

What is the Question for which Hegel's Theory of Recognition is the Answer?

Robert B. Pippin

I

The claim I propose to defend is that Hegel's 'theory of recognition' is intended as an answer to a specific question in his systematic philosophy. That question is the question of the nature and the very possibility of freedom.¹

This will be controversial for several reasons. First I want to treat his mature theory of ethical life or the ethical community (*Sittlichkeit*) (the theory published as the account of 'objective spirit' in the *Encyclopedias* and most familiarly in the lectures on the *Philosophy of Right*) as an extension of the original, or Jena-period theory of recognition, not its abandonment.² A widely accepted view has it that while Hegel was originally interested in accounting for the nature and authority of social institutions by appeal to a basic inter-subjective encounter and the 'realisation' of such inter-subjective links, he came later to abandon that view about inter-subjectivity, and believed instead that human social and political existence was best understood and legitimated as a manifestation of a grand metaphysical process, an Absolute Subject's manifestation of itself, or a Divine Mind's coming to self-consciousness.³ On this interpretation, what had been a competing modern theory about the nature of human sociality, a rival to Machiavellian and Hobbesian attempts to understand how and why persons forge the links of dependence and authority that they do and must, and so a rival account of an original dependence tied to the problem of recognition, status, esteem and solidarity, not fear, power and security, became instead a conservative, organic theory, with individuals mere accidents of 'the truly real' ethical substance manifesting itself in time and with no central role any more to inter-subjective experience. My claim will be that this interpretation is insufficiently attentive to the unusual foundations of the mature theory of ethical life, or to Hegel's theory of spirit (*Geist*), and so to the very unusual account of freedom that position justifies. Once the latter is in view, I want to show, it is much easier to see how the 'ethical life theory' is an account of successful recognition, or a mutuality based on a kind of rational acknowledgement.

Secondly the claim is controversial because defending that proposition will involve the claim that the theory of recognition is not primarily to be understood (as it often is in post-war Hegel scholarship) as a comprehensive transcendental theory about self-awareness, as if about the possibility of *any* self-relation (as if the contents of any such self-relation are and must be internalisations of ways of being-regarded by others), is not primarily a genetic theory about the formation

of ego or social identity, and is not directly a normative theory of institutions or social justice.⁴ It is true that one can say that, according to Hegel, a certain form of social relation (recognising and being-recognised) is a 'condition for the possibility of true individuality,' but all the work in that claim is being done by 'true' (or 'concrete') individuality (*Einzelheit*) and that theme in Hegel should not be confused with questions of pre-reflexive self-familiarity, self-knowledge, existential uniqueness, personal identity and so forth. A *true individual* is a *free* subject and recognition relations function in a complex way as conditions for that possibility.

If such an interpretation turns out to be plausible, then the main philosophical question at issue is a simple one: *why does Hegel think a subject cannot be free 'alone,'* (a question distinct from the practical question of the co-operative conditions for the successful exercise and protection of freedom), *especially why does he think that subjects cannot be free unless recognised by others in a certain way, and what is involved in such recognition?* Can't I be free whether or not anyone else notices, acknowledges me, assists me, expresses solidarity with me, etc.?

II

There is a great barrier to any economical discussion of this possible interpretation: we would first need an adequate account of Hegel's speculative notion of freedom. Since that involves his speculative logic, as well as his account of the Nature-Spirit relation, there would seem to be miles to go before the relation between the recognition theory and the theory of freedom could be addressed. There are, though, some very general peculiarities about Hegel's understanding of freedom that can be summarised, at least as points of orientation. We need to note four such peculiarities.

First, Hegel does not defend a voluntarist position on the nature of freedom. Although in many ways a Christian philosopher, on this issue his sympathies are all with pre-Christian (Aristotle) or non-Christian (Spinoza) philosophers. He does not understand being free to be an individual's possession of a causal power to initiate action by an act of will in some way independent of antecedent causal conditions.⁵ Instead, freedom is understood by Hegel to involve a certain sort of self-relation and a certain sort of relation to others; it is constituted by *being* in a certain self-regarding and a certain sort of mutually related *state*. Such states are active, involve deeds and practices, but are understood to be free by being undertaken in certain ways, not by having special causal conditions. (A standard formulation: 'Thus spirit is purely with itself and hence free. For freedom is this: to be with oneself in the other. . .' (Hegel 1970b, v. 8, §24A))

Although our modern intuitions about individual responsibility and blame seem inextricably linked with a 'could have done otherwise,' 'special causality' voluntarism, Hegel proposes a general desideratum for any theory of freedom that, according to him, this state or non-alienation theory better fulfills. If the

question concerns the conditions that must be satisfied such that my various deeds and projects could be, and could be experienced by me as being, my deeds and projects, as happening at all in some way because of me (*sponte sua*), then we are in some trouble if the only way to establish this link is under the condition that I can exempt myself from the great weight of prior dependencies and socialisation and nature and determine by an individual act of pure willing that some deed occur. (Or at least, I assume here for the sake or argument that it is highly implausible that there is such a 'liberty of indifference', to use Hume's term, and that it doesn't help much to say that this almost completely implausible picture of human agency is a 'practical assumption' we must nevertheless make or don't know how to avoid in holding others to account.) But how exactly to establish such a connection otherwise, how to link such deeds and projects with me such that they count as due to me or count as mine and are thereby instances of freedom is all not easy to see once one gives up this voluntarism and takes seriously the standard modern worries about compatibilism (worries that not a different form of freedom is being defended, but no freedom, or no link, just a causal connection between me and my conduct). The solution according to Hegel is supposed to lie in the form of this self-other relation, in recognition. Being *in* that relation, I will have thereby achieved the right relation to my own deeds, such that the general condition is satisfied.

