

The struggle for recognition and the authority of the second person

Thomas Khurana 

Department of Philosophy, University of
Potsdam, Potsdam, Germany

Correspondence

Thomas Khurana, Department of Philosophy,
University of Potsdam, Am Neuen Palais 10,
14469 Potsdam, Germany.
Email: khurana@uni-potsdam.de

Funding information

Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung, Grant/
Award Number: Humboldt-Kolleg; American
Friends of the Alexander von Humboldt
Foundation; Deutsche
Forschungsgemeinschaft, Grant/Award
Number: Heisenberg Grant / 344603747;
Kempf Memorial Fund

Abstract

In this introductory paper, I discuss the second-personal approach to ethics and the theory of recognition as two accounts of the fundamental sociality of the human form of life. The first section delineates the deep affinities between the two approaches. They both put a reciprocal social constellation front and center from which they derive the fundamental norms of moral and social life and a social conception of freedom. The second section discusses three points of contrast between the two approaches: The accounts differ in that the second-personal approach opts for a narrower conception of recognition focusing on mutual moral accountability, whereas recognition theory suggests a broader conception including relations of love, respect, and esteem. Secondly, the accounts differ as to how they conceive of the interrelation of the I-thou and the I-We relationship. Finally, they differ with regard to the way they think of struggles for recognition. Whereas the second-personal approach suggests that we can understand struggles on the basis of a transcendental infrastructure of second-personal address, the theory of recognition considers norms of recognition as themselves constituted by dialectical social struggles. The paper closes with a reflection on the ways in which both approaches can help us understand the social vulnerability of the human form of life.

This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and no modifications or adaptations are made.

© 2021 The Authors. *European Journal of Philosophy* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

It seems undeniable that the human form of life is essentially social. It is not immediately obvious, however, just what this sociality consists in. Maybe it means that human beings are more acutely aware of other human beings and take them into consideration as active forces to be reckoned with. Maybe it means that they do not just take them into account as obstacles but make active use of them as a means to attain whatever it is that they, individually, have set their mind to. Maybe it even means that they imitate and adopt modes of behavior observed in others and thus only become who they are by means of others. Whether it is observation, instrumentalization or imitation, however, in the description of all these cases, we tend to presume a given individual agent and confine ourselves to considering how such an agent may be affected by or make use of its social environment in the pursuit of its ends and in the formation of its own agency.

But saying that the human form of life is *essentially* social arguably has to mean something more. It must mean that we have to understand to what extent individuals are not just conditioned by a social context but *constituted by* and *individuated by* their social relations. We thus have to turn to shared activities and social transactions that cannot be understood as the sum of solitary individual acts but are irreducibly social. Attending to the fundamental significance of these types of social activities, it transpires that what the term “human being” designates is not an individual, intelligible in separation from others, however regularly it may interact with them. Rather, the human being is its social relation to others. In that sense, there is no human “I” without “You.” This is an idea that the philosophical tradition has expressed in many different ways: by the thought that “if there are to be human beings at all, there must be more than one,” to quote J.G. Fichte (2000, p. 37); by the idea that self-consciousness “only is ... for another self-consciousness” and that “the human being ... is recognition,” as G.W.F. Hegel has it (2018, ¶175, ¶177, ¶178; Hegel, 1987, p. 197–98), or by the notion that “persons essentially are second persons,” to quote Annette Baier (1985, p. 84).

The contributions in this special issue are concerned with bringing this fundamental and thoroughgoing sociality of human existence into view. They share the sense that what defines this fundamental sociality is not mere consideration, instrumentalization, or imitation; it is a form of social *address* or *relation* by means of which we first constitute ourselves as members of “this complicated form of life” we call human (Wittgenstein, 1999, p. 174). The two important strands of the recent discussion that have elaborated this view and are connected in this special issue have characterized this mode of social relatedness more precisely as that of a *second-personal relation* and of *mutual recognition*.¹ According to these two respective frameworks, the distinctive character of human sociality comes to the fore in the way in which human beings address and relate to others in the second person, as well as in the way in which human beings do not just observe, or treat, or handle each other, but recognize one another in thought, speech, and action. The relation of the second person and the relation of recognition are both *essentially* social in that both imply a reciprocal relation.² In addressing you second-personally, I claim a basic second-personal competence and authority that I have to attribute to you as well, in order for it to make sense to address myself to you (Darwall, 2006). In addition, I need to presume that you recognize the authority and competence I claim for myself, while I also aim to move you to acknowledge that, in demanding something of you, I do not one-sidedly impose my will but recognize your own basic authority and competence. I thus have to grasp myself as the second person of the second person. Similarly, if I seek your recognition, then this presupposes that I recognize you as being capable of and in a position to recognize me. And attaining your recognition is only completed in my recognizing you as recognizing me. Neither one of us, that is, can “recognize the other, if [we] both do not mutually recognize each other” (Fichte, 2000, p. 42).

