Towards a Conflict Theory of Recognition: On the Constitution of Relations of Recognition in Conflict

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Abstract: In this paper, we develop an understanding of recognition in terms of individuals' capacity for conflict. Our goal is to overcome various shortcomings that can be found in both the positive and negative conceptions of recognition. We start by analyzing paradigmatic instances of such conceptions—namely, those put forward by Axel Honneth and Judith Butler. We do so in order to show how both positions are inadequate in their elaborations of recognition in an analogous way: Both fail to make intelligible the fundamental nexus between relations of recognition and individuals' capacity for conflict. We then move on to reconsider aspects of Hegel's view of recognition—ones that, from our viewpoint, have been unjustly neglected in the debate about recognition: his focus on the constitution of relations of recognition in conflict and on the status of being an author of acts of recognition. On this basis, we then spell out in a more systematic way what we take to be a more convincing conception of recognition. This puts us in the position to gesture at some consequences of this conception in practical contexts, above all with regard to the justification, role and structure of political institutions..

1. Introduction

The concept of 'recognition' has taken on weighty expectations in contemporary debates. Its proponents claim to adequately conceptualize the constitution of self-consciousness and the distinctive character of interpersonal relations, as well as the normative basis of the critique of society. The concept has become significant in this way in debates that try to articulate and defend a perspective influenced by Hegel and Wittgenstein concerning the nature of the human spirit or mind (*Geist*), as well as in debates that seek to renovate critical theory. But the tremendous potential ascribed to the concept of recognition has also brought about a series of objections in its wake. The lowest common denominator of these objections is expressed in the claim that those who stand in relations of recognition are oppressed by them. The contemporary discussion about the significance of recognition is shaped, then, by a controversy: On the one hand, certain positions conceptualize relations of recognition as crucial to enabling the realization of freedom, while other positions, on the other hand, regard such relations as actually preventing the realization of freedom. In what follows we will designate the former positions as 'positive' and the latter ones as 'negative', even if this terminology is not completely satisfactory.[1]

The debate between positive and negative conceptions of recognition is hampered by the fact that the alternative conceived by these conceptions is ultimately untenable from our point of view. Indeed, there is actually more underlying agreement among these positions than it may seem at first glance; accordingly, they also exhibit analogous deficiencies. Both conceptions fail to make intelligible the fundamental nexus between relations of recognition and individuals' capacity for conflict (*Konfliktfähigkeit*). In order to arrive at a tenable conception of recognition, however, this nexus must be adequately understood. We attain a satisfactory conception only when it is made intelligible by recourse to individuals' capacity for conflict.

In the spirit of these preliminary remarks, the following considerations aim to rectify some deficiencies in how the concept of recognition is understood. It is our goal to overcome various shortcomings that can be found in both the positive and negative conceptions of recognition. For this reason we analyze paradigmatic instances of such conceptions in the next section of this paper—namely, those put forward by Axel Honneth and Judith Butler. We do so in order to show how both positions are inadequate in their elaborations of recognition in an analogous way. We then move on to reconsider aspects of Hegel's view of recognition—ones that, from our viewpoint, have been unjustly neglected in the debate about recognition. After that, we specify what we take to be a more convincing conception of recognition. This puts us in the position to gesture at some consequences that this conception has in practical contexts, above all with regard to the justification, role and structure of political institutions.

2. Positive versus Negative Theories of Recognition

The two conceptions of recognition mentioned above that serve as the point of departure of our discussion have been set out in recent decades in light of a shared theoretical background—namely, that of Hegelian philosophy. It is thus no wonder that both of these positions—paradigmatically, Honneth's positively and Butler's negatively oriented theories of recognition—share two fundamental assumptions that we would like to highlight briefly before we undertake the elaboration of their differences and problems.

First, both approaches share a basic assumption about the centrality of *intersubjectivity*. According to this assumption, self-consciousness (selfhood), as a theoretical and practical self-relation, is not something that can come to be prior to inter-subjective relations. Rather, it is a constituted phenomenon that can only come to be in and through such relations. To this extent, both positions assume that that which is recognized in relations of recognition is not simply something given that can be already identified independently apart from these relations. Rather, subjects—their self-consciousness and identity—are constituted only within these relations.[2]

Second, both approaches generally share a basic assumption about the significance of *conflict*. Accordingly, and following Hegel's detailed elaboration of

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struggle (*Kampf*) as a constitutive moment of 'the movement of *recognition*' (*Bewegung des Anerkennens*) (Hegel 2008: section 178), relations of recognition must be understood as essentially conflictual and dynamic. This understanding of relations of recognition differs from one that is conceived in accordance with the model of reconciliation, according to which conflicts are sublated (*aufgehoben*) in relations of recognition that are putatively stable because they can no longer be put into question.

To be sure, these shared assumptions are then spelled out in quite different ways by these two conceptions. In the theoretical tradition that leads from Fichte through Hegel, Mead and Habermas to Honneth, recognition is primarily understood as a positive enabling condition. In Honneth's appropriation of this tradition, the concept is thus conceived in terms of those necessary conditions that enable subjects in general to form a practical identity and live a self-determined life. The precise relation between practical identity, freedom, self-realization and autonomy remains relatively underdetermined according to this theory. In any case, recognition is both the condition of the development and of the performance of an individual's capacity to form a practical identity. It is not only necessary for the cultivation of a self-relation, but also for its sustainability: Subjects must not only possess the capacity for autonomous self-determination, they must also be capable of continually actualizing it in their actions.[3]

According to Honneth's theory, recognition is conceived above all as the affirmation of the other and, in particular, of the characteristics that he or she holds as valuable. As is well known, Honneth distinguishes three spheres of recognition that have developed historically and in which the principles of love, legal respect and social esteem become established as norms of recognition. These norms are concretized in the social practices and institutions of personal relations, democracy and the rule of law, and economic interactions:

> [I]n intimate relationships, marked by practices of mutual affection and concern, they [subjects] are able to understand themselves as individuals with their own needs; in legal relations, which unfold according to the model of mutually granted equal rights (and duties), they learn to understand themselves as legal persons owed the same autonomy as all other members of society; and, finally, in loose-knit social relations—in which, dominated by a one-sided interpretation of the achievement principle, there is competition for professional status—they in principle learn to understand themselves as subjects possessing capabilities and talents that are valuable for society. (Honneth 2003: 142)

Honneth seems to hold the view that the *telos* of mutual recognition—Hegel's 'pure concept of recognition' (Hegel 2008: section 185)—is built into these principles at their inception and that this *telos* unfolds a kind of distinctive normative dynamic that keeps a historical process of moral progress in place despite the various setbacks to which this process has been subject in the course of actual human history.