Secondly, although such a state can be said to have various incarnations and especially degrees, its ultimate and fullest expression involves a further condition unequivocally insisted on by Hegel, but often neglected in standard interpretations.⁶ This state is defined as a 'rational' self- and other-relation, and thereby, because rational or 'universal', counts as being free, the product of reason and not a matter of being pushed and pulled by contingent desires or external pressure, or of merely strategically responding to such pushes and pulls.⁷

The third point is a brief historical note. As we shall see shortly the direction of such claims points towards some position wherein the exercise of whatever legislative and executive capacities count as freedom are (a) not original, or not properties, in some matter of fact or metaphysical sense, of a kind of substance, but (b) results of and internalisations of social interactions and mutual commitments among subjects developed over time within a social community. The story of why Hegel believes this involves primarily his early appropriation of many themes developed in Fichte's 1796 *Grundlage des Naturrechts*. That long story has mainly to do with the root idea that I come to develop a different relation to *my own desires and interests* when not only physically hindered by that other in the satisfaction of my desires but 'challenged' or 'summoned' by an other who *rejects*, does not just stand in the way of, my implicit claims to a piece of the earth. That sort of challenge is said to turn my own relation to my deeds into a claim, not just an enactment of a desire; this is so because my own pursuit of my desires turns into, must now – in this social situation – be counted as, a demand on the other as well. It is, on my side also, a rejection of that other's entitlement and not just a hindrance. In Fichte this at least eventually leads to a state of mutually accepted coercion, a quasi-Hobbesean realisation that I

cannot make such a claim to secure use (i.e. cannot make such a normative *claim*, as it must be 'after' the challenge) without accepting its universal relevance in like circumstances for each, and this justifies mutual 'negative' restrictions on freedom in Fichte's account. As we shall see, Hegel's case goes far beyond the issue of rights protection and counts all normative claims as claims of, attempts at, mutuality of recognition, but his intuition follows Fichte's throughout: to wit that this can all look like a compromise with the existence of the will of others, and so like a partial subjection of my freedom to the will of others, but that it looks so only under the false assumption that there could be anything like an individually free will apart from that social challenge and response. Rather the latter is the original condition of free agency itself, a social relation without which my relation to my own deeds could not be conceived as free, and so a form of dependence in which independence is achieved, not compromised.

Fourth and finally, while Hegel is rejecting the notion of any causal or causal power account of freedom, we should not go too far in any 'objective' or social theory of freedom. There must of course still be a *relation* between my individual views of what I will or should do, my intentions and reasons, and the actual action. It is as obvious to Hegel as to anyone else that I can have various reflective attitudes towards what I should do, or about what the claims of others on me should lead me to do, and that I sometimes act accordingly or 'on' such views, and I sometimes do not act accordingly or 'on' them. But for Hegel this relation, however important and preserved in his theory, is not a causal, but an 'expressive' one. (The definition of an action (*Handlung*) is simply an 'expression of subjective will' (*Äusserungen des subjektiven Willens*.) Hegel's most frequent example of this 'translation' or expression relation is an artist and his art work. In some sense of course, the artist causes the statue to be made, but what makes it 'his' is that it expresses him and his artistic intentions adequately, and what makes the 'him' it does express 'really him' is what we are mainly looking for and that has something to do with reason and thereby with the establishment of some mutuality.⁸

Thus what is supposed to be able to 'connect' me as an individual facing a possible choice with the choice that actually resulted is, as in many other rationalist or reflective theories, some appeal to practical reason in the 'determination'. Under that condition, the deed can be said truly to express 'me,' what I resolve to be, but fulfilling that condition does not involve 'a reason' actually functioning as a cause (the causally effective condition without which the deed would not have occurred), nor does it involve a subject exercising a faculty, as if a neutral tool. As we have already seen, deeds can count as mine if they do express my intention, and they can so count when undertaken rationally, but this latter state is one that Hegel most often describes (within the context of objective spirit) *as being in* a social state of recognising and being recognised, a state itself essential in my relation to myself counting as a product of reason and so as 'free.' It's the last claim that is so hard to understand, and even if only dimly understood, so controversial.

III

Consider again that Hegel is proposing a 'state' theory of freedom ('being with self in another'). What sort of a state are we talking about?

It is of course first of all a state of *spirit* and the *Encyclopedia* definition of spirit gives us, in extremely compressed form, all we need in order to be able to see (eventually) how the theory of objective spirit counts *being recognised in a certain way* as essential to the *achievement of freedom*, to formulate again the thesis I am trying to defend.

The formal essence of spirit is therefore freedom, the absolute negativity of the Notion as self-identity. On account of this formal determination, spirit can abstract from all that is external and even from its own externality, its determinate being. It can bear the infinite pain of the negation of its individual immediacy, i.e. maintain itself affirmatively in this negativity and have identity as a being-for-self. This possibility is the abstract being-for-self of the universality within it. (Hegel 1970b, v.10, §382)

The state in question involves first a certain sort of negative relation to one's own 'individual immediacy,' a way of not merely responding to nature's dispensations and immediate impulses as determinants of action, even while this negative self-relation does not mean simply *not* being one's contingent biological self (as if really being another, immaterial substance). But it also involves an 'affirmative' self-identity, a positive determination and not merely the capacity not to act as so naturally inclined. This is achieved through, it is said, the 'universality' within spirit and this is the claim to reason we have already noted as a criterial factor in the realisation of freedom. As he notes in different ways on several occasions, 'reason constitutes the substantial nature of spirit, and is merely another expression for the truth or the idea which constitutes the essence of it.'⁹

As we shall see later, it is the question of *achieving* this 'universal' point of view that will lead us back to the recognition issue, or the issue of being treated as, and treating others as, reason-givers and reason-responders. This is so because Hegel treats the highest or ultimate satisfaction of the freedom condition noted above – being able to 'find' myself, identify with, my deeds – in very much a Kantian way. That is, Hegel argues as well that a practically rational determination recovers the content of such deeds as my own, and establishes the proper sort of independence even in the satisfactions of my interests. As with many other philosophers, so for Hegel: an action is simply the sort of event for which reasons can be asked, and the quality and character of such reasons determines the extent to which I have acted freely, rather than been determined.¹⁰ As in the *Zusatz* to §15 in the *Philosophy of Right*:

This thing which is mine is a particular content and is therefore incompatible with me; it is thus separate from me and is only potentially mine, just as I am only the potentiality of uniting with it . . . It is inherent in arbitrariness

that the content is not determined as mine by the nature of my will, but by contingency, thus I am a dependent on this content, and this is the contradiction which underlies arbitrariness . . . When I will what is rational, I act not as a particular individual, but in accordance with the notions of ethical life in general (*nach den Begriffen der Sittlichkeit*); in an ethical act I make not myself but the issue itself (*die Sache*) the determining factor (*geltend*). (Hegel 1970a, v.7, §15 Z)

As Hegel himself constantly insists, modern social forms, the authoritative considerations offered and accepted as justifications, have no legitimate standing if only affirmed by the 'heart' or 'positive authority' (or, one might add, as a matter of contingent mutual advantage), or if, as matter of social fact say, forms of nationalist or ethnic mutual recognition actually achieve a matter of fact, or a psychologically satisfying form of trust and solidarity; these forms must rather be 'justified to free thinking', the 'content' of modern life must be shown to have a 'rational form'; our various drives must be 'freed' from the 'form of their immediate natural determinacy' and must 'become the rational system of the will's determination', we must be 'educated' to see ourselves in terms of a 'self-determining universality', and will not as a 'particular', but must seek 'the rational high road'.¹¹ The 'destiny' of individuals is to lead a 'universal life'.¹² Leading such a life, acting in a rational form, is what is to count as freely leading a life, rather than responding to and managing contingently acquired drives and desires. And when Hegel tries to gloss what he means by having achieved such a rational form, he does not appeal to a kind of practical wisdom based on an experiential knowledge of human nature, to an instrumental rationality, to a formal criterion of universalisability, or to some knowledge of the rational structure of Cosmic Mind. What he says is: only a life 'in accordance with the notions of ethical life' will have achieved the 'negation' of nature and the 'self-determining universality' that Hegel counts as freedom. That reference to sociality is, I think, already an indication of the continuing role that the problem of recognition, of achieving a form of social reciprocity and genuine mutuality, continues to play in the mature theory.

Formulated this way, this spiritual peculiarity (freedom) can be said to have degrees of realisation (degrees of achieved distance and independence), a fact that will finally lead us to the negativity and 'affirmative universality' characteristic of social life or objective spirit, the realms wherein various ways of transforming (rather than sacrificing) the immediate manifestations of nature, various ways of establishing that negative relation, take place; the realms of family, work, law and politics. Something like the *degree* of 'distance' attained from the original natural imperatives, the range of self-constituted responsiveness in such taking up of possible attitudes, or the range *not* simply set or determined by the natural condition, represents the basis for the gradualist or developmental account presented by Hegel. Nature is 'overcome' (*überwunden*) and spirit is its overcoming of the immediacy of nature and thus, is '*not the result of nature, but in truth is its own result*'.

Thus Hegel's position on spirit amounts to defending the claim that some natural organisms can come to hold themselves and others to a 'determination' of

action, a norm or claim, that, while not the expression of any immaterial capacity, cannot be explained as a directly natural or causal result. Habits, rituals, socialised emotional dispositions and so forth (what Hegel calls 'anthropology') are the first, 'low level' manifestations of such achievements; low-level because, on the one hand, subjects still take themselves as largely subject to nature's immediacy (and so are), even as they begin to understand themselves as so taking themselves and so as potentially self-determining, as so subject because (and in the normative sense of 'subject' only because) they so take themselves. Being spiritual beings is a historical achievement of certain animals; not the manifestation of an immaterial or divine substance. Said much more simply: The left-Hegelians were right.

IV

These are certainly radical and very strange claims. (Hegel often writes that *Geist* is 'a result of itself', and it is initially hard to understand how anything can be a result of itself). But it is at least clear that 'being free' is not being treated as an essential or really any sort of property or substantial causal capacity, but throughout all Hegel's *Encyclopedia* formulations, as an *achievement*; the collective achievement of a state, wherein instead of natural dispositions subjects have come to be able to constrain their conduct on the basis of and, especially, engage each other on the basis of, norms. (Throughout his formulations, the language of achievement, product, making and especially positing, is considerably more pronounced than any language of manifesting, organic growth, or the appearance of substance.)¹³ Given such an achievement, we can say that some sort of consideration about 'what ought to be done' can actually circulate. Reasons are offered and accepted as entitlements and justifications for actions, all with a collective, binding authority, all with varying historical degrees of independence from what is experienced as the natural realm of unavoidable immediate necessity (from norm-less, state of nature relations of power alone.)¹⁴

That is, such beings can collectively bind themselves over time to rules and principles and laws constraining, sanctioning and directing conduct, and they can train themselves, come to hold each other to such constraints and expected common goals, in a number of ways (education, aesthetic practices, religious rituals, sanctions). There is no super-naturalism or 'noumenalism' in such an account and it is completely non-dualist.¹⁵

This chain of topics has now reached a decisive point, the chain that identifies freedom as a kind of state, not a causal power, that state as the achievement of a certain sort of negation of, independence of, nature, and that possibility as a kind of rational self- and other-relation. This multiplication of philosophical commitments (vague and abstract as they are in this rapid summary) has now created the core problem in Hegel's account: the question of what will finally *count*, in this mediated, gradualist picture of collectively achieved 'independence,' as *genuine* independence and collective self-determination (and so finally as the self-identification we are

looking for), i.e., constraint by norms that are not indirectly or directly 'nature dependent'; and why they can be so counted.

