

ARTICLE

Recognition, Needs and Wrongness

Two Approaches

Arto Laitinen

Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, Finland



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ABSTRACT: ‘Due recognition is a vital human need’, argues Charles Taylor. In this article I explore this oft-quoted claim from two complementary and equally appealing perspectives. The bottom-up approach is constructed around Axel Honneth’s theory of recognition, and the top-down approach is exemplified by T. M. Scanlon’s brief remarks about mutual recognition. The former can be summed up in the slogan ‘wronging by misrecognizing’, the latter in the slogan ‘misrecognizing by wronging’. Together they provide two complementary readings of the claim that due recognition is a vital human need: one starts from needs, shows how we have a multifarious need for adequate recognition and builds up to a view about wronging; the other starts from wronging and discusses the kind of interest or need that we have of standing in relations where wronging is absent.

KEY WORDS: *esteem, harm, Honneth, misrecognition, moral motivation, need for recognition, respect, Scanlon*

‘Due recognition is a vital human need’, argues Charles Taylor.¹ In this article I wish to explore this oft-quoted claim from two complementary and equally appealing perspectives. The perspectives are slightly idealized to make the contrast clearer, but what I call the bottom-up approach is constructed around Axel Honneth’s theory of recognition, and what I call the top-down approach is exemplified by T. M. Scanlon’s brief remarks about mutual recognition.² The bottom-up approach starts from the needs of vulnerable agents and from the prerequisites of autonomous agency, whereas the top-heavy approach starts from the idea of *due* recognition, defined in terms of what we owe to each other.

The bottom-up view holds that the need for recognition has multifarious roots in the human vulnerabilities and in the prerequisites of autonomous agency. Such needs provide others with reasons and duties to provide recognition for the agent. In many cases some ways of acting or ways of regarding others are wrong *because* they are cases of misrecognition. Such ‘recognitionally’ harms can be found side by

Contact address: Arto Laitinen, Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, Fabianinkatu 24 (P.O. Box 4), FI-00014 University of Helsinki, Finland.
Email: arto.laitinen@helsinki.fi

side with other harmful wrong-making features, and acts and attitudes where such *other* wrong-making features are involved need not be cases of misrecognition. The bottom-up view holds thus that some (but not all) wrongful acts are *wrong because of misrecognition*.

The top-down view holds by contrast that *all* wrongful acts are at the same time cases of *misrecognition because they are wrong*.³ Recognition and misrecognition do not therefore figure among the wrong-making features, but they play a role in an **account of being moral**. According to Scanlon, we should drop any idea of ‘morality for morality’s sake’, and see that we behave morally for the sake of others and our relations to them. We owe it to others that we do not wrong them in any way. Violations of such demands violate thin ‘moral’ interests of agents, in addition to any other harms that they may cause. As cases of such violations, they are cases of misrecognition (whatever the harms or wrong-making features in question) which may alienate people from one another.

Both are very appealing ideas, but seem to be in tension. I suggest that we can have it both ways if we distinguish two different senses of recognition: a bottom-up sense, which comes in different species, such as respect for autonomy, esteem for merits, concern for needs and feelings, and a top-down sense of ‘overall recognition’. The first sections of this article discuss the bottom-up view, then the contrast between the views is articulated, and in the last section, the top-down view is discussed more closely. The bottom-up view is built up in three steps: the first step introduces the idea of a need for recognition against the background idea of humans as autonomous vulnerable beings, the second step introduces the distinctions between adequate and inadequate recognition and the distinction between harming and offending, the third step claims that unjustified harming (including harming through inadequate recognition) is a case of wronging and a breach of the duty not to harm.

Autonomous Vulnerable Beings

The view about human nature that underlies the bottom-up approach conceives of humans as dependent autonomous agents, with two salient aspects: humans are dependent beings, in having a needy, vulnerable, passive side, as well as ‘independent’ beings as active, goal-pursuing, autonomous agents.⁴ Both of these aspects, basic needs and the pursuit of goals, give rise to interests which are relevant to human lives. Arguably the need for recognition plays a multifarious role in relation to *both* aspects. In the first two sections I try to show that the need for recognition is firmly and multiply rooted in the dual nature of needy autonomous beings. The needs and interests related to these two aspects differ from one another in various ways.

As dependent beings human agents have basic needs (or ‘deficiency needs’ or ‘welfare needs’) which typically are such that they can in principle be sufficiently satisfied, so that a sufficiency view captures the normative relevance of such needs:

basic needs ought to be met sufficiently well. Basic needs arguably form a chain which is as weak as its weakest link. The basic necessities of life have to be met, and lacking the prerequisites of one basic need in life (the need for food, for example) cannot meaningfully be compensated by goods of other kinds (security, for example). Often such basic needs can be satisfied directly by the actions of others. For example, a person can be fed and be provided with shelter by others. Deficiency needs are typically such that not having them met is a very strong obstacle to life, but their satisfaction does not yet make life very meaningful.

