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Hegel and Respect for Persons

Abstract: This essay discusses Hegel's theory of "abstract" respect for "abstract" personhood and its relation to the fuller, concrete account of human personhood. Hegel defines (abstract) personhood as an abstract, formal category with the help of his account of free will. For Hegel, personhood is defined in terms of powers, relations to self and to others. After analyzing what according to the first part of *Philosophy of Right* it is to (abstractly) respect someone as a person, the essay discusses the implications for private property and market. Then the paper turns to discuss pathologies of ideologies that stress these aspects only. Finally, the essay discusses the way in which Hegel's full social theory aims to overcome such pathological tendencies; most notably in his theory of Family and the State.

Hegel, following Fichte's initiative, developed an intersubjectivist account of human personhood, where relations of recognition are constitutive of personhood. Personhood is not merely a social status: it is also constituted by capacities and relations to self (see Ikäheimo and Laitinen 2007).

Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* puts forward a *multidimensional* account of relations of recognition, which concern different aspects of human personhood or selfhood and human freedom. Mutual respect, alongside social esteem and love, is for Hegel to be analyzed as one form that mutual recognition can take (see Honneth 1992, 2014; Siep 2014). And further, respect comes in different forms; some forms of recognition are clearly forms of respect (abstract respect for personhood, moral respect for autonomous subjectivity) whereas some others are forms of respect more contestable (possible forms of respect that are constitutive of aspects of ethical life such as civil society and state).

Philosophy of Right has three main parts. First, what Hegel calls *abstract right* concerns external legal personhood and negative liberty, and secondly *morality*, *Moralität*, concerns more or less Kantian self-determining moral subjectivity and inner "reflective freedom".¹ Both these spheres are constituted as forms of mutual recognition that can be approached as forms of respect: respect for abstract personhood and respect for autonomous moral subjectivity (nowadays also called moral personhood). Legal personhood is best understood as a protec-

1 See Honneth 2014.

tive mask, and moral subjectivity as a set of inner capacities – they both fall short of the concreteness and detail of actual ethical life, which is analyzed in the third part of *Philosophy of Right*.

Thirdly, *Sittlichkeit* or *ethical life* concerns humans in particular concrete roles, as members of family, civil society and the state. In contrast to mere negative liberty or the reflective freedom, they constitute forms of “social freedom” (Honneth 2014, Neuhaus 2000). Each of these aspects of ethical life is constituted by relations of recognition: love is constitutive of family, arguably a kind of respect is constitutive of market relations, bonds of solidarity and social esteem are constitutive of division of social labor, and further universal concern – and for contemporary Hegelians, respect for democratic participation – is constitutive of the state (see Honneth 1992, Knowles 2002).

It is therefore important to distinguish the *abstract* personal respect – presented in the section of Abstract Right – not only from other “thicker” forms of recognition such as esteem, love, or solidarity, but also from other forms of recognition that can appropriately be called “respect”: respect for moral subjectivity, and respect for each other as democratic members in collective self-determination (which is not part of Hegel’s story, but is stressed e.g. by Honneth 2014 and Habermas 1996). Further, the pre-institutionalized form of respect in Abstract Right, taken in abstraction from institutional structures, resembles forms of respect in concrete market relations as realized by economic institutions.

It is well understood that the main specificity of Hegel’s ethical and political philosophy is the way that *Sittlichkeit* supersedes *Moralität*, echoed in the communitarian criticism of atomistic tendencies in liberalism. Another much discussed topic in the debates on mutual recognition is Hegel’s defense of the sociality of self-consciousness in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in terms of a struggle for recognition. Hegel’s account of abstract personhood in *abstract right* has been less discussed but is worth serious attention, together with Hegel’s analysis of morality and recognition of moral responsibility.

This essay will focus on Hegel’s “abstract” respect for “abstract” personhood, and its relation to the fuller, concrete account of human personhood. Hegel defines (abstract) personhood as an abstract, formal category with the help of his account of free will. Like Rawls (1972, 1993), for whom persons have two powers, for Hegel personhood is defined in terms of powers, but Hegel differs in also holding relations to self and to others as constitutive: mere capacities do not suffice (presented in sections 1–2 in this essay).² After

² Further, for Hegel “personhood” has metaphysical significance: it is one layer in the realiza-

that this essay will analyze what according to the first part of *Philosophy of Right* it is to (abstractly) respect someone as a person (section 3), and what the implications of this for private property and market are (section 4). Then it turns to discuss the pathologies of an ideology of a roughly Neo-Liberal kind that stresses these aspects only (section 5) and also the way that Hegel's full social theory of *Sittlichkeit* and *Social Freedom* aims to overcome such pathological tendencies; most notably in his theory of Family and the State (section 6).

