confer power onto some entity.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, institutions involve power both in their existence and in terms of their purpose.

It is, however, equally obvious that institutions involve not just “raw” power, such as mere influence or violence, but a very specific kind of *authority*.

This can be shown using Searle’s analysis of institutional reality.<sup>5</sup> Searle takes institutional facts to be created by assigning status functions to objects, actions and persons which designate certain behaviour as permissible or obligatory. The status of a person being president or the status of paper being money are obvious examples. However, the normative properties created by these assignments can only be fully understood as being realised in particular kinds of relationships between agents. Specifically, permissions and obligations can only be socially instituted if agents are responsible to other agents for their behaviour and, consequently, if some agents are accepted as entitled to demand compliance with the institutional rules. It seems appropriate to say that these persons have a specific kind of authority. For this reason, institutions can be analysed as relations of authority between agents brought about by impositions of normative status.<sup>6</sup>

I want to take a closer look at this specific kind of institutional power or authority. For this purpose, it will be helpful to concentrate on social institutions in a narrow sense,<sup>7</sup> that is, on those institutional facts which accompany the creation of stable social status positions of individual persons, and which are inferentially connected to rights and entitlements of these persons.<sup>8</sup> The paradigmatic example of such a system of stable status positions is, of course, the modern nation state.

Thus, “institutional power” will be understood in the following analysis as the power persons acquire through their position in a stable and integrated system of social rules.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Institutional and Non-Institutional Power

Institutional power is dependent on the social context and on intersubjective relations between persons. Therefore, it is an instance of *social power*. While power in general is often defined as the *capacity to do what one wants to do*,<sup>10</sup> social power is the capacity of persons to bring about certain states of affairs by *influencing* other people’s actions in a specific way, such as by giving them

certain reasons to act—be it by coercive threats, reasoned arguments or anything in between—or by manipulating them into believing that they have such reasons.

The notion of social power, however, is still insufficiently precise to provide an appropriate description of institutional power, because it does not capture the specific kind of influence on which institutions rely. While a bank robber certainly has social power in virtue of her capacity to influence the actions of others, her power is not institutional in the sense that it calls upon to institution-dependent, ontologically subjective reasons.<sup>11</sup>

By contrast, genuine institutional power is a capacity which has two characteristics. First, as an instance of social power, it is the *capacity of a person to bring about certain states of affairs by influencing the actions of other people in terms of giving them reasons to act*. Second, this capacity is *created through a system of status functions which entitles the person to issue demands upon the actions of others*.<sup>12</sup>

But how can the entitlement of a person to issue legitimate demands upon others implied in a system of status functions or rules create *reasons* for these other persons? The fact that such a system of rules normatively obligates a person to perform an action is only a reason for this person to perform that act if she *accepts* the relevant system. The reasons institutional power creates for a person therefore stem from her acceptance of the institution, and from the resulting acceptance that the other person can *legitimately* demand certain actions from her.

Therefore, genuine institutional power is distinct from non-institutional social power in the *way* it influences the behaviour of agents.

Because institutional power rests on (collectively) accepted status functions, it works—at least in normal cases—by giving people a reason to obey the legitimate demands of those who have the relevant powers. When someone asserts her institutional status, the primary claim is not that she is *able* to get other people to do certain things, but that she has a *legitimate claim* or *standing* to demand obedience.<sup>13</sup>

Having this kind of power connected to reasons in this peculiar way is specific to institutional reality.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. Types of Power within Institutions

A plausible theory of institutional power needs not only to be able to distinguish between institutional and non-institutional social power, it also needs to accommodate the different roles of institutional power in institutions. While the power implied by the position of a person in a system of collectively accepted status functions is the most important form of power in institutions, it does not exhaust the significance of power for institutional reality. The power relations created by institutional statuses certainly account for the everyday importance of institutions, yet one should not overlook another kind of power involved in institutions: namely the power to create, sustain, change or abolish the institution and its rules. This could be called the difference between intra-institutional and constitutive power. *Intra-institutional power*, or power *within* an institution, consists of the power relations which are created and sustained by institutional rules. *Constitutive power*, by contrast, is the kind of power which sustains, creates, destroys or changes the institutional rules themselves.

This distinction between power *within* an institution and power *constitutive of* institutions implies that there must be instances of constitutive power which do not already presuppose institutions, since some constitutive power relations must already be in place for institutional relationships to emerge.<sup>15</sup>

### 4. Main Features of Institutional Power

Having noted the importance of distinguishing between institutional and social power and of accounting for the two roles of power in institutions, we can now approach the question of what the conditions are for institutional power to exist. To answer this social ontological question, it firstly has to be noted that such power is not a *property* of actions or persons, but rather a *capacity*.<sup>16</sup> As such, it does not necessarily have to be exercised: one can have institutional power without it having any effects.

Secondly, there is a strong and valid intuition that institutional power cannot be reduced to physical force. It is of course true that institutional power is often backed by physical force. However, the institutional character of such power relies on the fact that physical compulsion is only an exceptional case.

Institutional power in a strong sense is dependent on being (in some way) *accepted* by the persons who are subject to it. It is a kind of normative social power which is distinguished from other types of power insofar as, in general, its exercise must be legitimised by a system of rules or status functions that the participants accept,<sup>17</sup> which is to say, both those who are in a position to exercise the power and those who are subject to it.

We can understand this basic thesis about the *acceptance-dependency* of institutional power in different ways. Firstly, we could think that the notion of acceptance can be explained as *behavioural obedience*, such that a person A accepts the power of a person B, if A consistently behaves in the way B demands. Secondly, we could understand acceptance as realised by *beliefs* about legitimacy, such that A has power over B if B believes that A may legitimately demand that B behaves in certain ways.

But both alternatives turn out to be unsatisfactory. “Raw” obedience, in the sense of the conformity of the overt behaviour of the ruled with the demands of the rulers, is neither necessary nor sufficient for the existence of institutional power. It is not necessary because we can imagine forms of fully and widely accepted institutional power which are systematically disobeyed by a majority for a certain span of time, provided that there are still organised attempts to enforce these norms and it is still accepted that persons are, for example, punishable for not obeying the norms.<sup>18</sup> It is not sufficient, because—as H. L. A. Hart<sup>19</sup> notes in respect to legal institutions—one can do what another person demands without accepting her demands if one would have done the action anyway. Genuine acceptance of a demand requires not only that one act in conformity with the demand, but that one do so *because* it was made by a person with the relevant institutional status.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, beliefs are neither necessary nor sufficient: we can easily imagine that a person might have institutional power without anyone having explicit beliefs about it. Conversely, if a group of people believes that a person has a certain kind of institutional power but none of the members either followed her orders or assumed any accountability for failing to do so, this empty belief does not make her power real.

Therefore, I suggest a third option. In the cases where a person A fails to follow the commands of a person B, we would like A to at least accept

*accountability* for this failure to be able to speak of an institutional power relation at all.

This leads to a more plausible candidate for an answer to the question of what “acceptance” means in the context of institutional power: to take accountability, or pragmatically speaking, to accept evaluations and sanctions from others. More precisely, it is necessary and sufficient for B having institutional power over A that in all (factual and counterfactual) scenarios in which A does not comply with B’s demands, A is ready to accept accountability for failing to do so.

Thus, B has institutional power (in a narrow sense) over A if and only if A is *ready to treat* B as someone who has power in the respective way, which is to say, if A is *ready to accept accountability* for her compliance or noncompliance with B’s demands or, more generally, with the obligations entailed by B’s institutional status.

We can validate this intuition by considering whether there could be any case in which people consistently assume accountability for their compliance or non-compliance with the orders of a person and yet where this person could not be said to have any institutional power whatsoever.<sup>21</sup> Conversely, we can also consider whether there could be a case in which persons consistently do not accept accountability for failing to obey the commands of another person and yet this other person could still be said to have some institutional powers. I hold that neither case can be imagined.

The element of *accountability* is thus what separates institutional power from other types of influence. For someone to have institutional power, it is therefore not sufficient for her to be consistently obeyed or followed;<sup>22</sup> rather, obedience to her must also be supported by other agents accepting that they are accountable for their compliance or non-compliance.

The practical expression of the acceptance of accountability is the acceptance of *sanctions*.<sup>23</sup> People practically *take themselves to be accountable* for their success in obeying a specific command if they accept evaluations of their behaviour with respect to this command, and more specifically, if they accept sanctions if they fail to obey.

A sanction is not merely a reaction to the behaviour of an agent, but is a reaction which is—at least *prima facie*—apt to motivate the agent to change her

behaviour,<sup>24</sup> and which implies an evaluation of the action according to a certain standard.