As agents or persons we have further higher ‘growth needs’ related to self-realization, which we pursue through optional goals or ‘focal aims’.⁵ Such goals of self-realization are optional and lack of opportunity to pursue any one of them is not a great obstacle to life as long as there are others. So they do not form a ‘chain’ as do the deficiency needs. Further, success in such focal aims is typically deeply satisfying and rewarding, and succeeds in providing meaning to life. There is no upper limit concerning them; we can always pursue more and more challenging, worthwhile, goals and there is an element of self-transcendence involved. In the pursuit of such goals it is essential that the agent herself acts (no one can act for her) for example by doing her part in cooperative endeavours. Apart from meeting our basic needs, others can influence our lives mainly by influencing our goals and agency.⁶

Standard accounts of needs like Maslow’s give us a pretty rich picture. Such accounts have been heavily criticized, but I will here take Maslow’s list at face value and use it for illustrative purposes – we can interpret the need for recognition through these needs. Humans have (i) physical, material and biological needs, (ii) the need for security, (iii) the need for belonging and love, (iv) the need for esteem and respect, for example, to be able to appear in public without shame, and (v) a general need to develop, sustain and exercise various ‘truly human’ or ‘person-making’ capacities (cognitive, aesthetic, emotional, practical, evaluative, communicative) and undergo related experiences, to become and be a human agent and a subject.⁷ All these needs can be understood as ‘basic’ or ‘deficiency needs’ in the sense characterized. They form the basis for pursuit by agents which aims at satisfying (vi) various ‘growth needs’ for self-actualization (and transcendence) through the pursuit of optional goals, projects, focal aims and through exercise of the capacities in some specific way that matters to the person and is constitutive of her practical identity.

The last two levels concern persons as active beings. The relevance of distinguishing between levels (v) and (vi) can be seen from the fact that preventing someone from developing and exercising the relevant capacities *at all* is generally a much more encompassing harm than preventing her from pursuing the specific goals to which she has dedicated her life. Admittedly, the latter may be central to the meaning and purpose of an individual’s life as she experiences it, and it is no doubt a genuine sacrifice to have to give up one’s cherished goals, even in contexts where equally good optional goals might be available. Suppose a person has to

give up such goals (say, for reasons of oppression she has to emigrate to some foreign culture with circumstances where her valued practices are unavailable; or for environmental reasons some oil-consuming practice such as car racing may be banned and a person's racing career be wrecked). This may deny a person her goals and a path of self-realization, but insofar as she nonetheless retains the opportunity freely to exercise her central human capacities, she is in that respect better off than persons who have been prevented from developing those capacities to begin with, or have been systematically excluded from exercising them.

Step One: The Multifarious Needs for Recognition

Broadly speaking, recognition is a matter of how individuals, groups or institutions *relate* to each other: as equals, as persons to be respected, as vulnerable agents to be cared for, as capable agents whose achievements are to be esteemed and activities encouraged, as participants in joint activities and so on. The kind of 'relating' can be analysed in more detail in terms of attitudes, acts, statuses, relations, social structures and so on.⁸

Recognition arguably plays a *multifarious* role in meeting the needs on lists such as Maslow's. Let us start from the active side and see how recognition affects the prerequisites at level (v) of the central human capacities. We can note two indirect and two direct ways it does so. Axel Honneth's argument from self-relations and autonomous agency focuses on recognition as an *indirect* prerequisite of autonomous agency. Honneth's core idea is that certain kinds of recognition (respect, esteem and love) are not only occasions for enjoyable experiences, but are necessary for developing and sustaining certain kinds of positive relations to self (self-respect, self-esteem and self-confidence).⁹ The self-relations affect one's 'agentic capacities', one's ability to act as an autonomous person. Correspondingly types of misrecognition (humiliation, denigration and indifference) are not only universally unpleasant experiences, but typically cause negative relations to self (self-hatred, lack of self-respect, lack of self-esteem or lack of self-confidence), which distort a person's capacity to act. A person's competencies to act may be blocked by psychological factors, such as a fear of social situations or a conception of herself as inferior to others or as someone who is not a source of legitimate demands. Axel Honneth and Joel Anderson sum up:

In a nutshell, the central idea is that the agentic competencies that comprise autonomy require that one be able to sustain certain attitudes toward oneself (in particular, self-trust, self-respect, and self-esteem) and that these affectively laden self-conceptions – or, to use the Hegelian language, 'practical relations to self' – are dependent, in turn, on the sustaining attitudes of others.¹⁰

Another way that recognition indirectly affects human capacities is related to the platitude that in order for those capacities to develop in the first place, human interaction and inclusion as an interaction partner are needed. To quote Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer:

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We do not become persons like apples grow on trees; nor do we jump off Jupiter's ear in the full armour of personal competence, as Minerva did in mythology. It rather seems to be a truism that education and formation (*Bildung*) are necessary preconditions for personal competences like those of thinking or judging, planning and performing actions.¹¹

Thus agentic capacities depend not only on self-relations, but on socialization, acculturation, and on growing into a human lifeworld, and these can all be blocked by failing to recognize the newborn as a potential person.

In addition to this, there are at least two *direct* ways in which the exercise or possession of the central capacities may depend on recognition: *constitutive dependence and lack of interference in the exercise of the capacities*. It is quite straightforward to see how individuals or institutions may interfere with a person's exercise of the central human capacities, physically or via social sanction mechanisms. As Philip Pettit has argued, what matters is not only non-interference, but non-domination which requires guarantees that one's liberties will not be violated.¹² This non-domination is a form of recognizing and respecting the citizen's autonomy. Relatedly, some human capacities are such that our dependence on others is *constitutive* for their flourishing, and not merely causal or developmental. According to Hegel, self-conscious freedom is one such capacity. One may be 'free' in the sense of being capable of choosing independently of natural impulses, but a person is truly free only when others acknowledge this freedom and relate to her as a free being.¹³ In Hegelian terms, freedom is actualized only via other self-consciousnesses and institutions, which in some sense let the person be free: one has to be oneself in and through others. Hegel illuminates this structure of 'being by oneself in another' first of all with emotional unity, love, which is constituted only when both participate in the right way. The same dyadic structure can also be found between more distant autonomous beings, who mutually recognize each other as free and equal subjects. Freedom and self-consciousness are truncated, not completed, unless they are recognized by others and governed by institutions that actualize freedom.