From our perspective, it is now interesting to ask how Honneth elaborates the fundamental intertwining of recognition and conflict that he acknowledges. According to him, conflicts play a role at two points as the dynamic sources of development of relations of recognition: On the one hand, conflicts lead to the differentiation of spheres of recognition; on the other hand, they also engender extensions and new interpretations of principles of recognition within these spheres. Conflicts of the first type, which lead to the differentiation of spheres of recognition, are understood in such a way that they precede relations of recognition and are thus external to them. In this case, it is only when principles of recognition are first established that relations of recognition can then be actualized by reference to these principles. By contrast, conflicts of the second type pertain to the content and/or legitimate application of the principles themselves. In this case, it seems then that the relation between conflict and recognition is not merely external. But this appearance is deceptive, for Honneth does not elaborate what kind of recognition is presupposed and in play when a conflict is carried out: How must potential parties to conflicts recognize each other, so that they can be regarded as legitimate actors in these conflicts? Since Honneth apparently does not give an answer to this question, he cannot clearly distinguish between a conflict in the strict sense and a mere collision. He understands more inclusive and more differentiated orders of recognition as posterior results of the conflictual phases and in so doing considers conflicts once again as external to relations of recognition. In this way, conflicts are not understood as essential components of newly established orders of recognition (that would then have to be institutionalized in this or that way in the latter).[4] Conflicts are thus ultimately treated as mere occasions for the development of particular orders of recognition. As a consequence, neither the intertwining of relations of recognition and individuals' capacity for conflict, nor the constitution and tenuous maintenance of relations of recognition precisely in conflicts, is adequately taken into account.

Another important question can be raised at this juncture: How representative are those conflicts of recognition that only concern the application and extension of principles that have already been established? Is it not rather the case that paradigmatic conflicts of recognition are primarily concerned with the reinterpretation or novel conception of the principles in question (i.e., when such principles are considered not only under the aspect of their mere extensions, but of a novel determination of their intensions)? All the interesting cases of conflicts of recognition seem to be concerned with substantive conflicts of interpretation and not merely with questions of application, for in such cases the novel determination of contested principles is also at stake and the principles in question are not available as unchallenged points of guidance. In conflicts of interpretation of this type, who gets the opportunity to speak, in what way and with what interpretive claims—i.e., which rules are recognized as governing the making of interpretive claims—are always relevant questions. Honneth's theory, however, threatens to obscure questions along these lines. His talk of a 'surplus of validity whose normative significance is expressed by the constant struggle

over its appropriate application and interpretation' (Honneth 2003: 186) suggests rather that the three principles of recognition he has in view are already established and strive to obtain their full extension as a matter of their *telos*, mediated to be sure by the expectations and claims of individuals as well as by their social and political struggles. What tends to accompany this view is an overly static and monolithic understanding of the three spheres of recognition. Honneth seems to assume that the principles of the three spheres of recognition go hand in hand with more or less fixed rules that specify the means of settling conflicts of recognition by recourse to these principles. This, however, is not the case. Although Honneth rightly takes conflicts to be fundamental for recognition, we therefore contend that he fails to adequately account for the kind of conflict that is relevant for the establishment of relations of recognition and for the presuppositions of this kind of conflict.

Honneth himself seems to be aware of this problem when he emphasizes social visibility as the elementary form of recognition, which is undermined by socially established forms of invisibility (cf. Honneth 2001). That said, he not only understands the characteristics of subjects as what recognition aims at but even conceives the status that is constituted by this basic recognition on the model of such personal qualities, and hence not as a status that is only realized in practice—i.e., as the status of someone who is capable of engaging in conflicts by being an author of acts of recognition. As a result, Honneth bars himself from being able to articulate his negative insight in a positive way. By contrast, a conflictual understanding of recognition must conceive precisely agents' entering into conflicts as acts of recognition that can become the objects of further interpretations and novel negotiations in the course of these conflicts.

The tensions within Honneth's approach can also be made explicit in a slightly different way. These tensions persist between the (social-)ontological claim of Honneth's approach and the normative dimension of the conception of recognition that he develops.[5] Honneth's approach does not succeed in resolving these tensions. He assumes that unconferred recognition can be demanded via claims to recognition, or else that acts of recognition can be invalidated in light of new understandings of the principles of recognition. In this light, recognition appears as a normative phenomenon. Individual subjects cannot securely assume recognition in a straightforward way, but must, where necessary, struggle for it. If recognition in this sense is deferred or can be denied, it cannot—from an ontological perspective—ground the idea of a subject that is struggling for recognition. The ontological claim that Honneth aims to justify with the concept of recognition is thus unredeemed.

Honneth (2012: 51, 90 note 70) reacts to the above-mentioned tensions in his approach (among other ways) by taking the '"existential" mode of recognition' as the basis for the three spheres of recognition that he has in view. This mode of recognition is supposed to secure the ontological dimension of recognition. But it also has a normative dimension that shows up negatively in Honneth's idea of 'the forgetfulness of recognition' (*Anerkennungsvergessenheit*) (ibid.: section IV). This move makes clear again how social relations as such can be

characterized by a basic lack of recognition. The fact that Honneth elaborates this deficiency as the forgetfulness of recognition does nothing to change his claim that recognition is conceived as the norm by recourse to which deformed relations can be criticized.

We can summarize the tensions in Honneth's approach as follows: Honneth does not manage to unify the (social-)ontological and normative-critical aspects of the concept of recognition. To the extent that recognition is established as a normative-critical concept, it becomes unclear how it functions as a basic concept with (social-)ontological import. Doesn't Honneth have to deal with the possibility that practices can be utterly forgetful of recognition or that individuals remain utterly socially invisible? How can subjects in such a situation enter into conflicts, insofar as their constitution depends on relations of recognition? Honneth must conceive recognition as the basis of all social practices; from his perspective, conflicts of recognition can only come about under this condition. At the same time, recognition cannot be realized in these conflicts according to Honneth's understanding, for recognition turns out to be an unredeemed norm. The normative moment in the concept of recognition thus stands in tension with the (social-)ontological ambitions of his approach.