In the simplest (negative) cases, sanctions are expressions of disapproval which, for example, convey this disapproval by negatively affecting the other agent in a way independent of institutional reality. But sanctions can also take the form of consequences which can only be understood in terms of normative or institutional status such as in the withdrawal of entitlements or in even the mere expression of disapproval, which Margaret Gilbert calls “punitive criticism.”<sup>25</sup> They can be, as Brandom puts it, “norms all the way down.”<sup>26</sup>

## 5. Authority and sanction

If the acceptance of sanctions lies at the core of institutional power, a preliminary analysis of the concept might look like the following:

**Institutional power (sanctioning account):** *An agent A has institutional power, that is, power stemming from her status position in an institution, over a set of persons  $B_1 \dots B_n$  if and only if (and only to the extent that) (1) the rules which constitute the institution entitle A to make demands on their behaviour and (2)  $B_1 \dots B_n$  are ready to accept (sanctioning) evaluations of their behaviour in regard to these rules.*

We might now say that a person is in a position of *authority* if this person has the status of being allowed to issue legitimate demands upon others according to the rules of an institution and thus has institutional power to the extent that the institution is accepted.

But is the person whose authority is accepted always identical to the person who can exercise the legitimate sanctions constitutive of this authority? Sometimes, an agent’s behaviour in response to a legitimate demand will legitimately be evaluated and sanctioned, if needed, by the same person who issues the demand. But in many other instances, this is not the case. Larger groups often delegate the power of evaluation to, for example, agents of a judicial system and police. In such cases, we can distinguish the power a person or organisation has to make commands from the authority which establishes this power by enforcing it through (accepted) sanctions.

This constitutive authority of sanctioning lies at the very foundation of an institutional order.

According to this analysis, the acceptance of institutional power is constituted by the acceptance of sanctions. But what behaviour or attitude constitutes a case of “acceptance of sanctions”?<sup>27</sup> While explicit beliefs do not seem necessary to accept institutional power for the aforementioned reasons, it might still be the case that a subject must have a certain *attitude* to constitute an acceptance of power.

Intuitively, the negative case is the clearest one: certain types of reactions show that a person does not accept a sanction. For example, if a person treats the sanction as an illegitimate attack on herself, if she tries to fight back, or tries to sanction the sanctioner, her reactions clearly demonstrate that the sanction is not accepted. A certain practical reactive attitude—that is, a readiness to react in the above kind of ways—is incompatible with accepting sanctions. Thus, a necessary condition for the acceptance of a sanction is at least the absence of reactive attitudes of this type.

But this condition may seem too strong, since it is plausible that a sanctioned subject may evaluate their sanction negatively and yet accept it, just as many people evaluate the fact that they have to pay taxes negatively but still accept it. Acceptance should require no more than the absence of an attitude which leads to a practical *challenge* of the sanction. According to this idea, an agent accepts the action of another agent if her reaction does not constitute a *contestation*, that is, an attempt to punish or negatively sanction the original sanctioner. An individual might still disagree with a sanction or question its legitimacy without thereby contesting the sanction. Nor will a contestation of an authority occur if a person challenges a sanction with reference to some norm that grants an exception—thus demonstrating that she still accepts the underlying system of norms.

Thus, we can understand an individual authority relation between two persons as further developing what the acceptance of sanctioning authority requires.

**Acceptance of sanctioning authority** *An agent A accepts an agent B as being entitled to sanction performances according to a specific rule R in a specific context C, if and only if there are no scenarios in which (1) a performance P of A violates R,*

(2) *P happens in context C, (3) the performance P of A is sanctioned by B referring to R, and in which (4) A is ready to contest this sanction (that is challenges B's sanction without giving any reason that A should be granted an exception).*

For institutional power, acceptance is usually thought to be a permanent disposition or habit. Thus, we might say that a continually accepted sanctioning authority creates a standard situation of acceptance:

**Standard sanctioning authority** *If A habitually accepts the sanctioning authority of B in regard to a certain rule R and context C, i. e. is ready not to contest sanctions for any failures to obey R in C in the absence of reasons for exception, we say that A grants B a standard sanctioning authority.*

It is now only a matter of putting the different building blocks together to arrive at a first model of individual acceptance of institutional authority:

**(Individual) acceptance of institutional authority** *An agent A (individually) accepts the institutional authority of an agent B if and only if A accepts B and/or other agents as having standard sanctioning authority according to a rule R which grants B a status entailing the entitlement to issue demands on A's behaviour in a specific context C.*

This account already fulfils some of the conditions we have set out with regard to a plausible concept of institutional power as it does not depend on universal obedience, it understands power as a capacity, and allows us to distinguish cases of genuine acceptance of demands from cases of contingent behavioural conformity.

Even without fully understanding the specifics of institutional authority, it is now possible to describe a preliminary typology of institutions as regards the distribution of normative authority. The relation "A has authority over B in regard to a specific norm in specific conditions" can function as both a *symmetric* and an *asymmetric* relation. A symmetric authority relation exists when, according to some status function, an agent has authority over another agent only if the former grants the latter the exact same authority, while an asymmetric authority relation exists when an agent has authority over another agent without the latter having the same kind of authority with respect to that rule and context.

At the collective level, there could be institutional settings with different kinds of authority distributions in which different persons would have

different types of authority, symmetric or asymmetric, over one another. An (hypothetical) extreme case would be the *monopolisation* of authority, an institutional setting where a group of agents or even a single agent has authority over everyone else, while everyone else has no authority at all. The other extreme would be an institutional setting where every agent has authority regarding the same rule and context over every other agent, and where there is thus one pervasive and symmetric authority distribution. We can call this latter case an *egalitarian-symmetric distribution* of this authority type.

## 6. The Constitution of Collective Acceptance by Mutual Recognition

Individual acceptance of authority, as analysed so far, is not sufficient for social or institutional power, since individual agents can independently accept sanctions from one another without thereby creating a social institution. We only call those practices institutions which are created through the *collective acceptance* of rules and status-functions.

For example, if all U.S. citizens decide individually that they will accept shells as legal tender (and consequently, that they will accept sanctions for not living up to this decision), this will not establish shells as legal tender—if alone for the reason that such a decision is *not up to* any individual. Even if it became common knowledge that all U.S. citizens had individually decided to accept shells as legal tender, we would imagine that for shells to become legal tender it would still be necessary that there be a public declaration of some sort, through which the individual intentions become a collectively shared rule.

This intuition points to the necessity of not only individual but also collective acceptance of authority for the construction of full-blown institutions, a requirement which is shared by the social ontological accounts of Searle, Tuomela and Gilbert.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to the issue of descriptive adequacy, there are two theoretical reasons to endorse the necessity of collective acceptance. Firstly, institutional rules have a binding force on the participating individuals, that is, they are at least sometimes obliged to follow these rules. As Gilbert argues,<sup>29</sup> individual commitment to a rule is insufficient to explain this obligation as a matter of principle. Secondly, a more general argument concerns whether individuals

taken as such can follow a rule in a meaningful sense at all. The rule-following arguments by Wittgenstein, Kripke and their followers suggest that there must be a collective element in any kind of rule-following, and consequently that the status functions of institutions which are constitutive of rules must have a collective character at the most fundamental level.

Whether these arguments succeed or not, it is reasonable to argue that if differences between the collective and merely individual acceptance of a norm can convincingly be established, then institutional power requires that there is a *collectively held* norm in a group that the respective sanctions should be accepted.

But what difference might there be between a group in which every individual accepts a norm privately and a group in which a norm is collectively accepted? A helpful approach to this problem is offered by Gilbert's discussion of collective belief.<sup>30</sup> On Gilbert's account, collectively believing a proposition entails collectively accepting the proposition.<sup>31</sup> This collective acceptance of a proposition is accompanied by a normative obligation to conform to the implications of this acceptance which take to hold between themselves. Therefore, collective belief entails that group members accept that they are *entitled to expect each other* to conform to the shared commitment to the belief, and that they are even entitled to *rebuke* group members who do not act in accordance with this commitment.<sup>32</sup>

I would like to propose that the same condition holds for the collective acceptance of an institutional rule (at least in basic cases). A rule is only genuinely collectively accepted as a shared rule to the extent to which the members of a group *see each other as entitled to demand compliance from each other*.<sup>33</sup>

It follows that collective acceptance is accompanied by the institution of a specific form of authority. For saying that group members legitimately expect specific behaviour from other members—and can rebuke them if they do not behave this way—is tantamount to saying that they grant each other a certain authority over each other's behaviour.

If we want to describe the pragmatic significance of collective commitment using the vocabulary already introduced, we can further extend Gilbert's account by saying that a group of persons is collectively committed to a certain rule only if every member of the group has a particular type of accepted

authority over the other members, namely the authority to demand compliance with the collective commitment.<sup>34</sup> This authority is obviously not unconditional, but rather depends on whether the other group members actually accept to be part of the collective commitment. But if this condition is fulfilled, then the collective commitment must be understood as sufficient for the relation of authority.

