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A Vital Human Need

Recognition as Inclusion in Personhood

Heikki Ikäheimo *Macquarie University*

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ABSTRACT: Why is recognition of such an importance for humans? Why should lack of recognition motivate people to fight or work for recognition? In this article, I first discuss shortly Axel Honneth's somewhat psychologizing strategy for answering these questions, and suggest that the psychological harms of lack of recognition pointed out by Honneth are neither sufficient nor necessary for motivation to fight or work for recognition to arise. According to the alternative that I then spell out, recognition and lack of it are so intimately intertwined with some of the most fundamental and intuitively appealing facts about what it is to be a person in a full-fledged sense – arguably in any culture – that there are reasons to be optimistic about a more or less universal existence of latent motivation to fight or work for more or more equal recognition.

KEY WORDS: *animals, Hegel, Honneth, inclusion, lifeworld, norms, persons, recognition*

Introduction

Why is recognition of such an importance for humans? Why should lack of recognition motivate people to fight or work for recognition? In this article I will first discuss Axel Honneth's somewhat psychologizing strategy for answering these questions, and suggest that the psychological harms of lack of recognition pointed out by Honneth are neither sufficient nor necessary for motivation to fight or work for recognition to arise. Therefore, I propose, it would be better not to invest too much theoretical energies on the psychological effects of recognition and misrecognition in a theory that aims to tap into the sources of motivation for emancipatory action.

Next, I go back to Honneth's theoretical inspiration in Hegel's philosophy and argue that there recognition should be mainly understood as an ontological, or 'social ontological', phenomenon distinguishing 'spirit' from nature, that is, distinguishing *persons and their lifeworld* from *mere animals and their natural environment*. Then I explore how the constitution of personhood and the lifeworld of persons can be interestingly analysed in terms of Honneth's three-dimensional

Contact address: Heikki Ikäheimo, Department of Philosophy, Macquarie University, Sydney NSW 2109 Australia.

Email: heikki.ikaheimo@scmp.mq.edu.au

analysis of attitudes of recognition (with some elaborations): the three forms of recognition are central constituents of the lifeworld of persons, and being a person among other persons in a full-fledged sense of the word depends on being an object of these.

The point of the article is to suggest that recognition and lack of it are so intimately intertwined with some of the most fundamental and intuitively appealing facts about what it is to be a person in a fully fledged sense among other persons – arguably in any culture – that there are reasons to be optimistic about the more or less universal existence of latent motivation to fight or work for more or more equal recognition. For activating latent motivation, conceptually lucid and rhetorically powerful articulative tools are needed however. I hope to show that the concept of personhood, when thoughtfully elaborated, is a promising candidate for such purposes.

Honneth on the Importance of Recognition

In one of the most influential essays in political philosophy of the recent decades, 'The Politics of Recognition', published 1992, Charles Taylor promulgated 'due recognition' 'as a vital human need'.¹ In his book *The Struggle for Recognition*, first published the very same year, Axel Honneth presented perhaps the most differentiated and influential account so far on what recognition is and what makes it so vitally important for humans. According to Honneth's analysis, which is based on a reading of Hegel, recognition or *Anerkennung* is a genus for three species consisting of the interpersonal attitudes of love, respect and esteem (*Liebe, Achtung, Wertschätzung*) respectively.²

The vital importance of these attitudes of recognition is, on Honneth's account, twofold. On the one hand, without the experience of being an object of attitudes of recognition it is very difficult, if not impossible, for an individual to develop and maintain the corresponding positive attitudes towards oneself of self-trust, self-respect and self-esteem. And without such positive self-attitudes, the individual will lack necessary psychological resources for self-realization and thus for flourishing as a human being. On the other hand, recognition is for Honneth *the* medium of social integration, which distinguishes societies or communities from mere aggregates of isolated or merely mechanistically related individuals. Thus, recognition is vitally important, on the one hand, psychologically, because without it the individual psyche would remain seriously deficient with respect to the enabling conditions of individual self-realization and, on the other hand, 'social-ontologically', because without it societies and communities would lack the social or interpersonal infrastructure which keeps them together in the first place.³

It is fair to say, however, that the psychological theme has been more prominent in Honneth's writings than the social-ontological theme. This shows especially in the particular way in which Honneth, in *The Struggle for Recognition*, draws the outlines of what he calls the 'formal concept of the good life, or . . .

ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*), which is the central goal of the book. The formal account of good life is, on the one hand, meant to be able to evaluate the ethical quality of different societies and identify 'pathological' forms of interpersonal relations, their institutionalizations and resulting personality-types. On the other hand, unlike traditionalist communitarianisms, this account should not be bound to some culturally specific or particularistic ideal of the good life. Rather, it should be able to point out claims about necessary social prerequisites of a good life that are substantial, yet universalizable in the sense of in principle valid in *any* culture or tradition.⁴ Here Honneth's strategy is to say that the extent to which the interpersonal relations and institutionalized forms of interaction of a society enable persons to receive recognition, and thereby to build and maintain positive self-relations needed for individual self-realization, is a universal measure of the goodness of a society. Thus, when it comes to the criteria of a good society, only the first, psychological, reason for the vital importance of recognition is explicitly discussed.⁵

Obviously, any account of the universal criteria of a good life is bound to receive criticism from various sides. Honneth's formulations seem to make him particularly vulnerable to two kinds of worries. First, what reason is there to believe that the ideal of individual self-realization is more than a reflection of a particular outlook on life, namely that of the modern western man?⁶ Second, focusing predominantly on self-relations in a theory of good life seems to involve an unjustified narrowing of the issue into a merely psychological one. In this article I will address only the second worry.

Say that we can accept, on whatever grounds, individual self-realization as a universal measure. What reason is there then to restrict the theoretical focus only to its psychological prerequisites – that is, to positive self-relations? As far as I can see, Honneth's main reason for this is one immanent in the tradition of Frankfurt School critical theory in general. This is the attempt to find sources of motivation for collective action against the bad and for the good tendencies in societies within the personal experiences of the affected subjects. Honneth looks for these in 'private experiences of injury' which stem from 'violation of deeply rooted expectations regarding recognition' and touch upon the most intimate recesses of our individual being: the way we see or feel about ourselves, that is, our attitudes towards ourselves. These intimate injuries to self-relations will, other necessary conditions being at place, become the motivational basis for collective resistance when the affected subjects are able to articulate the causes of their suffering and disappointment and see them as 'typical for an entire group'.⁷

Assuming that this extremely brief reconstruction does justice to Honneth's intentions, there seems to be a problem. That is, it seems to be a matter of common sense that harms to self-relation are neither (A) sufficient nor (B) necessary for motivation to struggles or reforms for recognition to arise. (A) Even if harmed self-relations can move an individual, it is surely at least as common that it paralyses him, or that it moves him in aimless or irrational ways that are of no

help for really changing the situation for the better.⁸ (B) Even if the psychological harms of non-recognition may – in favourable circumstances – motivate people to effective action to change the situation for the better, non-recognition clearly may have other harms as well, and there seems to be no reason to think that only psychological harms can arouse the appropriate kind of motivation.

If this is so, then the motivational considerations do not seem to justify giving the psychological importance of recognition the central role it has had in Honneth's theory so far. Indeed, or so I suggest, it seems better not to invest too much theoretical energy in the psychological effects of non-recognition, but rather try to account for all of the different ways in which recognition is vitally important for humans, and in which lack of recognition may, in favourable circumstances, motivate individual or collective struggles for recognition.

In what follows, I want to go back to the sources of Honneth's theoretical inspiration in Hegel's philosophy and try to point out a slightly different start for a recognition-theory free of psychologizing limitations. In doing so I will not comment on the details of Honneth's reading of Hegel, but rather present an independent reconstruction of some of the central elements of the concept of recognition in Hegel. This reconstruction draws on certain motives and innovations of Honneth's reading, yet it puts a significantly stronger emphasis on the social ontological dimension of recognition than Honneth's theory has mostly done so far.⁹

Recognition as an Ontological Concept in Hegel

The first thing to note about recognition (or *Anerkennung*) in Hegel is that, whatever it is, it is something that distinguishes what he calls 'spirit' or *Geist* from nature. Contrary to still prevailing popular belief and textbook folklore, 'spirit' in Hegel is not an ethereal substance floating above the heads, or behind the backs of flesh and blood individuals, nor is it some mystical metaphysical power or principle determining their actions or thoughts, nor a 'collective mind' in any ontologically independent sense (even if a certain kind of 'collectivization' of minds is an essential part of it). As Robert Pippin writes, spirit or 'being spiritual' 'is a historical achievement of certain animals',¹⁰ namely human beings. Spirit is something that humans have made and continue to make. But what is it then and how do they make it?

The best way to translate Hegel's 'spirit' into contemporary philosophical terminology that I can think of is to say that 'spirit' is a title-word for all of the essential features that distinguish *persons* from mere animals and the *lifeworld of persons* from the environment of mere animals. Persons, such as you and me, have psychological capacities that mere animals do not have, and they have (theoretical and practical) intentional relationships of a kind to themselves, to each other and to the world in general that mere animals do not have. Because of this, the world as it is revealed to persons, or their lifeworld, differs dramatically from the world as it is revealed to mere animals, or their environment.