It is in the context of this fuller theory that we can understand why Hegel in *The Philosophy of Right* (§ 35 A) claims that being a person is “the highest achievement of a human being” and yet in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* writes that “to describe an individual as a ‘person’ is an expression of contempt”.³ We have other identities than (abstract) personhood that capture our being more fully, but nonetheless respect for (abstract) personhood constitutes a significant protective mask or shell for our existence.

1 The Structure of Free Will

As for Rawls (1972, 1993), for whom persons have two powers, for Hegel the capacity for personhood can be said to be defined first of all in terms of certain powers.

As outlined in § 5–7 of *Philosophy of Right*, free will has three moments. The first moment resembles 20th-century existentialism in its uncompromising emphasis on the capacity to negate any inclination or traditional injunction. Unlike any other natural beings, we are radically free, not necessitated by our natural inclinations. As argued e. g. by Yeomans (2012), Hegel's view on freedom and determinism preserves the libertarian insight that alternate possibilities and genuine control are needed for freedom. It is not enough that one is recognized as a free agent, or has a self-relation as a free agent; there are also metaphysical aspects of freedom that need to be taken into account. Free agents are able to say “no” to any alternative. Even when being coerced, being held at gunpoint, an agent with free will can in principle refuse the offer. And indeed, coercion by threats is only possible in the case of persons.

tion of the concept – but I will here ignore the metaphysical setting. For Hegel, it is not merely a historical construction, there is a speculative justification for it.

³ Hegel 1977, § 480; quoted in Poole 1996. Poole (1996, p. 48) also notes “that a derogatory sense of the French ‘personne’ is alive and well is indicated by Simone Weil's discussion in ‘Human Personality’ in Weil 1986.

That on its own does not yet suffice. The second aspect of free will is the capacity to set a positive end to oneself. The capacity to say “yes” to a goal, set it as one’s aim, is equally important – otherwise one would not be able to act at all. It would be a misguided conception of freedom that would see any positive content, even commitments to self-determined ends, as a threat to freedom. The capacity or power to set oneself an end is thus a necessary second aspect of free will.

Thirdly, what completes the analysis of the structure of the will is the capacity to still see the end as “mine” once it is realized in the external world: the capacity to find oneself in externalized deeds. Hegel has a developmental account about “finding oneself”: as explained e. g. by Charles Taylor (1975), for Hegel one gains self-understanding in acting – one grasps more fully what one is once one sees the results. The paradigm for such gains in self-understanding via self-expression is that of an artist who proceeds via different drafts and versions. In the process of acting, and pursuing means, the agent’s ends are specified and reformulated, so that she can retrospectively take external deeds to express her will.

This analysis of the capacity of free will forms one aspect of the background of Hegel’s theory. *That* one can freely set ends to oneself will be relevant to moral and legal respect, whereas *what* ends to set rather is at stake in concrete ethical life.

2 Conditions of Responsible Agency: Capacities, Self-Relations, Recognition

Mark Alznauer’s (2015) recent study discusses responsible agency from the illuminating viewpoint of “innocence” in the sense of not being fit to be held responsible.⁴ A responsible, non-innocent, agent must meet three conditions: first, he or she must have the required psychological capacities; second, he or she must have the self-conception of himself or herself as being free; third, he or she must be a recognized member of the state (2015, p. 21).

Accordingly, there are three ways in which beings can be “innocent”. They can, first of all, lack the psychological capacities needed for responsibility. There are three of these capacities, and Alznauer illustrates them with Hegel’s views about animals, children and “the mentally deranged” (who suffer from local irrationalities due to obsessions and fixed ideas):

⁴ I have discussed Alznauer’s views in Laitinen 2016a, this section draws on that text.