Collective commitment consequently does not need to be supplemented by an additional individual commitment in order to create relations of authority since—as described—authority is directly entailed by collective commitment. Consequently, if group members accept a collective commitment, they must accept the respective authority without requiring any *further* justification.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, if collective acceptance is to be realised in a social setting persons should at least accept each other (to a socially relevant degree) as being entitled to make the normative judgements which constitute their authority, for example, criticism and demands for compliance with norms. Therefore, we can describe collective acceptance using the same pragmatic vocabulary introduced earlier. Collective acceptance would then consist in a (more or less) *symmetric case of acceptance of authority in regard to a shared rule*.<sup>36</sup> At the most fundamental level this must be even of the egalitarian-symmetric type: Any agent who has a *special* authority or non-authority in regard to some subject matter cannot have this authority other than by being, in turn, collectively accepted to have this authority. And, unless we accept an infinite regress, at the bottom there must be a symmetric case where everyone accepts everyone else's authority, and through the same relation of acceptance it is collectively agreed that everyone has this specific authority.

At this point, it is necessary to remark that the above conceptual analysis does not imply that there is no coercion. As Gilbert argues, one can indeed be coerced into a collective belief without this belief losing its obligating character,<sup>37</sup> and the same is true for the collective acceptance of authority. Nevertheless, collective acceptance must also always include a certain degree of mutual authority ascription regardless of how it emerges, in order for collective acceptance to be distinguishable from pure coercion.<sup>38</sup>

Consequently, there must be both fundamental forms of institutional reality, which involve only the basic social status of mutual authority ascription, and

more complicated institutions, where new forms of social status are created through the collective acceptance of rules or procedures according to which this status is assigned to persons. Additionally, as already mentioned above, the collective acceptance of the entitlement of a specific set of persons to sanction behaviour can be constitutive of the institutional status of an entirely different set of persons.

Now, the only element which seems to resist such a pragmatic solution is the concept of a “shared rule.” Speaking of a shared rule might seem a mere way of talking. That is, while one may accept rules collectively, it could be said that the work of interpreting and applying these rules in each particular case must still be done by individuals. However, if there is no shared standard of application and interpretation, there are only individual interpretations of what the rule is. If the interpretation of a shared rule in particular cases is nothing more than an interpretation by individuals, then a collective acceptance account which rests on the notion of a shared rule would effectively amount to nothing more than an account of the individual acceptance of individual rule-interpretations. Consequently, there can only be collective acceptance of a system of status-functions in a strong sense if it is not just the abstract acceptance of norms that is subject to collective attitudes, but also their concrete application and interpretation. Consequently, to avoid collapsing into individualism, both symmetric and egalitarian relations of authority ascription must also be understood as *recursive*, for the agents in a group must not only accept each other as authorities in regard to a specific rule, but as regards the interpretation and application of this rule according to second-level rules, and so on.<sup>39</sup>

Is this requirement too demanding? It does seem counter-intuitive to ascribe an infinity of relations of mutual authority-ascription to the members of a group. However, this is unproblematic if we remember that the acceptance of authority contains a counterfactual element. To accept the authority of another individual on an infinite number of questions is tantamount to being ready to treat her reactions in a certain way *if one of these questions ever arises*. Since the question of authority only arises in the case of challenges of evaluations, there is no problem, because—given the sufficiency of non-contestation for acceptance—we can just imagine the group members to be committed to accept each other’s criticism on every level, without them relating to any level specifically. As far as questions of authority at higher levels tend to be decided

according to rules that are more widely shared, more stable and more tested, we can imagine that challenges will be progressively less likely on each level.

The central claim now is that the notion of a *recursive, symmetric mutual authority ascription* is pragmatically equivalent to Gilbert's idea of collective commitment, although it might be conceptually different.<sup>40</sup>

I want to call a constant disposition or readiness to participate in such a mutual relation of authority ascription "*recognition*." That is, two persons recognise each other in regard to a social relation if they are ready to take part in a structure of mutual, symmetric, recursive authority ascription in regard to this relation.

The term "*recognition*" is, as is well known, historically rooted in the theories of Fichte and Hegel, and it has also been taken up recently in analytic philosophy.<sup>41</sup> However, the meaning of this term in the historical context of German Idealism—which is also used by contemporary social philosophers as Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth—is distinct from the more technical sense in which it is used here.

In social philosophy, "*recognition*" identifies an attitude towards specific features of persons which confirms or even constitutes important aspects of their status as persons and their personal identity, and which thereby acquires moral significance.<sup>42</sup> However, these relations between recognition, subjectivity and identity are not central to this analysis. Rather, "*recognition*" in the sense of a mutual authority ascription focusses on the capacity of certain attitudes to constitute forms of social authority which are, in turn, narrowly defined as an acceptance of sanctioning power. Of course, this is not to say that there are no connections to the wider issues of social status in general or even to the social construction of identities. But while these connections would need to be discussed within a general social theory, the specific understanding of "*recognition*" used here is already sufficient to discuss the basic features of institutional power.

If we accept that the basic element of collective commitment is the readiness for recursive, symmetric acceptance of sanctions, or the relation of recognition which is constituted by this readiness, then understanding how a group could collectively be committed to a certain norm, and how a group could collectively accept the authority that goes along with a specific institution, is

no longer problematic. If the members of a specific group ascribe to each other mutual, recursive authority about which sanctions should be accepted by whom and in what respect, we can legitimately say that the group collectively accepts these sanctions and thereby fulfils the pragmatic conditions of accepting a specific authority. If this authority is accepted in respect to an appropriate constitutive rule of an institutional fact, the group accepts and constitutes the institutional power of the relevant agents.

Therefore, a norm is collectively accepted if the members of a group of agents recognise each other's authority in regard to this norm. And the institutional power of an agent is collectively accepted if there is a collectively accepted status rule which mandates the acceptance of the respective sanctions by this agent.

Consequently, the basic case of institutional power can be understood as follows:

**Institutional power (recognition account)** *An agent A has basic institutional power over a set of persons  $B_1..B_n$*

*if and only if*

- (a)  $B_1..B_n$  are part of a group G (which can but does not have to include A),*
- (b) the members of G display a constant readiness or disposition to grant each other the recursive and symmetric standard authority to evaluate each other's behaviour in regard to a norm or rule R,*
- (c) R prescribes  $B_1..B_n$  to respect the institutional obligations and entitlements entailed by A's institutional status,*
- (d) A's institutional status entails that A is entitled to make legitimate demands regarding the behaviour of  $B_1..B_n$ .*

Of course, in sophisticated systems of status functions not all institutional power will be basic institutional power in this sense. There will be forms of power which are derived from the basic forms, for example, if the authority of an agent A is based on the acceptance of the authority of an agent C who has legitimately conferred A's authority to her. Here, a basic norm N might prescribe the acceptance of C's status which, in turn, entails A's authority as a matter of institutional logic without there being collective acceptance of a rule directly constituting A's authority.

As noted earlier, this analysis does not claim that all institutional power is as a matter of fact of this ideal type. Persons with institutional authority often

exercise non-institutional power when they sanction people for their behaviour in a way which is not accepted by these sanctioned persons. But institutions are only able to exercise non-institutional power by relying on agents who act on behalf of the institution because these agents collectively accept the power of the institution to make them do so.

For example, if one country invades another, the members of the invader's military will typically be able to force the citizens of the other country to change their behaviour in various ways and thus exert considerable power upon them which the latter probably will not accept as legitimate. Citizens of the invaded nation will often resist commands and sanctions, such that whether the commands are successfully executed depends on raw power or violence. The same holds for the actions of the state against criminals who not only try to make exceptions from the law for themselves but who do not accept the laws as binding for them at all. But in both cases, the state relies for the exercise of non-institutional sanctions on agents in the military and the police over whom it has proper institutional power because the latter accept the power of other agents of the state to issue commands, and to sanction them in the case of disobedience.

A plausible picture of institutional authority now begins to emerge. Institutional authority is constituted through the collective acceptance of power, and this collective acceptance of power is, in turn, constituted by the mutual recursive acceptance of normative authority between the participants in an institution.

By accepting other agents as entitled to evaluate their actions, individuals thereby practically accept norms which accede a certain normative status to either the same interaction partners or other agents. The agents who are accepted as having this normative status are thereby entitled to take a range of actions, which often includes issuing legitimate commands within a specific context.

The notion power as a capacity constituted by acceptance might seem unnecessarily passive though, as it requires nothing more than the habitual absence of challenges. There is a real danger of speaking of this capacity as something merely hypothetical, as in the joke "Can you play the piano?— I don't know. I've never tried." While it is useful to start with as weak a notion of power as possible, it is important to note that this notion does not fully

capture the strong sense of power which actively structures social reality. Power as a capacity is not only a mere logical possibility but something like standing ability. A standing ability differs from a mere logical possibility in that in the former case pre-existent empirical conditions mean that the following holds: for any realistic situation in which a challenge could arise, there is a mechanism or other social preconditions such that the power of the relevant agent will be accepted. We could therefore define socially effective institutional power as the kind of institutional power that is backed by social structures, dispositions or intentional acts, such as social and psychological enforcement mechanisms on the one hand, and collective phenomena like the “group ethos”<sup>43</sup> or Gilbert’s “joint commitment” on the other hand.