How do humans then ‘make’ spirit, or, how do they achieve ‘spiritual being’? According to Hegel, a central constituent of ‘being spiritual’ – or in other words, of personhood and the lifeworld characteristic of persons – is recognition between subjects. Recall that Hegel’s famous story of the ‘lord and the bondsman’ (*Herr und Knecht*), which he uses to illustrate the phenomenon of interpersonal recognition, is preceded by a chapter on ‘desire’ (*Begierde*).¹¹ ‘Desire’ is here meant as an abbreviation for the structure of intentionality of a non-spiritual or non-personal animal. The intentionality of such an animal is practical and immediate in the sense that it is determined by its felt physiological needs and its instincts, which point out objects in its environment for it in light of their functional significances for the fulfilment of needs. In Robert Brandom’s terms, for an animal, things have only ‘erotic significance’. That is, anything that the animal attends to is, for it, either desirable or avoidable; and the behaviour of the animal consists in immediate responses to these significances.¹²

‘Erotic signification’ determines also the viewpoint of the Hegelian ideal-typical animal to other animals: they are, for it, either desirable prey, predators to be avoided, or competitors pursuing the same objects of desire. This pure state of nature ‘ends’ when the merely desiring and as such, with regard to each other, conflicting intentionalities are gradually replaced by forms of mutually mediated intentionalities. The relation which Hegel explicitly discusses in the passages in question is that of one party forcing the other to yield and the other yielding to an arrangement in which the latter *serves* the satisfaction of the desires of the first – the relationship of the master and the slave, or lord and bondsman.¹³ This, however, is only the beginning of the process of reconciliation or mediation of intentionalities, and thus only the most rudimentary form of ‘being spiritual’.

The ideal end-point is a mutual state of being-recognized or *Anerkanntsein*, in which all relevant parties mutually recognize each other and thereby form, as Hegel puts it, an “I” that is “we” and “we” that is “I”. This ‘I’ that is ‘we’ and ‘we’ that is ‘I’ is, according to Hegel, ‘the concept of spirit’.¹⁴ The concept of spirit, like all concepts in Hegel, can be realized to a greater or lesser degree. This means that any existing relationship or community can be more or less ideal or ‘spiritual’. The closer to the ideal a community is, the more, and more equal, recognition it embodies. The further from the ideal it is, the more it resembles the state of nature. But how is this ideal to be spelled out in less idiosyncratic terms? What is recognition, what is the ‘state of being-recognized’ and how should the enigmatic formula about the ‘I’s and ‘we’s be understood?

Here Honneth’s three-dimensional analysis of the concept of interpersonal recognition turns out to be very helpful. As already mentioned, according to Honneth’s analysis recognition is a genus for three species consisting of the interpersonal attitudes of love, respect and esteem (*Liebe, Achtung, Wertschätzung*). In what follows, I will try to show how these three attitudes can be understood as foundational for ‘spiritual being’, or in other words, for personhood and the basic structures of the lifeworld of persons. Personhood, as I will conceive of it, has

several components, or 'dimensions' and 'layers', each of which can be realized to a greater or lesser degree. Like spirit, personhood so conceived is thus a complex perfectionist concept. (However, not to complicate the presentation too much, I will tend to talk in the following as if each essential difference between persons and mere animals were a difference without degrees.)

Recognition and Personhood

One way in which persons and their lifeworld arguably radically differ from mere animals and their environment is that we persons live in a world which is *deontically* structured – in distinction from the mere immediate *erotic* structuring of the environment of animals. That is, persons regulate their thoughts and actions, and structure their lifeworld, with *norms*. Robert Brandom's great contribution to Hegelian philosophizing has been to conceive of intersubjective (or interpersonal) recognition as a necessary constituent of collective practices of norm-administration.¹⁵ According to Hegel's historicized and explicitly collectivized version of the general Kantian 'enlightenment-conception' of norms, as Brandom presents it, norms exist as effective social norms only if they are *collectively* acknowledged or authorized. An important point here is that collective authorization is not simply 'mass-authorization' by an aggregate of separate singular authorizers, but an authorization by a collective of authorizers unified by mutual attitudes of recognizing each other as co-authorities of the norms in question.

Generalizing Kant's usage of 'respect' from an attitude between 'law-givers in the kingdom of ends', or between authorities of *moral* norms, to the interpersonal recognitive attitude constitutive of collectives capable of authorizing *any* social norms, we can say that respect in the ontologically foundational sense is just this: taking someone as a co-authority of shared social norms. It seems that an important dimension of *being a person* in a full-fledged sense of the word is taking (or being capable of taking) part in the ever ongoing meta-practice of norm-administration constitutive of the lifeworld of persons. Let us call this the 'deontic dimension of personhood'. It includes, as it were, two 'layers': on the one hand, having *the psychological capacities* needed for norm-administration, and, on the other hand, having *the interpersonal status* of being respected by others as a co-authority. Both of these are necessary for taking part in the practice of norm-administration. (Note that even language and thus elaborate conceptual thinking is dependent on this practice and its requirements, since language is throughout constituted by norms in whose administration every speaker and thinker in principle takes part.)