An individual must be capable of thought (unlike an animal), she must be capable of having personal insight into right and wrong (unlike a child), and [...] her thoughts and desires must be fully responsive to her judgments about the world and about what she has grounds to do (unlike the mentally deranged). [...] A normal human adult is one that has all three of these capacities and so fully satisfies the psychological conditions for responsible agency. (Alznauer 2015, p. 75)

There are also sociological conditions of “innocence” that Alznauer (2015, p. 62) highlights with Hegel’s views about “savagery, tribal patriarchy, and slavery”. They are related to the second and third ways of being “innocent”: these sociological conditions prevent the individual from developing the required *self-conception* and getting the right kind of *recognition*. Savagery and tribal patriarchy “do not allow individuals to achieve a certain self-conception, one in which they take themselves to be bound only to those standards whose justification they have insight into” (Alznauer 2015, p. 81). They lack exposure to norms that are understood to be valid only if rationally justified. Slaves typically do not lack such exposure, but they lack the required relation to self. Alznauer writes:

[Hegel] characterizes the slave as someone who is not conscious of his freedom and so has not yet become “his own property as distinct from that of others” (PR § 57), and he goes on to say that it is precisely in “the act whereby I take possession of my personality and substantial essence” that “I make myself [mache mich] a being capable of rights and accountability [Rechts- und Zurechnungsfähigkeit], morality and religiosity” (PR § 66, [Alznauer’s] translation) (Alznauer 2015, p. 81).

Such “taking possession of one’s personality” may be part of the reason why non-human animals are often regarded as not bearing rights, but one may wonder whether it is plausible concerning children: arguably children have actual rights – it is wrong to harm them in ways which hinder the actualization of their potentials – despite them not yet having taken possession of their personality.

Without the requisite self-relation, the agents remain rational and responsible only implicitly and potentially, or “in themselves”, but not actually or “for themselves”. Unlike for example Robert Brandom’s (2006) more existentialist Hegel, according to whom the content of our essence or concept depends on our self-conception as well, Alznauer’s Hegel thinks that the essence or Hegelian “concept” is the same for all of us independently of our different self-interpretations. The self-interpretations make a difference in the degree to which the essence or “concept” is actualized. It is only when we regard ourselves as free, rational beings, and as having objective reasons and necessary ends, that the concept of free will is fully actualized. In this limited respect “humans can

change what they are merely by arriving at a different self-conception. When a slave, for example, becomes conscious of his own freedom and refuses to accept his position of dependency, Hegel says he ‘makes himself’ a ‘responsible being’ (PR § 66R)” (Alznauer 2015, p. 42).

Thus, when non-human animals fight for food or attack each other, they do not violate each others’ rights, as they have not constituted themselves as rights-bearing agents:

a true right to our bodies is only generated insofar as that possession is posited as rightful by the agent. In order for any possession to be rightful ownership, the agent needs to be conscious of her freedom, of her status as a person who can rightfully express her will in external existence. (Alznauer 2015, p. 103)

An analogue to Alznauer’s position could be a political system where one must register to vote: although voting rights are the same for everyone, one needs to register to vote to get the rights “activated” for oneself. There is no voting in the state of nature, and unless one is socialized in the system one would not have any idea of what is going on. But in addition, one must register oneself, and this registering partly consists in being recognized as a rights-bearer by the registrar.

The relevant kind of self-conception is, according to Alznauer’s Hegel, possible only when one is recognized by others as free. Further,

the kind of recognition responsible agency requires in order to exist fully and completely is political recognition: the sort of recognition that states give their citizens, not the sort that individuals could bilaterally give each other outside of the specific political context of a legitimate state. (Alznauer 2015, p. 63)

Alznauer (2015, p. 84) quotes Hegel, PR § 258 A: “it is only through being a member of a state that the individual himself has objectivity, truth, and ethical life”, and that someone who rejects citizenship is “devoid of rights, wholly lacking in dignity”. The necessity of recognition from the state is a highly interesting thesis, but ultimately it seems that recognition is not directly constitutive of responsible agency for Alznauer: it is merely a precondition of the required self-conception, and a precondition of responsibility.

Alznauer sees Hegel as radicalizing the view of Kant, who thought that ownership of external property is indeterminate in a state of nature (while possession of one’s body, or being subject to duties, is not). First of all, outside a shared normative structure or a general will, unilaterally taking something into possession does not obligate others to regard it as property. Secondly, there is no assurance that others will respect my property. Thirdly, it is indeterminate who owns what

in the absence of a shared mechanism of settling disputes. The rights to external property in a state of nature are provisional or tentative, not yet conclusive or valid (Alznauer 2015, p. 89). Those who violate these tentative claims, Kant writes, “do one another no wrong at all” (MM 6:307).⁵

Thus, all and all, persons must have certain capacities, certain relations to self, and they have to stand in certain relations of recognition to others. In different sections, different capacities, self-relations and relations of recognition are relevant. The relations of recognition within Abstract Right are the most formal ones – to be superseded by relations of recognition in the sections of Morality and Ethical Life.