A second qualification to this account must be stressed, which regards its normative significance. Specifically, even though this account refers to norms in various ways, it is important to note that it is agnostic with regard to the “objective” *legitimacy* of specific norms and forms of power. The point is not that institutional power is only legitimate if it is accepted, but that it is *constituted by this acceptance itself*. The acceptance constitutive of institutional power is not something which can be “added” to generic power after the fact, so to speak, but rather is something which essentially constitutes the character of institutional power.

Therefore, this account is not a normative account in the sense that would be concerned with “legitimate” or “objectively appropriate” norms. Rather, it only refers to norms insofar as they are objectively and empirically accepted in a specific population, regardless of whether these norms *should* be accepted on moral or political grounds.

To summarise, this account fulfils the conditions set out above: it can be used to distinguish between obedience and conformity according to the counterfactual question as to whether the agent would accept sanctions, and it does not require universal obedience. There is also a basis for a concept of a non-institutional form of authority, namely, the authority created by recognition. Finally, this specific type of authority, which is the most basic building block of all other types, provides the criterion according to which we can distinguish between constituting and constitutive power.

Given the necessary capacities and the right circumstances, everyone has the ability to create a basic type of constituting power, as everyone is able to enter

into relations of recognition with other people insofar as all parties are willing to do so. Therefore, there is constitutive power available to an agent provided that there are other agents who are willing to recognise her in relation to any specific norms. This kind of constitutive power is essentially in a tension with violence which does not require such willingness.

However, there are of course more sophisticated types of constitutive power beyond this basic capacity to be a source of normative authority. For example, there are institutions which confer authority onto specific persons not only in regard to their specific rights within the institution and the standing to sanction violations of institutional rules, but also due to it being collectively accepted that these persons might create *new* institutions for themselves and everyone else. The institution of government is, of course, the typical example for this, because governments are not only accepted in conducting their business according to the rule of law, but are also collectively accepted as entitled to create, transform and abolish other social institutions.

However, these higher-order forms of constitutive power are still dependent on the existence of institutions and thus on the basic form of constitutive power created by recognition.

## **7. Conclusion: Consequences of a Recognition Theoretic Analysis of Institutions**

If institutional power is analysed in these terms, two important conclusions can be drawn. The first is of methodological significance to the social sciences, while the second concerns normative issues.

It is easy to see the methodological significance of the recognition model. In social theory, it has been argued that power can be studied by looking at conflicts in a community and analysing who “wins” these conflicts more often than not.<sup>44</sup> That this method is insufficient should be clear from the arguments given above. As institutional power is constituted by collective attitudes towards sanctioning power and by the attribution of standard authority to such sanctions, we should not ask who is empirically successful but rather who has such authority in a group if we want to study institutional power. To do this, we must understand behaviour directed *at* sanctioning behaviour

as a *collective reaction*, as, for example, in reactions to successful and unsuccessful protests either against or in support of government intervention in society, to attitudes towards the law, and so on. Social scientists should therefore examine the discourses and interactions within groups by which they negotiate their collective stance towards the legitimacy of specific power relations.

The second, normative argument concerns three types of pathologies in instituted power which should be of special interest for social criticism. Firstly, there are forms of institutional power, such as those related to wealth, where the agents who are constrained by this power are either not aware that it is institutional power—that is, power legitimacy of which they could in principle deny—or where institutional power interlocks with other forms of power such that a one-sided negation of its legitimacy would be prohibitively costly for an individual.

Secondly, the acceptance of institutional power is often not experienced as a conscious decision by those who display this acceptance, because it is frequently masked by hidden agenda-setting or deception. People can deceive other people into believing that they are accepting a specific sort of power while they, in fact, accept something very different, especially if the power structure is so complex that a single individual can not comprehend it in its entirety.

Finally, a third form of pathology is the interference of non-institutional power with institutional power through either physical coercion or the withholding of material resources.

In respect to these pathologies, the account of institutional power developed above does not only provide neutral conceptual tools, but also an ideal type of institutional power which can serve as a means for comparison. It allows to us evaluate how non-institutional power—that is, power which is not dependent on collective acceptance—may interfere in the institutional process in three dimensions: by hiding the fact of acceptance, through deception and through direct interference.

This points to Hannah Arendt's famous distinction between violence and power.<sup>45</sup> Arendt locates this opposition not on the level of constituted power, but rather on the level of constitutive power. While both, power and violence,

are forms of a capacity to sanction people and thereby influence their behaviour, violence disregards the level of collective acceptance and thus ignores the mutual recognition of agents.

In the very concept of institutional power there is an ideal of collective acceptance which is based on collective recognition. While violence, or—to put it less dramatically than Arendt—one-sided, non-institutional social power, persists alongside institutional power created by collective acceptance in virtually every society, it is at the same time essentially in a tension with a social order based on mutual recognition.<sup>46</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> S. Lukes, *Power, A Radical View*, 2nd edition, Houndmills Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Compare R. Tuomela & W. Balzer, “Collective Acceptance and Collective Social Notions,” in *Synthese* 117, 1999, p. 176.

<sup>3</sup> Compare J. Elster, *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 147.

<sup>4</sup> J. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, London, The Penguin Press, 1995, p. 95

<sup>5</sup> Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, pp. 38ff.

<sup>6</sup> “The person who possesses money, owns property, or is married has powers, rights, and obligations that he or she would otherwise not have. [...] Institutional facts are always matters of deontic powers.” (J. Searle, *Freedom and Neurobiology: Reflections on Free Will, Language and Political Power*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2007, pp. 92f.); compare also: “all institutional structure are matter of deontic power [...] They are structures of power relationships” (J. Searle, “What is an institution?”, in *Journal of Institutional Economics*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2005, pp. 10f.)

<sup>7</sup> S. Miller, “Social Institutions,” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/social-institutions/>, 2007, helpfully distinguishes between institutions per se, social institutions and institutions, which are organisations.

<sup>8</sup> I understand institutional reality along the lines of Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, but concentrate on a narrower range of institutional phenomena, namely social institutions as organisations.

<sup>9</sup> For an argument that there are more aspects to institutional power than the Searlian notion of deontic power can capture, see F. Hindriks, “The Status Account of Corporate Agents,” in *Concepts of Sharedness*, eds. B. Schmid, K. Schulte-Ostermann and N. Psarros, Frankfurt, Ontos, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> J. Raz, *Practical Reason and Norms*, London, Hutchinson, 1975, p. 98: "Power in all its forms is related to the possibility of realizing one's wishes."

<sup>11</sup> Adopting the terminology of Raz, *ibid.*, pp. 98ff., one could say that social power typically operates only on first-order reasons while institutional power also typically involves second-order reasons, i. e. reasons to act or not act on certain first-order reasons. For an analysis of social power, see also W. Detel, *Philosophie des Sozialen*, Stuttgart, Reclam, 2007, pp. 65, 73.

<sup>12</sup> This obviously narrows the scope of an analysis of institutional power considerably and excludes different kinds of power which are often called "institutional power" in the literature, such as agenda-setting, ideology, and so on.

<sup>13</sup> There is a striking similarity of institutional power to some forms of what Stephen Darwall calls "second-personal authority" in S. Darwall, *The Second-Person Standpoint*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> This is not to suggest that the more general forms of physical or social power have no significance for the institutional realm.

<sup>15</sup> This does, however, *not* imply that this basic type of constitutive power is raw power in the sense of sheer physical force.

<sup>16</sup> Lukes, *Power*, p. 79.

<sup>17</sup> Compare J. Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1986, p. 65

<sup>18</sup> The parking rules in Frankfurt can serve as an example. They are systematically disobeyed, but enforced by sanctions and thus indisputably existent. Failing institutions still exist. Compare also N. Luhmann, *Macht*, Stuttgart, Enke, 1988, p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> H. L. A. Hart, *The Concept of Law*, 2nd edition, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 51ff.

<sup>20</sup> Compare D. Bloor, *Wittgenstein, Rules and Institutions*, London, Routledge, 1997, pp. 27ff. Bloor argues that this shows the institutional character of rule-following in general.

<sup>21</sup> This does not exclude, however, the possibility of error in the characterisation of this power. A group of isolated U.S. citizens could accept a person as U.S. President in the way described who does not fulfil the necessary preconditions for that status. But even though they would misapprehend his institutional status, he still would have some kind of institutional power (which would have to be correctly described as being something different) over them, as far as they take themselves to be accountable for conformance to his demands.

<sup>22</sup> As Searle seems to suggest in Searle, *Freedom and Neurobiology*, p. 91.