To recap, the two indirect ways in which recognition is needed at the level (v) on the Maslowian list concern recognition as a prerequisite of the development of positive self-relations and of the development of the human capacities. The two direct ways concern *lack of interference in the exercise of the capacities* and the *constitutive role recognition has in having the central capacities in a full-blown sense*. I do not pretend to have said enough about these ways in which recognition is needed in relation to the central agentic capacities, but I hope this serves to illustrate the way in which recognition might play a role in this bottom-up approach: so far we have seen that recognition is connected in a couple of both direct and indirect ways to the prerequisites of the basic capacities of agents (level (v) on the Maslowian list).

But the need for recognition is arguably present at the other levels as well. If something like Maslow's list is correct, some needs – levels (iii) and (iv) – directly concern the *receipt* of love, esteem and respect as modes of recognition. People

have a *direct* interest in relating to others in these ways, to feel cared for and to be able to appear in public without shame for example. These are, apart from their causal or developmental connections, direct interests of persons. Possessing a minimal sense of belonging, and having capacity to appear in public without shame, should be classified as necessities of life. Further, Honneth argues that at least in the context of childhood and development, one's sense of security, level (ii), and, closely related, self-confidence depends on receiving love or approbation. Honneth rightly takes these to be presuppositions of agency, but on lists like Maslow's they figure also as independent needs.

As regards self-realization through pursuit of identity-defining life-goals, level (vi), recognition and personalized feedback-mechanisms are relevant because they affect a person's choice of goals. (Which goals are worth pursuing according to one's significant others? What kinds of tasks does one's society find useful?) They also affect a person's motivation by promising positive attention from others, and also, importantly, by affecting a person's sense of the quality of her performance. Such personalized esteem, positive attention and feedback is **not a deficiency need** (a basic necessity like the capacity to be oneself without shame), but rather a **higher need** which imposes less stringent duties on others. While others may indeed have a duty to provide an intersubjective environment where everyone can be who they are without fear of undeserved shame (whatever one's ethnic, racial, gender identity), it is far less clear that others have a duty to pay attention and engage closely with the projects necessary for one's self-realization.

In sum, given a list of needs such as Maslow's, we find that the need for recognition is related to all its levels (apart from the first, concerning material needs): to security (ii), directly to love, belonging and basic esteem and respect (iii and iv), in direct and indirect ways to basic human capacities (v), and to self-realization (vi). This I hope suffices to give us a rich sense of the multifarious *needs* for intersubjective *recognition* in its different forms.¹⁴ For the purposes of this article, the details do not matter that much, what matters is the assumption that we need recognition at least in some ways. In these first two sections I have tried to show that the need for recognition is firmly and multiply rooted in the dual nature of needy autonomous beings.

Step Two: Harming through Misrecognition, Meeting Needs through Recognition

The next step in the bottom-up story is to distinguish adequate recognition from misrecognition, and harms from offences. The clearest cases of wronging will be cases of harming through misrecognition. They differ from cases of misrecognition which are 'mere' offences, and from cases of adequate recognition which nonetheless are setbacks to one's interests. The happy cases are naturally ones

What is the criterion of *misrecognition*? The question concerns what kind of recognition, and by whom and when, is supported by normative reasons. By and large, the needs of the other provide reasons to respond in ways which help meeting the needs. But the responses must be of the right kind – it may be that, despite the universal need for esteem, esteem ought to be granted on the basis of merit and genuine value judgements. We need to address, therefore, the *reasons* for our responses towards others. Reasons are considerations that speak in favour of responses, and the balance of reasons tells us what we ought overall to do, or have most reason to do. Adequate recognition is inherently responsive to reasons, which determine what kinds of esteem, respect or concern are ‘fitting’. Such reasons also determine the standards of reasonableness for our experiences and expectations.

In general, evaluative features of objects give us reasons to treat them in ways consistent with their value.¹⁵ We have a categorical reason to protect and not to destroy any valuable object, and reasons to acknowledge its value. The point is not that we ought to think about every valuable object, but insofar as we think about something, there is a reason for us to think of it in ways consistent with its value. We also have optional reasons to engage with valuable objects.

We do so when we listen to music with attention and discrimination, read a novel with understanding, climb rocks using our skill to cope, spend time with friends in ways appropriate to our relationships with them, and so on and so forth. . . . Merely thinking of valuable objects in appropriate ways and preserving them is a mere preliminary to engaging with value.¹⁶

For example, supposing that reading books is a valuable activity, the reasons to read books are optional, but reasons not to destroy libraries are categorical, and apply even to persons who do not fancy reading books themselves.

This general meta-ethical connection between evaluative features and responses that they call for, if it is true, holds of treating persons in the right way as well. Here are some examples of how some features of persons call for certain ways of acting and relating. The vulnerability and neediness of any sentient beings (especially self-conscious ones which can experience being inadequately regarded) calls for concern, positive regard, care or love, or makes such attitudes fitting (that is, appropriate, adequate or reasonable). The variety of enjoyments and feelings of union that the other person promises calls for interaction, engagement, attachment and possibly forming special bonds and ultimately regarding the other as a significant other. And the nature of the other as an autonomous judge and agent calls for (rationalizes, makes appropriate) respect and reverence for those capacities. A special case of respect for autonomy is the ban on paternalism: even if some course of action would benefit the agent more than another, respect for autonomy demands that the agent gets to decide what she does. And one’s deeds, efforts, merits, achievements, accomplishments or victories call for or merit esteem, appreciation, admiration, gratitude or praise (or, resentment and blame in negative cases). Thus, a variety of reasons determines what kinds of recognitive

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responses are adequate or fitting in the light of the features of other persons.¹⁷ The inadequate or unfitting ones count as misrecognition.