It is so extraordinarily difficult to understand what Hegel means because, throughout the *Philosophy of Right*, given all the alternatives he has rejected, he appears to have been busily painting himself into a very narrow corner, with no room to answer such a question. Famously, against Kantians, Hegel has given up the hope that there is a single formal rule of practical rationality in itself simply definitive *a priori* of such self-determination and inherently motivating, a rule which tells us how to determine our actions so as to be 'one among many', and self-determining and autonomous, not bound to our natural dependencies. He thus gives up the Kantian version of the attempt to show how one could come to experience *one's own* concrete, individual freedom in acting 'as any rational agent at all', defined so formally.¹⁶ As we have already seen (from the Zusatz to §15, among many other passages), he also rejects any strategic or utilitarian conception of such a normative structure. *I* (or, in a way we shall address in moment, 'we') must determine the preferences and interests to be satisfied (the preferences can't do the 'determining' if I am to be free), and that means, if I am doing so rationally, that others, as also setting and pursuing ends, must be taken account of in any such internal reflection as equally entitled agents. And the question remains: how? It is clear enough that and why Hegel rejects a rational egoist or contractualist or legalistic model of such common (morally equal, each counting as only one among many) subjection to norms, and why he thinks the achievement of such mutual regard, such concrete real normative equality in interactions, *is* the achievement of true self-determination and so of the state of freedom. And it is thus clear that his ethical thought means to appeal at bottom to an inescapable, binding form of human dependence which when properly (or normatively) acknowledged becomes itself the means for the achievement of a collective form of independence. But this all does not yet present an answer to the question: What really *counts* as this general normative ideal – counting myself as and being counted as (recognising myself and being recognised as) one among many (especially such that I remain a distinct one, even while being counted as among many) – and under what conditions would such a normative ideal come to be experienced as binding, as criterial for my being able to express my agency, to be able finally to 'see and experience myself in my deeds and institutions'?

It is at this point that we should recall how radically anti-substantialist and historical Hegel's *Encyclopedia* position on freedom (and therewith agency) has turned out to be. It is essentially the radicality of Hegel's non-dualist and constructivist position on *Geist* that leads him to answer these questions in such non-Kantian, non-instrumentalist ways and to appeal to recognition relations in so decisive a way. In essence what Hegel is claiming is that 'being an agent' is not to be analysed in terms of properties and inherent capacities but as itself a kind of collective social construct, an achieved state. The notion rather functions a bit like 'being a speaker of a natural language'; where vocalisations count as speaking the language only within a language community that takes such vocalisations to commit the speaker to various proprieties and entitlements. Or, in a simpler

example, one 'is' a philosophy professor only by being taken to be one, only in conforming to the norms that establish such a role, which norms exist only as social artifacts. It may sound strange to suggest that something so important to us as being an agent could have the same artificial status, and it seems much more intuitive to think of 'rational agent' as falling into the class of 'featherless biped', or 'being a female', but that, I am claiming, is Hegel's position. The passages already quoted are, I think, remarkably clear: one is a free individual only as 'a result', an element of a collectively achieved mindedness; or in being taken to be one in a certain way. The notion functions as a normative constraint in Hegel's account of *Geist*, constructed and held to as a social norm; it is not a metaphysical or natural kind.

As readers of the Jena *Phenomenology* know, the problem in such a collective attempt at a 'self-liberation' from nature is the achievement of a coherent, authoritative form of mutuality in the reciprocal claims and influence on others inherent in any action. (In that work too, a resolution of that problem is supposed to involve a kind of appeal to reason, as in the transition from Chapter Four to Five.) In that account, as already noted, one can even be said to become the subject of one's natural desires, they can emerge as mine, only as a result of a challenge from an other to any entitlement to satisfaction. Again, being a free agent consists in being recognised as one, and one can be so recognised only if the other's recognition is freely given; and this effectively means only if I recognise the other as a free individual. This introduces a much longer story, never finally resolved at the level of ethical life in the *Phenomenology*, but the point here is more introductory. Once Hegel's anti-dualism about *Geist* and a radical anti-realism or constructivism about norms is conceded, and some version of Hegel's critique of a formalist answer is accepted, then there is just nothing left to 'counting as a norm' other than being taken to be one, effectively circulating as one in a society, acquiring the authority that is determinative for what happens, what trumps what, what cannot be publicly appealed to, etc.¹⁷ Without a possible Aristotelian appeal to the realization of natural capacities in order to establish when one is really acting in a practically rational way (realizing one's natural potential), and without an appeal to a formal criterion of genuinely rational self-determination, this turns out to be the only criterion left: one is an agent in being recognized as, responded to as, an agent; one can be so recognized if the justifying norms appealed to in the practice of treating each other as agents can actually *function* within that community *as* justifying, can be offered and accepted (recognized as) justifying.

Of course this can all sound far too historicist and constructivist and potentially relativist (perhaps even Nietzschean) to do justice to the historical Hegel (especially since what counts as 'successful justification' is itself also a norm, functioning as such only if recognised as such), so we need quickly to note that Hegel also has elaborate and controversial views on the conditions that must ultimately be satisfied before the *attempt* or *presumption* to act as an agent (= to appeal to others to *take* one as such an actor), can be *successful*. We can address each other on the basis of certain normative claims that can *fail to function* as such normative appeals, despite our assumptions. One acts freely when one acts on the

basis of a claim to entitlement (a norm), but such a claim can be contested and can fail. We can thereby, Hegel thinks, somehow reconstruct something like the inherent 'logic' of such attempts, partial resolutions, and successes. (In the developmental account presented in the *Phenomenology*, as well as in earlier Jena accounts, the role of *conflict*, and actual challenges to any putative claim of normative entitlement, play a central role in an argument for the constructed character of the norms that result from such challenges, and in a idealised story of the development of successive, more adequate resolutions of such challenges.)¹⁸

Again, as noted above, on the face of it that logic is simple enough – I can succeed in being taken to be an agent, in being recognised as acting on entitlements and permissions, only if I recognise the other as such, respond to the other on the basis of such equal claims to entitlement (otherwise I cannot recognise his recognition of me), or only if some mutuality of recognition is possible – but what constitutes such an achievement and why certain claimants to it (historically, e.g., the Greek polis, or the results of the French revolution; systematically: contract, or the moral point of view) must be regarded as failures to achieve it, are not at all easy to summarise.

Matters are so complicated because of Hegel's rejection of a Kantian 'deductive' model of any such derivation (or any formal model of such rationality, such as Rawlsian constructivism), and because of his insistence on a dialectical, or perhaps more modestly, developmental model. More specifically in this context, Hegel's theory of recognition has turned out to be a theory of practical rationality of a radically 'boot-strapping' (internally self-determining and internally self-justifying) sort, the result of which is supposed to be, partly, the affirmation of the social norms defended in the *Philosophy of Right*, to which I should briefly return in conclusion.