Built into the structure of second-personal address and of recognition is thus a fundamental reciprocity, equality, and unity of the participants included in this relation. And according to the two approaches connected here, this reciprocity, equality, and unity concern our status as free and authoritative members of the moral community or as full participants in a distinctively human form of life. What we mutually accord to one another by relating to each other second-personally and by recognizing one another is our competence and authority, our rationality and freedom, or, put both more simply and more broadly, our humanity.

By drawing on the structure of the second-person standpoint and the struggle for recognition, the approaches discussed below argue, we can thus rethink the very foundations of moral and political philosophy and rearticulate their fundamental concepts. Any address of second-personal reasons, whatever its specific content and however prosaic, carries with it presuppositions that “commit addresser and addressee alike to ... equal dignity of persons and to morality as a form of mutual accountability” (Darwall, 2006, p. 81), so that the basic concepts of morality are contained in the mere form of second-personal address. Based on the concept of mutual recognition, on the other hand, we can see that the justice of a social order is not simply a function of the distribution of goods to its individual participants, but a function of the modes of interpersonal recognition it institutes. Social and political justice, thus, is not simply a matter of redistribution but of overcoming structural forms of disrespect and misrecognition (Honneth, 2004; Honneth, 2015): “our notion of justice is...linked to how, and as what, subjects mutually recognize each other” (Honneth, 2005, p. 44).

Finally, both discussions suggest that considering the second-person standpoint and the structures of recognition provides us with a different conception of freedom: a *social* conception of freedom according to which freedom is not a mysterious causal property of individual wills, but something I have in virtue of my relation to you and you have in virtue of your relation to me (Strawson, 1968). Freedom is thus reconceived as a mode of “being with oneself in the other” (Hegel, 1986, §7Z, p. 57). It is no wonder then that both approaches take participation in second-personal address and in relations of mutual recognition not to be optional for the kinds of beings that we are, but as constitutive of human existence. As Strawson puts it, the commitment to the participant's stance of interpersonal attitudes is “part of the general framework of human life, not something that can come up for review” (Strawson, 1968, p. 84).

In this way, the two general approaches discussed here turn to second-personal address and mutual recognition to offer a new take on the very normative foundations of moral and political life. Their current significance, however, also has to do with the fact that they articulate these foundations in ways that directly relate to present moral, social, and cultural struggles—struggles confronting structural forms of inequalities and oppression that manifest themselves in social hierarchies and differential treatment, structural violence and social exclusion, forms of misrecognition and denial along dividing lines including race, class, culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and ability. Not all of us are heard or taken seriously or addressed or recognized equally, something we would like to ignore or deny but still “cannot just not know” (cf. Cavell, 2003, p. 191). The approaches discussed below help elucidate how fundamental such injustice and violation is. It does not consist in just wronging someone by violating a distinct claim they may be entitled to but in withholding full acknowledgment of their humanity. In turn, facing these forms of structural inequality and oppression, the two approaches discussed here are confronted with the challenge of explaining to what extent claims to mutual accountability and recognition can help overcome forms of inequality and oppression or may in fact remain complicit with them. Given how deeply inequality and oppression have sunk into our epistemic and practical attitudes, as well as into our social and political institutions (cf. Fricker, 2007; Medina, 2013), it is conceivable that the apparent mutuality of our relations does not rectify but merely masks our deeper inequality. Addressing myself to you second-personally and thereby generally granting you a formal authority and competence may thus be a way to gloss over the hierarchical, unequal, and irrevocably one-sided relation I maintain with you, masked by our formal equality. And to the extent “that public recognition is a common mechanism of all forms of ideology,” a “critical theory of society that seeks to locate its normative foundation in the act of reciprocal recognition” has to confront the challenge that recognition may “take on the function of securing domination” (Honneth, 2007, p. 324).

2 |

The specific task of this special issue is to bring these two recent approaches into dialogue with each other. Despite the deep affinities between the core ideas of these two approaches just indicated, they have up to now rarely

interacted. Bringing these two approaches into closer contact helps to define them more clearly and to understand, by virtue of their contrast, the different options and challenges that are in play. On the other hand, it also allows us to uncover ways in which these approaches can offer resources to each other for developing their views further, extending them to different fields and maybe overcoming some of their own internal difficulties. Confronting the second-person standpoint and the struggle for recognition can thus uncover unexpected points of contact and surprising ways in which the various conceptions of the second-personal, bipolar, relational character of morality and the various conceptions of recognition can complement one another. Exploring these connections also allows us to identify unexpected connections between the anglophone and continental philosophical traditions in the background of these two discussions, connecting Strawson and Hegel, Anscombe and Fichte, Baier and Arendt.