What, then, is the distinction between harms and offences? Following Joel Feinberg, we can say that any event which sets back one's interests or constitutes an obstacle to one's needs (at any of the levels listed) constitutes a *harm*. Harms can be distinguished from the miscellany of other universally unpleasant occurrences. Feinberg uses 'offence' as a technical term in a broader sense than in everyday language to cover such states which, while bad, are not harmful. These vary from 'mere nuisances' to 'profound offences'.¹⁸ It is easy to see that misrecognition is, exceptional cases aside, unpleasant. Having to encounter insults, disrespect, unjustified lack of esteem, lack of emotional concern, negative attitudes and being treated as if one does not exist at all warrant resentment, and thus such treatment constitutes offence, at the very least. But as we have seen, the multiple needs for recognition give rise to equally multifarious opportunities to be harmed (and not merely offended) by misrecognition. When related (in sufficiently weighty ways) to the satisfaction of such needs and prerequisites of agency, misrecognition constitutes a harm. Such harms are often (though not invariably) accompanied by experiences of misrecognition, and they would justify these sorts of feelings even when the feelings themselves are not present. In what follows, I will draw on the idea that there is a duty not to harm, and a corresponding right not to be harmed, and thus unjustified harming is a clear case of *wronging* the other. (I need not take a stand here on whether there is a *duty* not to commit offences in Feinberg's sense, with a corresponding *right*; in any case it is clear that there is some reason not to commit offences, and a corresponding valid claim.)

In the happy cases, forms of adequate recognition help to meet the needs. To see how this is so, we need to distinguish some subspecies of recognition. Axel Honneth (and following him, for example, Simon Thompson) stresses that respect, esteem and love are the main different forms of recognition.¹⁹ I have here divided each in two to help see how the multifarious needs for recognition can be met. So I assume there are two kinds of each: one type of respect for the individual as an agent capable of leading his or her life, entitled to personal autonomy; another type of respect for the individual as capable participant in collective self-rule entitled to the public, political autonomy of citizens. Further, we can talk about *personalized esteem* for actual achievements and *basic esteem* (or 'absence of undeserved public shame') for all individuals whoever they are. Analogously, we can talk about *basic concern* for the basic needs of individuals and *personalized concern* and loyalty to those near and dear. (To anticipate, the suggestion will be that the top-down sense of (mis)recognition, or 'overall respect' is an analytically separate category, and not an additional subspecies on a par with these.)

So how do adequate forms of respect, esteem and love help to meet the needs? Roughly, *basic concern* has to do with the bottom levels, including the need for security (ii), *personalized concern* answers quite directly to the need for belonging

and love (iii), the two types of *respect* and *basic esteem* (obviously) for the need for esteem and respect, for example, to be able to appear in public without shame (iv), all subspecies are relevant (for example, via their relevance to positive relations-to-self) to agentic capacities (v), and *personalized esteem* is especially relevant for the higher self-realization needs, by providing the necessary feedback we need in such pursuits (vi).

A person is harmed if such needed responses are denied. That is, cases of inadequate recognition – lack of respect, esteem or concern – can be harms first of all directly. When misrecognition constitutes humiliation, denigration, or not caring for another, it constitutes a setback or obstacle to the needs for respect, esteem, belonging and love. Or they can be harms indirectly via the effects of misrecognition on agents' competencies (through their effects on self-relations as Honneth stresses, or through other developmental or constitutive connections to agents' capacities).

Step Three: Wronging and Violating Duties by Misrecognizing

The final step in the bottom-up story is the claim that *unjustified* harming constitutes a wrongdoing. The qualification 'unjustified' is quite crucial. Satisfaction of these sorts of needs and higher interests is always a good thing, and obstacles and setbacks to them are something bad. But not all bad things are *wrong*. The setbacks to needs and interests may result from all sorts of causes, including natural disasters. Such setbacks are a bad thing, but obviously not cases of misrecognition. And even when the setbacks result from the actions of other humans, they may be fully justified, and thus not cases of misrecognition: even though a person needs esteem, others should give esteem only on condition that it is merited. Not getting positive esteem from others may be an obstacle to well-being, but the others are not to blame if they provide esteem conditionally on merit.

The question we need to address is whether there are recognitive responses that individuals *owe* to each other, that is, whether there are duties and corresponding rights (or valid right-like claims) involved in recognition. Some responses that we have reasons to make, we are free to make or not – we need not be duty-bound either way. For example, even when very high esteem would be a fitting response to someone's great merits, a failure to engage in the detailed critical study that results in a value judgement of esteem is not necessarily a violation of that person's rights. Perhaps there is no categorical duty to engage with others in these sorts of ways. On the other hand, there does seem to be a basic duty to respect others and refrain from mistreating them. Rights and duties are explicitly interpersonal concepts involving two (or more) agents.²⁰ Duties may conflict, of course, and prima facie duties can be overridden by stronger duties. But duties are not typically overridden by reasons of other kinds: duties arguably generate reasons of very high priority and importance and in many situations these reasons are conclusive. It is

only when such interpersonal rights and valid claims are violated that the case is one of moral wrongdoing.

So we must ask whether there are *duties* to give adequate recognition and corresponding *rights* to be recognized adequately. The answer is positive. It is a very deeply rooted idea that, whatever rights and duties there are, the right not to be harmed and the duty not to harm are among the most central. And we have seen how denying people the recognition they need can be a form of harming. It would take a detailed substantive theory of duties and rights to tell us which kinds of adequate recognition in what situations are duties and which are not, but an approximate rule seems to be that negative demands (not to destroy, humiliate, denigrate, betray and so on) are categorical *prima facie* duties in every context, whereas positive demands (to engage with in a respectful manner, to provide personalized value judgements, to engage in intimate loving relations) are optional, dependent on the mode of relationship between the persons, and are not categorical duties.