V

Prior to the account given of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*), Hegel takes himself to have shown that, while being a free subject consists only in the 'realisation' (*Verwirklichung*) of that norm, or consists in the 'actuality' of recognising others as, and being recognised as, such a free subject, that cannot consist alone in mutual recognition as rights bearers, with equal entitlement to produce, acquire and exchange goods, nor (alone) in recognising and being recognised as having equal status as morally responsible subjects, entitled to mutual respect in the pursuit of their own welfare and to assessment in terms of individual intentions and responsibility.

This is so for a number of reasons, many having to do with the putative status of the 'universality' claimed for such a norm of mutuality. (Hegel bases so many of his claims in the *Philosophy of Right* on such a very abstract logical language (as opposed to a direct analysis of the nature of a free will, or a phenomenology of self-determination, or an account of societal failure and historical change) that one might well be skeptical about whether the considerations about mutuality and reciprocity discussed above are relevant to the mature theory of ethical life.)

And indeed in these cases, it is because the norm in question, considered together with its application conditions and the ways it can and cannot count as a reason for an agent, is only an abstraction from a particularity, a mere generalisation, or based on a very formal appeal to conscience, that reliance on the norm cannot properly transform and regulate particularity, as freedom demands. There is no resolution of the appeal to universality on the one hand and the claims of particularity on the other, and Abstract Right is realised as the vengeful settling of scores; morality as evil itself (the supreme priority of the particular in conscience), and so both as the return of, the generalised manifestation of, repressed particularity, rather than its sublated 'overcoming'.

I leave aside the issue of the cogency of these criticisms. However, Hegel is also gradually demonstrating just what factors must be considered in accounting for the constructed character of such norms, regarding them as attempts at the achievement of collective self-regulation, and so self-determination, not determinations by nature or insights into moral reality. If they *are* to count as so posited within such an attempt, the conditions, *aporiai* and dilemmas in terms of which any such appeal would be legislated must also be considered. Without such a broader appeal to ethical life as a whole, without understanding these norms as posited within and by an ethical community, the status of coming to recognise each other as rights-bearers and individually responsible moral individuals or moral equals in any sense will look opaque; there will be no solution to the moral motivation problem; and the norm itself will be dangerously unstable and multiply interpretable. This is because we '*are*' not simply rights-bearers or moral individuals; we acquire such status in being so recognised, and so no appeal to 'natural' rights or noumenal status gets us very far. Only in some conditions, given some self-understanding, prompted by certain forms of social life, would coming to recognise each other as rights bearers or moral individuals have some role to play in the ethical life of a people (the attempt to live a free life, understood as the liberation from nature through the realisation of a form of ethical mutuality or universality), and we need an account of those prior conditions and so an account of the particular sort of claim on us that such notions have within modernity.

But the idea of the 'priority' of *Sittlichkeit*, and this sort of general Hegelian response, still seems to many to bring us all the way back now to the conservative, substantialist metaphysics supposedly behind the *Philosophy of Right*, a prior context or whole within which all the constructing and positing I have been talking about, in order really to count as the realisations of reason, are mere epiphenomena, where subjects binding themselves to certain norms are only manifestations of absolute *Geist*'s necessary, unfolding self-relation in time.¹⁹ If certain norms are appropriate to (and can be described in an attenuated sense as self-legislated within) some 'prior ethical substantiality,' we might be back to a claim for pre-reflective, substantialist position, and to a social ethics, where fulfilling a function I could not help but adopt and subscribe to, amounts to living a justified and so free life.

However, although Hegel does not treat the institutions of *Sittlichkeit* as the products of some idealised rational construction, and treats them as prior to and

the basis of more legalistic and formally rationalistic institutions (which he certainly does not reject, even while qualifying), he does not abandon, when describing such ethical life, the normative, rational and recognitional character of such ethical institutions, nor detach their claim on us from the claims of reason.²⁰ (Confusing these two issues is quite common, I think, in accounts of Hegel; taking, that is, his denial of the possibility of any methodological form of rationalist constructivism to be *ipso facto* a case for an ethical substantialism, rather than an extension and alteration of such a constructivism, which is what, I am trying to claim, it is.)

For example, already in the Addition to §7 of the Introduction, where the ethical status of the family is first introduced as an aside, Hegel makes very clear what is at stake for him. The following passage is offered as a gloss on such *logical* notions as: The 'I as . . . primarily pure activity', 'the universal which is with itself' as well 'as other', and so the 'third moment', the 'I which is with itself *in its* limitation, in this other'.

But we already possess this freedom in the form of feeling [*Empfindung*], for example in friendship and love. Here we are not one-sidedly within ourselves, but willingly limit ourselves with reference to an other, even while knowing ourselves within this limitation as ourselves. In this determinacy, the human being should not feel determined; on the contrary he attains his self-awareness only by regarding the other as other. (Hegel 1970a, v.7, §7 Z)

Thus the family, for example, is an ethical (an ethically binding, normatively regulated) and not primarily a natural institution: not because of anything 'substantial' or intrinsic about the family, but only because of the sort of active recognition of the mutual dependencies it requires and the necessary role of such dependencies in the achievement of any independence. (Note the 'limit ourselves' and all the other active verbs.) The form of this recognition is not rational in the rule, formal, legal or strategic sense, but it is treated here as a subject's realisation of dependence without which a subject cannot be who he or she is, a qualification of one's own interests that is also an expansion and alteration of such interests, all of which forms the basis for the establishment of an ethical relation.