<sup>23</sup> This is related to the difference between "command" and "counsel" in Th. Hobbes, *Leviathan: With Selected Variants from the Latin Edition of 1668*, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1994, p. 166. The same distinction is explored by Morriss who takes it to be the difference between "power" and "influence." Compare P. Morriss, *Power*.

*A Philosophical Analysis*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, pp. 8f.; The idea of acceptance or acquiescence is similar to the one defended by R. Ladenson, "In Defense of a Hobbesian Conception of Law," in *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 9(2), 1980, pp. 134–159. Raz notes, however, that Ladenson's analysis is not one of legitimate power but only of de facto power. Compare Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, p. 26.

<sup>24</sup> "The avoidance of sanctions is indispensable for the function of power" (Luhmann, *Macht*, p. 23, my translation) The existence of an institutional background assumption that the sanction is sufficient for this purpose is a necessary condition for there being power, but it is not necessarily the case that this assumption always proves to be true.

<sup>25</sup> M. Gilbert, *A Theory of Political Obligation: Membership, Commitment, and the Bonds of Society*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 190.

<sup>26</sup> R. Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1994, p. 144. Because of this wide notion of sanctions, I will speak of sanctions and evaluations interchangeably.

<sup>27</sup> Compare S. Darwall, *The Second-Person Standpoint*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2006, pp. 116f, and A. Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings. A Theory of Normative Judgment*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1990, pp. 55ff.

<sup>28</sup> "the status requires collective intentionality" (Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, p. 114); "A norm-entailing sentences expresses a social institution in a primary sense in a collective G if and only if the members of G collectively accept s for the use of G, with the understanding that collective acceptance for the group entails and is entailed by the correct assertability (or truth) of s from G" (Tuomela & Balzer, "Collective Acceptance and Collective Social Notions," p. 198); The most elaborated account of Tuomela's view is to be found in R. Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 182ff.; M. Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, London, Routledge, 1989.

<sup>29</sup> Compare Gilbert, *A Theory of Political Obligation*, pp. 197ff.

<sup>30</sup> Compare M. Gilbert, "Modelling Collective Belief," in *Synthese* vol. 73, no. 1, 1986, pp. 185–204; M. Gilbert, "More on Collective Belief," in *Living Together. Rationality, Sociality and Obligation*, Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield, 1996, pp. 339–360.

<sup>31</sup> Gilbert, "Modelling Collective Belief," p. 195, although strictly speaking she distinguishes collective belief from a more technical sense of acceptance. Compare M. Gilbert, "Belief and Acceptance as Features of Groups," in *ProtoSociology* 16, 2002, pp. 35–69.

<sup>32</sup> Gilbert, "More on Collective Belief," pp. 351f.

<sup>33</sup> There must be a minimal kind of reference to the institutional norm implicated in this acceptance, because the members must conceive their mutual correction and the acceptance of sanctions as referring to this norm.

<sup>34</sup> In this spirit, Tuomela remarks about agreements that they give “a reason for each participant to normatively expect that the other participants will indeed participate” (Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality*, p. 88), and, consequently a reason to normatively demand cooperation; the same holds for his notion of social commitment in R. Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Social Practices: A Collective Acceptance View*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 143.

<sup>35</sup> This also seems to be a consequence of the analysis of a “proper social ought-to-do norm” in Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality*, p. 214.

<sup>36</sup> Whenever there are members in social groups which are not given any authority in regard to the social norms (e. g. children) this does directly entail that they are not full members of the normative group and that the authority which other members exercise towards them is not fully institutional but partly mere social power (based on psychological, emotional or physical advantages).

<sup>37</sup> Gilbert, “More on Collective Belief,” pp. 351ff.

<sup>38</sup> Many institutions can be shown not to be based on mutual authority ascription alone, but on a mixture of collective acceptance, individual-rational calculation and coercive social pressure. To the degree in which this is the case, they deviate from pure institutional regulation towards individual adaptation and coercion and are consequently not examples for pure institutional power but for social power in the wider sense.

<sup>39</sup> At this point I can only point to similar models of rule-following as proposed by Brandom and Haugeland in J. Haugeland, “The Intentionality All-Stars,” in *Philosophical Perspectives* 4, 1990, pp. 383–427, and Brandom, *Making It Explicit*.

<sup>40</sup> It avoids, however, the objections which have been raised against Gilbert’s account of collective beliefs, compare Gilbert, “Belief and Acceptance as Features of Groups.” Additional support for the idea of understanding Gilbert’s account in terms of the mutual, recursive ascription of authority can be found in her account of Hart’s concept of a social rule in her M. Gilbert, “Social Rules. Some Problems for Hart’s Account and an Alternative Proposal” in *Law and Philosophy* 18, 1990, pp. 141–171 where she (a) argues that one of the features of Hart’s concept of social rules is that they give “group members a title to exert punitive pressure” (*ibid.*, p. 151) and (b) argues that if her account of collective commitment to a norm is correct, “all of Hart’s conditions will be satisfied” (*ibid.*, p. 165), allowing the conclusion that the entitlement to exert punitive pressure (authority) is a feature of her account of collective commitment, too.

<sup>41</sup> For example, R. Brandom, “The Structure of Desire and Recognition,” in *Philosophy and Social Criticism* vol. 33, no. 1, 2007, pp. 127–150. (Reprinted above as Chapter Two).

<sup>42</sup> See H. Ikäheimo, “On the Genus and Species of Recognition,” in *Inquiry* vol. 45, no. 4, 2002, pp. 447–462.

<sup>43</sup> Compare Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality*, p. 16.

<sup>44</sup> As the classic account of Dahl suggests. Compare R. Dahl, "The Concept of Power," in *Behavioral Science* vol. 2, no. 3, 1957, pp. 201–215.

<sup>45</sup> H. Arendt, *On Violence*, San Diego, Harvest, 1970.

<sup>46</sup> An extended version of this paper was presented at the conference "Collective Intentionality VI: Social Change" in Berkeley, California. I would like to thank Martin Saar, Heikki Ikäheimo and Mauro Basaure for comments on earlier versions; Raimo Tuomela and Juliette Gloor for two useful objections; and Arto Laitinen for extensive comments on the final manuscript. Part of the work on this paper was supported by a Macquarie Research Excellence Scholarship.

## Chapter Thirteen

# **The Problem of Collective Identity: The Instituting We and the Instituted We**

Vincent Descombes

The paper has three parts. First, from Hegel's discussion of the question "Who is to frame a constitution?" a distinction is introduced between two concepts of a social context for action, one atomistic and the other holistic or moral (*geistig*).

In the second part, the Hegelian notion of a "spirit of the nation" is explained by reference to Montesquieu, who introduced a social concept of institution—as opposed to a merely political one—when he pointed out that legislators could establish laws, but that they could not establish manners and customs.

In the third part, the question is raised whether a group of individuals could establish an institution by an act of collective commitment. It is argued that the exercise of instituting powers requires that an institutional context is already given.

## I. Social Forms of Life

### 1. “Who is to frame the constitution?”

Let’s start with comments made by Hegel on a classical topic of political philosophy. In a remark added to §273 of his *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel considers a question which has generated a lot of discussions among political theorists: “Who is to frame the constitution?”

As is well known, Hegel does not give any answer to that question, he just dismisses it as meaningless. His argument is couched in the form of a dilemma. Indeed, one can think of two possible situations in which such a question would seem to arise, depending on who is supposed to be given the constitution. In both cases, it will be shown that the question does not arise.

In the *first* situation, it would be a matter of framing a new constitution for a nation already existing in the form of a constitutional State. But, in that case, the answer to the question is already given in its present constitution. In order to get the answer, we just need to look at the section dealing with the constitutional means to modify or amend the constitution.

In the *second* situation, the task would be to give a constitution to people who, up to this day, did not have yet any kind of political organisation. These people are not yet members of a political body. Could they become citizens by receiving a constitution? Hegel thinks the question does not make sense. He thinks that you can’t give a constitution to a bunch of people, because these people are just an “atomistic heap of individuals” (*ein bloßer atomistischer Haufen von Individuen*), which means they don’t exist as a group.

So Hegel invites us to ask about the social life of these individuals who are to be given a constitution. What kind of social group is here the intended beneficiary of the gift? And then the question arises whether the people to be given a constitution do already have a collective identity or not. If they don’t, they are what the Scholastics would have called a *multitudo*, a mere multiplicity, lacking any sort of moral unity. (I am taking “moral” in the sense of *geistig*, as in “moral sciences.”<sup>1</sup>) But we suppose here that the multiplicity we are considering is deprived of any sort of unity: it cannot express itself, it cannot ask to be given a constitution and it cannot acknowledge that it has been given one. Hence there is no way one could frame a constitution for these individuals.