Cases of harming through misrecognition are *wrong* always when there are no weightier considerations present which would override the duty not to harm. That is how the bottom-up picture of wrongful misrecognition builds up: from needs for recognition to harms caused by misrecognition and thereby to violations of the duty not to harm, and thus, cases of wronging the other. When we have a case of misrecognition which constitutes a harm, it is also case of violating a duty not to harm, and therefore a clear case of wronging, unless there are some contextual considerations which excuse harming.

Misrecognition and Wrongness: Two Complementary Views

We are now in a position to draw the contrast between two ways in which wrongness and misrecognition can be related. As we have seen, the bottom-up view stresses that there are various recognitional needs which we cashed out with the help of Maslow's account, and there are various specific forms of harming by denying the needed kinds of respect, esteem or care. Call these the 'bottom-up recognitional harms' – for example harming someone's sense of security by denying basic concern, blocking the development of someone's competences by denying basic respect, or harming someone's self-realization by actively denigrating forms of personalized esteem.

It is easiest to draw the contrast to the top-heavy account, if we note that in addition to these kinds of cases of bottom-up recognitional harms, there are varieties of other types of harms. Not all human needs are reducible to the needs for recognition. For example, setbacks to one's material or economic interests, lack of access to cultural practices in which to exercise one's capacities, lack of opportunities of other kinds, and so on are all harmful. These need not be, *qua* harms, cases of bottom-up recognitional harms. It is one thing for a person to experience

lack of adequate nutrition (with possibly lasting physical effects), and another thing for her to experience lack of concern (with possible lasting psychological effects), even when adequate concern would have manifested itself in another person taking care of the nutritional situation. These non-recognitional kinds of harms make the lives of individuals worse in ways other than (directly) affecting their state of being recognized or (indirectly) their self-relations or agentic competencies. Some kinds of behaviour may thus well be wrong for two reasons at the same time: because they are cases of misrecognition (and are detrimental to positive self-relations), and because they are harmful in some other sense (being detrimental to physical health, for example). Thus one can individuate aspects of action which are wrong-making, while not as such cases of misrecognition, even when they are accompanied by simultaneous misrecognition. Thus, insofar as the bottom-up story is concerned, there may be normative violations, wrongings, which are not cases of misrecognition.

But on the other hand, there is an intuition that *any* kind of intentional wrongdoing, whether the harm in question is an immediate case of bottom-up misrecognition or not, is a violation of the overall normative standing of the person, and thus in some fundamental sense a case of misrecognition. Violating a person's rights, to take one important example, seems to be a failure to recognize that person's normative status. Violation of a person's overall normative standing is arguably a distinct type of misrecognition, *misrecognition because wrongdoing*. This is the top-heavy sense of misrecognition. Here the very fact that the event is a case of wrongdoing makes it count as the 'top-heavy' sense of misrecognition (whether it results especially from one of the six species of 'recognitional harming' or some other type of harming). The cases discussed are bottom-up cases of *wronging because misrecognizing*, or wrongdoing by causing bottom-up recognitional harms (related to respect for personal autonomy, respect for public autonomy, basic or personalized esteem for valuable features, or basic or personalized care for needy beings).

It would be very natural to call the cases of the top-heavy misrecognition failures of 'overall respect', but it is important not to confuse this with the two kinds of respect already discussed (respect for private and public autonomy). People can be wronged in ways which have nothing to do with disrespecting their private or public autonomy (but are for example cases of deficient responsiveness to their merits). This kind of 'overall respect' is discussed by Arneson and Raz in the following quotes:

One expresses due [overall] respect for persons and treats them respectfully by acting towards persons in accordance with the moral principles that are best supported by reasons. In this sense [overall] respect for persons looks to be . . . a purely formal idea, neither a clue to what principles are best supported by moral reasons nor a constraint on what principles might be chosen.²¹

We respect people [overall] if we treat them as they should morally be treated. But that means that the way they should morally be treated is determined by other considerations

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(they should not be made to suffer, should be helped in their valuable endeavours, should be protected from destitution, and so on). Once these considerations are determined we know what we ought to do. They are moral reasons and we should follow them. A byproduct of following them, a byproduct of doing our moral duty, is that we will be respecting people [overall]. If that is so then there are no duties of [overall] respect as such. [Overall] respect is what we show when we do what we otherwise have to do. We need not worry about [overall] respect. We will respect people [overall] willy nilly, simply by doing what we have non-[overall]respect-based reasons to do.²²

While the bottom-up view is rooted in a substantive picture of human needs, interests and agency, the top-down view claims that any kind of violation of a person's overall moral standing, rights and valid claims (whatever they are) are, on that account, cases of (overall) misrecognition and cases of overall disrespect. We can draw an analytical distinction between the thick harms, which are setbacks to needs and interests, and the thin moral violations which consist merely in the fact that someone's normative standing has not been observed. The former harms are wrong-making, the latter 'harm' or violation is just the fact of someone being wronged. In addition to the six kinds of needs (and related harms) discussed, we have a directly moral interest in being treated in morally justified ways.²³ This is not without interest to the topic of mutual recognition: *violations of such moral interests are always inconsistent with relations of mutual recognition in the thin, top-heavy sense*. While 'overall respect' does not explain why something is wrong, it may shed light on moral motivation – the desire to be moral may derive from the desire to stand in certain kinds of relations to others. Let us end by taking a look at T. M. Scanlon's view of such relations.

