

FIGHT, FLIGHT OR RESPECT? FIRST ENCOUNTERS OF THE OTHER IN KANT AND HEGEL

Lydia L. Moland

It is perhaps a commonplace to claim that myths describing the origin of human society are ethically laden. To speculate about the beginning of human interaction is to speculate about the nature of humankind. This in turn is to theorize about how humans can achieve their potential, what temptations are peculiar to them, and what they ought to do to live up to their particular gifts. Such accounts, although most often used in the service of religion, are not unique to it. Philosophers as diverse as Plato, Hobbes, Rousseau, and Nietzsche have made use of the genre as well. The questions these narratives ask may seem as frivolous as the answer is unknowable, for instance: did the first human perceive this first other human he encountered to be a threat or an ally? Did knowing of other agents like himself give him hope, promising safety in numbers, or challenge his sense of well-being? Did man band together easily and naturally with fellow man, or did strife and coercion immediately predominate?

The purpose of this paper is to consider first-encounter narratives in the writings of Kant and Hegel. Reflecting on these two versions brings an important question into focus, namely: how can ethical theory best preserve the otherness, the uniqueness, of the other? We presumably want to ensure that humans treat each other with respect regardless of any individual's particular background, preferences, or personality. But we do not want, in doing this, to relegate those particular qualities to too incidental a status. If an individual is valued only as abstracted from her particularities, we are not valuing the actual individual in question but only her abstract identity as human. How can

ethics balance the unequivocal respect we believe is due humans with the otherness, the particularity, of each individual?

To address this question, first Kant's and then Hegel's account of how a subject comes to be a self-determining agent, and what this agency means to his interaction with other subjects will be examined. Two questions will help pinpoint the difference between their respective stories. First, is the other actually necessary to my becoming a moral agent, or am I a fully formed agent prior to any interaction with the other? Second, what kind of first encounter with the other best preserves both his and my particularity, our individual otherness? We will see that both philosophers intend their stories to have pedagogical value, to instruct their audiences as to the correct attitude to have toward other subjects. A contemporary articulation of these questions can be found in Christine Korsgaard's *The Sources of Normativity*, which offers a third alternative. By looking at her treatment of the other and its role in moral theory, we can better assess which components of these questions continue to require attention.

I. KANT

We do not usually associate Kant with narratives explaining the evolution of human rationality. His more widely read works give the impression that man has always been a fully rational agent, complete with dignity and respect. Yet in his essay "Speculative Beginning of Human History" (*SB / MA*), Kant chooses the form of a narrative to explore the nature of man's rational beginnings.¹ There he gives an account of man's development into a self-determining moral agent, modeled loosely on the Biblical story of the Fall. The stage is set accordingly, in a newly created world, where plants, animals and the first couple exist in prelapsarian bliss. Assuming a first couple is necessary to explain the propagation of the species, Kant claims: but we must imagine only that one pair, since the existence of multiple couples would cause immediate war (*SB 110 / MA 86*).

In the beginning, Kant then writes, man followed his instincts in order to meet his physical needs (*SB 111 / MA 88*). But unlike his fellow creatures, who depended exclusively on this natural ability for survival, man was not limited to instinct. He had another capacity whose defining characteristic was in fact that it allowed him to go *against* instinct. This capacity was, of course, reason. Reason had at first been dormant, but

once it began to “stir,” man became aware of his ability to act both without and against natural urges. Thus man discovered “the capacity to choose a way of life for himself.” He was not bound to follow his instincts simply as he experienced them, but could subject them to a greater end. This gave the subject a fearsome sense of responsibility and indeed the dreadful knowledge of death: but along with these weighty realizations came a sense of freedom and self-determination. “And so man became the *equal of all* [other] *rational beings*, no matter what their rank might be (Gen. 3:22), especially in regard to his claim *to be his own end*, his claim also to be valued as such by everyone, and his claim not to be used merely as a means to any other ends” (SB 114 / MA 91).

This first human also realized quickly that freedom from inclination was something the animals did not have: he concluded that he was therefore superior to them (SB 114 / MA 88). He also understood immediately that this superiority licensed him to appropriate animals to further his chosen goals. Kant reports that the first man announced to the sheep with unabashed anthropocentrism: “*the pelt that you bear was given to you by nature not for yourself, but for me*” (SB 114 / MA 91). The man then removed the sheep’s wool and used it for clothing. The sheep had no value on its own; its only value was in being subsumed into the self-determining agent’s plans. As lacking self-determination, the sheep could offer no relevant resistance.