In other words, a people in the sense of a nation is already a *constituted* entity, even if it is not yet a *constitutional* state in the modern sense of a nation possessing a written constitution. Members of a nation already have their own *politeia* insofar as they form a political community endowed with the means to express a common or general will. And this is why the question “Who is to frame the constitution?” is meaningless. Constitutions cannot be given from outside, they can only be amended or developed from inside the social life of a group. Hegel concludes a little further at §274: “every nation has the constitution appropriate to it.”

Hegel’s point about the giving of a constitution was of course loaded with many implications within the political context of his time. As a matter of fact, we know from the *Zusatz* to §274 that he was thinking in particular of Napoleon trying to impose a “rational” constitution on the people of Spain. Now, behind the political point, there is also an insight in the ontology of social forms of life, as can be inferred from his description of people deprived of a any kind of political unity as forming an “atomistic heap of individuals.” Hegel’s reasoning is based here on an important insight in social philosophy. I would put it like this: our use of the adjective “social” is often confusing because there is not just one notion of sociality—meaning just one notion of what it takes for an agent to act in a *social* context. In Hegel’s terms, one should distinguish between an *atomistic* conception of sociality and a *geistig* one, or, as I will say, a *moral* one.

According to one view predominant in modern philosophy, all it takes for a context to be social is that at least two individuals be present and somehow interact. Let’s call this notion of sociality the *Hobbesian* or *Weberian* form of sociality. I am thinking here of Max Weber’s example of two cyclists on a narrow track. They are heading for collision unless at least one of them gets out of the way of the other. If they collide by pure accident, we may consider it a natural event. If they avoid the collision by their cooperation, it is a *social* event, since the behavior of each of them is to be understood as guided by a thought about the behavior to be expected from the other. On that view, one could say, an individual is acting or behaving in a social context as soon as he is aware of the presence of other individuals. Sociality means basically that the agent knows he is not alone. Social life begins with the intrusion of a second individual or, as a phenomenologist would say, with the *Alter Ego*. Robinson Crusoe meets Friday: this is the paradigm of an emergent sociality.

What is striking about sociality conceived in the Weberian fashion as a relation of dependency between individuals resulting from their continuous interaction is that it does not require that societies as such exist. Individuals can have a social life without belonging to groups, let alone being aware that they share a collective identity with other people. According to Hegel, that is indeed the reason why they cannot give to their interaction the form of a political organisation. Let's now turn to the *Hegelian* form of sociality. Hegel holds the view that plurality of individual agents *plus* interaction between them are not enough to yield the social life of a people (in the sense of a *Volk*). Something is still lacking, namely a moral unity. Political theorists who reflect on the task of *making* a constitution are not aware of that lack because they have, according to Hegel, an "abstract" way of thinking. What does that charge of abstract thinking amount to in our context?

Hegel insists on the fact that a constitution is not something to be made or manufactured. It should not be thought of as a construct or a product designed by somebody. Bringing together the two propositions 1° that a constitution cannot be given and 2° that it is not something made, one could explain the mistake made by *a priori* donators of constitution by pointing out that they believed they could identify the people to be given a constitution *apart* and *independently* of the constitution to be given. It would be so if the constitution were a mere *device* to be used by people in order to regulate their interactions. In that case, the relation between the group of people and its constitution would be *instrumental*. Hegel's position is that the relation between the group and its political constitution is *expressive*: the constitution is not an instrument used by the people for political purposes, it is the very expression of the people, of what they think of themselves, of their self-consciousness.

(In speaking of an expressive relation between the group and its constitution, I am drawing of course on Charles Taylor's presentation of Hegel as a spokesman for expressivism. Among the tenets of expressivism, I need only to mention what Taylor has called the "principle of embodiment." According to the principle of embodiment, mental life is not something to be perceived by introspecting internal data, it is something we become aware of when we try to understand the way we express ourselves in various mediums. And it is very much to the point to observe here with Taylor that this activity of articulating our meanings "takes place, not only in concepts and symbols, but also in common institutions and practices."<sup>2</sup>)

No collective identity for a group without a common will. No common will without the expressive resources to manifest such a will. Therefore it is impossible to say to whom a constitution is to be given without referring to a group already in possession of the kind of constitution which is appropriate to it.

But at this point, we need to answer the charge that Hegel has only exchanged one mystery for another one. Hegel made fun at §273 of the idea of *making* a constitution for a bunch of individuals. But his argument seems to prove too much, since now it becomes impossible to understand how constitutions come into existence.

## 2. Hegel's Paradox of the Transcendent Rule

Hegel writes in the same §273:

It is absolutely essential that the constitution should not be regarded as something made (*als ein Gemachtes*), even though it has come into being in time. It must be treated rather as something simply existent in and by itself, as divine therefore, and constant (*als das Göttliche und Beharrende*), and so as exalted above the sphere of things that are made (*über der Sphäre dessen, was gemacht wird*).<sup>3</sup>

Is Hegel asking us to apply a double truth doctrine? On the one hand, we *know* that the constitution has been brought into existence by human beings. Historians can even tell us about the laborious preparatory works the constitution went through and the conflicts it gave rise to during the time of its gestation. On the other hand, we should not think of it as something we made, it would be the mark of a lack of respect. Or so Hegel seems to be saying when he calls the constitution “divine.” How are we supposed to treat the constitution as something transcendent (existent in and for itself, beyond time) while we know it has been made? How can the constitution be already there before having been brought into existence? This seems to require on our part a consent to a kind of self-inflicted delusion.

Now one could say that we should not be surprised to find intimations at mystification in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. Is not the book well known for having given a mystified account of the State in its relation to society, as was argued by the young Marx?

Well, is Hegel telling us to forget the fact that constitutions are historical entities, that they have a date and a place of birth? Obviously not. His objection to the *a priori* framing of constitutions is precisely that nations have a history. So what is at stake here is not any desire to play down the historical dimension of political institutions. Then what is at stake? It is, I am going to argue, the kind of sociality that is needed in order to put any kind of explicit rule into effect.

I don't want to deny that we have the *appearance* of a paradox. Indeed Hegel himself does not seem to be doing anything to avoid looking provocative in his speculative style. Nevertheless, I think the idea that a constitution comes into existence in time through human activities *without having been made* is both profound and illuminating. In the same line of thought, one is reminded of what Wittgenstein has written about the difficult task of giving a philosophical account of rules, how they exist and how they have a place in our lives:

A rule *qua* rule is detached, it stands as it were alone in its glory; although what gives it importance is the facts of daily experience.

What I have to do is something like describing the office of a king;—in doing which I must never fall into the error of explaining the kingly dignity (*Würde*) by the king's usefulness, but I must leave neither his usefulness nor his dignity out of account.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, I am suggesting we could read Hegel's argument about the making of a constitution as bearing on any kind of social rule, not just on constitutional rule. A social context is needed for people to have common rules, and a mere plurality of agents would not provide such a context.

### 3. *Hegel's way out of the Paradox*

Hegel thinks he can overcome the contradiction of an entity like the constitution having both an immanent and a transcendent status by bringing in the concept of a *Volksgeist*: there is no *nation* without a *spirit of the nation*, no *Volk* without a *Volksgeist*.

At §274, Hegel explains why "every nation has the constitution appropriate to it." He writes it is so because the state is "the mind or spirit of the nation" (*der Staat als Geist eines Volkes*). As such it has a dual ontology. First, it exists

as the law governing the political relationship between the parts of the state. Second, the state is also “the manners or customs and the consciousness” of the individuals belonging to it (*die Sitte und das Bewußtsein seiner Individuen*).

What are we to make of that explanation? I would like to argue, following a line suggested by the anthropologist Louis Dumont<sup>5</sup>, that Hegel is using the vocabulary of political philosophy to describe both the political institutions of a nation and the social preconditions for these particular institutions. The words “state” and “constitution” have a reasonably well defined use in political thinking. When they are so used, they have sharp criteria of application. For example, a constitution will be conceived as a written document stating the rules of a form of government. Either there is such a document organising the political relationships within the state, or there is not. Thus being a constitutional state is a matter of *all-or-nothing*.

Now Hegel is using the same words “state” and “constitution” in a broader sense. He maintains that any group with a genuine collective identity will have some degree of self-consciousness, since the unity of a group is a *moral* unity. Among human groups, constitutional states have the highest level of self-consciousness, since they are able to express it in the form of political statements. But what is expressed in the written constitution is precisely the “spirit of the nation,” something which exists also in “the manners or customs and the consciousness” of the individuals. The way a group expresses its general or common will might not be “constitutional” in the restricted sense of being in conformity with a written document called “the Constitution.” Nevertheless, such a group is able to make clear to other groups what it accepts or what it refuses, which implies it has the expressive resources to manifest a kind of sovereignty. Therefore, being a state and having a constitution become a matter of *more or less*. There will be degrees of constitutionality, as there are degrees of self-consciousness. So the people of Spain are not a constitutional State (in the sense of having a written Constitution), but they are not a bunch of individuals either, since they have the means to express a common will against the French invader and Napoléon’s will to bring them rationality from above. In this respect, they have a political unity, which is a matter of having common fundamental “laws” implicit in their common *mores*.