Scanlon and Mutual Recognition in the Thin, Top-Down Sense

Scanlon discusses mutual recognition as an internally motivating goal which can provide an answer to the question 'why be moral?'²⁴ More specifically, he is interested in why is it that moral considerations, or considerations about what we owe to one another, seem to have *priority* over other values and reasons for action. Moreover, why is it that failures of others to live according to the demands of what is wrong and right in this sense constitute very serious failings? That is, why do considerations of right and wrong have the special importance that they do?²⁵

Answering these questions involves facing a dilemma, which Scanlon calls 'Prichard's dilemma'. There are two kinds of readily available answers to the question 'why avoid doing an act which is morally wrong?' One answer is obvious but uninformative: the reason not to do the act is just that it is wrong (or, has features which make it wrong). This answer which amounts to saying, 'because morality demands it', simply takes the reason-giving force of moral considerations for granted and is quite uninformative. It also presents a somewhat unattractive picture of morality for morality's sake. The other option is to appeal to some clearly

non-moral reason such as a person's self-interest, narrowly construed. This option gives us external reasons to be moral, in the light of social sanctions, future benefits and so on. This option seems, however, to offer the wrong kind of reason to be motivated by, as it makes morality merely a contingent means to self-interested ends.²⁶

Prichard himself was a fierce critic of any attempts to answer this question in any substantive way.²⁷ In his view, moral philosophy rests on a mistaken assumption that this question must be answered. We should just embrace the first horn of the dilemma and accept the intrinsic reason-giving force of moral considerations. Even those of us who think Prichard was right in this (at least when it comes to the question why right-making features provide some reason for action on their own) may find it illuminating to consider the possibility of a third alternative. For, in addition to either focusing on morality in an isolated sense, or calculating the external benefits of moral action, we can consider the *constitutive* relations that moral behaviour has to some larger whole. One option would be to focus on one's whole life and argue that a good, meaningful life may be constituted partly by moral actions: thus true *eudaimonia* consists of activities in accordance with virtue. Scanlon's suggestion is not to appeal to the agent's whole life as such, but, interestingly for our purposes here, to the value of interpersonal relations and living with others.

In discussing the priority of questions of right and wrong, Scanlon draws an analogy with friendship. Friendship poses an analogous motivational problem to morality at large. Here the question is 'why be loyal to one's friends when this requires sacrificing other goods?' Again there would be a non-informative answer, 'because friendship requires it', and a wrong kind of answer if we were to cite external benefits unrelated to friendship. The proper response to the question, according to Scanlon, is to show how friendship is not merely something that grounds cold obligations of loyalty, but also something 'desirable and admirable in itself'.²⁸ One should bear in mind what benefits are intrinsic to friendship, 'such as enjoyable companionship, help and support'. At the same time it is important to notice that 'being a friend involves seeing "because loyalty requires it" as a sufficient reason for doing something even though it involves a sacrifice of other goods'.²⁹

Thus, as far as friendship goes, the dilemma merely seemed a dilemma, because it forced two essential aspects of friendship apart. A person who could not see loyalty as a reason would not be a true friend, and on the other hand, someone who did not take friendship as a good and enjoyable thing and a constituent of good life 'would not be a friend either, but only following a strangely cold imperative'.³⁰ Thus, Scanlon concludes that being a friend involves both feeling friendship's demands and enjoying its benefits.³¹

Analogously, the answer to Prichard's dilemma is to be found by appealing to something more generally interpersonal:

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[The ideal of acting in accord with what we owe to each other] is meant to characterize *the relation with others the value and appeal of which underlies our reason to do what morality requires*. This relation, much less personal than friendship, might be called a *relation of mutual recognition*. Standing in this relation to others is *appealing in itself – worth seeking for its own sake*. A moral person will refrain from lying to others, cheating, harming, or exploiting them, *'because these things are wrong.'* But for such a person these requirements are not just formal imperatives; they are *aspects of the positive value of a way of living with others.*³²

Thus, like friendship, morality has a positive aspect of being in unity with our fellow creatures.³³ This resembles Hegel's formula of meaningful non-alienated freedom in terms of 'being at home in the social world', or 'being oneself in another'. As we saw earlier, for Hegel the same structure as that of morality can be found in an immediate emotional sense in love, and also, in a more mediated way, in relations of mutual recognition between autonomous individuals. Scanlon points to the civil rights movement and Vietnam War protests in the USA in the 1960s and early 1970s to illustrate the reactions of shock, loss and estrangement, to the social divisions which resulted from growing public awareness of deep injustices or wrongs.³⁴ What was at stake then was not just the loss of certain goods, or guilt, or distress among US citizens for not living up to their moral ideals. It was a deep sense of alienation since 'one cannot take the same pleasure in cooperative relations with others' if the terms of that cooperation are unfair.³⁵

In discussing the *importance* of considerations of right and wrong, Scanlon points out that

. . . the reasons that a person recognizes are important to us because they affect the range of relations we can have with that person. In many cases these effects are quite local. If someone does not see the point of music, or of chess, or does not appreciate the grandeur of nature, then one cannot discuss these things with him or enjoy them together. 'Blind spots' such as these . . . leave much of life untouched.³⁶

A failure to be moved by moral considerations, or by what is right and wrong, however, effects a more global rupture. What is at issue here is 'the person's attitude towards us – specifically, a failure to see why the justifiability of his or her actions to us should be of any importance'.³⁷ This involves denying the other's standing as a person, and where this occurs there is a gulf in understanding, not simply a blind spot. One is totally unconnected to the person who fails to recognize one as a person. This, in Scanlon's view, accounts for the special importance of seeing the reason-giving force of moral considerations.