As we will now show with regard to the theory of Judith Butler, negative theories of recognition are confronted with analogous problems. These problems show up here in fact with an even clearer contour. Firstly, the *relation of conflict and recognition* is not defined adequately; secondly, individuals are not conceptualized as *authors of acts of recognition*. At the core of the tradition of negative theories of recognition that leads from Rousseau (at least according to a certain interpretation[6]) through Sartre and Althusser to Butler lies the assumption of an unresolvable intertwining of relations of recognition and relations of domination, asymmetrical dependence and forms of subjection,[7] indeed, of oppression. Recognition is not considered here as something that enables freedom, but rather something that increases conformism by normalizing and disciplining human beings. Recognition is as such 'reifying' because the 'recognition of X as Y' makes it so that X is determined or regarded as Y. Thus, an experience of alienation and misrecognition always accompanies recognition, especially if (or so goes this argument) we depend on recognition and cannot simply dispense with it (see esp. Butler 2005). In this sense we are subjected to the constraints of various social structures—e.g., the family, the state, the market—that confer recognition on us:

> A certain effect of alienation is the price that we pay for our ability to take up a [social] position in general. Only in this manner can we act in the space of the legible, the intelligible, and the recognizable. (Butler 2001: 593)[8]

According to Butler's negative theory of recognition, the illusion of reciprocity and of the realization of freedom through recognition is part of an ideology that contributes toward the more efficient functioning of the dominant order of recognition; recognition does not provide a critical stance that could be used

against the latter since it conceals the fact that we lose our freedom and ourselves through recognition by others—even when there may be no alternative to this state of affairs. Hence, we cannot realize our freedom and ourselves for structural reasons. According to Butler, then, recognition is always only possible in accordance with the dominant norms of recognition that enforce conformism against everything that is regarded as deviant by reference to such norms: paradigmatically, by forcing individuals into the corresponding social roles (e.g., father, citizen, entrepreneur, etc.) or else by treating them as pathological or deviant and excluding them on such grounds. The process that Honneth describes without much ambivalence as affirmation or confirmation appears here as one that objectifies and standardizes individuals—a process that is to this extent incompatible with freedom. On this view, we are made into fathers, citizens, entrepreneurs, and take over all the other socially recognized and recognizable identities that there are without being able to adopt a reflective or critical attitude toward these roles or even transform the norms themselves that structure more or less anonymous occurrences of recognition.

A number of objections can be raised against this conception of recognition.[9] From our perspective, however, its most significant problem is that the phenomenon of conflict remains oddly underdetermined in Butler's theory. To begin with, it becomes unintelligible, under conditions of comprehensive normalization, where the resources come from that enable agents to enter into conflicts at all—i.e., that ground their capacity for conflict in general. In addition, Butler's position seems to preclude the possibility of distinguishing between normalizing or other deficient modes of conflicts and ways of carrying out conflicts that allow for higher degrees of reflexivity, contestation and reciprocal acknowledgment. As in Althusser's influential and homogenizing structuralist analysis,[10] Butler conceives recognition primarily in terms of structures and apparatuses rather than individuals and their acts. The others who recognize me come into view primarily as representatives of the established order (as parents, teachers, police personnel, etc.), whose reactions do not display any significant differences with regard to their recognitive behavior, and who are thus not plausibly understood as participants of practices pervaded by conflict. On this view, relations of recognition tend to get hypostatized as an order that manages to exclude meaningful conflicts and to extract itself from the reflective, critical and transformative involvement of individuals.[11]

As is the case with Honneth, the problems in Butler's approach can also be considered in terms of how the (social-)ontological claim of the theory of recognition and its normative moment conflict with each other. The comprehensive normalization that is connected with recognition implies that individuals are bound up with norms of recognition in their constitution as subjects. Accordingly, recognition as normalization functions in a restrictive way. Butler (2004: 136) can only propose a practice of 'subversive resignification' as a way of relating to these normalizing contexts. How efficacious or productive, however, can such a practice be for the subjects in question? It can only play its role insofar as subjects are equipped to constitute themselves in new ways through this

practice. But they are only equipped to do so according to Butler if new norms of recognition come about through this practice. Insofar as this is not the case, subjects dissolve or efface themselves by engaging in this subversive practice, which at the same time was initiated for their own sake. Butler thus lacks the possibility of adequately accounting for the normative aspects of the concept of recognition. She does not succeed, therefore, in unifying the (social-)ontological claims of the concept of recognition with its normative dimension. In contrast to Honneth, the pendulum swings here towards the side of (social) ontology. Insofar as relations of recognition come about at all, they constitute subjects. Understood in this way, the concept of recognition does not make room for any potential for conflict.

While Honneth's approach involves a suggestion about how the constitutive connection between recognition and conflict should be conceived, albeit in such a way that both sides in this picture are understood as remaining external to each other, it seems that Butler cannot render conflicts as such intelligible, so that recognition must be thought, paradoxically, as something astonishingly free of conflicts. Although Honneth's intersubjective model presupposes the status of being an author of acts of recognition and its realization in practice, it does not succeed in adequately making sense of this status; the paradigm that Butler represents, however, tends to even obscure the questions connected with this status. We arrive, therefore, at the assessment that, regardless of all divergences, the positive and the negative conceptions of recognition are incapable of making adequately explicit the conflictual character of relations of recognition. Although both conceptions are supposed to present a conflict and not a reconciliation model of recognition, they both end up understanding conflict in an overly external and one-sided relationship to recognition.

3. Recognition according to Hegel

It is our view at this juncture that there are elements in Hegel's thinking that can help us to avoid the problems that we have identified in the positive and negative conceptions of recognition. Both conceptions misconstrue certain insights of Hegel or else turn out even to regress from the latter. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* obtains a central place in this context. In our view, the line of thought expressed in this work is not, as Honneth suggests, a relapse into the philosophy of consciousness (Honneth 1996: 30, 62ff). It presents rather, in a more or less argumentatively explicit way, the most thoroughgoing reflections that Hegel devotes to the concept of recognition. We can illustrate this with regard to the two points of criticism that we made in the previous section against the positive and negative conceptions of recognition. Hegel develops an alternative conception in which conflict acquires an essential role for relations of recognition. Conflict is not an intermediate stage that would be external to relations of recognition themselves. The idea of agents' capacity for conflict that is central to our account is inextricably connected to the following claim of

Hegel: If we want to explain how relations of recognition are constituted, we have to make sense of the status of being an author of acts of recognition.

Hegel develops the nexus between recognition and conflict by recourse to a context in which no conflict can be carried out—i.e., a context in which the normative claims of the parties involved collide in an unmediated and unmediatable way when they meet one another.[12] Hegel elaborates such a context in terms of the concept of 'ethical life' (*Sittlichkeit*). This concept expresses the idea of a collective practice in which substantive norms are initially shared by individuals within the context of a community. For our purposes we can understand such a practice as follows: It is a practice in which individuals are immediately recognized by way of their conformity to norms, insofar as they act in accordance with the traditional norms of ethical life that are shared by all the other members of the community. Individuals are recognized in such a context by reference (to use Honneth's terminology) to certain established values or accomplishments that they display in their doings. The corresponding values or accomplishments are affirmed as the positive qualities of the individuals in question by other individuals as representatives of the community.

