"The *identity* of the idea with itself is one with the *process*"

(Hegel, *The Science of Logic*) [1]

I

In discussions about recognition today, one stumbles almost instantly on a widespread consensus about a distinction between two kinds of theory of recognition. Constructed as tracing back from Butler to Althusser, the first or the so-called "pessimistic" one, understands recognition as intrinsically problematic, whereas the other, referred to as the Taylorian or Honnethian, "optimistic" one is constructed as regarding (proper) recognition as good. Now, in such an ambivalent situation, a desirable outcome might be a theory of recognition that places the problems of recognition at its very core, while giving even more reason for optimism than the optimistic one. The prospects for such an account seem not very promising. But the reasons for trying are good.

As a matter of fact, I believe there to be two stories of recognition intending precisely this. The first of these stories is told by Hegel in the section on "Conscience, the Beautiful Soul, Evil and Its Forgiveness" in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Whereas Hegel is widely acknowledged as the founding father of theories of recognition, the author of my second story, John Dewey, has not been considered as a recognition theorist nearly at all. Yet, whenever he is attempting to elaborate his social philosophical perspective systematically, Dewey is relying on, what I argue to be, a recognition-theoretical conception of a "general pattern of social conflicts," which is, I believe, of great relevance for the systematic

recognition-theoretical efforts of today (cf. Dewey 1939 and 1973; Dewey & Tufts 1932, Part III).

Here I will not be able to give enough textual evidence of the hermeneutic work that my reflections are based on. Hence I will confine myself to highlighting some of the conceptual consequences that I believe to result from a close reading of these two stories. My hunch is that by drawing attention to the conception of recognition in play in the section of "Evil and Its Forgiveness" and interpreting Dewey as essentially trying to further develop what Hegel is saying there, marks a shift in ontological implications and commitments of talking about problems of recognition. This is shift is a transition from basically action-theoretic, relational or institutional conceptions of recognition to a *processual* conception. The "processual view" I am proposing claims further to be able to *include*, or to speak Hegelian, to determinately negate, the earlier ones. The claim is, thus, to present the ambivalence of recognition not merely as a moment but also as a *phase*. But before I tell Hegel's and Dewey's stories, some pre-considerations are needed.

Firstly, it is important to note that the selection of precisely these two texts for considering problems of recognition is all but arbitrary from a systematic point of view. "Evil and Its Forgiveness" is the closing section of the chapter on "Spirit" in Hegel's *Phenomenology*; and as such, it marks a significant achievement for the experiencing consciousness. On the phenomenological "path of despair," this specific struggle for recognition presents, namely, the first *successful* "experience of consciousness." It results in a standpoint that is not to be sublated as falsely one-sided in the following chapter. As the end of the movement of spirit and as the result of the successful movement of recognition, it forms the conceptual emergence of the inclusive standpoint that Hegel calls "absolute spirit." Since this success is presented in recognitive terms, it also gives us an account of what *successful recognition* or even *successful struggling for recognition* might be. Therefore, one might even argue this to be the most convenient section in Hegel's work for clarifying ambivalences of recognition.

Surprisingly, this applies in a way to Dewey's version of the struggle for recognition as well. Dewey, namely, understands his social philosophy as a systematic attempt to aid in the resolution of social conflicts (cf. Dewey 1973, pp. 45-53; Dewey and Tufts 1932, Ch. 16). Social conflicts are, according to Dewey, based on problems of public of recognition between social groups (cf. ibid. 1973, pp. 72-81). Now, for the experimentalist social philosopher, the task is to reconstruct the one-sided conceptions and "ideologies" arising in such conflicts and pathologically blocking their resolution. Thereby the experimentalist claims to be able to work out a more inclusive social-philosophical standpoint, which is reached not in a deliberate conception of absolute spirit, but in a theory of the democratic public become "in-and-for-itself." Dewey's version of the movement of recognition presents as such the "general guiding principles" for social-philosophical reconstruction (Dewey 1973, p 64). Thus, for both Dewey and Hegel, the recognition-theoretical accounts considered here are attempts to offer an inclusive standpoint, from which to overcome one-sided perspectives that block a process of successful recognition.