Another key realization followed the first man’s declaration to the sheep. He realized “that he may not speak in this way to any *man* but must regard all men as equal recipients of nature’s gifts” (SB 114 / MA 91). The first human recognized in one breath his ability to determine his own way of life and his dominion over animals: in the next he realized (“however darkly,” as Kant says) that any other self-determining being must be accorded the same respect as he was due, must also be self-determining and therefore not to be used as a means to any end. In “Self-Understanding and Self-Realizing Spirit in Hegelian Ethical Theory” (SU), Terry Pinkard imagines the subject reasoning in this way:

I must be opposed to any and all actions that would impede or obliterate [my self-determination]. I therefore must lay it down as a rule that others respect my freedom, which is to say that I claim a non-negotiable *right* to my unimpeded freedom. . . . But since each of us makes exactly the same argument, and there is no morally relevant difference between us, I must grant

you the same right. . . . So we can live together peacefully after all. (78)²

From the initial realization of self-determination, therefore, follow the more familiar privileges and responsibilities of a Kantian subject: freedom, knowledge of oneself as the final goal of nature, dignity, and respect. From the moment he becomes conscious of his self-determination, the subject is a fully equipped moral agent, ready to follow the categorical imperative in all its formulations, including the formulations which command that he treat other humans with the same dignity that he knows should be accorded to himself.

It is not immediately obvious, however, why Kant assumes that the first epiphany (that other non-human objects are intended for his use) should so readily introduce the second (that he can use no human as a means to his ends). My self-determining abilities could, one might argue, just as easily lead me to *deny* competing claims to self-determination. Another self-legislator might imagine that he *is* able to declare to me (as he does to the sheep) that nature gave me my talents, my resources, my capacities for *him* and not for myself. I might also believe that my status as self-determining actually precludes other self-determining subjects, since it is not clear that I can remain self-determining if my interlocutor is determining *himself* instead of *my* determining him. Even if he does not imagine that he is determining me, his freely chosen ends might conflict with mine and keep me from achieving them. But for Kant's agent, recognizing one's capacity for self-determination should go hand-in-hand with recognition of the value of all humanity and respect for it. His initial encounter with the other will result in the recognition of an equal, respect for the other's self-determination, and a resolve to cooperate in order to preserve both agents' self-determining capacities.

Pinkard wonders whether this is not making an assumption about morality which, to use Rawlsian terminology, smuggles "conceptions of the *reasonable* into a conception of the *rational*." If a subject is genuinely self-determining (rational), we cannot, the argument goes, assume that he will acknowledge another self-determining subject (be reasonable). At least it does not seem to follow without further deliberation. Pinkard suggests that Kant assumes more than he should at such a primitive stage: "To say that this asserted supremacy is *not* a morally relevant distinction is to *assume* a conception of morality from the outset rather than to derive it" (*SU* 79). How can I *know* that

my status as self-determining leads me to value the self-determination of others, rather than just assuming it? How is imagining a peaceful resolution here not begging the question of how mutual respect between self-determining agents begins?

There are two possible Kantian responses to this charge. The first is to turn to the “Formula of the End in Itself,” the formulation of the categorical imperative which commands us to respect the humanity in all people, as found in Kant’s *Grounding of the Metaphysics of Morals* (429).³ Here we can hope to find an explanation for why it is necessary for me to transfer my respect for myself to others. The premise of the “Formula of the End in Itself,” according to one interpretation, is that “[r]ational nature exists as an end in itself.”⁴ Rational nature here is understood as the capacity to set ends, and Kant argues that our ability to set ends because we value them is what indicates to us that we ourselves are of value. Christine Korsgaard calls this the “regress on conditions.” The argument is as follows: I must infer from my own rationality that as a human I have value: since I know myself to be a creature who sets ends and values them, I value myself as the being who confers this value. And knowing that I confer value on my own ends implies, as Korsgaard writes, that “value is grounded in the rational nature of the being who set this end,” namely in myself (*Creating the Kingdom of Ends [KOE]* 127).⁵ I can try to deny the value of my rational nature, but in the very execution of an action, I am in fact valuing my ability to set ends and therefore valuing my rationality.

Now, the argument based on the “Formulation of the End in Itself” continues, I turn to the other, and the “regress on conditions” transfers to him. Korsgaard writes: “If you view yourself as having a value-conferring status in virtue of your power of rational choice, you must view anyone who has the power of rational choice as having, in virtue of that power, a value-conferring status” (*KOE* 145). In another self-determining subject I see someone who sets ends and therefore things of value; I infer from this fact that it is the subject who confers the value that is of value.