#### 4. *The Volksgeist*

The characterisation of the state as being a *Volksgeist* will not explain anything if one takes the word "*Volksgeist*" to name an entity endowed with active powers, precisely those powers individuals are lacking. On such an interpretation, the *Volksgeist* would enter on the stage as the real maker of the constitution. Thus, when Hegel writes that the constitution is not something made, he would just mean: not made by people like us. In fact, the constitution would have a maker, although a superior one, both existing within our history (therefore immanent) and using individual agents to achieve its goals (therefore transcendent). But such a view of the *Volksgeist* as a superagent does not square with the explanation Hegel gives at §274: the state, as the spirit of a nation, is both the law and the customs. Neither the law nor the customs can be turned into an active agent.

At this point, it might be helpful to turn to another thinker, Montesquieu, who is of course one of the sources of the very notion of *Volksgeist*. Montesquieu's work, wrote Hegel, is exemplary as an application of the general principle: the part should be considered in its relationship to the whole<sup>6</sup>. But the relation between a state and its political constitution is precisely a whole/part relation: a global society finds its expression and its self-consciousness (or collective identity) in its laws or political institutions. And this is why it is in fact impossible to identify the group independently of its institutions, or the political institutions of a nation independently of the totality of its customs and established ways of acting.

## II. The Concept of Institution

Book XIX of *The Spirit of Laws* is about the general spirit of a nation. The complete title goes like this: "Of laws in relation to the principles which form the general spirit, the morals, and customs, of a nation."<sup>7</sup>

What is the reason for bringing together these various items: laws, morals, customs? Montesquieu has given an illuminating answer to that question in his *Defence of the Spirit of Laws*. He wrote that *Defence* in order to defend himself against the accusation of being a dangerous writer because of his opinions about religious matters. Montesquieu made the point that he was not writing as a theologian. Rather, he was writing as a political writer.

Nevertheless, he had to include in his object of study religious rituals and beliefs precisely because he was considering nations in the totality of their established ways of acting and thinking. We might say today that he had adopted the point of view of a cultural anthropologist. This is how he describes the dimensions of his object of study:

[...] the objects of this work are the Laws, the various customs (*coutumes*), and manners (*usages*), of all the nations on earth. It may be said, that the subject is of prodigious extent, as it comprehends all the institutions received among mankind. (*Defence of the Spirit of Laws*)

And this is why he had to give an account for *rituals*, since religions are among the various institutions forming the “general spirit of a nation” (EL, XIX.4). This is particularly clear in his treatment of the Chinese institutions. In Book XIX, chapter 19, Montesquieu explains that the Chinese rituals, laws, morals (*mœurs*) and manners form a unity because they have the same finality. The point of Chinese laws, he says, is to keep the Empire peaceful and orderly. The Chinese way to achieve that goal is by inculcating respect for the older parents. So, writes Montesquieu, the Chinese legislators “established an infinite number of rites and ceremonies to do them honor when living, and after their death.” Actually, the respect for the parents after their death is the basis for all other kinds of respect: for the living parents, for the older, for the authorities, for the Emperor. Montesquieu points out that all these ceremonies and rituals are just but *one code*.

The ceremonies at the death of a father were more nearly related to religion; those for a living parent had a greater relation to the laws, morals (*mœurs*) and manners (*manières*): however, these were only parts of the same code (...) (EL, XIX.19)

I have quoted these passages about China in order to make a point about Montesquieu as a philosopher. He presents himself as a “political writer,” in other words as a political philosopher. Indeed, the political point of view he has adopted is manifest in the very title of his masterwork. A political philosopher deals with human affairs from the perspective of a *legislator*. But Montesquieu, like Hegel after him, is aware that legislating requires a social context in the sense of a *moral* or *geistig* context. And here the conceptual limitation of a purely political perspective becomes manifest. From the point of view of the philosopher as legislator, all varieties of social normativity are

to be subsumed under the heading of legislation. Therefore, it will be difficult to avoid the paradox of having to legislate on the preconditions for legislation itself.

When Montesquieu describes the spirit of Chinese laws, he speaks of the Chinese institutions as forming one single code devised by wise legislators. And that is precisely the way one is going to speak when seeing the matter from a political perspective. But of course the question “Who framed the Chinese code?” is meaningless. And Montesquieu is not really explaining the wisdom of the Chinese code by the wisdom of its makers. He is pointing out that all these institutions have a meaning, that they manifest a common intention or spirit, the same way written laws manifest an intention or a spirit. But the idea is not that all institutions are laws. It is that laws are just one kind of institutions among others.

Montesquieu distinguishes generally between three kinds of norms: the *laws*, the *morals* (*mœurs*) and the *manners*. The difference between them shows up in the way they have been established. Montesquieu writes:

Morals and manners are those habits (*usages*) which are not established by legislators, either because they were not able, or were not willing, to establish them (EL, XIX.16).

In some cases, legislators did not establish the morals and manners because they did not care about them. But, in other cases, they did not have the instituting power to establish anything in the domain of collective habits. So Montesquieu provides us with a criterion for differentiating the world of social norms: there cannot be a legislation without a legislator, but there are other kinds of norms that have been brought into existence in an *impersonal* way since no legislator would have been in a position to edict them.

Montesquieu draws a political lesson from his tripartition of institutions:

We have said that the laws were the particular and precise institutions of a legislator, and morals and manners the institutions of a nation in general. From hence it follows, that, when these morals and manners are to be changed, it ought not to be done by laws; this would have too much the air of tyranny: it would be better to change them by introducing other morals and other manners (EL, XIX.14).

Hence this maxim: a prince should reform by law what is established by law, and change by custom what is settled by custom. Thus, and this is Montesquieu's example, it was a mistake, on the part of Peter the Great, to edict laws against the traditional Russian dress: boyards were under the legal obligation to cut off their beards and to wear Western kinds of cloaks instead of the good old ones. Montesquieu says it would have been wiser and more efficient to change manners by the way of fashion.

One could express the distinction between a classical political account of institutions and a social account in the following way. The political perspective on laws and customs is a *personalist* one, since it is the point of view of the supreme legislator, whereas Montesquieu's social approach is an *impersonalist* one. When we take the political point of view, we understand a social form of life by moving back from the meaning of the law to the intention of the legislator. But when we take the social point of view, we acknowledge a priority of "general institutions" such as customs over "particular and precise institutions" such as laws. In other words, we recognise that the impersonal or "objective" spirit (to use a Hegelian terminology) has a primacy over the personal or "subjective" spirit.

### III. Collective Identity

One could object to my whole argument that we are not stuck with an exclusive alternative between the personal way of a legislator and the impersonal way of "*l'esprit général d'une nation.*" Obviously, there is a third possibility, namely the collective intentionality of several individuals acting together. This seems to be the right way to reconcile the personal aspect of the act of legislation and its collective dimension.

Such a personalist account of institutions in terms of collective intentionality has been developed recently by John Searle, and I will now make some comments on it.

John Searle has drawn an ontological characterisation of institutions from an observation about the life span of rules. Sociologists have pointed out that institutions are not like material tools in respect of utilisation. Material objects get worn out as we use them. What about institutional objects such as banknotes? Here, one will have to distinguish between two possible ontological

categorisations of a bank-note. It is first a *material object* like any other. As such, it is a piece of paper and it has the natural powers of a bit of paper. The more we use it, the more it will deteriorate. As some point, it will be necessary to replace it by a new bit of paper. But the bank-note has also the institutional power of a monetary instrument. These powers do not result from the physics of the piece of paper, they are imposed by us upon the material object. The more people use bank-notes, the more they reinforce the institution of money. Thus Searle concludes that, since the institutional functions are a matter of convention, not a matter of natural powers, “each use of the institution is in a sense a renewal of that institution.” And it is a renewal of the institution because it is a “renewed expression of the commitment of the users to the institution.”<sup>8</sup>

According to Searle, the fact that institutions get renewed by constant use confirms the validity of a thesis he wants to maintain concerning the ontology of institutional facts, namely that in this domain we have to acknowledge a *priority of process over product* or a *primacy of the act over the object*.<sup>9</sup> That thesis is of course a strong assertion of the personalist outlook on institutions and rules. The institutions are depending for their existence upon the personal commitment of the users.

It is worth mentioning here that Searle has held successively two distinct theories of institutions, the first one in *Speech Acts*<sup>10</sup>, the second one in *The Construction of Social Reality*.