To strengthen his case, Scanlon further argues that such universal mutual recognition is a precondition of other kinds of relationships. Even friendship

. . . involves recognition of the friend as a separate person with moral standing – as someone to whom justification is owed in his or her own right, not merely in virtue of being a friend. A person who saw only friends as having this status would therefore not have friends in the sense that I am describing: their moral standing would be too dependent on the contingent fact of his affection. There would, for example, be something unnerving about a 'friend' who would steal a kidney for you if you needed one. . . . what it

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implies about the 'friend's' view of your right to your own body parts [is that] he would not steal them, but that is only because he happens to like you.³⁸

The role of the kidney example is to assure us that friendship requires that we recognize our friends as having the moral standing of persons, independently of the fact of our friendship. The same goes, of course, for any particular relationship: at the core of each is the relationship of mutual recognition. It is worth stressing that Scanlon agrees with Prichard that moral reasons are primitive and unconditionally binding. It is just that their priority, importance, and positive appeal can be elucidated in ways which do not simply amount to the slogan 'because morality says so'. As Scanlon puts it, 'these requirements are not just formal imperatives; they are aspects of the positive value of a way of living with others'.³⁹

What must recognition be like, if it is to play the role that Scanlon envisages? The first thing to note is that mutual recognition does not amount to the mere *identification* of the other as a person or a potential recognition partner of some other kind, but also involves some element of normative *acknowledgement*, or regard, or a willingness to treat another person only in justifiable ways.⁴⁰ At a minimum, this regard might amount simply to the admission that our decision on how to relate to the other agent is at least of some ethical significance.⁴¹

Building on Scanlon's remarks, we can arrive at a more informative twofold account of what the element of acknowledgement of normative claims involved in mutual recognition is. On the one hand, the acknowledgement in question necessarily implies a general disposition to take the wrongness of an act as a reason not to do it, and moreover a reason with special importance and priority. This reason is independent of the other consequences or features of the act.⁴² But on the other hand, there should be some analogue to the idea that friends enjoy friendship, and do not act on the cold imperatives of loyalty. What we want to capture is the idea that, like friendship, morality involves being 'in unity with our fellow creatures'.⁴³ Crucially, this unity does not compromise autonomy, but is instead the unity of autonomous beings, freely willed by them. It gives a person's autonomy a 'social existence', and (if the Hegelian view is right) completes a person's self-conscious freedom. There is a constitutive connection between acknowledging certain kinds of reasons (of 'morality in the narrow sense of what we owe to each other') and *being* a recognition-partner, or 'person for the other'. One is not a partner unless one sees such considerations as reasons, and moreover as reasons with special importance and priority. That, however, is not enough: one must also implicitly appreciate the relationship or unity in question, the Hegelian freedom as 'being oneself in another' or as 'being at home in the social world', and the experiences of being respected, or at least not humiliated.

This is the most interesting part of Scanlon's 'top-down' view of mutual recognition. Mutual recognition has two aspects: first, the element of acknowledging the importance and priority of normative reasons and obligations which are related to moral rightness and wrongness; and second, the notion that the relation of mutual recognition has some felt positive appeal or satisfactoriness and is hence

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intrinsically motivating. This dual structure helps to understand how the acknowledgement of reasons and obligations is intrinsically related to recognition of persons, notwithstanding their being analytically distinct (reasons and obligations are normative entities of some sort, not conscious subjects who could for example experience being misrecognized).

With any specific pattern of relationship, new constellations of reasons and values come to the fore, but the requirement not to impose unreasonable burdens on others is a part of *any* relationship. Overall recognition is the idea of being responsive to this requirement. It is complementary to the bottom-up view of specific forms of recognition of the needy and autonomous nature of humans. Together they provide two complementary readings of the claim that due recognition is a vital human need: one starts from needs and builds up to a view about wronging, the other starts from wronging and discusses the kind of interest we have of standing in relations where wronging is absent.

Notes

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1. Charles Taylor (1992) 'Politics of Recognition', in Amy Gutmann (ed.) *Multiculturalism and 'The Politics of Recognition'*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
2. Axel Honneth (1995) *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Cambridge: Polity Press. T. M. Scanlon (1998) *What We Owe to Each Other*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Belknap.
3. This is a more informative claim than merely saying that all wrongful acts also happen to be cases of misrecognition, and it does not state that 'wrong' means the same as 'misrecognition'. The claim is that the way one person regards or treats another person has one property (is a case of misrecognition) in virtue of having another property (is a case of wronging the other). Even if the bottom-up and top-down readings would agree that all cases of wronging are cases of misrecognition, they would disagree on whether such cases are wrong because misrecognition (bottom-up) or misrecognition because wrong (top-down). One cannot have it both ways unless (as I will suggest) the bottom-up and top-down views use the terms, e.g. 'misrecognition', in different senses.
4. See e.g. Martha Nussbaum (2006) *Frontiers of Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Belknap. Alasdair MacIntyre (1999) *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*. Chicago: Open Court. Honneth (n. 2).
5. On 'needs' and 'goals', see Joseph Raz (1986) *Morality of Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. On 'welfare needs' and 'focal aims', see Joel Feinberg (1984) *Harm to Others*. New York: Oxford University Press. On 'deficiency needs' and 'growth needs' see Abraham H. Maslow (1943) 'A Theory of Human Motivation', *Psychological Review* 50: 370–96. Or Abraham H. Maslow (1970) *Motivation and Personality*, 2nd edn. New York: Harper & Row. Compare to Nicolai Hartmann's distinction between strong and high values in (1926) *Ethics*, vol. 2. London: George Allen & Unwin.
6. See Raz (n. 5).