Let me briefly indicate three general points of contrast between the two approaches that play a role in the exchanges collected in this special issue. Firstly, where the discussion of the second-person standpoint and related approaches on bipolar or relational normativity primarily aim to make a contribution to moral philosophy, the theory of recognition primarily aims to make a contribution to social and political philosophy.³ The first approach delineates a second-personal relation and aims to derive from it the fundamental normative principles of moral accountability; the second approach identifies multiple societal spheres of recognition and their respective normative principles needed to enable just and flourishing forms of human co-existence. The difference regarding the area of primary concern here is less important, however, than the resulting difference in view of the kind of reciprocal social interrelation the approaches are interested in. The second-personal approach is not concerned with just any kind of address between I and Thou but only with the address of a *second-personal reason*, that is, with me making a putatively legitimate claim to someone else that involves us in a situation of *mutual accountability*. According to this relation, I owe the other “recognition respect” (Darwall, 1977), acknowledging their second-personal competence and authority, but I do not owe them loving appreciation of their particular needs, social esteem of their specific achievements or contributions, or an acknowledgment of their individuality and singularity. Honneth's theory of recognition on the other hand distinguishes three types of mutual recognition—love, respect, and esteem—and argues that full human self-realization requires recognition in all these dimensions. “What the subject seeks ... through recognition” therefore ultimately is, as Robert Stern puts it, “to be seen for who they are, as complete individuals—where this is wider than their second-personal competence and authority (Darwall's recognition respect) or their status and standing (his appraisal respect)” (Stern, 2021, p. 11). Recognition is thus not solely recognition of universal equality—be it equality in terms of equal accountability or in some other register—but also includes recognition of difference and individuality, to which each and every one of us is equally entitled.⁴ It thus appears that the two frameworks suggest fundamentally different views of the kind of recognition and respect constitutive of our social existence. According to the Hegelian line, not only do we have to acknowledge a plurality of forms of recognition; it is even part of the account that the “acknowledgment of quasi-judicial rights and claims” (Wallace, 2021, p. 6) constituted by the moral nexus has to be superseded in view of a higher form of ethical recognition (cf. Stern, 2021). The second-personal approach, on the other hand, insists that the more defined relation of individual moral accountability is primary and defines the kind of interpersonal recognition we can actually expect and demand (Darwall, 2021a; Wallace, 2021).⁵ As R. Jay Wallace puts it: the ideal of recognition is “not a foundational idea in its own right, so much as an element within a broader conception of the relational structure of the moral norms that link moral persons with each other” (Wallace, 2021, p. 2).

A second point of contrast is the question of the interrelation of the I-thou and the I-We relation. The theory of recognition introduces the dependence of human self-consciousness on the second person and its dependence on a collective “We” in one and the same stroke, which highlights the complex interrelation between the I-thou and the I-We relation. The kind of interpersonal relation that is needed to enable human self-consciousness on Hegel's account is a form of reciprocal cognitive relation in which not only do I recognize you and you recognize me, but, further, we recognize *each other* as recognizing *each other*. To be recognized, therefore, does not just require the second person, but a shared “We” uniting the first and the second person. Looking on the relation from the other side, we can say that for the actualization of the concept of spirit—according to Hegel's famous slogan: “the I that is We and the We that is I” (Hegel, 2018, ¶177)—the respective “We” has to be articulated in terms of I-thou relationships.

The relation of “I” and “We” is not the relation between a particular instantiation and its universal concept. Rather, the shared “We” requires that there are different, distinguishable “I”s in relation to one another which each have a general claim to articulating what it is that “We” do. That also means that “We” is a fundamentally contested matter: it is only accessible through my and your “claims to community” (Cavell, 1979, p. 20).