Hegel argues that relations of recognition cannot succeed in such a context because individuals cannot take up a stance toward the norms of recognition to which they are subject and thus cannot thereby reciprocally recognize one another. This becomes manifest as soon as a collective practice of this kind is confronted by another collective practice in which other norms of recognition are realized, in cases where there exists this sort of confrontation between different kinds of ethical life. We can make sense of this sort of confrontation (among other ways) as an intercultural episode. For example, insofar as a certain norm of greeting other individuals is experienced as offensive in another culture, this confrontation can lead to the type of collision in question. A participant of practice *A* acts to realize a certain norm that is affirmed for the sake of his claim to be recognized. By contrast, a participant of practice *B* acts in such a way that she has to treat the action of the first individual as offensive to her. Both individuals in their actions are—apparently—immediately recognized by the other participants of their respective practices. But they are incapable of reciprocally recognizing each other.

Such a failure of recognition in a conflict can also occur within the context of a single ethical practice. This is the case when norms of recognition remain unclear in their application or are themselves contested. Hegel's diagnosis of a tragedy in ethical life in the ancient Greek *polis* has, therefore, a fundamental significance. According to Hegel, there exists a systematic deficiency of recognition where individuals are incapable of carrying out conflicts about relations of recognition. Insofar as their recognition rests solely on how certain realized values or accomplishments on their part are immediately recognized, they cannot take up a stance toward norms of recognition. The norms to which individuals are subject in this case are their norms only insofar as they are realized in a shared practice with others that is external to these individuals and in which they participate.[13] They do not know the norms to which they conform as *their* norms.[14]

Insofar as agents are confronted with conflicting norms, what occurs here is, for this reason, merely a collision of norms. To the extent that the participants of a practice do not know the norms as their own, they cannot really appreciate the divergence of other norms from the norms of their practice. Hegel is concerned, then, with the question of how it is possible to carry out conflicts over norms of recognition: He attempts to understand how norms can be one's own and thereby how they stand in relation to other norms. His answer to this question is that this is only possible when relations of recognition become *reflexive*.

In turn, Hegel understands the reflexivity of relations of recognition in terms of participation in a collective practice. Individuals can come to an agreement about the correctness or incorrectness of norms in the context of a practice as soon as they are capable of making these norms explicit. Hegel analyzes above all three kinds of practices that bring about the explication of norms in different ways: art, religion and philosophy. From our perspective, what is especially vivid, however, is the example that he uses to develop his considerations in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Let us assume that two individuals are in dispute about what a conscientious action is. How can they carry out such a dispute? They can only do so when they are capable of reciprocally 'confessing' their respective positions.[15] Toward this end they need a vocabulary by means of which they can make explicit their respective positions to each other. They need, for example, concepts like that of action or judgment. Once these are in place, one person can now say, e.g., that conscientiousness can only be realized by an action and not by a judgment. The other person can reject this view by arguing that a judgment is also an action, so that conscientiousness cannot be sufficiently defined by means of the distinction between action and judgment. We can call the battery of concepts that are brought into play in disputes of this sort *reflexive norms* since they primarily have a normative rather than a cognitive function. They concern norms that turn a normative relation of recognition into a potential object of practices of reflection.

A further example of a reflexive norm is the concept of 'contradiction'. Whoever establishes this norm can assert the judgment that a certain act is not one of recognition. In terms of our example above: When an individual *B* takes issue with an individual *A* by treating the latter's action as offensive, *A* can respond by saying that this view stands in contradiction to his own intention. In this way, a conflict can be initiated and carried out, which raises the dispute above a sheer uncomprehending collision. Hegel's thesis is, therefore, that relations of recognition come about when individuals standing in relations of recognition are capable of conflict. In his view, they put themselves in the position of being capable of conflict by making reflexive practices part of their practice. Reflexive practices enable (equip) the individuals who engage in them to put norms of recognition up for consideration.[16] That said, it is not the case that engaging in these practices requires agents to suspend their first-order practices in order to enter into a process of critical reflection that is relieved of the pressure that accompanies first-order practices. Rather, reflection is an integral component of the first-order practices themselves.

This line of thought suggests a Hegelian response to the second deficiency that we discerned above in the positive and especially in the negative conception of recognition. Hegel succeeds in explaining the status of being an author of acts of recognition by conceiving recognition in such a way that individuals reciprocally recognize one another as the authors of acts of recognition. Recall once more the collision between two orders of recognition. Hegel's analysis of this collision can be understood as follows: An individual who is immediately recognized for certain values and accomplishments in the context of a collective practice cannot be understood as the author of acts of recognition on the basis of such a practice alone. For acts of recognition are essentially actions from freedom. If certain actions conform merely to stereotypical expectations of behavior or are immediate expressions of a substantive ethical life, they cannot be understood as acts of recognition. In other words, someone can only confer recognition if she is capable of denying it in a justifiable way. To recognize someone in turn implies that she is recognized as the author of acts of recognition who is capable, with reason, of carrying them out or failing to do so. Thus, one can dispute with such a person whether recognition in certain circumstances is called for or not. But this very possibility becomes unintelligible on the basis of an order (a set of collective practices) in which the doings of its members are immediately attached to certain substantive values or conceptions of achievements. To formulate this point in terms of the main protagonists in Hegel's analysis of the tragedy of ethical life: Neither Creon nor Antigone can be understood as authors of acts of recognition. It is not just that they cannot mutually recognize each other; they cannot even in general, in the proper sense, recognize *anyone* because in their doing they are immediately attached to certain values and conceptions of achievements.

For these reasons it is necessary from Hegel's perspective to conceptualize acts of recognition as acts from freedom. This in turn is possible in his view only when we elaborate individuals' capacity for conflict with regard to the relations of recognition in which they stand. Hegel holds that an individual is only an author of acts of recognition when she participates in reflexive practices with regard to the relations of recognition in which she stands with others.[17] By way of contrast, Hegel (2008: section 667) offers a concept that expresses the omission of such a reciprocal ascription of authorship—namely, the concept of the 'hard heart'.

The figure of the hard heart can be understood in the following way with regard to the constitution of relations of recognition: It pertains to an individual who does not participate in the required reflexive practices that others offer in context.[18] Such a figure becomes relevant especially in struggles for recognition. If an individual *A* claims in relation to individual *B* that she does not see herself recognized through a particular action,[19] such a practice of reflection time and again encounters a hard heart. It can always happen that individual *B* does not respond to the request or demand for addressing the deficiency of recognition. At this juncture the (normative) conflict of recognition shows its (social-) ontological side: The hard heart of individual *B* affects individual *A* in such a way that the latter's efforts to bring about recognition will be substantially

hampered.[20] This shows that recognition can only be obtained when different individuals participate in reflexive practices with regard to the relations of recognition in which they stand and reciprocally recognize one another as participants in these practices, ones that have the right to problematize the norms of recognition as well as their application. The normative claims that individuals raise in conflicts of recognition have the consequence that such individuals constitute themselves as participants of practices of recognition. Reflection on relations of recognition turns out to be the basis of the constitution of subjects in intersubjective relations.