Another way in which persons and their lifeworld arguably radically differ from mere animals and their environment is that persons live in a world which is *axiologically* structured – in distinction from the mere immediate *erotic* structuring of the environment of animals. That is, persons see things, events and states of affairs

in light of *values* that transcend the mere immediate erotic significances that they have for non-personal animals. Of central importance in this is that persons are concerned, or at least capable of being concerned, with their lives as temporally extended finite wholes. Heidegger's notion of *Sorge* grasps this, as does Aristotle's *eudaimonia*, which is for humans as humans (or, in contemporary terms, for persons as persons) the ultimate end of all motivation. Aristotle calls the attitude of being concerned with someone's *eudaimonia* intrinsically or as an end in itself *philia* 'in the primary sense of the word'. In this primary sense, *philia*, best translated as 'love', is wanting the good or what one takes to be good for someone for her own sake.¹⁶ Or caring about someone's good life, happiness or well-being, not instrumentally, but intrinsically. Following Harry Frankfurt,¹⁷ this is how persons as persons relate to themselves, and so can they also relate to other persons.

Caring about the happiness or good life of oneself and/or of others intrinsically is arguably a centrally important structuring principle of the axiological or evaluative layout of the lifeworld of persons. Everything that we do, individually or collectively, is somehow determined by what we care about intrinsically. If it is not possible to care about anything instrumentally without caring about something intrinsically, as Frankfurt argues, then without intrinsic caring there is no caring at all. Further, it seems that not caring about anyone's well-being or happiness intrinsically leaves extremely little to care about and therefore to do. If this is so, then it seems hardly possible to lead the life of a person without having at least some love at least towards someone (oneself and/or others).

Following thinkers such as Aristotle or Harry Frankfurt, being a person hence involves *having the psychological capacities for loving*. There is, I believe, also a well-formed even if less often theoretically elaborated common-sense idea according to which another important axiological component of being a person in a full-fledged sense is *being loved by others*. Indeed, it is one of the most deep-seated moral intuitions that we have in general that persons should not have (at least merely) instrumental value to each other, but (at least also) intrinsic value and that (mere) instrumental valuing or 'instrumentalization' is somehow, as such, inimical to personhood. Assuming that the relevant concept of valuing a person intrinsically here is just that of valuing or caring about her good life, happiness or well-being intrinsically, this seems to suggest that being a person in a full-fledged sense on this 'axiological dimension of personhood' involves, in addition to having the psychological capacities of intrinsic valuing, also being loved or having the *interpersonal status* of someone whose happiness or well-being is intrinsically important to (at least some) others. As on the deontic dimension, also on this axiological dimension personhood thus seems to have two layers, the psychological and the interpersonal.

A third way in which persons arguably differ from mere animals is closely related to the two already discussed ways (the deontic and the axiological), yet it is not reducible to them. Namely, having long-term concerns which temporally transcend mere immediate satisfaction of given desires and having the capacity for

conceptual thinking makes persons as persons planning and working creatures. A central point here is that there is extremely little worth planning and doing which does not somehow depend on the plans and work of others. Almost any imaginable plan or action-scheme of any existential importance for persons depends on others planning and acting in ways that are enabling, complementary, supportive or, at the absolute minimum, at least not prohibitive of its realization.¹⁸

To the extent that persons have other persons, implicitly or explicitly, in view in their intermingling plans and planned actions, they can, in principle, relate to each other either in a purely non-personal or 'reifying' way – by seeing each other as instruments to be used, obstacles to be eliminated or avoided, or otherwise as merely unchangeable or manipulable variables – or else in some *cooperative* manner. The latter case where persons take each other into account as cooperators has, from the point of view of the multidimensional analysis of recognition, two important variations. Both of these have in common the fact that cooperators necessarily have, at least some, *respect* for each other as co-authors of the norms or terms of their cooperation.¹⁹ That is, if one accepts the intuitively natural stipulation that simply forcing or manipulating someone to act as one wishes is not cooperation at all, then cooperation is by definition free in the sense that it involves both partners (and two is here just shorthand for plurality) exercising at least minimal authority on its norms or terms. This implies that both partners need to have both the capacity for, and the mutually attributed status of, co-authority on these.