3 Respect for Persons in *Abstract Right*

Baynes (2002, p. 6) aptly summarizes the kind of recognition at play in Abstract Right:

“Abstract Right”, the first section of the *Philosophy of Right*, introduces the most formal and minimal mode of recognition. The social status mutually attributed to members is that of legal persons with basic rights, including the right to own property and form contracts. It is a relatively uncomplicated form of recognition in that it abstracts from all motives and intentions of persons and considers them solely in terms of their “external” relations to one another.

The crucial thing in (abstractly) *respecting* a person is taking into account only *that* the person has a free will. Respect need not be sensitive to *what* they

⁵ Alznauer’s Hegel argues the same is true of all rights and obligations – there are none in the state of nature (Alznauer 2015, p. 92–93). Alznauer argues then that the state of nature is a normative vacuum. There can be no rights or any “way to wrong [each other] at all” (p. 95), good or evil (p. 87), no independent reasons (p. 97), nor responsible agency – all there is to being right is taking oneself to be right (p. 96). Evaluability or responsibility depend on “the establishment of some normative framework within which we can be evaluated for what we do. If that framework has social preconditions, then so will action itself.” (p. 12). Now the assumption of a total normative vacuum seems to go too far, and in any case Alznauer might not need it. He could try to defend the interesting claims concerning personhood (that actualization of the capacities requires a certain self-conception, which in turn requires recognition) without making such an assumption of a normative vacuum, which is not that plausible (are there not objective reasons, say, to avoid poisonous food outside a political state? Are not the tyrants outside a developed state at all responsible for their deeds? Are there no reasons at all not to torture animals outside a political state?).

will. The particularities will be important in concrete relations, but respecting someone as a person abstracts from that.

Personality [or better: personhood, AL] contains in general the capacity for right and constitutes the concept and the (itself abstract) basis of abstract and hence formal right. The commandment of right is therefore: be a person and respect others as persons. (Hegel 1991, § 36)

The universality of this will which is free for itself is formal universality, i.e. the will's self-conscious (but otherwise contentless) and simple reference of itself in its individuality [*Einzelheit*]; to this extent, the subject is a person. It is inherent in personality [or better: personhood] that, as this person, I am completely determined in all respects (in my inner arbitrary will, drive, and desire, as well as in relation to my immediate external existence [*Dasein*]), and that I am finite, yet totally pure self-reference, and thus know myself in my finitude as infinite, universal, and free. (Hegel 1991, § 35)

Personality [or better: personhood, AL] begins only at that point where the subject has not merely a consciousness of itself in general as concrete and in some way determined, but a consciousness of itself as a completely abstract "I" in which all concrete limitation and validity are negated and invalidated. (Hegel 1991, § 35, Rem.)

Schmidt am Busch (2008, p. 578) explains that

As a person, the human individual ("subject") stands in relation to himself, and this type of relationship has two crucial aspects. First, such an individual is, in Hegel's words, "completely determined in all respects" and "finite." As a biological and social being, this individual is "determined" in a number of ways: he has specific convictions, needs, desires, and interests, and in most cases, he also knows which convictions, needs, desires, and interests he has. With this knowledge, the individual refers to himself as a "concrete" being; he is, as Hegel puts it, a "finite self-reference." Second, the individual in question is said to be, at the same time, a "totally pure self-reference," that is, "a completely abstract 'I' in which all concrete limitation and validity are negated and invalidated." This is supposed to mean that the individual who refers to himself as a concrete being also believes that he is able to distance himself from every one of his convictions, needs, desires, and objectives. For him, there is indeed no belief he could not call into question, no need and no desire he could not decline to act on, and no objective he could not stop willing and pursuing. It is in this sense that such an individual has "a consciousness of [him]self as a completely abstract 'I.'"

Schmidt am Busch argues that an individual "not only believes that he has the capacity to distance himself from his desires, objectives, etc., but that he also takes this capacity to be of value and importance to him. This in turn means that he wants to be somebody who actually exercises the capacity in question and decides on his own which goals to pursue. In this sense, such an individual wants to be a person." (Schmidt am Busch 2008, p. 578) This has two aspects: first, particular features, but also universal capacities or powers of persons.