Secondly, there is much to recognition that is already worked out at this point of argument forming its background. "Evil and Its Forgiveness" presents the last movement of recognition in the *Phenomenology*, and thus, according to the method of the "logic of experience," it *preserves* what was true and *negates* what was false in the conceptions of recognition at play in earlier conflicts. As such it offers richer accounts of both the nature of recognitive problems as well as of the grammar of their resolution. The two most important lessons to keep in mind, I think, are those of the experiences of mastery and servitude (a) and reason (b):

I. Firstly, the essential lesson to be learned from the recognitive failures of mastery and servitude, namely, is the *concept* of spirit as it emerges "for us," according to which, among many other things, recognition cannot be understood as a one-sided *act*, but as a *dialogical complex of mutual attitudes*. A mere recognitive attitude of one party towards another does not suffice to constitute a relation of recognition. On the contrary, according to a dialogical conception of proper recognition, it takes the attitudes of both

parties. In other words, in order for a recognitive relation between two persons or groups of persons to succeed, one group's recognitive attitude towards the other group must be recognized by this other group as relevant.[2]

II. The "abstract" relations and principles of recognition presented in the chapter on "Reason" result in the concept of an *ethos* (Sittlichkeit), according to which such dialogical complexes of mutual attitudes must be understood to be *institutionally embedded* as *practices* or *habitualized* as *coventions* if they are to actualize freedom. Recognition-theoretically elaborated institutions are not, at best, to be understood as external "necessary conditions of the possibility" of freedom. On the contrary, they present an internal moment of the concept of freedom itself.[3]

Now, the question is, what is the lesson about recognizing in which the chapter on "Spirit" results? My suggestion is that "Evil and Its Forgiveness" gives reason to understand recognition not merely *dialogically* and *institutionally* but also *processually*. I read it as making explicit the processuality of recognizing implicit at all earlier stages of recognition in the *Phenomenology*. Such an interpretation is not only saying that it "makes a difference" whether one is speaking of recognition in terms of a relation or a process.[4] Rather, I think Hegel is putting forward the more robust claim that one ought to understand recognitive relations and institutions as functional distinction *within* a processual totality.

II

Both Dewey and Hegel reconstruct the process of a struggle for recognition, firstly, from the perspective of the parties involved, their self-conceptions and their conceptions of the other. Secondly, they present it from the external perspective of the social philosopher observing the development of the one-sided conceptions and working out a more inclusive one. Contrary to earlier shapes in the *Phenomenology*, in the case of "Evil and Its Forgiveness" these two methodological tracks of "for consciousness" and "for us" coincide at the end.

Furthermore, Hegel and Dewey both distinguish three phases of such a process.

The first phase Hegel (1977, §§ 632-654) calls "conscience" and Dewey (1973, p. 77) "the period of tacit acceptance of the status quo": Here consciousness regards "duty" as a recognitive norm claiming universal validity. "Pure duty" is a universal form that can be applied to any relation of recognition as its content. Consciousness has immediate awareness of manifold concrete duties; that is to say, it has habitualized generally acknowledged reciprocal treatments and corresponding attitudes. Confronted with this multitude of recognitive norms, consciousness might find them conflicting or else ambivalent. How can consciousness choose between conflicting duties let alone formulate new ones? As an immediate certainty of duty, the only ground consciousness can fall back on is its own *conviction* of the good, that is, in Hegel's terminology, it becomes "conscience."

The second phase is characterized in Hegel (1977, §§ 655-666) by the attitudes of "evil," "the beautiful soul" and "the hard heart"; Dewey (1973, pp. 77-8) calls it the phase of "challenge." Acting on such conscientious decisions can, obviously, either succeed or fail: If all goes well, the act as a public expression of a conviction of the good is acknowledged as in accordance with the publicly effective conception of the good. This might, however, as well, not be the case: The success of such conscientious decisions is arbitrary. Thus, in case of failure, there occurs a diremption into two consciences. The first of is a conscience *acting* according to recognitive norms justified by its own conviction of the good, the second a conscience *judging* in accordance with effective recognitive norms and the publicly acknowledged conception of the good.