This gives us more information as to what the link between rationality and value (in myself or in others) consists of. But it falls short of answering the charge that Kant assumes rather than derives a moral state of affairs. It may well be true that my capacity to set ends and value them signals to me that I am of value. It may also be true that I see others setting and valuing

ends, and therefore realize that they believe themselves to be of value. And certainly it would be most reasonable to assume that if I see another agent claiming the same value-conferring status and therefore the same value as I claim, I would recognize that other agent's value. But the idea that the subject will do what is most reasonable is precisely what is being disputed. And although the argument suggests that without valuing my own value-conferring capabilities, I cannot be a human agent, it is more difficult to imagine how that necessity would extend to my recognition of other subjects as well.

We must not rush to the conclusion, however, that Kantian subjects will always act with reasonable peacefulness toward each other. In fact, struggle and conflict play a substantial role in Kant's discussion of the teleology of humanity. We find this if we turn again to Kant's anthropological writings. As we saw, Kant places the first couple alone at the beginning of his "Speculative Beginning" essay in order to avoid conflict. He does therefore imagine that humans will not cooperate reasonably from the beginning. More importantly, Kant stresses in his essay "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose" (*IUH* / *IAG*), that not only will we not always live at peace with others, but that, fortunately for us, we are incapable of doing so.⁶ Nature has arranged matters such that humans will live in mutual conflict: she knows that only so will humanity better itself. She fosters discord by pitting man's self-determining capacities against the wills of other humans. Since man knows that his self-determination is the source of his value, he precisely does not want others interfering in his decisions. He would therefore on the one hand prefer to keep to himself: he has "a great tendency to isolate himself, for he finds in himself the unsociable characteristic of wanting everything to go according to his own desires, and he therefore anticipates resistance everywhere, just as he knows about himself that for his part he tends to resist others" (*IUH* 21–2 / *IAG* 38). On the other hand, nature made man such that he is also dissatisfied when he is alone: "Man has an inclination to society, since there he feels more like a man, that is, he feels the development of his natural capacities" (*IUH* 21 / *IAG* 37). Man's participation in society is therefore conflicted from the very beginning.

This internal unease motivates conflict with other men on two levels. First, man's unsociability instills in him a "distasteful, competitive vanity," the "insatiable desire to possess" and, more ominously, the "desire to rule" (*IUH* 21 / *IAG* 38). Albeit

displeasing, this desire furthers moral and political progress: it drives man to war against other nations and to coerce the more savage others he encounters there “to leave the lawless state of savagery and enter into a federation of peoples” (*IUH* 24 / *IAG* 42). Second, man’s unsociability facilitates human progress through the domestic encounters that constitute society. Within society, we learn in “Speculative Beginnings,” man wants to be esteemed by his fellow men and so is driven to compete with them. Kant claims that competition therefore produces “decency” [*Sittsamkeit*], the “propensity to influence others’ respect for us by assuming good manners (by concealing whatever could arouse the low opinions of others)” (*SB* 113 / *MA* 90).⁷ This decency includes proper clothing, manners, and an “incalculable series of cultural expansions.” An unreasonable, antagonistic response *is* necessary to the social development of man. Kant writes, “Man wills concord; but nature better knows what is good for the species: she wills discord” (*IUH* 21 / *IAG* 38).

Perhaps these essays address the worry that Kant was smuggling in a reasonable response to the other: certainly the tendencies to war, competition and social manipulation are not overly cooperative. Yet, if we look again, acquittal is not so easy. While the first man is still at risk of immediate conflict with another, namely while in the garden, Kant explicitly provides him with no other human besides his spouse (with whom, Kant seems to imagine, there is no conflict). The conflict and competition occur only *after* I realize my self-determination is premised on my resolve to respect the self-determination of other humans. My acknowledgement of your actions as worth competing against evidence my belief that you are an agent with a plan, a point of view. If you were not, I would not be driven to earn your respect, to show my ability to dominate by manipulating your opinion. Therefore, even when I am at war or in competition with you, I will not be denying you your full status as a moral self. For I still understand myself as deserving of respect and, having recognized you also as human, know that I must transfer that respect to you. I am therefore not struggling to win your acknowledgement *of my agency*. I can assume that I have that simply by showing that I am a rational agent. Kant, we now see, does not assume that humans’ response to each other is of constant, reasonable cooperation. And yet, since competitive relationships are still based on the subject’s initial reasonable response, we still have to ask where that reasonableness originated.

Having considered these Kantian details, we are in a better position to address our initial question, namely whether Kant believes the other is necessary to my moral agency. We have seen that I do need the other, because I need to improve myself. I need the other's challenge to bring me out of my isolation, force me to compete and war with him, and so build a better society. I do not, however, need the other to become an agent in the first place. I achieve that independently, as the natural conclusion of my valuing of myself. The competition comes only *after* my realization of my value and my transferring of that value to you. Even when trying to manipulate you in order to gain your respect, I do not attempt to deny your value as a human. The struggle that contributes to the development of society is premised on recognition of and respect for other humans: as such, it assumes that I will immediately acknowledge other humans. The answer to the question of whether the other is necessary to human agency must therefore be negative.