The same sort of account can be made out in the discussion of civil society, where again there is no appeal to ethical substantiality that is not glossed as an appeal to forms of dependence criterial for freedom and recognised as such, and binding only as recognised. As at §192,

Needs and means, as existing in reality, become a being for others (*ein Sein für andere*) by whose needs and work their satisfaction is mutually conditioned. That abstraction which becomes a quality of both needs and means also becomes a determination of the mutual relations between individuals. *This universality, as the quality of being recognized (Anerkanntsein)*, is the moment which makes isolated and abstract needs, means, and

modes of satisfaction into concrete, i.e. social ones. (Hegel 1970a, v.7, §192, my emphasis)

And even in his discussion of the state, long the focus of critics of Hegel who believe he was untrue to his earlier insights, the state is said, in a way that again raises all the elements of the interpretation just sketched, to be the 'actuality of concrete freedom', and such concrete freedom is said to consist in the fact that,

... personal individuality (*Einzelheit*) and its particular interests should reach their full development and the *recognition* (*Anerkennung*) of their right for itself (within the system of the family and civil society) and also that they should, on the one hand, pass over of their own accord into the interest of the universal, and on the other knowingly and willingly *recognize* (*anerkennen*) this universal interest even as their own substantial spirit, and actively pursue it as their ultimate end. (Hegel 1970a, v.7, §260, my emphasis.)

This represents at least the desideratum of Hegel's theory of freedom; it does not yet provide a defense of the details of such claims about the legitimacy of various modern institutions. That goal would be: to be able to show (i) that one could be a free subject only in being recognised as one; (ii) that what that would involve is being 'concretely' recognised as, really taken as, one among many, and (iii) that the 'concrete' or mediated nature of such recognition must mean in modern life being loved (or being able to be loved) as a person, a distinct, entitled individual, not as a clan, or tribe member, or as family chattel; being respected as a functioning, rights-bearing, individually and morally responsible, significant member of the rational system for the satisfaction of needs, and as a citizen whose 'estate' status and so concreteness is respected and represented in a *Rechtsstaat*. It is in *being recognised as such a free subject*, that one can then *be one*, can thereby come to regard one's own life as self-determined and so one's own.²¹

Robert B. Pippin
Committee on Social Thought
University of Chicago
1130 East 59th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637
U.S.A.
r-pippin@uchicago.edu

NOTES

¹ I will throughout refer to Hegel's 'theory of recognition,' in the sense that we would today call it a theory. But Hegel's speculative position, and his claims about the radical

inter-dependence of conceptual content, make this separation of topics slightly misleading, if still basically harmless. See Siep 1979: 301. (Siep is also right that Hegel understood himself to have clarified and resolved the great logical problems caused by the sort of relational claim implicit in a radical theory of the constitutive function of recognition (wherein the relata themselves, or agents, are ultimately also relational) in his account of 'reflection' in particular and the 'logic of essence' in general.)

² Looking at matters this way will also make it possible to distinguish the Jena and post-Jena theories not as original, and then abandoned, theories of inter-subjectivity, but as components of one theory with different emphases; first between genetic versus structural conditions of freedom (something that corresponds to what appears to be Hegel's own understanding of the issue, as at the Remark to §57 in (Hegel 1970a, v.7), and secondly, between an initial stage of exploration, where the *desideratum* of mutual recognition is posed and explored, and the later discussions, where Hegel seems to have decided that forms of ethical life wherein we recognise each other *rationally*, where the terms of recognition are rationally grounded, satisfy the conditions for the achievement of free individuality and so provide the answer to the issues he was grappling with in his Jena period.

A relatively standard view of the stages of this development: (1) (a) the critique in the 1802 *Naturrecht* essay of the notion of 'individual' presumed by the natural right tradition in its 'empirical' (Hobbes, Locke) and 'formal' (Kant, Fichte) versions, with a necessarily prior form of sociality largely assumed rather than argued for, and (b) the treatment of sociality as 'natural' in the Aristotelian sense (the developmental issue here is treated more as the development of ethical and more self-conscious forms of sociality out of prior 'natural forms'), (c) a strong emphasis on the risk of life as a marker for the kind of independence constitutive of freedom, within a community as well, as in the notions of bravery and willingness to sacrifice, and (d) the more favourable treatment of property and trading relations than in the classical context; (2) the *System of Sittlichkeit*, written just thereafter in 1802, where the influence of Fichte and a profound disagreement with Hobbes led to an approach where *social conflict over recognition*, especially as an explanation of the meaning of crime, and as leading to attempted resolutions of social struggle understood in such recognitional terms, replaced a reliance on natural development in an account of a true ethical totality (where, according to Honneth, 'communicative interaction' can even be said to replace natural forms of sociality as the central element of *Geist*. cf. the argument in Chapter Two of Honneth 1996, and contrast 'Hegel's Criticism of Natural Law Theory,' in Riedel 1984: 76–194); then (3) the decisive turning point (according to Honneth 1996, Wildt 1982: 325 ff., and Siep 1974: 155 ff.) in the 1803/4 fragments of a philosophy of spirit, where we see the beginning of the mature theory, with *Geist* (and so sociality) now explicitly the 'other' of nature, and any putative 'development' of *Geist* to be explained by a *self-formative*, self-educative, 'non-natural' process.

³ Versions of such a claim can be found in Habermas 1973 and 1987, Theunissen 1982, Hösle 1987, Honneth 1996, *inter alia*. Williams 1997 also opposes the developmental or abandonment interpretation, but for reasons different than those presented here.

⁴ So that debates about the 'originality' or non-originality of self-conscious subjectivity, like those between Henrich and Habermas, for example, do not touch on the real desiderata of *Hegel's* theory, however important and interesting the issue itself may be. The confusion in such debates stems, I want to claim, from an imprecision about the desiderata of 'the theory of recognition' and without more precision, it is very hard to assess such debates. See Dews 1995 for a very valuable summary and analysis of the Henrich-Habermas debate and related issues.

One brief example of the claim I am making: in one of Manfred Franks' attacks on what he calls this 'a priori inter-subjectivism,' he identifies *all* of the following as what such a 'theory,' supposedly, is trying to show is secondary or dependent on inter-subjectivity: *Subjekt, Ich-Perspektive, Selbstverständnis, Selbstbeziehung, Selbstbewußtsein, Person* (in the moral, Kantian sense) and *Das Selbst*, and *Ego*. If all of these dimensions of subjectivity are to be at issue at once, there is no reason to refute such an inter-subjectivity theory, since it couldn't possibly be claiming anything coherent. cf. Frank 1991. My thesis in this paper is that there is no justification for inferring from Hegel's thesis about the priority of like-mindedness in the realisation of freedom that he wishes to defend a reductionist claim about subjectivity. When we see *what* such sociality is supposed to be prior to, and why, the suspicion that he does should evaporate. See my criticisms of Frank in Pippin 1996.