If personal respect is to be analyzed as an intersubjective relation, we should ask: what do individuals respect each other as when they respect one another as persons? Schmidt am Busch continues, that Hegel answers this question on the basis of his distinction between the aforementioned moments of the will: personhood and particularity. Respect as a person concerns only personhood, and abstracts from particularities.

Hegel argues that human beings who respect each other as persons respect one another as individuals who can distance themselves from their particular needs, desires, and objectives, and who can decide on their own which goals they will pursue. As persons, human beings take each other to be independent actors in this sense. To be sure, they may also appreciate the particular objectives other people pursue and hold these people in esteem on the basis of the particularity of their goals – it is important to note, however, that this type of esteem is not part of what Hegel calls personal respect. As far as personal respect is concerned, there is, as Hegel (1991, § 37) says, “not a question of particular interests, of my advantage or welfare, and just as little of the particular ground by which my will is determined, i.e. of my insight and intention”. (Schmidt am Busch 2008, p. 579)

4 Personal Respect and Private Property

Perhaps surprisingly, Hegel ties the notion of personal respect to private property. To be a person is to be an owner, to have external property rights. It is perhaps quite readily understandable why being a person is to have rights – and in an imagined “Nowheresville” where individuals would not have rights they would lack something central: not only would they lack the normative protection, but also the self-understanding as a locus of claims, which is central to self-respect (see Feinberg & Narveson 1970, Honneth 1992). But it is perhaps less clear why among these rights, there should be a right to privately owned property.

In Schmidt am Busch’s (2008, p. 579) analysis, Hegel ‘derives’ the institution of private property from his concept of the person with the help of four theses:

- (1) “The person must give himself an external sphere of freedom.” (Hegel 1991, § 41)
- (2) This sphere of freedom must consist of entities that are “immediately different and separable” from the person.
- (3) The human body, human capacities, and external things can be said to meet Hegel’s criterion of difference and separability; however, they do so in different ways.⁶

⁶ Schmidt am Busch (2008) also notes that with respect to the human body, Hegel emphasizes the person’s possibility of committing suicide: “[A]s a person, I [...] possess my life and body, like

- (4) The person can only give himself a “sphere of its freedom” in private property.⁷

The need for such an external sphere can be highlighted developmentally: what would a child lack without any chance to have his or her own say and own control over external things such as toys? If one could never be in charge of what happens in a play? Presumably one’s will and sense of responsibility could not develop. Similarly, Virginia Woolf famously argued for the need of a room of one’s own (see also Honneth 2014 for arguments for the need for such an external sphere). The external sphere is that of negative liberty – and Hegel’s argument is that although it cannot be the full story, it is a necessary aspect of the full story.

In evaluating this thesis one may ask whether less individualistic forms could not do as well: why not common property governed by a deliberative democracy in light of general interests? Why not common property of the family? Indeed, one could argue that as long as one has an equal say as others, why could not all of one’s life, including the choice of one’s marriage partner and career, be a matter of common choice – and yet one would be treated in terms of “respect” as long as one has an equal say. This would however be to reduce personal respect to democratic respect, and thus to lose one dimension of self-relations and relations to others: the very dimension that Hegel’s abstract right tries to articulate. Since Roman Law this idea has been part of Western Civilization, and in modernity it has been gradually institutionalized with the aim to cover all adults with the relevant capacities.

Here, a comparative evaluative argument would state that individualistic forms of private property have their pros and cons, as does common property. Hegel’s approach is not merely comparative (although it makes a claim about historical progress in this respect) but argues that individualistic property is necessary for personhood: abstract right forms a necessary aspect of full personhood.

other things, only in so far as I so will it.” (Hegel 1991, § 47) And he explains: “[T]he animal cannot mutilate or destroy itself, but the human being can.” (Hegel 1991, § 47, Rem.)

7 Schmidt am Busch (2008) further continues: “Why is it that the person’s external sphere of freedom must be made up of private property? In this connection, Hegel puts forth the following thesis: “Since my will, as the will of a person, and so as a single will, becomes objective to me in property, property acquires the character of private property [...]” (Hegel 1991, § 46) To this, Hegel adds by way of a hand-written remark: “Private property, because person [is] single [and because] I shall be, shall be there as such.” (Hegel 1991, § 46, Marginal Remark)

Other economic implications of “personal respect” include the ban of slavery or bondage as incompatible with personal respect. Yet, *markets* are not a necessary condition of personal respect.