The second-personal approach does not highlight the role of the shared “We” uniting you and me to the same extent, but it would be mistaken to suggest that it has no place for it (Darwall, 2021b). By relating to you second-personally, I attribute to you a basic competence and authority that we *share* and thus through my address make reference to, or constitute, a community with you. However, this community is, on Darwall's account, *the* moral community solely established by the fact that we confront each other as second persons (Darwall, 2021b). The recognitional approach, on the other hand, thinks that we have to bring into view more concrete and substantive communities on the basis of which we can first encounter each other as “I” and “You” and which we in turn re-articulate and reshape through our interpersonal exchanges. On Honneth's account (Honneth, 2021a), these more substantive and specific communities which enable our second-personal encounters are not only relevant because we cannot derive substantive moral norms solely from the second-personal framework alone (a version of the empty formalism charge)⁶ but also because attending to those communities makes clear that we cannot neatly separate our basic equality as persons from the asymmetries and inequalities of our substantive roles. In relations of mutual recognition both are at issue, allowing us to raise the question as to whether the hierarchical nature of some of our substantive relations may be incompatible with the equality of our fundamental recognitive status.⁷

Finally, a third contrast concerns the fundamental significance of struggle and conflict in the elaboration of the concept of the mutual relation each approach focuses on. The second-person standpoint elaborates a circle of moral concepts that are co-constitutive and of which Darwall contends that “there is no way to break into this circle from outside it” (Darwall, 2006, p. 12). The analysis accordingly proceeds in a transcendental manner, elucidating the necessary presuppositions of addressing second-personal reasons. By doing so, it uncovers the necessary attribution of shared competence and authority and thus reveals a normative presupposition that is part of every form of address of second-personal reasons, whatever the specific content. Now, we will often address second-personal reasons without fully understanding and acknowledging that we have thereby granted a shared, equal, basic authority and have thus made our own authority dependent on its acknowledgment from a shared standpoint of equal, basic authority, even where we claim a superior authority in a specific matter or role. It is quite conceivable that where we fail to acknowledge this a “struggle for recognition” will ensue, aiming to hold us to account and forcing us to acknowledge the authority and competence we ourselves have inadvertently granted. Yet, the second-personal approach does not regard it as its primary task to account for the specific form of such struggles, but rather focuses on first drawing out the normative presuppositions of any address of putatively legitimate claims.

The recognitional approach that is being discussed below, however, directly focuses on struggles for recognition. It does so because it takes the relation of mutual recognition itself to be the product of such a struggle. It is, therefore, concerned with the way in which we actually enter the circle of concepts elaborated by the second-personal standpoint and, more importantly, by the fact that the actual realization of this circle of concepts is capable of always giving rise to new struggles that transform their concrete character. The struggle for recognition thus characterizes both the genesis and the actuality of the constellation of mutual recognition. Characterizing how the concept of recognition first appears and develops, Hegel describes a “struggle of recognition”—a struggle of life and death—that finds a first, failed resolution in the relation of master and slave, a one-sided and unequal structure of recognition.⁸ Characterizing the reality of recognition in terms of institutionalized structures of mutual recognition in the realm of the family, civil society, and political life, we are confronted with further conflictual “struggles for recognition” concerning the very terms, forms, and limits of recognition. The struggle is thus first conceived as the generative medium of the very notion of mutual recognition, such that mutual recognition gains its validity from, and has to be understood in view of the way it overcomes a one-sided recognition. Secondly, the kind of mutual recognition thus reached is itself understood as the basis for further struggles about the very terms and forms this mutual recognition should take. Thirdly, in this struggle about the terms, forms, and limits of recognition, there is always the shadow of

the original struggle in which recognition as such was contested with the attendant possibility of the relation breaking down or reverting to an asymmetrical resolution falling short of recognition. To capture this complex struggle, the theory of recognition proceeds not by means of a transcendental analysis of presuppositions of a given relation of mutual recognition. Rather, it has to develop the concept of recognition dialectically and genetically.

3 |

Let me now give a brief overview of the contributions to this special issue that explore these three contrasts in productive ways. In their two papers and responses, Stephen Darwall (2021a, 2021b) and Axel Honneth (2021a, 2021b) directly engage with each other's work extensively for the first time and propose different ways of thinking about the relations of the theory of recognition and the second-person standpoint. Darwall characterizes both projects as complementary, defining the theory of recognition as an explanatory theory of social and political change and his own endeavor as a foundational theory of moral and political normativity. Against this background, the second-personal theory of morality can provide a normative vindication of the theory of recognition that this theory arguably does not provide for itself. From Darwall's perspective, Honneth's endeavor can in turn help us apply the second-person account to nonideal conditions and contribute to our understanding of how the structures of second-personal accountability become operative in struggles for recognition. In his own contribution and reply, Honneth in turn insists that his theory of recognition is not meant as a merely explanatory social theory but provides its own normative account. He suggests that, on the level of normative theory, Darwall's and his own account disagree in two fundamental ways. The first disagreement is about the ways in which the I-Thou relation is dependent on the substantive norms of a shared We. By appealing to you second-personally, that is, I rely on what we share above and beyond the mere fact that we relate to one another second-personally. The second disagreement concerns the conflictual character of our interpersonal relations. Accounting for our shared community requires reflecting on its contested character by attending to the struggles for recognition that produce, challenge, and transform the nature of this shared "We." Two important sources for these struggles are social inequality and personal individuality.