⁵ Being free does not involve the possession of such a capacity and in fact, does not involve any special sort of causality at all. (cf. Wolff 1992 on the categorial problems in the nature-spirit relation according to Hegel.) See also Quante 1997 for a valuable discussion.

⁶ As in the influential neo-Aristotelian accounts of commentators like Ritter and Ilting, rightly dubbed 'Unterwerfungsphilosophie' by Marquard (1973: 37ff.). The counter movement, the attempt to show that Hegel was trying to extend and better support the notion of moral autonomy (as a kind of rationality) is due mainly to Dieter Henrich's articles, and has been extended in exemplary fashion by Wildt (1982: 28 ff.).

⁷ Admittedly, there is no compelling, *prima facie* reason why being in such a state, however valuable or wonderful it might be, should count as being *free*. Hegel must show that to be so, and tries to do so by trading on our sense that I have acted freely if I can 'identify' with my activities and projects, if they are and can be experienced by me, as being mine. See my discussion of this and the compatibilism issue in Pippin 1997a.

⁸ As Taylor has pointed out, on this expressive model, he might even discover something about his intention *in* acting to express it, or come to alter it in so acting; something not possible on the reasons-functioning-as-causes view. See Taylor 1985: 77–96, and compare again Quante 1997.

⁹ Hegel 1978: 89.

¹⁰ The issues of degrees of freedom is important to stress. In a general sense being able to act on a reason at all establishes the deed as free, at least in the general sense of 'not being unfree', and only a slightly greater degree of self-understanding and intentional attitude is necessary for individual moral responsibility to be imputed. The 'full' realization of freedom though involves the achievement of a 'genuinely universal point of view,' and that requires actually being taken to be such reasons within a society, actually to circulate as such.

¹¹ Hegel 1970a, v.7, §16; §20; §21; §15 Z.

¹² Hegel 1970a, v. 7, §258 A.

¹³ Some representative passages:

'Spirit is usually spoken of as subject, as doing something, and apart from what it does, as this motion, this process, as still something particular, its activity being more or less contingent . . .'

And Hegel's contrary view is now clearly stated:

' . . . it is of the very nature of spirit to be this absolute liveliness (*Lebendigkeit*), this process, to proceed forth from naturality (*Natürlichkeit*), immediacy, to sublimate, to quit its naturality, and to come to itself, and to free itself, it being itself only as it comes to itself as such a product of itself; its actuality being merely that it has made itself into what it is.'

And even, finally: ' . . . it is *only* as a result of itself that it is Geist.' (All in Hegel 1978: 6–7, my emphasis).

¹⁴ Thus views like Allen Wood's – 'Hegel's ethical thought thus turns out to represent a rather Aristotelian variety of ethical naturalism' (Wood 1990: 12) – are somewhat misleading, especially in the use of the 'naturalism' category and the invocation of 'essential tendencies in the existent.' (For the best brief summary of Hegel's great differences with the Aristotelian project, see the evidence compiled by Wolff 1992.) Wood is careful to distinguish Hegel's from standard teleological theories (although he still often refers to freedom as something like an essential end or purpose for human beings), to emphasise the role of Kant and Fichte in Hegel's account of freedom, and to construe this naturalism as 'historicised.' But the 'state' of freedom as described by Wood seems very often a kind of *knowledge* of the human essence or of ethical substantiality. See pp. 32, 51, 70, 83, 204. This (a) leaves it unclear what sort of knowledge this is (especially when expressed as a 'historicized universalism', a term that sends us straight back to all the dialectical puzzles Wood wants to ignore); (b) raises all the concerns Theunissen, Habermas, Hösele, Honneth and others have raised about the 'abandonment' of Hegel's inter-subjectivity theory, and (c) raises ominous political questions about the role and authority of claims to knowledge or even Hegelian science inside a political culture. See my review of Wood's book, Pippin 1993, and my comments on the intellectualist approach to Hegel's theory of freedom in Pippin 1997a.

¹⁵ These sorts of claims make it very unlikely that the 'state' in question that Hegel wants to count as the achievement of freedom is any part of a romantic or organic holism. The emphasis on independence from nature and the rather extreme, paradoxical claims that human mentality or mindedness *is a result of itself*, a product of itself, that it has 'made itself what it is' do not seem to be leading in any such direction. Self-realisation cannot be the development of a natural potentiality if the development in question is described as the 'self-liberation' from nature, and there is no natural whole into which subjects are supposed to 'fit' in realising their natures. The language is not about the accidents of any substance, but a kind of collectively made, *geistig* or artificial substantiality in time, a kind of collective achievement that finally makes possible the 'negative' relation to one's own nature, nature itself, and others, that Hegel wants to count as freedom, or as true independence.

¹⁶ The former constitutes the 'formalism' objection to Kant; the latter the 'rigorism' objection and is especially relevant to modern discussions of the problem of internalism, as I have tried to show in Pippin 1997b.

¹⁷ Of course, first of all, in many social situations, there are conflicting norms and deep disagreements. But Hegel's position is that we should first focus on what normative commonality makes possible the social solidity within which there can be conflict at all, agreement about the terms of the conflict, and he then proposes an account of the ground and significance of the conflict. Secondly, the full story about what it is to be 'acting on reasons' is a very long one, and should not be confused with being able to state and defend my reasons, as if modern social life is a kind of debating society. See Brandom 1994, ch. 1, on 'regulism'.

¹⁸ cf. My discussion in Pippin 1989, ch. 7. This strategy continues to reveal the strong influence of Fichte and Fichte's notion of the role of '*Aufforderungen*' in the development of any free self-conscious subject.