Schmidt am Busch argues that, however,

Personal respect gives individuals who wish to cooperate economically a prima facie reason to favor market-like exchanges over state-regulated distributions of goods. Two points are responsible for this. (a) Market-like exchanges can be understood as possible institutionalizations of personal respect. (b) The sphere of activities that realize the structure of personal freedom seems to be larger in market economies than in state-regulated economies. (Schmidt am Busch 2008, p. 584)

5 The Pathology of Mistaking Abstract Personhood for the Concrete Individual

What is wrong with a one-sided view according to which we all would conceive of each other and of ourselves as just persons, characterized by such respect? It would, according to e.g. Honneth 2014 and Poole 1996, be a pathological development.⁸ The reason personal respect cannot be the whole story is by now pretty evident: it abstracts from all the concrete features that provide our distinctiveness and provide meaning for our lives; as persons we are all alike, share the same relevant capabilities. As Poole (1996, p. 48) puts it:

For Hegel, the concept of a person is an artefact of those systems of law which recognize the equal rights of all those subject to it. The identity which the law imposes abstracts from all those characteristics which differentiate one subject from another.⁹

⁸ One may also stress its social-ontological impossibility in a state of nature (see Alznauer 2015).

⁹ Poole continues by describing the Hegelian understanding of Modernity and modern personhood: “When it is divorced from actual life, as it was in the Roman Empire, the concept of a person is a mere empty formalism. The modern world provides, on Hegel’s view, a far richer form of ethical life than the Roman imperium. The family, life in civil society and the institutions of the state provide the social purpose necessary to sustain the legal structure of abstract right (property, contract, and the like). Insofar as an individual enters this sphere of abstract right, that is, he makes contracts, owns property and so on, he counts as a person, i.e., as a bearer of rights. But this abstraction is not a self-sufficient form of existence: it arises on the basis of an individual’s substantive ethical life in the family, civil society, and the state.”(1996, p. 49)

In Poole's words:

The concept of personhood invites us to abstract our identity from those very narrative resources – birth, growth and development, sexuality, procreation, friendship, decay, death – which we require to make sense of our lives. It is through these resources that we are able to form conceptions of ourselves which do justice to our existence as individuals and which at the same time provide us with a location within a larger framework. Personhood does not provide a story at all, let alone a story which is mine. (Poole 1996, p. 50)¹⁰

In Honneth's (2014) view, there are real pathologies, which consist in people relating to each other and to themselves in these formal and abstract terms as "persons" when they should regard each other as suffering beings and cooperators in concrete roles. Overlegalization of other social spheres brings with it such pathological relations to others as "mere" persons with claims to privacy, and a related empty relation to self. Regarding others as "black boxes" whose intentions and motives do not matter for their rightful claims is an appropriate relationship in abstract and contractual relations, but it would be a very pathological relation to take to oneself: that my motives and intentions do not matter to me, because I can always set myself different ones.¹¹ It is good to value the capacity to set oneself ends, but it is also good to see that the ends that one has set to oneself indeed matter.

The main point then is that respect for personhood is a necessary but not a sufficient form of recognition of personhood. Thicker notions of recognition are at play in the contexts of family, civil society and the state. They provide concrete roles, which are (in the good cases) not obstacles to self-realization, but something *through* which self-realization can take place. In those ways, they add to the layers of recognition of individuals. But additionally, they seem to break the bounds of the so far individualistic analysis: in some sense a family and a state are themselves collective agents, collective persons even.

6 Family and State

In his article, David Ciavatta (2006) notes how collective ownership and personhood of the family break the bounds of the individualistic notion of personhood:

¹⁰ Cf. Raz 1986, who argues that morality does not provide meaning; here abstract personhood, as being a rights-bearer, provides no meaning.

¹¹ I have discussed Honneth's view in more detail in Laitinen 2016c.

As Hegel writes, one is in one's family "not as an independent person but as a member," and the ethical core of the family involves the "identification of personalities [*Persönlichkeiten*, Ciavatta writes "personhoods", AL], whereby the family becomes one person and its members become its accidents (though substance is in essence the relation of accidents to itself)." Rather than being separate, self-standing persons, each with her own individual will, and each thus affirming her familial involvements through the mediation of her own independent reasons and motivations, the individual family member *finds* her own will, and, more generally, her affirmation of her own individual self-identity, to be already concretely implicated in an inherently intersubjective will – in a collectively affirmed, familial "we" – that serves as a fundamental background context that gives ethical legitimacy and determinate meaning to her own agency (Ciavatta 2006, p. 156).