What emerges clearly, then, is a persistent connection that figures centrally in Hegel's reflections on the concept of recognition in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: Reciprocal recognition brings about the condition under which individuals attain freedom, participating as free agents in practices or becoming capable of taking up a (critical) stance toward these practices.[21] This happens precisely in a practice in which individuals participate in reflexive practices with regard to relations of recognition. Freedom, which is the presupposition of acts of recognition, can only be attained within the framework of such reflexive practices.[22] If individual *A* is capable of drawing attention to a deficiency of recognition and individual *B* responds to such an assertion as a reflection on relations of recognition, both individuals attain freedom in this interaction. They both recognize each other as participants of practices in which they are capable of reflecting on and problematizing their own norms in a self-determining way.

We can connect Hegel's reflections here with our analysis in the previous section of the positive and negative conceptions of recognition in the following way: Hegel makes intelligible why recognition cannot be understood as the affirmation of positive characteristics of persons (or of a positive status understood according to the model of characteristics). On his view, this conception of recognition fails to make intelligible how these affirmations are conceivable as doings that express and realize freedom. The latter become only possible if we conceive recognition as something essentially tested through and shaped by conflict. According to Hegel's understanding, recognition can be actualized only where conflicts can be carried out. It is only at this juncture that the possibility emerges for the further struggles for recognition that Honneth has in view. If one makes sense of recognition in the way that we suggest, the opposition between positive and negative conceptions of recognition can be overcome: What this shows is that individual freedom, and thereby the constitution of subjects, cannot be the result of mere affirmations of values and achievements; moreover, it also shows that recognition cannot be understood solely in terms of rigid normalization. There can only be individual freedom (and self-actualization can only succeed) where individuals can recognize themselves freely and enter into conflicts about what exactly this involves. In so doing they do not affirm values or achievements that are displayed in their behavior, but respond reciprocally to their reflections about relations of recognition. Such a response in turn cannot be reduced to a normalizing effect: Insofar as individuals recognize themselves in this sense, they grant each other the standing to further develop relations of

recognition in a structurally undetermined way and, in fact, to problematize the normalizing effects of the norms of recognition.

4. A Reformulated Concept of Recognition

In our view, the considerations we have developed in connection to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* present an appropriate basis on which we can now systematically rearticulate the concept of recognition. We can do so by picking up once again our examination of Honneth's conception of recognition, which represents the most elaborate contemporary theory of recognition. Honneth (2007: 329ff) essentially determines the concept of recognition that he defends in terms of the four following aspects:

(a) Recognition is the affirmation of the positive characteristics of human subjects or groups.
(b) Recognition is realized in acts that have a correspondingly affirmative character.
(c) Acts of recognition realize a distinctive intention that is directed at the value of another person.
(d) Recognition is a generic concept that encompasses more specific kinds of recognition—namely, those of love, legal respect and social esteem for distinctive achievements.

In light of our discussion above, an examination of these four aspects can begin with (b). It is right, in our view, to conceive recognition in terms of actions. That said, (b) itself neglects an important aspect: The actions that realize recognition must be conceived as acts from freedom. In our view, this is one of Hegel's central insights. Insofar as acts of recognition are only stereotypical or immediate expressions of a substantive ethical life, they do not succeed in accomplishing what they promise to carry out: They may produce a certain conformity, but not the condition of being recognized by an other or others. In this respect, the positive and negative conceptions of recognition are both mistaken for the same reason. Recognition is only possible where it can be denied or challenged. It is in this sense that acts of recognition are acts from freedom: acts that can be denied with justification and that an individual or a group can be entitled to call upon others to perform.

If one conceives (b) in this way, (a) and (c) must be put differently. Honneth's theses insufficiently define the object of recognition. Recognition is not directed primarily at characteristics that are attributed to a person or ascribed to that person's value. Rather, it is directed at the autonomy or freedom of a person, at her possibility of determining herself in relation to others. This feature of recognition is neither a characteristic nor a value or status. Rather, the autonomy and freedom of a person is an aspect of her agency and only actual through the exercise of this agency. A person is autonomous and free to the extent that she

herself is capable of determining aspects of her agency in relation to others. But this can only come about where individuals in fact interact with one another. Acts of recognition must therefore be understood in such a way that they are directed at the actions or the range of actions of another person; acts of recognition are directed at aspects or moments of interactions. In this way, actions or the range of actions of another person become undetermined. To recognize the autonomy and freedom of others means, therefore, to grant them an undetermined leeway of action (*Handlungsspielraum*) in certain respects, a leeway that then enables them to take up a stance toward the determinations (beliefs, attitudes, actions, etc.) of others. This is in turn only possible within a reciprocal interaction. Properly conceived, an act of recognition only comes about (is actually performed) when one grants others some leeway in their actions, and these others in turn from their perspective(s) grant the same leeway to oneself. Accordingly, the core of (c) can be reformulated as follows: Acts of recognition realize a specific intention that refers to the reciprocally granted autonomy which other people as free agents manifest in interactions.

Nonetheless, this elaboration is not yet fully satisfactory. We return here to an important objection from the perspective of negative theories of recognition. More specifically, this elaboration as it stands does not make intelligible how there can be talk of interactions only when interacting individuals encounter one another in a determinate way. Thus, it does not suffice to say that the actions or range of actions of other people are undetermined in acts of recognition. For they are indeed determined in a certain sense—namely, as acts or actions through which something determinate is realized. What must be made intelligible is how the perspective on determinate actions is *connected* in acts of recognition with the perspective on the autonomy and thereby the freedom of other people. To make this point in terms of the concept of recognition: How can the action of another person, on the one hand, be recognized as a determinate action while such an action, on the other hand, is meant to express and realize her autonomy and hence her undetermined freedom? Again, Hegel's reflections can provide a response to this question. His considerations on interaction with regard to conscientiousness make clear that someone is only recognized in the context of such an interaction when her reflections on the objects of interaction are recognized. We can conceive acts of recognition to be directed at determinate aspects of the doings of other people, when these aspects as such can be reflexively considered or problematized. If the determinations of one's doings are not to be experienced as heteronomous and external to oneself, one must always be able to reflexively contest these determinations. Reflexive practices thereby establish the norms to which interacting individuals reciprocally bind themselves. One can therefore only attain recognition when one binds oneself to determinate norms—primarily norms of reflection (i.e., reflexive norms). The autonomy of others, at which acts of recognition are directed, stands in a constitutive nexus with the condition that others put forward norms that apply to their own doing and bind themselves to these norms. Relations of recognition are thus intrinsically bound up with determinate elements. This is the reason