At this point, we can only begin to answer the second question, namely what kind of description of a first encounter with the other best preserves that other's otherness. We have seen that, in Kant's view, my relationship with the other should be initially one of respect and recognition of him as another self-determining subject. Only premised on that respect is a relationship of mutual challenge and competition possible. We need then to evaluate whether this kind of encounter does preserve the otherness of the other, or whether the other's particularity is too much marginalized in the name of this respect. Before making that judgment, however, I would like to offer the contrast of Hegel's description of the subject's first encounter with the other. This comparison will further articulate the balance between universal respect and acknowledgement of the other's distinctness that I presented at the beginning of this paper.

II. HEGEL

Hegel begins his narrative, found in the *Encyclopedia's Philosophy of Spirit (PS)*, with his first subject, much like Kant's, newly aware of his capacities for self-determination. Hegel's subject has recently gone from being fully determined by his instincts to realizing that he can mold these instincts through habit (*PS* §409–410).⁸ Also like Kant's agent, he finds that his self-determination in turn gives him the capacity to appropriate other objects for his own benefit: he too makes use of the sheep's wool. Hegel calls this stage "desire" (*PS* §426). The desiring subject

believes that his appropriation of the sheep's wool is proof of his capacity to have a plan and execute it: in short, it is proof of his ability to be self-determining rather than determined by instinct. Objects around him, such as animals, confirm this view by allowing themselves to be used as means to his ends.

Kant's subject concluded directly from his superiority over animals that other human subjects must be self-determining just as he is. Hegel makes a more ambitious claim: he argues that this stage, at which a subject considers himself self-determining without yet having recognized the freedom of other subjects, is *unsustainable*. The argument for this is obscure in a typically Hegelian way, but it is something like the following: since the subject's status as self-determining is based on his appropriation of objects, he actually needs a steady diet, as it were, of these objects. Every time he negates the otherness of one object by making it a means to his ends, he has destroyed the proof of his self-determination, and must therefore search for another object to dominate. The subject desires and takes, desires and takes: "the appetite is again generated in the very act of satisfaction" (*PS* §428). He needs an other: but, since his only means of dealing with an other is to negate its otherness, he loses the other which could meet this need with every new appropriation.⁹ It becomes clear that the subject is actually determined by his desires, not vice-versa. He is dependent on the existence of objects whose otherness he can negate. His self-determination is unstable, constantly renewed and destroyed by forces beyond his control. It is therefore incomplete: he is not self-determining in the way he believed himself to be.

The subject needs an other that can confirm his status as self-determining without having its otherness negated, something that can acknowledge his status as self-determining but still remain other. In such a case, the confirmation of the subject's independence would be lasting, not consumed with every appropriated object. Where, Hegel invites us to ask, does one find such an object? Animals cannot sustain their otherness in the face of the subject's goals and plans since they have no self-determined ends (that is, ends formed without or against inclination) of their own. The only answer, therefore, is *another self-determining subject*. Such a subject, being equally independent, could *choose* to recognize our first subject's status and so give that status stability. If he recognizes the first subject's status by choice, he is retaining his freedom, and not relinquishing his otherness. Hegel therefore considers it established that

what is necessary for the subject to escape the treadmill of desire, the cycle of negating the other's otherness, is another subject's voluntary recognition of that first subject's self-determination. The need for a movement out of desire gives "self-consciousness the impulse to *show* itself as a free self, and to exist as such for the other:—the process of recognition" (*PS* §430).¹⁰

My focus on this particular stage is meant to address the first question posed above, namely in what way the other is necessary to my being a moral agent at all. Hegel clearly thinks that the other *is* fundamentally necessary: I cannot make the transition into real self-determining agency without the recognition of another. Lacking this recognition, I will remain determined by my need for objects to appropriate. Paradoxically, then, the quality that allows the two subjects to remain other to each other is what they have in common: they are completely separated from each other by virtue of their *common* capacity for self-determination. Kant's view focused on the immediate respecting of the other as human, and discussed that other's involvement in my life only under the assumption of this respect. Self-determination, the capacity which makes Kant's two subjects similar, is what makes them realize their commonality, not what emphasizes their otherness. They may not always treat others with the dignity due them, for instance when they attempt to gain influence by manipulating each other. But the threat is not that the two subjects will be able to refuse categorically to respect each other: that, as Kant argues, is not possible without contradiction, just as it is not possible for someone not to respect his own humanity without contradiction.¹¹ Hegel instead wants to explain why humans *must* recognize their fellow subjects in order to become full human agents at all. They cannot continue in this mode of domination without the recognition of another subject. But in order to see more fully what the difference is, we must turn to the second question and ask what kind of first encounter Hegel imagines, and whether the other's otherness is preserved through this encounter.