Darwall's and Honneth's exchange is followed by two contributions by Terry Pinkard and Robert Stern that consider the extent to which Hegel's recognitional account of the sociality of the human life form can be considered as second-personal, one contribution by Sebastian Rödl reflecting on Fichte's conception of recognition and the second person, and two contributions by R. Jay Wallace and Carla Bagnoli in turn reflecting on the way in which the bipolar approach to morality relates to recognition.

Terry Pinkard suggests that explaining the sociality of human agency often makes use of the notion of a "game of recognitional tag." This model, however, is confronted with the problem that it either cannot show how that game can get off the ground in the first place or has to presuppose a given agency that enables the respective agents to enter such a game. Pinkard discusses two models, one he attributes to Fichte and Darwall, one exemplified by Brandom, that on his account both ultimately fall short. He presents Hegel as offering a third way, giving up the idea of a game of recognitional tag and instead elucidating the sociality of agency in terms of our participation in a social practice that involves a social struggle about the very form of this practice. To understand this struggle, we have to grasp the specific interplay between two levels of sociality, the I-thou and the I-We relation.

Robert Stern questions the extent to which recognition in Hegel is, in fact, a mutual recognition of moral authority and accountability, as the framework of the second person would suggest. Even the initial struggle of recognition that ends in the relation of master and slave can be understood as not being a struggle over authority, as is usually presumed. More importantly, the real resolution of the struggle for recognition in the scene of forgiveness depends on a mutual recognition not of each other's moral authority but of the limit of each other's accountability. My true connection to the other is thus won not by reasserting myself as the other's judge or acknowledging him as my judge; it is rather won by relinquishing the hard heart and acknowledging in mutual forgiveness our moral finitude.

Recognition, it thus appears, is not simply a matter of giving each what is due but an experience of mutuality beyond what is owed.

Sebastian Rödl develops Fichte's thought that "a freely acting individual is her relation to every other freely acting individual" (Rödl, 2021, p. 1). Fichte has special significance for the encounter of second-personal and recognitional approaches as he is a main figure of reference in both discourses. As Rödl points out, Fichte helps us avoid two equally unsatisfying ways of thinking the sociality of human existence that the debate still oscillates between. This sociality can neither be understood in terms of the internal projection of a given individual self-consciousness (a conception that arguably remains monological) nor in terms of the additive external co-ordination of two self-conscious beings (however dialogical that may look). Rather, the second-personal relation has to be understood on the basis of an original division of self-consciousness.⁹

Finally, R. Jay Wallace and Carla Bagnoli reflect on ways in which relational conceptions of morality relate to the theory of recognition. Wallace argues that an attractive conception of interpersonal recognition falls out of his own conception of the moral nexus. This is a form of recognition that has deep affinities with the second form of recognition as specified in Honneth's theory of recognition. Whereas Wallace sees a role for the other registers of intersubjective appreciation of love and esteem as well, he considers interpersonal recognition to be primary. With regard to this notion of interpersonal recognition, he then considers the hypothesis that mutual recognition, understood as a valuable form of human relationship, is not just a correlate of the moral nexus but may have a more fundamental role in actually providing moral norms with their "reason giving force" (Scanlon, 1999, chap. 4, sec. 5). While he rejects the notion that recognition is the driving force first moving us to enter into moral relationships, recognition can make an indirect contribution from within the moral standpoint, helping to vindicate the reason-giving force of moral norms.

Carla Bagnoli finally returns us to Strawson's "Freedom and Resentment," an important background text for most relational and second-personal accounts of morality. Whereas Strawson's notion of the participant's stance is of chief importance for these attempts by articulating a constellation of mutual moral accountability, Bagnoli draws attention to Strawson's distinction between a participant's stance and an objective attitude toward another human being, seeing her as an "object of social policy" and "a subject for what might be called treatment" (Strawson, 1968, p. 79). As Strawson points out, the objective stance is not just adopted in exceptional cases, but can be understood as a resource in other cases too, accessible from within the practical stance: "we *can* sometimes look with something like the same eye on the behavior of the normal and the mature" (Strawson, 1968, p. 80). This points us to ways in which the objective stance can be employed for strategic reasons. As Bagnoli develops, the divide between the two stances thus is a matter of contestation and negotiation, giving rise to a "complex dynamics of recognition through which the boundaries of the moral community are negotiated" (Bagnoli, 2021, p. 2). Attending to this divide can therefore give us new resources for understanding the struggle for recognition and shine a light on oppressive forms of withholding reactive attitudes and of neutralizing others by objectifying them.