In his first theory, Searle is interested in institutions as providing a context for speakers. Within the relevant context, producing a particular sequence of noises will amount to performing a particular act of speech, for example an act of commitment. Such contexts are institutional. As a paradigm of an institutional behavior, he mentions the ceremony of marriage. “It is only given the institution of marriage that certain forms of behavior constitute Mr Smith’s marrying Miss Jones” (p. 51). Drawing on Wittgenstein’s analogy of language games as defined by autonomous rules, Searle defines institutions as “systems of constitutive rules.” Then he gives the general formula of such constitutive rules: “X counts as Y in context C.” For instance, X will designate a bit of paper with the natural powers of a bit of paper, and Y will designate a bank-note with the conventional powers of a bank-note. The institution of

money makes it possible to use bits of paper produced by the monetary authorities as monetary means of payment.

In his book on speech acts, Searle does not give any account of the emergence of institutional contexts. They are taken as given. One might think there is here an unfinished business. The general form of constitutive rules does not say anything about their historical origin and their perpetuation: when and how did they come into effect?

That is no longer the case in his book on *The Construction of Social Reality*. Searle is now eager to demystify the ontology of institutional entities. Marriages, governments, bank-notes, languages are not self-sufficient entities like natural objects. They would not exist without us. But, as we already saw, they are not like material tools either. Books, hammers and houses would not exist without us in the sense that they don't grow out of the soil by themselves. However, once produced, they are among the inhabitants of the material world, at least until their natural deconstruction. But institutions need to be *renewed* by people achieving their goals within the contexts they provide to these people.

The general formula for explaining institutions as constitutive rules is now a scheme for the *creation* of institutions. In his new account of institutions, Searle acknowledges the primacy of acts over objects. Therefore the formula he is offering now is a *personalist* one, I mean a formula in terms of personal powers (natural or conferred). There are just two possibilities. First, an agent called S can exercise *natural powers*, such as the physical power to lift a stone. Second, the agent S can exercise *conventional* or *institutional* powers such as the power to come into possession of our goods by giving small bits of paper in exchange: but he can do that if and only if we accept to take his bits of paper as having monetary powers, that is institutional powers. The general formula is then:

We collectively accept (S has power (S does A)).<sup>11</sup>

In other words, S would not be able to buy our goods if we did not collectively renew our commitment to the institution of money. By accepting his money, we recreate the institution. Therefore the users of an institution are the real holders of the *instituting power*. And the question arises then: what is the identity of the "we" in "We collectively accept"? Who are the users?

What is the point of stressing the fact that our acceptance is collective? According to Searle, collective acceptance of a rule is a species of collective intentionality. As a matter of fact, the sociality of the “We intend” can be either *distributive* or *collective*. It is here a matter of disambiguating a sentence such as “Both of us have the same intention.” Suppose that the intention in question is to win the election in which you and I are in competition, then the meaning of “we” is distributive, since only one of us could be elected. Whereas our intention is collective when neither of us can have the intention without other members of the same group having not just a similar intention, but the very same intention. In such a case, we attribute the common intention to the group itself or to its members taken collectively.

The distributive “we” is the grammatical person we need to express interactions taking place within an atomistic form of sociality, provided that it makes room for intersubjective “conventions” (in the sense of David Lewis). For example, Max Weber’s cyclist A is able to anticipate the movements of cyclist B and to say *to herself*: unless I move to the right, *we* are going to collide.

The collective “we” is needed as soon as we mean the context of our action to be social in the moral or institutional sense. And Searle made clear that the generative formula he has offered requires the “we” of “we accept” to be the collective one. My query will be then: how can we conceive a collective subject as being an *instituting* subject, a subject exercising instituting powers?

One is reminded here of a story told by Herbert Hart in his book *The Concept of Law*<sup>12</sup>. That story is intended to illustrate the fact that legislators and legal authorities are powerless when it comes to generate an institution in the sense of an established way of doing things involving standards of correctness. The story—perhaps apocryphal, says Hart—goes like this: “the headmaster of a new English public school announced that, as from the beginning of the next term, it would be a tradition of the school that senior boys should wear a certain dress.” Hart comments on the logic that lies behind the comic effect of the story: it is logically impossible to bring into existence a tradition by a mere *fiat*. The headmaster is saying *in the future tense* what will be the traditions to be observed next term. And that is not supposed to be a prediction, but a choice. So the comic effect supposes an element of snobbery: the schoolboys will be required to observe a dress code as if their school were not a *new* public school but an old one, rich in traditions.

One could say: it is impossible to *make a tradition*, exactly in the sense in which Hegel maintains it is impossible to *make a constitution*. Traditions do not belong to the “sphere of things that are made” any more than political constitutions.

Now, Searle is not open to the charge of believing that institutions or traditions can be made by a *fiat!* since he draws his formula from a scene of acceptance, not from a scene of authoritarian legislation. Thus, the instituting power does not belong to the headmaster, it belongs to the generations of schoolboys. But suppose now that one of the boys expresses his consciousness of partaking in the creation of a tradition in saying something along the formula:

We collectively accept (the headmaster has power (the headmaster legislates)).

What kind of collective identity is required for this “we” to be the *instituting* we? Linguists have pointed out an important distinction between two possible meanings of “we.” The person I am addressing may be included or excluded from the plural subject I am expressing by means of “we.” In some languages, there is a distinct form for expressing the so called *exclusive* “we,” as opposed to the *inclusive* one. The distinction in question is nicely illustrated by the anecdote of the missionary in Africa. That missionary is trying to address his audience in their language. But he is not aware these people have two words for the plural of the first person. And unfortunately, as he tries to convey to them the meaning of the English sentence: “We are all of us sinners, and we all need conversion,” he uses the word signifying “we and my people to the exclusion of you whom I am addressing,” which destroys the whole point of his preaching.<sup>13</sup>

Let’s consider whether the *instituting* “we” is the inclusive one or the exclusive one. From the point of view of a linguist, the question to be asked is how a single speaker will make up a “we” out of his (her) own person *plus* other persons. These other persons can be taken among the present participants in the collective act of speech—which will yield the inclusive “we.” Or they can be found outside the present audience.

Suppose now that the speaker tries to form an inclusive “we.” That would amount to making a proposal to the audience: do you accept to be included in the acceptance of the institution? Such a proposal of acceptance is restricted

to the persons present at the scene of the speech act, namely to the very persons who could disagree and express their refusal to be included in the “we.” Now, of course, we want the present acceptance of bank-notes to be a commitment to the future use of these pieces of paper. However the people who are using the inclusive “we” to express their “We accept” do not say anything about what will be accepted tomorrow. Will the bank-notes be accepted tomorrow? Will they be accepted within the whole community and not just by the present individuals? Will there exist tomorrow the same institution of money? That is not something we can decide right now by a collective act of legislation—unless we take for granted that the future users of the institution are already in agreement with us. In other words, we want the subject of the institution to enlist future users. And this is not possible when using the inclusive “we.”

By definition, the future users are not present with us to take part in the acceptance of the institution. Of course, the future generations are not present if they are still to be born. We, the living users of the institutions, have to speak for them, as we do for our dead ancestors. But, and this might be more important from a philosophical point of view, we are also speaking for ourselves in the sense of expressing *in advance* our *future* acts of acceptance and commitment, acts that are still to be performed by us. One could not argue here that the present protagonists can at least undertake commitments for themselves as to what they will accept in the future. Of course, we can commit ourselves, but we can do it given the appropriate institutional context. Otherwise, we would just express our *intention* to be committed in the future. But expressing the *intention* of being committed is not the same as *committing oneself* by the appropriate speech act. In order to commit ourselves as future users of the institution, we have to rely on the fact that we are provided with an *instituting power* by the institutional context of our customs.

And that gives me my conclusion: we cannot be exercising an *instituting power* without taking ourselves to have been *instituted* as a “we.” We cannot just institute ourselves into our instituting powers. Therefore, one has to acknowledge a primacy of the *impersonal* way of establishing institutions over the *personal* one. Or, to put it in Hegelian vocabulary, a primacy of the objective spirit over the subjective spirit.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Hegel explains that the French word “moral” is the equivalent of what the German mean by *geistig* (*Enzyklopädie*, §503).

<sup>2</sup> C. Taylor, “Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind,” in *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers I*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 87. See also his *Hegel*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox, New York, Oxford University Press, 1967.

<sup>4</sup> L. Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, VII.3, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford, Blackwell, 3rd ed., 1978, p. 357.

<sup>5</sup> L. Dumont, *Homo Aequalis*, Paris, Gallimard, 1977, pp. 147–152.

<sup>6</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, §261.

<sup>7</sup> C. Montesquieu, *De l’Esprit des lois* (1748), quoted EL. I have used (and sometimes corrected) an English translation (1777) to be found on the Online Library of Liberty (Liberty Fund, Inc.).

<sup>8</sup> J. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, New York, The Free Press, 1995, p. 57.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 56–57.

<sup>10</sup> John Searle, *Speech Acts: an Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1969.

<sup>11</sup> Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, p. 111.

<sup>12</sup> H. L. A. Hart, *The Concept of Law*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 172.

<sup>13</sup> O. Jespersen, *The Philosophy of Grammar* (1924), New York, Norton, 1965, p. 192.



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