In the first case, however, respect is accompanied by merely instrumental valuing of the other, or his role or contribution in the cooperation. This is *egoistic cooperation*. In the second case, the motivation to cooperate is intrinsic concern for the well-being or happiness of the partner. This makes up *altruistic cooperation*, where respect is accompanied by love towards the other. Real cases of cooperation are mostly various kinds of mixtures of egoistic and altruistic cooperation.²⁰

This is, I believe, relevant to how exactly we should conceive of the third recognitive attitude that Honneth calls esteem or *Wertschätzung*. According to Honneth *Wertschätzung* is a matter of being recognized 'as a person, whose capabilities have constitutive value for a concrete community'.²¹ Honneth does not reflect on how exactly 'constitutive value' should be understood here, but I take it that this third form of interpersonal recognition simply cannot be *instrumental valuing*, since there is nothing in this that makes it a specifically interpersonal attitude.²² Almost any mere thing can be valued instrumentally, and to the extent that the ideal-typical master values his slave for his capacities instrumentally, he values him – so we think – as a thing.²³ Even if in free and egoistic cooperation instrumental valuing is combined with the interpersonal recognitive attitude of respect, instrumental valuing as such is not an attitude of interpersonal recognition – already for the reason that it is not a specifically interpersonal attitude at all.²⁴

I take it that in order to be an interpersonal attitude of recognition, the attitude in question has to attribute its object a specifically 'person-making' significance or

status, analogical to the statuses of co-authority and someone whose happiness or well-being is intrinsically valuable to others, attributed by the recognitive attitudes of respect and love respectively. My suggestion is that the attitude is – or is at least very close to – what we mean by ‘gratitude’.²⁵ An important point here is that only free and altruistic contributions call for genuine gratitude: while you can value instrumentally good instruments, useful slaves, as well as people whose free but purely egoistic actions contribute to your ends, it would be awkward to feel genuine gratitude towards any of these. What we normally do, or at least think we should, feel grateful towards are persons who contribute to our ends freely and altruistically. As to mutual recognition, it is free and (to a sufficient degree) mutually altruistic cooperation where mutual recognition in the form of gratitude (or *Wertschätzung* which is not instrumental valuing) is most at home.

Intuitively, being someone to whom others are genuinely grateful seems to be a further important component of being a person in a full-fledged sense. Not having anything to contribute or not receiving any recognition for one’s contributions means not having the full standing or status of a person in the cooperatively structured lifeworld of persons among other persons. To account for this intuition and the reflections so far, I suggest that we should conceive of personhood as having a third dimension, which we could call the ‘cooperative dimension of personhood’. This too, analogously to the deontic and axiological dimensions, seems to have a psychological and an interpersonal layer, comprising, first, having the psychological capacities and propensities for free and altruistic cooperation, and, second, having the status of an object of genuine gratitude by others, respectively.

Why is Recognition so Important?

Assuming that these reflections – concerning the various components of full-fledged personhood, the lifeworld characteristic to persons and the recognitive constitution of these – are intuitively appealing and philosophically coherent enough, we should now be in a position to pose anew the question what makes recognition so vitally important for humans, and why humans might have motivation to struggle for more or more equal recognition.

From the point of view, as it were, of the species there is a rough general answer: without recognition humans, in general, would not lead a life above merely animal existence. But here we are interested not in phylogenesis, but in the motives of individuals or particular groups of humans living already within a ‘spiritual’ life-form. Taking into account the two layers of personhood discussed – the psychological and the interpersonal – the answer has two general components. First, as Honneth emphasizes, being an object of recognition is certainly important psychologically. It is hard, for instance, to respect oneself as an authority if one does not receive the support for this positive practical self-attitude from the corresponding attitudes of respect by others. And not practically seeing or

respecting oneself as having, or being entitled to, a position of (co-)authority on the social norms constitutive of one's lifeworld is, for sure, potentially very harmful for the development and maintenance of one's very psychological capacity for co-authority. Think of someone who has never been encouraged to say independently 'yes' or 'no' to the normative claims or demands of others.

But second, not being recognized by others, and therefore not having a full standing or status as a person in their eyes, is usually a harm – in the best case a limitation and in the worst case a catastrophe – to an individual wholly independently of its possible psychological effects. Not being respected by others as a co-authority of the norms or terms of practices in which one takes part or which affect one, not being taken as someone whose life and happiness has intrinsic importance, and not being seen as free and altruistic contributor whose actions call for gratitude are surely, in different ways, things that no one – in any culture – rationally wishes for himself nor for anyone else who he cares about.

Slavery instantiates all of these three harms: (1) the activities that fill the life of a slave are unfree; (2) his well-being has ideally only instrumental value for the master; and (3) because his work is unfree, it does not count as genuine cooperation and does not produce the satisfaction and fulfilment that someone working freely and altruistically may receive in the form of gratitude from others. In short, the condition of the slave is unfree, loveless and thankless.²⁶ But slavery is just one example of the harms of non-recognition that are not only psychological. I take it that taking part in, or being affected by, *any* non-trivial practice on which one holds no authority is potentially a precarious situation. Infants are in such a situation of more or less complete lack of authority at the start, but an essential part of growing up into full-blown personhood is becoming a member of the relevant communities of authority, and therefore overcoming complete submission to others.