4 |

Drawing on insights from both approaches, we can see that the fundamental sociality of human existence manifests itself in a peculiar vulnerability. It is a programmatic feature of the theory of recognition to focus on experiences of disrespect, humiliation, and misrecognition in order to identify the pathological distortions of recognitive institutions in contemporary society. Interestingly, the second-personal approach is also deeply informed by attention to normative injury. One class of examples informing this account are reactive attitudes that respond to a moral injury and reflect the force with which it affects the will of the afflicted party. Both approaches thus reveal that the fundamental role of sociality for human life involves an immediacy and depth of interpersonal involvement that also means that we can be immediately touched and hurt by other minds. From within the participant's stance we are, as Strawson makes clear, capable of being touched or hurt by a mere attitude or intention toward us, and we can directly respond

in kind: by taking a reactive attitude.¹⁰ From within the participant's stance, it thus seems that we possess a remarkable “capacity for the meeting of minds” (McDowell, 1984, p. 351), our “two consciousnesses are unified into one” (Fichte, 2000, p. 42), giving rise to a “unity [of self-consciousness] in its reduplication” (Hegel, 2018, ¶178).

The fact that the “problem of other minds” in some sense always already seems to be solved here, however, does not mean that the relation between you and me is one of agreement, harmony, or transparency. It just means that the discord that may arise between us concerns and hits me directly, without filter, and without the option of relegating its source to some external quarter that cannot touch me. If the other is a condition of my self-consciousness, how the other addresses me or turns away from me concerns my very existence. This already becomes evident in our capacity to be hurt by nothing else than a mere glance. It becomes even more acute where someone does not merely look at me disparagingly but in a more fundamental sense withholds acknowledgment of my status as a second person—withholds acknowledgment of my humanity. This is a violation that is not just painful but can also be stifling, as it questions my ability to feel pain of the same sort or in the same way as the other. One cannot withhold the acknowledgment of the other's humanity without thereby also mutilating oneself. And yet, we do it more often than we would like to admit. Avoidance of the acknowledgment of this violation is a chief part of it. “It is the innocence which constitutes the crime,” as James Baldwin so aptly put it (Baldwin, 1962).

So it seems that it is part of our essential sociality that we are capable of and feel moved to deny this sociality, deny it to others as well as to ourselves: “Nothing is more human,” Cavell writes in *The Claim of Reason*, “than the wish to deny one's humanity or to assert it at the expense of others” (Cavell, 1979, p. 109). Finding resources that help us confront and dissolve at least some forms of such denial is an urgent task. I hope that you will agree that the approaches discussed below can be instructive in various ways in identifying what confronting this task will require.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Most of the contributions in this special issue were first presented and discussed at a Humboldt-Kolleg on “The Struggle for Recognition and the Authority of the Second Person” at the Whitney Humanities Center, Yale University in September 2018. I am deeply grateful to the Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation, the Kempf Memorial Fund, and the American Friends of the Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation for their generous support of this conference. Work on this special issue was further supported by my DFG-Heisenberg Grant. Many thanks to Robert Stern and Matthew Congdon for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of the introduction. Finally, I would like to thank the many participants and discussants at the Humboldt-Kolleg, as well as numerous anonymous referees that have helped shape this special issue. Open Access funding enabled and organized by Projekt DEAL.

ORCID

Thomas Khurana  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3149-3787>

ENDNOTES

¹ Both terms are used in a broad manner in the following. The “second-personal” strand of the discussion I am pointing to obviously includes Darwall's proposal of the same name, but is meant to extend to other related and competing proposals developing the relational or bipolar character of morality as well (as e.g., R. Jay Wallace's approach in *The Moral Nexus*; on the differences between Darwall and Wallace see Wallace, 2007, 2019, p. 238; Darwall, 2007, 2013). Similarly, the “recognition approach” mentioned above obviously includes Axel Honneth's extensive theory of recognition, but is also meant to extend to other related and competing post-Hegelian approaches.

² I do not mean to argue here that any essentially social relation is necessarily reciprocal, but merely suggest that reciprocity is one type of relation that is irreducibly social, and that the two considered approaches put this front and center. This is meant to leave room for the debate about the role and importance of dissymmetric social relations, either understood as in some way internal to or as to be distinguished from the kinds of relations that are here being analyzed as reciprocal. In connection to alterity, hospitality, care, gift etc. see Mauss, 2016; Lévinas, 1969; Løgstrup, 2020; Derrida, 1999, 2006.