why it is always possible in principle that determinations come into play that become independent from those who are recognized. In this way we can conceptualize certain aspects of relations of recognition that have been emphasized by negative theories of recognition. On our view, relations of recognition do not fundamentally make those who are subject to them unfree. But these relations are constituted in such a way that the determinations that are built into them always threaten to have a constraining or rigid character. In this way the freedom that is attained in relations of recognition is always precarious and can never be realized as absolute freedom. It is a standing concern in relations of recognition that one maintains an autonomous stance toward the norms to which one binds oneself. With regard to norms that are shared with others—primarily norms of reflection (reflexive norms)—it must be always possible for the individuals who live by or respond to them that they be able to distance themselves from these norms and in so doing put forward new determinations of the relevant norms.

Something central and essential becomes intelligible at this juncture: Relations of recognition are established and (con-)tested in and through conflicts. Conflicts cannot be conceived as what drives differentiation, nor merely as what initiates the reinterpretation of norms of recognition and thereby the extension of relations of recognition. Rather, conflicts are interactions between individuals or groups through which relations of recognition are actualized in the first place and must always be constituted anew time and again. Accordingly, relations of recognition are only realized when individuals or groups are capable of negotiating divergent normative claims. This is only possible on the basis of reflexive practices, by means of which individuals or groups can respond to one another. In these practices, recognition is not only realized reflexively—it is always also realized symmetrically as a reciprocal interaction. That said, it can always happen in a conflict that the determinate norms which a participant asserts as binding are not recognized. What must be recognized, however, is her status of being able to assert claims of recognition (and also, e.g., to contradict other people) in relation to these norms. This shows how conflicts do not aim primarily or even exclusively to bring about the reconstitution of ongoing relations of recognition. Rather, relations of recognition are constituted (actualized) precisely in and through conflicts.

If we conceive the constitution of relations of recognition in this way, this also resolves the tension between the (social-)ontological claims of theories of recognition and the normative aspects of the concept of recognition that we emphasized above in our discussion of positive and negative theories of recognition. Both positive and negative theories of recognition must interpret conflict in such a way that relations of recognition are either suspended or not even constituted at all. In this sense the normative moment of the concept of recognition is opposed to its (social-)ontological dimension, and vice versa, in these two conceptions. But this very opposition does not exist if we regard the carrying out of conflicts as fundamental for the constitution of relations of recognition. On this view, it becomes intelligible how the normative moment of relations of

recognition redeems precisely the (social-)ontological claim with which these relations are connected. Whoever asserts a claim that there is a deficiency of recognition *vis-à-vis* others is justifying herself with reference to recognition as a norm. Recognition is realized when she does so and others respond to this claim. Recognition can thus be made intelligible in terms of its constitutive function for subjects. It fulfills this function precisely through its normative moment: Subjects attain the status of being constituted as subjects on the basis of recognition only when they are able to exercise the capacity to assert demands on others. The normative moment of the concept of recognition thus explains the (social-) ontological potential that the concept of recognition exhibits.

We can now appropriate Honneth's formulations for our purposes and articulate essential aspects of the concept of recognition in terms of four theses. In light of the discussion above, these can be formulated as follows:

(a*) Recognition is the (essentially procedural) affirmation of the determinations of other people's actions in terms of their being the potential object of reflexive consideration.
(b*) Recognition is realized in acts from freedom that exhibit or express an affirmative character in the sense of (a*).
(c*) Acts of recognition realize a specific intention that refers to the reciprocally granted autonomy which other people as free agents manifest in interactions.
(d*) The concept of recognition picks out a specific type of relation from which individuals in reciprocal interactions attain their freedom and a corresponding self-relation. Although these relations exhibit one common structure, they can take different forms in different social spheres.

In our view, theses (a*) through (d*) explain the extent to which recognition is constitutively connected to the capacity for conflict and how it is established and (con-)tested in conflict. It should be noted here that reflexive considerations do not treat determinations of actions (determinate norms of doings, etc.) as primarily cognitive. As already emphasized above, such considerations have the character of commitments. In reflexive problematizations individuals commit themselves in relation to other individuals. Examples of such commitments are: elaborating what one has said; explaining why one does not agree with another; asserting a claim about why the actions of another do not recognize an individual or group, etc. Thus, the capacity for conflict that is constitutive for recognition becomes expressed in quite divergent practices: in disputes in personal relations as well as in conflicts about identity politics and in academic discussions. Although multiple and different criteria are established in these diverse practices, through which respective relations of recognition are considered and problematized, the basic structure of these practices is nonetheless unitary: Recognition is always primarily actualized through the freedom that is attained in reflexive practices and from which individuals or groups are affirmed in the determinations of their actions. This applies to intimate relations as well as to social and political conflicts. For this reason it seems sensible to us to regard

the differentiation of the spheres of recognition that Honneth emphasizes as a more determinate specification of relations of recognition. In our view, however, this specification is not essential for the availability and existence of relations of recognition as such.

We can make our theses concerning the constitutive nexus between recognition and conflict more precise by contrasting them with related considerations put forth by Robert Brandom. Brandom (2007) argues that acts of recognition are related to commitments (which are in turn analyzable on his view in terms of obligations and entitlements) that people undertake in their respective actions. Brandom takes himself to be in the position of making sense of recognition without needing to have recourse to shared norms of recognition, but rather on the basis of individual interactions among persons. In so doing, he considers acts of recognition in terms of how they relate to the status of individuals who are committed in certain ways. Understood in this way, acts of recognition cannot claim to have the last word. They are instead essentially connected to the possibility of becoming themselves objects of affirmation and critique. In this manner, they themselves attain the status of bearing determinate commitments. Brandom thereby makes intelligible how relations of recognition form a complex network in which the different commitments of individuals, along with the determinateness of these commitments, are constituted within the framework of communal practices.