As learnt from the lesson of mastery and servitude, recognitive conflicts are characterized by "*Doppelsinnigkeit,*"[5] meaning, firstly, that whatever happens on the one side of the recognitive relation has immediate consequences on the other and, secondly, that the relata will both identify with and negate each other as well as themselves (Hegel 1977, § 183).

Now, the acting party first negates what it sees as the false consciousness of the public judging it. It thereby also negates itself as the *acting* party by withdrawing from public expression in the "dread of besmirching the splendour of its inner being by action" (ibid., § 658). The attitude of such pathological withdrawal from any attempt at resolving concrete recognitive problems at hand, Hegel calls "the beautiful soul" (ibid.).

The publicly judging party, on the other hand, responds by judging the beautiful soul as "evil." Since, in placing its *own* inner law of conscience above the acknowledged universal, acting conscience is, in fact, evil, as the concept has widely been conceived since Kant. Hegel and Dewey, however, give the concept of evil a recognition-theoretical push by conceiving it as the intentional "singularizing" (Hegel 2007, p. 206) or "isolation" (Dewey 1929, p. 245) of oneself in a recognitive process.

Now, it is precisely on the basis of this judgment that the acting party can *identify* itself with the party of the judging public. In denouncing the acting party as evil, the party of the acknowledged universal is, in fact, itself appealing to its own particular law, which, since the other party's withdrawal of its acknowledgement, is no longer an *acknowledged* universal. It thereby presents itself as exactly as evil, negates itself and legitimizes the self-isolation of the acting party by placing itself alongside the latter. By experiencing the evil of the judging party, the acting party identifies itself with the former. In an attempt at a one-sided recognition, it admits to its being evil and expects mutuality. The judging party, however, rejects this attempt at public reconciliation and, thus, *it*, in turn, becomes a "beautiful soul" and makes the experience of evil corresponding to the one made earlier by the acting party.

The third phase, entitled "forgiveness" by Hegel and "fruition" by Dewey, marks a transition that for us observing philosophers seems like a necessity, but for experiencing consciousness

requires a moral self-transcendence: Having made the corresponding experience and seen the evil consequences of its particular conception of the good, the judging party is able to identify itself with the acting party. In a mutual attempt at coming to terms with the recognitive problem, the judging party surrenders its one-sidedly *particular* conception of the good like the acting party puts aside its one-sidedly *singular* conception. Together they are able to cooperatively resolve the recognitive problem at hand by formulating a new conception of the good, which is not anymore "abstractly universal," but a *concrete universal* as including the *singularity* of conscientious deliberation (as represented by the acting party), the *particularity* of concrete historical situatedness (as represented by the judging party) and the *universality* of the law formulated in mutual public recognition.

I am inclined to infer that this kind of cooperative public constitution of concrete universality might be labeled "successful recognition." Such public recognition comes with an insight into the fallibility of one's singular and particular judgment. Such a recognitive attitude Hegel calls "forgiveness." Dewey (1973, p. 80) calls it an "attitude of inquiry," with a clear reference to the recognitive struggle's being a process of social problem resolution. It involves an openness and willingness to cope with recognitive problems cooperatively and, correspondingly, as Dewey (ibid., p. 76) puts it, "to be recognized as an operating component of the larger society."

To Dewey, this sequential unity of the three phases of a struggle for public recognition forms a general pattern of social conflicts, repeatable on ever-higher levels. Concrete universality as its result is not to be understood as merely an *achievement* or a *state*, but as an ongoing *process* of social reconstruction (Dewey 1929, p. 151). Cooperative democracy is this pattern made reflexive by institutionalizing and habituating the recognitive attitude of inquiry. Therefore Dewey does in no way regard evil as a necessary stage of all social conflicts.

III

I would like to conclude by briefly indicating how such a processualist approach to struggles for recognition might include some of the central recognition-theoretical concepts such as recognitive relations and attitudes (a), norms (b) and values (c). The challenge is to present them as functional distinctions *within* this process.

(a) Such an account distinguishes, obviously, between unproblematic and problematic relations of recognition. Furthermore, both problematic and unproblematic recognitive relations seem to come in two kinds. Firstly, recognitive relations can be unproblematic in the sense of being *indeterminate*; that is to say, constituted by immediate, habituated everyday attitudes and not being claimed by anyone as problematic. Secondly, recognitive relations can be seen as unproblematic in the sense of being *determinate*; that is to say, achieved through struggle and constituted by attitudes creatively habituated as a kind of mediated immediacy.