¹⁹ This is basically Habermas' and also Theunissen's worry. It is not an unreasonable one; cf. Hegel's later remarks about 'ethical powers' (*die sittliche Mächte*) and the 'accidentality' of the lives of individuals (Hegel 1970a, v.7. §145), the use of the substantialist language in §145A, or the discussion of the 'self-will of the individual' 'vanishing' 'together with the private conscience that had claimed independence and had opposed itself to the ethical substance' at §152. cf. Ilting 1963/4.

²⁰ See also the references in the *Encyclopedia*, (Hegel 1970b), v.10, §430ff., §490, §497ff., §527, §547, and Siep 1979: 302.

²¹ A final marginal note. Critics sometimes write as if Hegel expects modern citizens to be German Spartans, constantly adopting as their deepest, personal ends the 'good of the whole.' *But there is no 'good of the whole'* in Hegel's account. Surprisingly, ethical life as Hegel describes it is quite a modern phenomenon, let us say; fairly formal, pretty thin ethical gruel (rather more like Michael Oakeshott's 'civic associations' than Plato's *Republic*). And this very limitedness is partly what insures that the 'infinite' value of diverse individuality is preserved, since Hegel draws very few conclusions about the content of such free individual lives from such premises. Indeed, part of his theory about individual freedom insures that we should not and cannot draw such substantive implications. That is, one should note and take very seriously the fact that there is no theory of substantive virtues in Hegel's ethics, no account of the states of character or dispositions all should aspire to in order to live a free or rational life. The decisive issue remains the forms of social relations and social dependence within which a certain sort of self-relation is possible. Indeed, that issue is so decisive that, on the other side of the map from those criticisms of Hegel which hold that the individual is swallowed up into some all-determining organic whole, many have also criticized Hegel for abandoning his earlier theory of community, where inter-subjective experiences of recognition and solidarity were paramount, and claimed that he adopted instead an abstract institutional model, where the primary relation among human beings was between the institution and the individual and not between individuals. There is something to this, but it might also be regarded as testimony to Hegel's modernism.

REFERENCES

- Brandom, R. (1994), *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing and Discursive Commitment*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Dews, P. (1995), 'Modernity, Self-Consciousness, and the Scope of Philosophy: Jürgen Habermas and Dieter Henrich in Debate', in his *The Limits of Disenchantment: Essays on Contemporary European Philosophy*. London: Verso.
- Frank, M. (1991), 'Wider den apriorischen Intersubjektivismus: Gegenvorschläge aus Sartrescher Inspiration', in *Selbstbewusstsein und Selbsterkenntnis. Essays zur analytischen Philosophie der Subjektivität*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.
- Habermas, J. (1973), 'Labor and Interaction. Remarks on Hegel's Jena Philosophy of Mind', in *Theory and Practice*, transl. J. Viertel. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Habermas, J. (1987), *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, transl. F. Lawrence. Cambridge, Ma.: MIT Press.
- Hegel, G. (1970a), *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts, oder Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse. Bd. 7, Werke*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. Michelet Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.
- Hegel, G. (1970b), *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, vols. 8, 9 10. *Werke*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. Michelet. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.
- Hegel, G. (1970c), *Werke, Bd. 4* ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. Michelet. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.
- Hegel, G. (1978), *Hegels Philosophie des subjektiven Geistes / Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, 3 vols., ed. and transl. M. Petry. Dordrecht: Riedel.

- Hegel, G. (1991), *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. A. Wood; transl. H.B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Honneth, A. (1996), *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, transl. J. Anderson. Cambridge, Ma: MIT Press.
- Hösle, V. (1987), *Hegels System. Der Idealismus der Subjektivität und das Problem der Intersubjektivität*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner.
- Iltting, K.-H. (1963/4), 'Hegels Auseinandersetzung mit der aristolischen Politik', in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, vol 71. p, 38ff.
- Marquard, O. (1973), 'Hegel und das Sollen', in *Schwierigkeiten mit der Geschichte*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.
- Pippin, R. (1989), *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pippin, R. (1993), 'Review of A. Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*', in *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, Bd. 47, Heft 3.
- Pippin, R. (1996), 'On Not Being a Neostructuralist', in *Common Knowledge*, vol. 6, n. 2.
- Pippin, R. (1997a), 'Hegel, Freedom, the Will. The Philosophy of Right, §1–33', in Siep 1997.
- Pippin, R. (1997b), 'Hegel's Ethical Rationalism', in Pippin 1997c.
- Pippin, R. (1997c), *Idealism as Modernism. Hegelian Variations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Quante, M. (1997), 'Personal Autonomy and the Structure of the Will', in *Right, Morality, Ethical Life: Studies in G.W. F. Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, ed. J. Kotkavirta. Jvaskylä: Publications of Social and Political Science and Philosophy.
- Riedel, M. (1984), 'Hegel's Criticism of Natural Law Theory', in *Between Tradition and Revolution: The Hegelian Transformation of Political Philosophy*, transl. W. Wright. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Siep, L. (1974), 'Der Kampf um Anerkennung. Zu Hegels Auseinandersetzung mit Hobbes in den Jenaer Schriften', in *Hegel-Studien*, Bd. 9, pp. 155–207.
- Siep, L. (1979), *Anerkennung als Prinzip der praktischen Philosophie. Untersuchungen zu Hegels Jenaer Philosophie des Geistes*. Freiburg/Munich: Karl Alber.
- Siep, L. (1997), ed. *Hegel: Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
- Taylor, C. (1985), 'Hegel's Philosophy of Mind', in *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers, vol. I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Theunissen, M. (1982), 'Die verdrängte Intersubjektivität in Hegels Philosophie des Rechts', in *Hegels Philosophie des Rechts*, ed. D. Henrich and R.-P. Horstmann. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Wildt, A. (1982), *Autonomie und Anerkennung. Hegels Moralitätskritik im Lichte seiner Fichte Rezeption*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Williams, R. (1997), *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Wolff, M. (1992), *Das Körper-Seele Problem. Kommentar zu Hegel, Enzyklopädie (1830)*, #389. Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann.
- Wood, A. (1990), *Hegel's Ethical Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.