In our view, however, Brandom's elaboration of relations of recognition remains one-sided and incomplete. This is due to the fact that he does not properly conceptualize the authorship of acts of recognition. To be sure, he does refer to the *shared* status of being an author of acts of recognition. The status of being an author is realized within a communal context in the sense that all individuals are conceptualized as being transitively and symmetrically connected with one another in relations of recognition, with the consequence that a commitment can never be reduced to any conclusive factual recognition. This conception does not make intelligible, however, the extent to which acts of recognition are acts from freedom in the relevant sense. On Brandom's understanding, we can ascribe freedom to individuals only through their participation in communal practices. This, however, is not really freedom, but just another way of being obliged to conform in accordance with the norms of the community. (One could also say that the flawed views of shared norms of recognition examined above understand conformity in a material way, whereas Brandom understands it in a formal way.) Freedom can only be achieved when one is capable of taking a reflexive stance toward the relations of recognition in which one stands and when one is recognized in making relevant evaluations of them.

The nexus between recognition and commitment must, therefore, be conceived differently from the way Brandom does. Commitments are the results of recognized evaluations of relations of recognition and the norms that are realized in them. They only become conceptualized as aspects or moments of relations of recognition when these relations are understood as reflexively constituted, and

when this reflexivity is involved as an essential component of practices. Commitments, then, are the results of reflexive practices within which these commitments can also be considered and problematized.[23] We agree, therefore, that determinate acts of recognition can never have the last word in relation to determinate commitments. The justification for this thought does not have to do with how acts of recognition can in turn on any occasion be objects of further acts of recognition. What justifies this thought is rather that the individual who commits herself, and is recognized by others as being so committed, is capable of taking up a stance toward these commitments when recognition is realized. Recognition is constitutively connected with the capacity for conflict. Thus, it is not a coincidence in our view that conflicts do not play any role in Brandom's conception of recognition. This is all the more surprising since he takes his conception to be an interpretation of Hegel.

5. On the Institutionalization of Relations of Recognition

What are the implications of our conflict-oriented conception of recognition for the justification, role and structure of institutions that promote the realization of reflexive relations of recognition that are open to agents who can criticize and transform such relations? After Hegel, this question has always been answered by the positive conception of recognition along the following lines. According to prominent contemporary theorists of recognition like Honneth and Pippin, principles of recognition are realized under current conditions (albeit in a potentially one-sided or distorted way) in the institutions of liberal-capitalist society (paradigmatically, the family, the market and the state). Indeed, the ambivalence of Honneth's position shows up again with regard to the question of institutionalization. On the one hand, Honneth assumes that the strength of his theory of recognition in comparison with Hegel's consists in taking the spheres of recognition to be independent of concrete institutionalizations, thereby resisting the 'concretism' (Honneth 2003: 146) of Hegel's conception. On the other hand, and despite this putative strength, Honneth assumes that the spheres of recognition which he differentiates show up in certain institutions, so that he himself only partially avoids the charge of 'concretism' that he raises against Hegel.[24]

In our view an actual extension of Hegel's perspective can only be attained when we once again ask to which extent relations of recognition can be institutionalized in certain ways—i.e., to which extent the essentially conflictual and dynamic practices of recognition can be implemented in the more or less formalized and persistent state of social and political institutions. We submit that an answer to this question can be formulated as follows: Relations of recognition can only be institutionalized to the extent that the sort of reflection about and conflict over the norms that are bound up with these relations—norms that are put forward as rightfully binding in these relations—can themselves be institutionalized. The institutions that are usually identified following Hegel, however, do not necessarily satisfy this condition; and when they are actually realized at

all, they do so only partially. The family, the market and the state are institutions that are not necessarily, and in practice never more than in a very restricted way, connected with practices of reflection on the norms that are asserted in them. In this sense, Honneth is right: If one conceives relations of recognition on the basis of these institutions, these relations are concretized in a problematic way. One fails in so doing to discern the constitutive nexus between recognition and the capacity for conflict.

It is appropriate, therefore, to conceive other institutions or else raise other demands regarding the structures of institutions so that the reflexive moment of relations of recognition can come into its own. Such institutions are distinctive by enabling the carrying out of conflicts and facilitating the rise of a culture of 'reasonable dissent' in institutionalized procedures (cf. Tully 2004). The institutionalized process of confrontation, together with its procedural and substantive commitments and ascriptions of statuses (who is allowed in whose name to do what when and to speak in what manner), must be able to become itself the object of conflict. Institutions thus appear less as fixed social structures than as specific temporary states of an ongoing practice of institutionalization. But only institutions that reflect and instantiate this specific (social-)ontological and political character, and this also in a way that is internal to these institutions, can be understood as self-reflexive in the relevant sense. Institutions that perform a mediating function seem to us to be exemplary for what we have in mind here. Couples therapy and civil forums, as well as other less formal and more transitory practices of contestation (such as 'Occupy Wall Street') can be conceived as institutions in which relations of recognition are institutionalized. With regard to such institutions, one can always ask how exclusive or inclusive, as well as how hierarchical or egalitarian, they are, which possibilities of contestation they open up, and to what extent they take into account the possibility that individuals do not always have the vocabulary and social resources available that allow them to articulate their points of view adequately and effectively. Last but not least, conflicts over recognition are always also concerned with (institutional) answers to these questions.

Institutions that exhibit the characteristics in question not only take into account the nexus between recognition and the capacity for conflict in the sense that relations of recognition as such can be problematized and conflicts over them can be carried out. They also take this nexus into account by making it possible to always question and possibly determine anew both the way in which conflicts over recognition are carried out and the reflexive norms that regulate the occurrences of such conflicts. In other words, they do not merely react to contestations and novel determinations in the deficient mode of the 'hard heart'. If they do react in the latter fashion, however—and here we can follow Hegel one last time—this is already a sign of their unreasonableness and deterioration, and thereby of their failure as institutions (cf. Jaeggi 2009a).

If they are not to fail as institutions that effect relations of recognition, they must be able to transform themselves time and again. In the case of political institutions, this will often happen in reaction to the pressure exerted by

non-institutional political practices such as civil disobedience. For this reason, the relevant procedural mechanisms acquire a distinctive significance if they strengthen the capacity for conflict of agents by protecting and institutionalizing these agents' 'recognizable capacity to assert claims'.[25] In so doing, such mechanisms can defend the reflexivity of the order of recognition by fending off the normalizing and disciplining tendencies that can lead institutions to become rigid, develop an internal dynamics of their own, become detached from practice, succumb to reductive technical solutions for social coordination problems, and finally become depoliticized. Since the capacity for conflict and reflexivity can never be conclusively realized, last but not least because it always has to face this 'dialectic of institutionalization', the struggle for recognition can also never come to an end.[26]

Translated from the German by Jo-Jo Koo

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NOTES

[1] See Jaeggi (2009b) on why this distinction (opposition) is unsatisfactory. Regarding the distinction between conflictual and reconciliatory models of recognition that at least partially overlaps with the one between positive and negative theories, see also Celikates (2007).