Analogously, living among people to whom one's well-being has no value, or to whom it has merely instrumental value (say, like that of a workhorse to a heartless owner) is in any circumstances always a potentially precarious situation. At any rate, it seems that having *both* no authority and *no* intrinsic value in the eyes of others on whose actions and decisions one's life and future depends is a frightening vision for any rational person in any culture. Finally, it may be that being, or not being, an object of gratitude for others is not as dramatic a precondition as not being respected and/or loved by others. Yet, it surely makes a great difference to one's standing in the shared lifeworld in general whether one is an object of gratitude, to whom and how much. Further, common sense suggests that this has important effects on how meaningful and fulfilling any rational person – in any culture – will experience his life to be. This is not only a matter of having self-esteem, but more broadly a matter of being connected in a meaningful and fulfilling way, *as a person*, to the net of interpersonal relationships and activities comprising the lifeworld of persons.

40 It is this net, I believe, based on interpersonal attitudes of recognition through

which persons mutually attribute to each other person-making significances or statuses, that Hegel means by the formula “I” that is “we” and “we” that is “I”. In a nutshell (and abstracting from a number of complexities), ‘spirit’ is the complex network of interpersonal relationships of mutual ‘being recognized’ in which humans can flourish as persons, both psychologically and socially. The three dimensions of being recognized are thus dimensions of being ontologically integrated or included into the lifeworld of persons as a person (and not, say, as beast of burden), or in other words, dimensions of *inclusion into personhood*. Even if the institutional forms in which the different forms of recognition are realized may vary greatly from one culture to another, the three dimensions of personhood corresponding to the three recognitive attitudes seem to articulate quite universal human expectations concerning good life.²⁷

Talking about *self-realization*, it seems that the layers and dimensions of personhood spelled out represent parameters within which it – in any non-trivial sense – will have to take place in any circumstances. That this is so should be no wonder if it is true that the three forms of recognition discussed are essential constituents of what distinguishes the world of persons ontologically from the world of non-personal animals in general. Assuming that this is so, I suggest that the ‘self’ in ‘self-realization’ should be thought of as a *person* (and thus not, for instance, as an animal or ‘Cartesian ego’) and that thus its ‘realization’ is realization of whatever it is that makes us persons in the psychological and interpersonal senses.²⁸

Let me make a short remark about something about which I have so far conspicuously not talked at all, namely *rights* and their relation to recognition. Having the interpersonal status of a person in the eyes of one’s interaction partners should not be mixed with having institutionally enforced rights, such as those comprising juridical personhood.²⁹ As important as having juridical personhood, or rights in general, is, it does not guarantee full personhood in the interpersonal sense in the concrete contexts of everyday interaction in which we lead our lives. **Being desperately excluded from these is wholly compatible with being a juridical person with enforced rights and interpersonal recognition, but here I have concentrated only on the latter.** If one wants to tap into the potential experiential sources of motivation for fighting or working for more or more equal recognition, one needs to see clearly that very often these are to be found in the intimate experiences of lack of recognition and therefore of full personhood in the interpersonal sense, rather than in the experientially often quite remote phenomena of rights or lack of them.³⁰

Conclusion

Activating and organizing latent motivation is to a large extent dependent on getting the often diffuse and inarticulate experiences of something being wrong clearly articulated. It is part of the task of critical theory or critical social philo-

sophy to produce tools that are both conceptually lucid and rhetorically powerful for this purpose. In combining ontological, psychological and ethical considerations, the concept of personhood opens a broader view onto the spectrum of reasons for why being recognized is vitally important for humans, and why fighting or working for it should be a good idea for any human being, than a predominantly psychological approach focused on self-relations does. And from a straightforwardly pragmatic point of view, even if its exact content is not always too clear, personhood is also a powerful moral ideal with deep intuitive appeal and therefore its systematic utilization in critical social philosophy with emancipatory aims makes good political sense. If people, in whatever culture, are not at all, even latently, *interested* in fighting or working for personhood, then they are probably beyond all help. If they are not *capable* of fighting or working for personhood, perhaps others should fight or work for them.³⁰