When Hegel imagines the first meeting of self-determining subjects, he does not characterize it as fundamentally peaceful, as did Kant. Although Hegel's philosophical audience is meant to know that this other subject is exactly what the first subject needs, the first subject does not yet know this, and so his response is *not* of cooperation and recognition. Instead, when he encounters another self-determining agent, he is

shocked, unsettled, threatened, sees his essence marginalized, and prepares to fight to win it back. There is not room in the universe, he believes, for two self-determining subjects. Pinkard imagines the ultimatum (it cannot be a conversation) thus: "You claim to be absolute, but there cannot be two absolutes in the world. . . . Your thoughts, your consciousness, your values are to be determined by me. Admit it, acknowledge it. Recognize me as the only autonomous agent in the world for whom there is no price but dignity" (*SU* 78). The other of course holds the opposing view, considers *himself* to be the only autonomous agent in the world. There is no immediate respect, only an existential fight-or-flight reaction. Both demand that they be acknowledged by the other as absolute, and when both refuse, they fight their "struggle to the death." The fight ends when one acknowledges the self-determination, or mastery, of the other and himself as determined by, or the slave of, that other. In effect, the slave shows himself unwilling to carry the struggle through to the death; instead, he flees death by capitulating to the other who then spares his life and becomes his master.

Hegel's account descends to a violent, barbaric level. Initially, the outcome of the struggle is bleak. The slave suffers the ultimate humiliation of abandoning his self-determination, making the master's desires his own. He does not have the master's recognition, as the master has no reason to acknowledge the slave. What follows this violent confrontation, however, is a slow development toward mutual recognition. The slave "works off his individualist independence in the service of the master, and transcends the inner immediateness of desire" (*PS* §435). He is forced to take the master's perspective and self-determination into account, and so loses his earlier, fallacious viewpoint that depicted the world as only there to be appropriated by him. Being forced to abandon this faulty self-understanding in turn frees him from the cycle of hopeless appropriations Hegel called "desire."

Hegel entertains two possible outcomes for the master: in the *Phenomenology*, he does not overcome the problem of desire.¹² He has made the other subject into a slave, someone whose recognition of him is coerced. He treats the slave as another means to his ends, just as he did animals. He therefore cannot shed the fallacious view of himself as the only self-determining subject. Consequently, he remains in the cycles of desire. In the *Encyclopedia*, by contrast, the master eventually overcomes his limited world view by coming to value the slave and so beginning to share a point of view with him.¹³

The master no longer desires to destroy the slave, but is concerned for his preservation:

This status [of master and slave], in the first place, implies *common* wants and common concern for their satisfaction—for the means of mastery, the slave, must likewise be kept in life. In place of the rude destruction of the immediate object there ensues acquisition, preservation, and formation of it, as the instrumentality in which the two extremes of independence and non-independence are welded together (*PS* §434).¹⁴

In the latter case, each subject is slowly brought to recognize the other as another self-determining subject: in this recognition comes the promised freedom from the cycle of desire. The subject is not free in the way he expected to be: he is not free independently of other subjects around him or by dominating them. He is free *through* the other subject. Hegel himself calls this universal self-consciousness, or “the affirmative knowing of one’s self in the other self” (*PS* §436).

Fuller self-determination therefore involves a community, initially of two and, later, a full society. Independence is, paradoxically, dependent on another’s voluntary dependence, and only a specifically self-determining yet self-negating subject will provide the necessary recognition. The recognition of each other developed through this interdependence is the basis of the various forms of community that follow: it “is the form of consciousness which lies at the root of all true mental or spiritual life—in family, fatherland, state, and of all virtues, love, friendship, valour, honour, fame” (*PS* §426).

The question at hand is not who more accurately narrates the emergence of the subject and the first encounter with the other. Neither Kant nor Hegel claims to be recording history. Kant explicitly discusses how the encounter should be told in order best to educate the human race and keep us content with the progress of humanity.¹⁵ Hegel, some have argued, also has pedagogical aspirations. He wants his audience to learn, from the various stages of consciousness, what the misconceptions and limitations of self-understanding are.¹⁶ Examining the pedagogical intent and consequences of these narratives allows us to compare what Kant and Hegel respectively want their readers to learn about the role other human agents have in moral theory. What attitude toward a moral other do the two narratives encourage?