And later Ciavatta notes that this is in tension with the argument that abstract personhood involves private property:

For, in Hegel's account of Abstract Right – and we can infer that this point would apply generally to the civil sphere – collective ownership is claimed to be counter to the very notion of personhood, for ownership *necessarily* involves an *individual* person's unilateral control over a thing, and thus involves the recognized freedom to exclude all others from being able to lay claim to that thing. In the family, in contrast, I own things only insofar as my family members own them too, for what I own here is not merely the expression of my unconditioned freedom as an individual, but rather the concrete expression of the unconditioned bonds of mutual recognition that allow us to be the particular selves we are (Ciavatta 2006, p. 164).

Thus, one must say that there are two rival forms of recognition – as an abstract person and as a concrete family member – which come with rival understandings of property being either private or shared. Presumably then, while these may be in tension, they are both necessary aspects of full human personhood.

In family, the ethical nature of the relationship, despite involving owning, is a more intimate one, and provides what is missing in mere abstract respect:

The collective ownership of such priceless familial resources is thus not defined primarily in terms of natural need, or in terms of the sheer assertion of the individual self's independence from the world (as is the case in the realm of Abstract Right), but is an essentially ethical matter, defined essentially in terms of the project of maintaining a concrete, living field of intersubjective recognition that allows the family members to be who they are in relation to one another. (Ciavatta 2006, p. 165)

Further, the dialectics of Family and Civil Society show how Family is not an ethically self-sustaining whole, but contains its own seeds of destruction:

Although the family's property has a unique and self-sufficient ethical significance within the context of its family life, family members must implicitly rely on the fact that their prop-

erty attains its full, objective status as property only through the actual recognition of a civil order that preserves formal property relations in general. Each family as a whole, qua a collective property owner, thus implicitly claims to be a recognized legal person externally related to other recognized families. In tension with its incomparable, ethical significance as embodying familial self-identity, then, this family property implicitly takes on for family members a generic – but very real and objective – market value that is determined in the light of its external significance for any legal person who might seek to possess it. For Hegel, it is precisely in having to deal with inheritance which is essentially “the transfer to private ownership of property which is in principle common,” in that the family’s common property now appears as something that has to be divided into separable shares. The fact that these shares are, in principle, something that can be given to anyone, and thus no longer possess the concrete, ethical significance of uniting these specific family members together into a common project, signals that the principle of personhood has emerged from within the family itself. (Ciavatta 2006, p. 167)¹²

As Hegel writes, civil society “tears the individual from his family ties, estranges the members of the family from one another, and recognizes them as self-subsistent persons” (PR, § 238).

No discussion of Hegel’s notion of respect for persons can be complete without a reference to how Hegel seems to suggest that states, and not only individual humans, can actualize the conceptual structure of personhood. Let me therefore end with a quotation, which serves to remind us that it is not only within family that there is a tension between individuality and membership in a bigger unity:

Personality, like subjectivity in general, as infinitely self-related, has its truth (to be precise, its most elementary, immediate, truth) only in a person, in a subject existing “for” himself, and what exists “for” itself is just simply a unit. It is only as a person, the monarch, that the personality of the state is actual. Personality expresses the concept as such; but the person enshrines the actuality of the concept, and only when the concept is determined as person is it the Idea or truth. A so-called “artificial person”, be it a society, a community, or a family, however inherently concrete it may be, contains personality only abstractly, as one moment of itself. In an “artificial person”, personality has not achieved its true mode of existence. The state, however, is precisely this totality in which the moments of the concept have attained the actuality correspondent to their degree of truth. (Hegel, PR § 279)

12 Ciavatta adds: “The family is, then, an inherently unstable institution in Hegel’s view: It is an institution that must recognize the unconditional legitimacy of the individual person and of the civil sphere, and yet it cannot do so without at the same time giving up its status as an original and independent source of normativity and self-identity – without, in short, risking becoming just another civil institution among many. This inherent tension is not simply done away with once we move on to a consideration of the civil sphere. Rather, Hegel seems to be suggesting that the ethical order is founded on this tension, and can never fully rid itself of it.” (Ciavatta 2006, p. 167)

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