Notes

1. Charles Taylor (1992) 'The Politics of Recognition', in Amy Guttmann (ed.) *Multiculturalism and 'the Politics of Recognition'*, p. 26. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
2. Axel Honneth (1995) *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral and Political Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Cambridge: Polity Press (originally *Kampf um Anerkennung*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp). On conceiving recognition in terms of attitudes, see also Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen (2007) 'Analysing Recognition: Identification, Acknowledgement and Recognition between Persons', in Bert van den Brink and David Owen (eds) *Recognition and Power*, pp. 33–56. New York: Cambridge University Press.
3. On the social ontological aspect, see for instance Honneth's notes on social integration and its priority to system integration in 'The Point of Recognition: A Rejoinder to the Rejoinder', in Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth (2003) *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, pp. 245–58. London: Verso as well as, Axel Honneth (1998) 'Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today', *Political Theory* 26(6): 763–83.
4. Honneth (n. 2), p. 172.
5. Even where Honneth criticizes Nancy Fraser for overdramatizing the importance of the psychological aspect of recognition in his theory (Honneth (2003, in n. 3), pp. 258–9) and emphasizes that of the social ontological aspect (ibid. pp. 245–58), the latter remains, as far as I can see, still subordinate to requirements of, as Honneth puts it, 'the most undamaged possible self-relation'. Honneth's latest book in fact represents a clear turn towards a more ontological approach to recognition: (2007) *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. But since it departs in several ways from his earlier programme and would therefore deserve a wholly separate discussion, I will ignore it here. Let me just say that whereas Honneth in *Reification* takes distance from his earlier Hegelian inspiration and conceptual apparatus, in this article I try to show that this is not necessary for an ontologically deep account of recognition.
6. See Christopher Zurn 'Anthropology and Normativity: A Critique of Axel Honneth's "Formal Conception of Ethical Life"', *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 26(1): 121. I believe that Honneth could answer this line of criticism by arguing that 'self-realization' is not just one ideal among others, but realizing any authentically chosen ideal. I cannot discuss this problem here.

7. Honneth (n. 2), p. 163.
8. Honneth is fully aware of aware of this problem: e.g. *ibid.* p. 164.
9. Having no space for full argumentative grounding, and having discussed most of the relevant details more fully elsewhere, I will present my interpretation of Hegel here mostly in the form of thesis. Heikki Ikäheimo (2004) 'On the Role of Intersubjectivity in Hegel's Encyclopaedic Phenomenology and Psychology', *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* 49/50: 73–95, contains a more thorough discussion of the function of recognition in the structures of intentionality distinguishing persons (or in Hegel's terms the 'concrete I' or 'concrete subject') from mere animals in Hegel. Ikäheimo and Laitinen (n. 2) contains a more thorough discussion of recognition conceived of in terms of attitudes. Heikki Ikäheimo (2007) 'Recognizing Persons' (in Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen (eds), *Dimensions of Personhood*. Exeter: Imprint Academic) contains a more thorough discussion of personhood conceived of in terms of recognition. Elsewhere I have discussed in a more thorough and differentiated way Hegel's concept of spirit and its foundation in interpersonal recognition: Heikki Ikäheimo (2006) 'Rehabilitating Hegel's Spirit: Recognitive Attitude as a Social-Ontological Concept', paper read at the conference 'Social Ontology and Constitutive Attitudes' 29 Aug., University of Helsinki.
10. Robert Pippin (2000) 'What is the Question for which Hegel's Theory of Recognition is the Answer?', *European Journal of Philosophy* 8(2): 161.
11. G. W. F. Hegel (1975) *Phenomenology of Spirit*, tr. A. V. Miller, pp. 104–18. Oxford: Oxford University Press. G. W. F. Hegel (1978–9) *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, ed. and tr. M. J. Petry, §§ 424–39. Boston, MA: D. Reidel Publishing Co. I should note that my primary references in the Hegelian corpus differ somewhat from Honneth's in that I read the famous self-consciousness-chapters of the 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the 1830 *Encyclopaedia*, whereas Honneth primarily refers in Honneth (n. 2) to the earlier texts of Hegel's Jena-period. I apply, somewhat unconventionally, Honneth's three-dimensional analysis of the concept of interpersonal recognition (although in a slightly modified form) to the reading of the self-consciousness chapters of the 1807 and the 1830 texts.
12. Robert Brandom (2007) 'The Structure of Desire and Recognition: Self-Consciousness and Self-Constitution', *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 33(1): 127–50. I do not use Brandom's notion of 'erotic significance' in exactly the same way that he does as regards to the inter-animal relation. Also, like Brandom, I am somewhat simplifying Hegel's complicated account of the transition from nature to spirit by not mentioning the sexual relation and reproduction, which for Hegel represent the point in nature closest to spirit. Finally, I am not interested in following Hegel's own way of using 'i', but intend my usage to resonate with a wide variety of classic and contemporary usages or intuitive meanings of the term.
13. Hegel talks sometimes of *Herr und Sklav*, sometimes of *Herr und Knecht*, which in understandable since the ideal development proceeds from the weaker being killed, to the weaker being enslaved (*Sklav*), through the weaker having to serve as a bondsman (*Knecht*), to a state of equal recognition.
14. Hegel (1975, in n. 11), p. 110.
15. See, for instance, Robert Brandom (1999) 'Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel's Idealism: Negotiation and Administration in Hegel's Account of the Structure and Content of Conceptual Norms', *European Journal of Philosophy* 7(2): 164–89. Brandom is mainly interested in semantic norms, but his recognition-theoretical account can be easily generalized to social norms in general.
16. Here I am following Gregory Vlastos (1981) 'The Individual as an Object of Love in Plato', in his *Platonic Studies*, pp. 3–42. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. This primary sense of *philia* is not to be mixed with the more famous pleasure-*philia*, utility-