I will briefly sketch what Hegel's intended conclusions are first. Hegel's theoretical point against Kant would be this: it is true that we think of humans as fundamentally self-determining, as having plans under which they organize their inclinations and in the service of which they appropriate other objects. But Kant's subject involves the other too late, too peripherally: the subject is too complete from the outset, before the appearance of the other. From the moment Kant's subject realizes his self-determination, his attitude toward the other is fully formed. He has respect for his own and others' dignity, *without yet* having encountered another subject. For Hegel, a second subject is not something that is inserted into an already moral agent's perspective. The first subject *needs* the second subject in order to become an agent at all, in order to get beyond the treadmill of desire and to gain the recognition necessary to sustain his self-determination. This difference has repercussions for how well we are able to protect the other's distinctness in ethical theory. If we assume that the moral subject is complete without other subjects, it may be impossible to add the other, as it were, in an adequate way. The role of relationships, family and society, may be thereby undermined in the name of the individual. From this follow all the familiar arguments against an individualist ethics.

Secondly, it is important to ask what difference it makes to an ethical model whether we assume that the original encounter is a Hegelian response of fight or flight, or a Kantian model of immediate respect. To return to the question posed earlier, under which model is the other's otherness better preserved? Clearly, the question is ethically significant: it matters how we describe this first encounter because it matters whether we conceive of the other as fully other or rather as something basically identical to ourselves. On the one hand, Kant's subject does preserve the otherness of the other by respecting it as such. He accepts his interlocutor's self-determination and therefore his otherness as a consequence of his ability to set ends for himself. But does such an account really describe the other as *other*? Is the other left any real distinctness, any real difference, or is that difference precisely what is negated in the automatic respect the other is allowed? Hegel, on the other hand, depicts the other as completely other: as a threat, a foreign intruder. This portrayal has the virtue of better emphasizing the distinctness of the other. It forces the subject to confront the other subject as opposed to it, rather than meet it immediately on

equal and abstract terms. The struggle that takes place between the initial encounter and the mutual recognition that comes much later is evidence that the other's otherness is something to be reckoned with.

We might, however, reply that what is important to an ethical theory is not that the other's otherness be preserved but that respect for the self-determining subject be protected at all costs. A Kantian response to the first question (whether the other should be included in the formation of the self) might be that it is true that the other plays no role in the development of a Kantian subject's agency, but that *this* is in fact the safest theory. For if a subject requires another subject to make him capable of being a complete human agent, this undermines the first subject's autonomy. An agent should not be dependent on the recognition of others: he is a full subject in and of himself. Only so is his status as free guaranteed.

A Kantian could also admit that the other's distinctness is not fully acknowledged in Kant's narrative, but claim that this, again, is actually for the better. Hegel seems to muddy Kant's clear, uncompromising command to respect the other. Kant's universal and immediate recognition of all self-legislators may be the safer way to protect the rights of all humans. If these are pedagogical, pragmatic stories about how we should see our relations with others, perhaps Kant believes that we are better off telling a story that portrays respect for the other as immediate and uncomplicated.

III. KORSGAARD

Christine Korsgaard's *The Sources of Normativity* (SN) suggests a third alternative, combining immediate respect for other humans with a central role for the other in our agency. Korsgaard understands the categorical imperative as being "the law of acting only on maxims you can will to be laws" (SN 98), and affirms that Kant was right to claim that we must follow such an imperative. She then proposes to supplement Kant's theory: in addition to following the categorical imperative, moral agents need something she calls practical identity.¹⁷ Such an identity includes particular facts about me: my race, gender, religion, and so forth. It therefore includes obligations to *others*, other members in the communities I have committed to. This identity in turn will determine what actions are obligatory for me. My identity as a parent will obligate me to care for my children; my

identity as a psychologist will require me to listen carefully to my patients, and so forth. "Autonomy is commanding yourself to do what you think it would be a good idea to do, but that in turn depends on who you think you are" (SN 107). If there are no others in a subject's life, he has no practical identity. If he has no practical identity, he is not a full moral agent.

This argument combines the perspectives of Kant and Hegel in a promising way. On the one hand, Korsgaard shares Kant's uncomplicated respect for the other's humanity. On the other hand, the existence of the other is clearly necessary for her concept of agency. Korsgaard's answer to my first question, whether others are necessary to full agency, appears to be yes. It remains to ask the second question: what story of our encounter with the other might we choose to preserve the otherness of both parties? Do we recognize instantly the worth of the other *qua* human, or do we struggle with his otherness, thus acknowledging the foreignness of another's self-determination?