There seems to be two types of problematic relations of recognition as well. Firstly a recognitive relation and habitual attitude can become thematized as problematic, because it is experienced as involving domination or wronging or else as bad. These are the kind of claims that mediate between the first and the second phase. Secondly, recognitive attitudes can be seen as problematic in the sense of Hegel's concepts of "the beautiful soul" and "the hard heart." Both authors consider such highly problematic attitudes as evil. They might occur in the second phase as the intentional withdrawal from any attempt at cooperative problem resolution.

(b) Such a processualist approach regards social norms as means of an enduring direction of recognitive relations. The kind of processual account, I have been reconstructing, presents struggles for recognition as *responsive* to pre-existing norms in the sense of reacting to *failed*

norms or practices. The struggle for public recognition originates in a disintegrated situation of a community where recognitive norms are experienced as ambivalent and are unmasked as containing relations of domination or wronging. But precisely this negative response to pre-existing norms in the second phase seems to indicate a generation of new recognitive norms. As such, the struggle for public recognition is also *generative* of norms in the sense of being creative of new ones as intended to resolve the problems of the old ones and bypass the relations of domination or wronging in them. Thus, this approach understands successful recognition processually as *mediating* between norms-become-problematic and emancipating norms-in-view.

It might be worth noting, at this point, that the processualist approach could claim to be able to integrate multidimensional theories of recognition, such as those presented by Charles Taylor (cf. 1992) and Axel Honneth (cf. 2011), as accounts of unproblematic recognition. There seems to me to be good reasons for the processualist to distinguish between diverse dimensions of unproblematic recognition, such as, for instance, being correctly treated according to the best available conceptions of ones particularity, singularity and universality or as being esteemed, loved and respected.

(c) As mediating between problematic and unproblematic recognitive attitudes, relations and norms, the struggle for public recognition, furthermore, presents a process of collective valuation, since it marks the formation of new values and projection of them on future recognitive relations. The struggle for public recognition begins in an indeterminate situation characterized by the need of a novel direction of certain relations of recognition. As a consequence the acting party attributes a negative value to the kind of direction of recognitive relations effective, whereas the judging party values it positively. New values emerge, according to Dewey, always as simultaneously negations of existing conditions and affirmation of an intended future situation. As such, values constitute conceptions of good or better direction of recognitive relations. Thus, they seem to give participants *reasons* how to treat each other. Such reasons constitute norms of recognition, and if followed, they can become social institutions.

Therefore the processualist recognition-theorist seems to be a representative of the branch of value-based recognition theories (cf. Laitinen 2002). According to this branch, values give persons reasons for ways of mutual treatment and such ways can be understood as social norms. This does, however, not commit the processualist to any kind of strong value realism, since he regards values as essentially *transitional* entities: A novel direction of recognitive relations has "value" according to its resolving a problematic relation of recognition. Or better: Recognitive norms have "value" in so far as they *emancipate*.

A recognitive problem counts, namely, as resolved, if the relata of the recognitive relation and the participants of the recognitive process can act freely. Thus, freedom counts as a kind of ultimate value in the processual account. What freedom in any single case means in concrete, is left relatively open and "problem specific." But anyhow, every resolution of a problem gives a sense of being at home in the world.

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Notes

[1] I am grateful to Federica Gregoratto and Arto Laitinen for critical comments and helpful remarks most of which I wish I had been able to elaborate further in this paper.

[2] I read Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen (2007) as putting forward such a dialogical conception of recognition in the contemporary debate.

[3] I read Axel Honneth (2011, Part A, Ch. III) as proposing an institutional conception of recognition somewhat in accordance with this move in the *Phenomenology*, although he is implementing a very different strategy than the phenomenological one to overcome the conventionalist difficulties of a *Sittlichkeitslehre*.

[4] I read Robert Brandom (2002, Ch. 7) as suggesting this "less robust" thesis about processuality.

[5] A.V. Miller (Hegel 1977, § 112) translates "*Doppelsinnigkeit*" as "double significance."