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7. For various lists of which capacities are crucial here see e.g. Nussbaum (n. 4), or Daniel Dennett (1978) 'Conditions of Personhood', in *Brainstorms*. Cambridge, MA: MIT. Or see essays in Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen (eds) (2007) *Dimensions of Personhood*. Exeter: Imprint Academic.
8. See e.g. Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen (2007) 'Analyzing Recognition: Identification, Acknowledgement and Recognitive Attitudes towards Persons', in Bert van den Brink and David Owen (eds) *Recognition and Power*, pp. 33–56. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
9. Honneth (n. 2).
10. Joel Anderson and Axel Honneth (2005) 'Autonomy, Vulnerability, Recognition, and Justice', in John Christman and Joel Anderson (eds) *Autonomy and the Challenges to Liberalism: New Essays*, p. 131. New York: Cambridge University Press.
11. Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer (2007) 'Persons and Practices: Kant and Hegel on Human Sapience', in Ikäheimo and Laitinen (n. 7), p. 174. And as e.g. Nussbaum (n. 4) stresses, capabilities are a combination of innate potentials, as well as learning, acquisition and habituation, and further, the social (intersubjective, institutional and cultural) context of opportunities to exercise of the capacities. All are needed for there to be a true capability.
12. Philip Pettit (2001) *A Theory of Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
13. G. W. F. Hegel (1991) *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Michael Hardimon (1994) *Hegel's Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. G. W. F. Hegel (1977) *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
14. There may well be other things for which individuals need recognition, but further there are various collective and institutional things that recognition is arguably necessary for (positive features of groups, institutions and societies, perhaps even the existence of groups, institutions and societies).
15. Or, according to Scanlon's (n. 2) buck-passing account of value, to be of value just is to have features which provide reasons to respond in certain ways.
16. Joseph Raz (2001) *Value, Respect and Attachment*, pp. 162–3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
17. For more detailed treatment, see Arto Laitinen (2002) 'Interpersonal Recognition: A Response to Value or a Precondition of Personhood?', *Inquiry* 45(4): 463–78.
18. Joel Feinberg gives 31 examples of offences, classified in six classes: affronts to the senses (intolerable smells, sounds); disgust and revulsion; shock to moral, religious and patriotic sensibilities; shame, embarrassment (including vicarious embarrassment) and anxiety; annoyance, boredom, frustration; and finally, fear, resentment, humiliation, anger. Feinberg (1985) *Offense to Others*, chs. 7–9. New York: Oxford University Press. The mere nuisances are such that they are violations of someone's rightful claims to privacy or autonomy merely when the persons are trapped by them, and the costs for avoiding them would be unreasonably high (Feinberg's examples concern bus trips). They are violations towards a particular person only when they overwhelmingly restrict the autonomy of the person to decide whether or not to undergo such an experience, or be disclosed such information. Profound offences, such as religious or ethnic insults, are ones which are deeper violations, and not so dependent on whether one can avoid experiencing them.
19. Simon Thompson (2006) *The Political Theory of Recognition: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity.
20. Judith Jarvis Thomson (1990) *The Realm of Rights*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
21. Richard J. Arneson (2000) 'Luck Egalitarianism and Prioritarianism', *Ethics* 110: 344. See

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- the discussion in Andrew Mason (2006) *Levelling the Playing Field*, pp. 63–4. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
22. Joseph Raz (2002) 'On Frankfurt's Explanation of Respect for People', in Sarah Buss and Lee Overton (eds) *Contours of Agency*, p. 301. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Raz does not adopt this usage of 'respect' himself.
 23. Various 'moral interests' cover the violator's interest in moral integrity, the victim's interest in not being wronged, the participants' interest in standing in an 'unstained' moral relation, the moral community's interest in sustaining its integrity. Setbacks to such interests are explicitly moral harms.
 24. Scanlon (n. 2), ch. 4.
 25. Ibid. pp. 148–9.
 26. Ibid. p. 150.
 27. See Harold Prichard (1949) *Moral Obligation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
 28. Scanlon (n. 2), p. 161.
 29. Ibid.
 30. Ibid.
 31. Ibid. p. 162.
 32. Ibid.; italics added. As contractualism is not at stake here, I removed 'The contractualist ideal of acting in accord with principles that others (similarly motivated) could not reasonably reject' from the quote and replaced it with a more general 'the ideal of acting in accord with what we owe to each other'.
 33. Ibid. p. 163.
 34. One may note that this experience is internal to a political community, so it could have something to do with associational duties, which are stronger than mere mutual recognition as persons. Presumably the mutual standing includes even strangers who do not permanently share a social world.
 35. One may note that it also raises further issues of 'moral repair'. See Margaret U. Walker (2006) *Moral Repair*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 36. Scanlon (n. 2), p. 159. Note how standing in a relation of some particular kind (such as artist and art critic), or in a certain institutionalized pair of roles (such as client–salesperson), always brings with it a certain spectrum of reasons that are constitutive of those roles.
 37. Ibid.
 38. Ibid. pp. 164–5.
 39. Ibid. p. 162.
 40. See Ikäheimo and Laitinen (n. 8) for the distinction between identification, acknowledgement and interpersonal recognition. Compare to Paul Ricoeur (2005) *The Course of Recognition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
 51. Compare to Carol Rovane (1998) *The Bounds of Agency*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. And to Peter Strawson (1982) 'Freedom and Resentment', in Gary Watson (ed.) *Free Will*, pp. 59–80. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
 52. Which token acts or attitudes are required or recommendable depends on the features of the relationship, the other person and the particular situation. Such disposition may well be a matter of background 'secondary motivation' in that it does not surface unless there are temptations to violate the normative demand.
 53. Scanlon (n. 2), p. 163.