Korsgaard gives a response to this question while attacking the worry that "valuing your own humanity does not commit you to valuing that of others" (SN 131). My valuing my own humanity, Korsgaard had just argued, is at the core of all my commitments. Also, as we saw earlier, Korsgaard follows Kant in believing that my valuing of myself because I value my ends translates into my valuing of others who similarly value their ends. But why, Korsgaard's interlocutor asks, would it not be possible under the above description for me to acknowledge only my personal interests? How do I ensure that I will act on my knowledge of the value of others, that I will be reasonable?

Korsgaard argues that it would be much harder to find an explanation if we had *no* effect on each other.¹⁸ We ought to devote more attention, she thinks, to discussing how hard it is *not* to take the call of other humans into consideration. Korsgaard imagines a scenario in which you are tormenting me and I call upon you to stop. She then imagines you admitting that if someone were doing what you are doing to me to *you*, that would be wrong. But since you are not me, there is nothing wrong. Then she suggests that this would never really happen: "But the argument never really fails in *that* way. . . . it is impossible to hear the words of a language you know as mere noise. In hearing your words as *words*, I acknowledge that you are *someone*" (SN 143).

Since you are a human, I cannot help but recognize you. As in Kant, my automatic recognition of you does not mean that I invariably treat you well: I can manipulate you, for instance, to make you respect me. My reaction to you can be negative, and I can even ignore you. But in manipulating you I will still be treating you as a human and a source of obligation to me. Korsgaard imagines another scenario:

“If I call out your name, I make you stop in your tracks. (If you love me, I make you come running.) Now you cannot proceed as you did before. . . . But why should you have to rebel against me? It is because I am a law to you. By calling your name, I have obligated you. I have given you a reason to stop” (SN 140).

The fact that I am unable to go on in the same way as before after encountering another human gives evidence for the fact, so Korsgaard seems to think, that I cannot *help* but recognize your humanity. In other words, we should stop worrying about how to ensure that each of us treats others as humans, since we cannot help feeling obligated to them as humans. Like Kant, Korsgaard sees the recognition of the other as clear, exceptionless, and immediate.

If it is true, as Korsgaard suggests, that my recognition of other subjects is based on the fact that I cannot ignore their humanity, this suggestion does not allow the other to retain her full otherness. Some advantage was gained through her combining of unquestioned value of humanity with the inclusion of others in my practical identity. But this advantage is undermined if I assume that I cannot *but* recognize the other. Respecting another human being purely because of her value as a human is not fully engaging the otherness of the other. It is only an automatic response to that subject's general status as a human *like me*. Another subject's abstract human value does not capture that person's genuine otherness.

Korsgaard is right to say that Kant's moral agent needs to be supplemented by a more integral need for the other. In this respect, she, with Hegel, answers the initial question posed in the affirmative. But the kind of encounter she describes neglects the importance of showing the other in its full otherness. In doing so, it duplicates the weakness of Kant's narrative.

IV. OUTLINE OF A HEGELIAN SOLUTION

It promises to be very difficult to construct a Kantian-based theory that will leave the other satisfactory distinctness. Given

that Hegel does seem to be able to retain this distinctness, it remains to ask whether he can satisfactorily account for specific ethical relationships, and the answer to this question—in brief—is that he can. Hegel is determined throughout his system to portray the negative element of his dialectic as transcended (*aufgehoben*) in the synthesis, that is, *both* preserved and overcome in the synthesis that follows. In order for the dialectic to function, the antithesis must be seen as fully, completely other. Indeed, the second subject who confronts the first in Hegel's imagined conflict has, as yet, no specific characteristics. He is nameless, faceless, without particular commitments or projects. He is, simply, other. It is this featureless otherness with which the first subject struggles.

We remember, however, that what Hegel suggested was actually necessary for the subject, although the subject could not yet see this, was a voluntary exchange of recognized self-determination between the two subjects. This cannot happen at the stage of master and slave, but in later passages, Hegel shows how it is increasingly possible in more developed relationships. In marriage, for instance, I retain my distinctness by offering it up voluntarily; I gain self-determination by joining willingly with another. Hegel writes that the first moment of love is the negating of one's independence, but he goes on:

The second moment is that I maintain and preserve myself in this negation, because I gain myself in another person. In her I have the intuition, the consciousness, that I count for something, in her I have worth and validity. But it is not only I who counts, she also counts for me. This means that each person has in the other the consciousness of the other and of the self, this unity (*VPR4* 420).¹⁹

This is the account of recognition as it is appropriate in marriage: further descriptions of how we must recognize the other while maintaining our self-determination are presented by each stage of the *Philosophy of Right*. Abstract right demands the universal respect of persons; morality illustrates the vital but inadequate nature of subjective certainty. In civil society, the subject finds individual satisfaction that eventually requires fulfillment in the greater community of the state, where citizens are recognized as persons, along with their particular projects.