philia and philia between the virtuous. Whereas these are different forms of concrete interpersonal relationships, philia in the primary sense ('pros hen legomenon') is a single attitude.

17. Harry Frankfurt (2004) *Reasons of Love*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
18. These thoughts are influenced by discussions with Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer. See also Honneth (1998, in n. 3), pp. 763–83.
19. As has often been pointed out, even war – to the extent that it is not simply pure annihilation – involves some mutually accepted norms and thus at least some cooperative structures.
20. I abstract here on purpose from considerations concerning third persons.
21. Axel Honneth (2000) 'Zwischen Aristoteles und Kant: Skizze einer Moral der Anerkennung', in Honneth, *Das Andere der Gerechtigkeit*, p. 187. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
22. This observation has broad-ranging implications which have to be suppressed here. Let me just say that in discussing e.g. expectations concerning the third form of recognition in sociology of work it would be, in my opinion, very important to distinguish this from instrumental valuing – i.e. if the concept of esteem is to have here any normative or emancipatory significance. Fighting for esteem is surely not fighting for instrumentalization.
23. This is not significantly affected by the fact that the lord is concerned for the well-being of the slave because this is instrumental to the ends of the master. Similarly Honneth's notion of 'solidarity' (closely connected to esteem), which, according to him, involves that we are 'concerned for the well-being of the other for the sake of our shared goals': Honneth (n. 21), p. 187. I am arguing that this cannot be merely instrumental concern if it is to be recognition.
24. There are of course good reasons why we may hope that others value us for our contributions instrumentally: making oneself useful to others is the primary way to earn living in any society organized by division of labour. But not everything (and also not every attitude) that we may have reason to wish from others is (that of) interpersonal recognition.
25. See Fred R. Berger (1975) 'Gratitude', *Ethics* 85(4): 298–309. For similar thoughts about gratitude as a form of recognition, see also Paul Ricoeur (2005) *The Course of Recognition*, tr. David Pellauer, pp. 232–46. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. See also my (2008) 'Personhood and Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities: A Recognition-Theoretical Approach', in Kristjana Kristiansen, Tom Shakespeare and Simo Vehmas (eds) *At the Crossroads of Disability Studies and Philosophical Ethics*. New York: Routledge. In the last mentioned paper I argue that the third form of interpersonal recognition is what I call 'contributive valuing'; and (A's) gratitude to B is a positive emotion which is constituted by (1) A's belief that B contributes freely and out of (some) love to something A values, and (2) A's pro-attitude of contributive valuing towards B as a free and loving contributor.
26. Joshua Cohen (1997) 'The Arc of the Moral Universe', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 26(2): 91–134, provides a broad view on the economic, social and moral aspects of slavery. As far as I can see, the 'essence' of slavery can be grasped as the lack (almost never complete) of interpersonal and institutional personhood of the slaves.
27. Saying anything about ideal institutional forms for the realization of the three dimensions of personhood is far beyond the aspirations of this article. Hegel's rational reconstruction of what he thought of as the ideal institutional structure of 'being-recognized' for his own time and culture is his *Philosophy of Right*.
28. This is saying that self-realization involves developing and using capacities for rational authority, for seeing the world in terms of values and for gratitude-worthy contribution,

as well as becoming to have the corresponding person-making significances or statuses in the eyes of other persons. Within these – unambiguously ethical (*sittlich*) – parameters there is an unexhaustible space for individual, cultural, etc. variation.

29. In Ikäheimo (2007, in n. 9) I conceive of institutional personhood (under which juridical personhood falls) as a third layer of personhood in addition to the psychological and interpersonal layers of personhood.
30. See Michael Bach (2002): *Social Inclusion as Solidarity – Rethinking the Child Rights Agenda*. Perspectives on Social Inclusion Working Paper Series. Ontario: The Laidlaw Foundation (<http://www.laidlawfdn.org/cms/page1448.cfm>, accessed 25 September 2007). On the relationship of recognition and rights, see also Jonathan Seglow's contribution to this issue. For a complementary view with mine on the importance of recognition for persons, see Arto Laitinen's contribution to this issue.
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