[2] Although Honneth interprets recognition in terms of a perceptual rather than an attributive model and understands it as the appropriate reaction to the characteristics of a person, he still holds the view that these evaluative qualities can never be identified independently from historically developing orders of recognition. Both these characteristics as well as their realization in the autonomous life of a person are thus socially constituted (cf. Honneth 2002).

[3] Accordingly, forms of misrecognition have to be distinguished by whether they harm the basic practical identity of agents (their capacity for reflection) or 'only' impair the possibility of agents to live their lives as fully recognized individuals.

[4] In Georg Simmel's theory of conflict, to which Honneth also refers, one can find corresponding considerations that understand conflict as a basic form of social relations (and thus not as a break with these relations). See Simmel (1999 [1908]: Chapter 4, esp. section 4).

[5] We are indebted to an anonymous referee for pointing out this important aspect of our discussion of the concept of recognition.

[6] Regarding the complexity of Rousseau's position, see Neuhouser (2008).

[7] This term signifies precisely the entanglement, as captured and expressed in Foucault's concept of '*assujetissement*', between becoming (or being made into) a subject and subjugation.

[8] Butler describes the identification with what we experience as limiting with reference to Wendy Brown's notion of 'wounded attachment' (cf. also Deines 2007).

[9] See especially the three points of criticism distinguished in Jaeggi (2009b): (1) The negative theory of recognition seems ultimately to presuppose a romantic understanding of *authentic subjectivity* (whereas one should hold on to the basic assumption of intersubjectivity). (2) Such a theory conceives *freedom and determinateness* as mutually exclusive (whereas, following Hegel, freedom as such is only conceivable in a dialectic of determinateness and indeterminateness, within which subjects must be able to take a potentially distantiating stance toward what determines them). Finally, (3) such a theory also leads to an *ontologization* of relations of recognition (whereas these relations should be understood precisely as practical relations, hence as dynamic practices and not as a fixed and homogenous order with which subjects must fall into line, if they wish to be recognized at all).

[10] See Althusser (1971). Butler inherits this problem in certain respects not only from Althusser but also from Foucault (cf. Allen 2006).

[11] Butler is thus vulnerable to a criticism that she herself once raised against Pierre Bourdieu's theory and its structuralist tendencies (see Butler 1999).

[12] With this point of entry, we pass over the famous fourth chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in which Hegel elaborates the foundations of his understanding of recognition. As a crucial element of this foundation, recognition is conceived as a reciprocal phenomenon, which in turn is only possible (or so Hegel argues) where individuals share norms in practices involving one another. Hegel's discussion of the realization of recognition begins for this reason with 'ethical life' (*Sittlichkeit*) (see Bertram 2008).

[13] Hegel thus conceives ethical life as a practice in which only a first moment of the structure of recognition is actualized: 'For self-consciousness, there is another self-consciousness; self-consciousness has come *outside itself*' (Hegel 2008: section 179; translation slightly modified).

[14] Hegel conceives such a knowledge as the second moment of the structure of recognition, which is not realized in a customary ethical (*sittliche*) practice: 'It [self-consciousness] must sublate its *otherness*' (Hegel 2008: section 180).

[15] Accordingly, in Hegel's elaboration of conflict 'confession' (*Eingeständnis*) plays a central role; (cf. Hegel 2008: sections 632–71, esp. 665ff).

[16] For Hegel, art, religion and philosophy are reflexive practices that bring about this sort of explicitation in different ways. An instance of this already occurs in Hegel's interpretation of the tragedy of Antigone. Sophocles's tragedy brings about a reflection on a pre-classical conflict within the context of ethical life, a reflection that leads in turn to a conception of how, in certain respects, such a conflict can be carried out in the classical era (as a theatrically presented and reflected conflict).

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[17] The status of being an author of acts of recognition is thus (to speak in Robert Pippin's terms) a 'practical achievement' (Pippin 2011: 15). It is the highest act of a 'self-positing' (ibid.: 85) from Hegel's perspective.

[18] The 'hard heart' does not thereby bring about the third moment that is constitutive of relations of recognition according to Hegel's elaboration: 'However, . . . it likewise gives the other self-consciousness back to itself, since it existed for itself in the other, but it sublates *its* being in the other, and it thus set the other free again' (Hegel 2008: section 181).

[19] Such a stance of individual *A* (her assertion that she does not see herself recognized through a determinate action) is conceived formally, Hegel thinks, as a recognition of the recognition of individual *B*: Individual *B* is recognized as someone who is capable of representing a definite perspective on his part and thus in this sense capable of recognizing others (as those who confront his perspective). For this reason, Hegel characterizes the stance of individual *A* in terms of the concept of 'confession' (Hegel 2008: section 667): Whoever 'confesses' in this sense recognizes the perspective of another on his or her own doing.

[20] For this reason Hegel takes the stance of a hard heart to be that of someone who does not respond or agree to a reflexive utterance or expression with regard to relations of recognition; he describes such a stance as 'the highest rebellion of the self-certain spirit' (Hegel 2008: section 667).

[21] Pippin (2000) has especially emphasized this way of thinking in his interpretation. Pippin's own explication of this nexus of recognition and freedom is faced, however, with the problem that he determines freedom in terms of the status of free agents and then conceives such a status as a socially instituted status among others (e.g., that of being a professor of philosophy). What it means precisely to be free, however, in relation to socially established statuses and norms is not made intelligible (cf. also O'Connor 2012).

[22] Our way of putting this thought may seem circular: Indeed, we take freedom to be both a precondition of recognition and realized in recognition. But in our view this is not a vicious circle. Individuals can only be free in a complex practice that includes reflexive practices and thereby presupposes their freedom; recognition and freedom are thus understood as co-constituting or 'equi-originary'.

[23] Brandom does not analyze the nexus between recognition and reflection in a satisfactory way: He conceives reflection as the subjective production of self-consciousness in connection with relations of recognition in which a subject stands—i.e., as self-recognition (cf. Brandom 2007). The reflexivity of recognition cannot be made intelligible, however, in terms of self-recognition. As presented above, this reflexivity must instead be made intelligible in terms of the evaluation of relations of recognition. Recognition is reflexive when other people's acts of recognizing become themselves objects of recognition—hence, when there can be disputes and conflicts about the norms of recognition, how they are realized, etc.

[24] This objection can also be raised against Honneth's view in Honneth (2011: esp. part C).

[25] This is a phrase of Joel Feinberg, which is quoted in Honneth (1996: 120).

[26] For comments on earlier versions of this paper we are grateful to the participants in a summer course on recognition in Rot an der Rot and Georg W. Bertram's colloquium at the Free University of Berlin. We would also like to thank an anonymous reviewer for this journal as well as our translator, Jo-Jo Koo, for helpful suggestions.

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