Hegel does not claim that any given subject begins life by confronting a faceless other and only after years of development joins a community. Rather, through treating each of these

stages in isolation, Hegel allows us to examine the exact nature of, among other things, the commitment in marriage, our professional obligations, or our role within a society. He does this in part to emphasize what features a full sense of agency must include.²⁰ Hegel's depiction of the original struggle for recognition is to make the point that *one* of the necessary components in ethical agency is acknowledgement of the other's full foreignness. This foreignness should ultimately be mediated by my recognition of the other's particular commitments and roles. But it should never be explained away by shared rationality. The story of the fight to the death should keep this fact before us.

An ethical theory maintains an important balance when it guarantees respect and recognition to all humans, requires that we acknowledge the particularity of other subjects, and also motivates us to preserve the other's distinctness. Achieving this balance is not a new challenge to ethics. Once the dilemma is brought into focus through a consideration of narratives of first encounters, Hegel's success in achieving it through his story of struggle and recognition becomes apparent. As obscure as narratives of society's origins may seem, their pedagogical force informs our stance toward the other. The effects of these assumptions will necessarily be evident in the accompanying ethical theory: a good reason to examine our narratives carefully.

Boston University

ENDNOTES

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1. *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983); "Mutmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte," *Schriften zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie, Politik und Pädagogik 1: Werke in 12 Bänden*, Band 11 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft: 1977). References are to the English translation followed by the German.

2. *Philosophical Topics*, vol. 19 (1991), pp. 71–98.

3. Translation by James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1981); *Grundlegung der Metaphysik der Sitten* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1994).

4. Allen Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 124. Wood refers to this formulation as the "Formula of Humanity," and draws on Korsgaard's "regress on conditions" mentioned below. Given the vast literature on the categorical imperative, I have chosen to limit myself to Korsgaard's and Wood's arguments.

5. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

6. This essay is found in the same volume as the previous essay, both in English and German.

7. See also Allen Wood, "Unsociable Sociability: The Anthropological Basis of Kantian Ethics." *Philosophical Topics*, vol. 19 (1991), pp. 325–351.

8. *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, trans. William Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). *Philosophie des Geistes: Werke in 20 Bänden*, volume 10 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft: 1986).

9. As Frederick Neuhouser writes, "[t]he other has ceased to exist, and the certainty of self-consciousness' identity with itself is no longer true until it reproduces its desire and engages in the endless and ultimately unsatisfying cycle of gratification followed by emptiness" "Deducing Desire and Recognition in the *Philosophy of Spirit*." *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 24 (1986), p. 253.

10. See also Neuhouser, pp. 243–262; Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 40.

11. I am thinking of Kant's examples of lying and suicide in *Grounding*, p. 422.

12. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft, 1986).

13. Compare *PS* §§432–434 with the *Phenomenology's* section on the master-slave dialectic. Robert Williams gives a helpful summary of the difference in *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press) pp. 61–80.

14. Although Hegel does portray this conflict as a necessary stage in the dialectic, it would be incorrect to infer, as Darrel Moellendorf does, that Hegel thinks *slavery* was a historical necessity: see his "Racism and Rationality in Hegel's *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*." *History of Political Thought*, vol. 13 (1992), pp. 243–255. For a very thoughtful discussion of Hegel on slavery, see Angel Oquendo, "Hegel's Account of Ancient Slavery," in *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 4 (1999), pp. 437–463.

15. See *SB* 109–111 and 122–123 / *MA* 85–86 and 102.

16. See, for instance, Butler 21; Neuhouser 252; Allen Speight, *Hegel, Literature and the Problem of Agency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 14–16.

17. Korsgaard sees her description of practical identity as breaking down “Kant’s overly harsh . . . division between natural impulses that do not belong to my proper self and rational impulses that do” (*SN* 240).

18. This is not the only argument Korsgaard uses to explain why we are required to take others into account. In other passages, she bases her argument on the idea that reasons are public and relational: see *SN* 135–137; *KOE* 301. I discuss the passages above because they recall the encounter narratives I am discussing otherwise.

19. *Vorlesung über Rechtsphilosophie*, vol. 4: Vorlesung im zweiten Semester 1824–5, ed. Karl-Heinz Ilting (Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann Verlag, 1973), as quoted by Williams, p. 213.

20. Obviously this is not the full story: Hegel has many systematic reasons for isolating each stage as he does, reasons that have to do with his view of the development of logic.