- ³ However, as Darwall's contribution below (Darwall, 2021a) makes clear, he considers his second-personal account to be relevant to both ideal and non-ideal theories of justice as well. Honneth, on the other hand, has suggested that the issue of recognition endows social conflicts with a "moral grammar" (Honneth, 1996) and has also presented his conception of recognition as a contribution to moral philosophy (Honneth, 2005). In that sense the contrast between the two approaches only concerns the *primary* home of their respective notions.
- ⁴ See Taylor (1992); compare also Arendt (1958, p. 176): "In man, otherness, which he shares with everything that is, and distinctness, which he shares with everything alive, become uniqueness, and human plurality is the paradoxical plurality of unique beings... Speech and action reveal this unique distinctness. Through them, men distinguish themselves instead of being merely distinct; they are the modes in which human beings appear to *each other*, not indeed as physical objects, but qua men."
- ⁵ It is an interesting fact that Strawson's own consideration of reactive attitudes, which plays such a huge role for the second-personal approach, is itself not restricted to the realm of moral accountability. As he himself characterizes it, it concerns a broader set of phenomena reflecting our attitudes of "love," "respect," and "esteem" towards one another, manifested in affection or indifference, goodwill or malevolence, esteem or contempt (Strawson, 1968, p. 68), in direct correspondence to the three forms of recognition Honneth identifies in the early Hegel. This raises the question of whether the second-personal approach can be extended to a broader set of I-thou relationships beyond relations of mutual moral accountability. See Darwall's recent attempts at expanding his account to include love, trust, and gratitude as second-personal relations in the broader sense; cf. e.g. Darwall (2016).
- ⁶ Note that in his contribution below Terry Pinkard (2021) suggests a reverse form-matter contrast regarding the articulation of the I-thou and the I-We relation: the "'I-We' relation is, following Hegel, the apperceptive *form* of Geist, whereas the *content* of Geist is filled in, at least at first, by 'I-You' relations" (Pinkard, 2021, p. 6, my emphasis).
- ⁷ This is an issue that could also be explored further vis-à-vis the second-personal approach which interestingly often elucidates the equal and basic second-personal authority and competence we share against the background of an unequal social authority, as e.g. in the relation of sergeant and private (Darwall, 2006, pp. 12, 60, 80, 125, 259ff.; cf. also Darwall's discussion of slavery: 2006, pp. 263ff.)
- ⁸ For the intricate relation of life and recognition at this juncture, see Khurana (2017, §§90-95; Khurana, 2021).
- ⁹ On a related discussion of the monological or dialogical character of Darwall's second-personal approach cf. Korsgaard (2007) and Darwall (2007).
- ¹⁰ Cf. on this point Løgstrup's striking comment on the way our mere attitude to the other affects their world (2020, p. 17-18): "By our mere attitude to one another, we take part in giving shape to each other's world. Through my attitude to the other person, I play a part in determining the breadth and colour that the other person's world has for them. I play a part in making it broad or narrow, light or dark, varied or dull—and not least I play a part in making it threatening or secure. This comes about not through theories and views, but through my mere attitude. This is why there is an unspoken, and one might say anonymous, demand on us that we take care of the life that trust puts in our hands."

REFERENCES

- Arendt, H. (1958). *The human condition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Bagnoli, C. (2021). The objective stance and the boundary problem. *European Journal of Philosophy*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12678>
- Baier, A. (1985). Cartesian persons. In *Postures of the mind: Essays on mind and morals* (pp. 74–92). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Baldwin, J. (1962). A letter to my nephew. *The Progressive*. Dec 1, 1962. <https://progressive.org/magazine/letter-nephew/>
- Cavell, S. (1979). *The claim of reason: Wittgenstein, skepticism, morality, and tragedy*. New York, NY/Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Cavell, S. (2003). *Disowning knowledge in seven plays of Shakespeare*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Darwall, S. (1977). Two kinds of respect. *Ethics*, 88, 36–49.
- Darwall, S. (2006). *The second-person standpoint: Morality, respect, and accountability*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Darwall, S. (2007). Reply to Korsgaard, Wallace, and Watson. *Ethics*, 118(1), 52–69.
- Darwall, S. (2013). Bipolar obligation. In *Morality, authority, and law: Essays in second-personal ethics I* (pp. 20–39). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Darwall, S. (2016). Love's second-personal character: Holding, beholding, and upholding. In E. Kroeker & K. Schaubroeck (Eds.), *Love, reason, and morality* (pp. 93–109). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Darwall, S. (2021a). Recognition, second-personal authority, and nonideal theory. *European Journal of Philosophy*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12674>

- Darwall, S. (2021b). Reply to Honneth. *European Journal of Philosophy*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12680>
- Derrida, J. (1999). *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Derrida, J. (2006). *The politics of friendship*. London, England: Verso.
- Fichte, J. G. (2000). *Foundations of natural right*. Trans. M. Baur, ed. F. Neuhouser. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Fricker, M. (2007). *Epistemic injustice: Power and the ethics of knowing*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Hegel, G. W. F. (1986). *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts oder Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse*. Ed. by E. Moldenhauer & K. M. Michel. Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Suhrkamp.
- Hegel, G. W. F. (1987). *Jenaer Systementwürfe III: Naturphilosophie und Philosophie des Geistes*. Ed. Rolf-Peter Horstmann. Hamburg, Germany: Meiner.
- Hegel, G. W. F. (2018). *The phenomenology of spirit*. Trans. and ed. by Terry Pinkard. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Honneth, A. (1996). *The struggle for recognition: The moral grammar of social conflicts*. Translated, with an Introduction, by Joel Anderson. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Honneth, A. (2004). Recognition and justice: Outline of a plural theory of justice. *Acta Sociologica*, 47(4), 351–364.
- Honneth, A. (2005). Between Aristotle and Kant: Recognition and moral obligation. In *Disrespect. The normative foundations of critical theory* (pp. 129–143). Cambridge, England: Polity Press.
- Honneth, A. (2007). Recognition as ideology. In B. van den Brink & D. Owen (Eds.), *Recognition and Power: Axel Honneth and the Tradition of Critical Social Theory* (pp. 323–347). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Honneth, A. (2015). *Freedom's right: The social foundations of democratic life*. Translated by Joseph Ganahl. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Honneth, A. (2021a). “You” or “We”. The limits of the second-person-perspective. *European Journal of Philosophy*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12681>
- Honneth, A. (2021b). Reply to Darwall. *European Journal of Philosophy*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12679>
- Khurana, T. (2017). *Das Leben der Freiheit. Form und Wirklichkeit der Autonomie*. Berlin, Germany: Suhrkamp.
- Khurana, T. (2021). The irony of self-consciousness. In D. Finkelde, C. Menke, & S. Zizek (Eds.), *Parallax. The dialectics of mind and world* (pp. 145–158). London, England: Routledge.
- Korsgaard, C. (2007). Autonomy and the second person within: A commentary on Stephen Darwall's The second-person standpoint*. *Ethics*, 118(1), 8–23.
- Lévinas, E. (1969). *Totality and infinity: An essay on exteriority*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Løgstrup, K. E. (2020). *The ethical demand*. Translated by Bjørn Rabjerg and Robert Stern. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Mauss, M. (2016). *The gift*. Trans. and ed. by J. I. Guyer. Chicago, IL: HAU Books.
- McDowell, J. (1984). Wittgenstein on following a rule. *Synthese*, 58(3), 325–363.
- Medina, J. (2013). *The epistemology of resistance: Gender and racial oppression, epistemic injustice, and resistant imaginations*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Pinkard, T. (2021). Who gets to play recognitional tag? *European Journal of Philosophy*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12673>
- Rödl, S. (2021). Freedom as right. *European Journal of Philosophy*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12672>
- Scanlon, T. M. (1999). *What We Owe to Each Other*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Stern, R. (2021). Is Hegelian recognition second-personal? Hegel says ‘no’. *European Journal of Philosophy*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12676>
- Strawson, P. F. (1968). Freedom and resentment. In *Studies in the philosophy of thought and action*. London, England: Oxford University Press.
- Taylor, C. (1992). The politics of recognition. In A. Gutmann (Ed.), *Multiculturalism and the politics of recognition* (pp. 25–74). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Wallace, R. J. (2007). Reasons, relations, and commands: Reflections on Darwall. *Ethics*, 118(1), 24–36.
- Wallace, R. J. (2019). *The moral nexus*. Princeton, NJ; Oxford, England: Princeton University Press.
- Wallace, R. J. (2021). Recognition and the moral nexus. *European Journal of Philosophy*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12677>
- Wittgenstein, L. (1999). *Philosophische Untersuchungen/Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (2nd ed.). London, England: Blackwell.

How to cite this article: Khurana, T. (2021). The struggle for recognition and the authority of the second person. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12675>