

What We Do When We Recognize

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What We Do When We Recognize

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What action or actions does a person perform when she recognizes someone? I argue she engages in a process composed of four parts. First, she attends to the subject in a particular manner. Second, she uses the information gathered in the first stage to categorize the subject. Third, she appreciates the import or significance of the subject in light of the category she employs. Fourth, she acknowledges the subject by engaging the subject's attention as one who bears that import and that category.

My analysis helps us interpret theories of recognition. One clarifies a theory's specific claims by decomposing theories into instances of recognizing and then further analyzing each instance into discrete actions. First one determines how many instances of the process are involved by stating who does what to whom and for what end. Once instances are separated, one analyses each instance into its four components by describing the agent's progress through the process of recognizing. The final result is an organizing body of specific claims with well-defined relations to one another.

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Introduction

A Brief Overview

After a revival of interest in Hegelian ethics in the 1970's, a number of theorists in ethical, political or social theory argued that interpersonal recognition (*Anerkennung*) plays a major role in ethical and political life. At the most personal level, everyone wants to be recognized as valid by the people they care about. At the social level, the way we collectively recognize one another shapes the social role that each of us plays. Where social roles hinder personal development, the need for personal recognition turns into a social conflict over the public order of recognition, i.e. who gets recognized as what and to what end. The topic of recognition thus provides a scaffold joining together personal development, interpersonal relations, social practices, and political power.

The modern interest in the concept of recognition is often dated to 1979 when Ludwig Siep published *Anerkennung als Prinzip der Praktischen Philosophie* (Recognition as a Principle of Practical Philosophy) (Hetzel 11). Siep looked to Hegel's Jena period and found an alternative to so-called monologic practical theory. To summarize loosely, Hegel characterizes political life as a struggle for acknowledgment and appreciation. He says people demand that others recognize them as valuable, capable members of society. As society adjusts to those demands, more people are integrated into social life and, in turn, more people feel obligated to support society's normative order. In this telling, ethical life broadly construed is driven by an interpersonal process in which parties negotiate how they will regard one another. In addition to traditional

ethical topics like valid norms or virtuous traits, one could also focus on a society's patterns of recognition and the specific demands for recognition raised at any given moment.

Interest developed quietly until the early 1990's. Charles Taylor published *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition"* in 1992 and Axel Honneth published *Kampf um Anerkennung (The Struggle for Recognition)* in 1994. Broadly speaking, they are both concerned with mutual recognition, or two parties acknowledging one another's identity claims as equally legitimate, where "identity" is taken to mean self-understanding in personal and cultural terms. Paul Ricoeur's essay *Parcours de la reconnaissance (The Course of Recognition)* developed the same vein in 2004 while adding in the sense of gratitude, which is present in the French '*reconnaissance*' but not generally observed in the German '*Anerkennung*' or the English '*recognition*.' For Honneth, Taylor, and Ricoeur '*recognition*' is treated as quasi-teleological. Mutual recognition is supposedly a stable state in which the agent and the recognized party come to understand themselves and one another better by reaching consensus on how to recognize a person, therefore encounters between people tend to develop toward a state of mutual regard.

There are at least three other major orientations toward the concept of '*recognition*' exemplified by Nancy Fraser, Judith Butler, and Emmanuel Levinas.

Whereas Honneth and Taylor draw on Hegel's concept of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*), Nancy Fraser focuses on recognition and Kantian respect. In "*Recognition without Ethics?*" she asks us to evaluate demands for recognition in terms of what she calls "*participatory parity*." A person needs to be recognized as legitimate in the manner and to the degree that such recognition is a prerequisite to equal participation in civic life. Fraser's version largely evades the questions of

identity core to Honneth and Taylor's work. You do not have to endorse someone's self-understanding or their cultural projects, you merely have to accept their participation in public life. Arguably, Fraser offers a model of Kantian recognition: to treat someone as an end in themselves is to treat them as a valid participant in social affairs.

Judith Butler's work on social roles and on interpellation gives a much more mixed picture of recognition. In *The Psychic Life of Power*, Butler describes recognition as a mechanism by which authorities assign social roles along with normative expectations to members of society. Once you are addressed as the bearer of a role, you are recognizable to the extent that you perform your part well. That creates a problem for those who do not wish to play the part assigned to them as well as for those who have no part to play. The latter are unrecognizable in that they do not occupy a clear place in society and therefore do not enjoy the normative protections afforded to people recognized as legitimate.

As attention turned toward the preservation of differences between people, Emmanuel Levinas's work became a major source of inspiration. Whereas Taylor, Honneth, and Fraser all stress mutual recognition, Levinas presents recognition as a unilateral gift or as an overwhelming experience of the Other, by which he means someone considered as absolutely distinct from you. Rather than engaging with others so far as you have something in common, Levinas asks you to accept and appreciate the fact that the Other is distinct from you. Those inspired by Levinas tend to stress the contingency and fragility of recognition: The gift that you offer might be rejected, people might change the way they think of themselves, and the relationship can never be nailed down to clear-cut obligations.

All theories of recognition have a few features in common. By the very nature of recognizing these theories are concerned with interpersonal relationships, social roles, and expressions of regard between people. They assume that your appreciation of a person is as ethically important as the rules you follow or the outcomes that you optimize. They make some room for “dialogic” participation in which people negotiate with one another about who they are and what principles are important to them collectively. Finally, they assume that social systems both depend on and enforce orders of recognition.

What is at Stake in this Discussion?

Even if everyone desires recognition there is no guarantee that they all desire the same thing. Even if you do owe it to others to recognize them that does not specify what actions you must undertake or in what manner. I interpret recognizing as a process composed of four activities: attending, categorizing, appreciating import, and acknowledging. Recognizing is a process because each activity contributes information to the subsequent activities. How one attends will influence how one categorizes, which in turn affects what one takes to be important and thus the way one acknowledges the other person.

Recognizing is a social process though, so any analysis that excludes social relations is necessarily incomplete. If we want to know what recognizing entails, then we need to know how it facilitates interaction. I identify five important relationships in which recognition can take place. The parties might be merely familiar in which case recognizing someone implies very

little (although not nothing).¹ The parties might have identical normative standing, in which case whatever the agent recognizes in the subject the agent can also expect to be recognized for in turn.² They might have distinct roles in a larger social unit, so that recognizing someone implies knowing the particular expectations associated with each position. One party might demand unilateral submission from the other. Or, finally, one party might offer unilateral acknowledgment to the other.

If something is an instance of recognizing, then it involves at least one process of recognition, the process can be subdivided into four parts, and that process takes place in one of the contexts listed above. We can untangle knots in a theory by separating out distinct processes,³ clarifying what each part looks like in that process and making note of the predominate context.

¹ I discuss this more below, but I take it that familiarity is a form of social standing. If I am familiar with someone then I believe they have a justification to approach me. More plainly, it is unreasonable to just walk up and talk to someone you don't know, but it's reasonable for people to talk once they are familiar. That may be true even if the familiar parties strongly dislike one another. Their familiarity, even as enemies, is enough to make it reasonable for them to engage one another's attention.

² This would be reciprocal recognition, which Taylor, Honneth, and Hegel take to be especially important because of its stabilizing power. The precise mechanism is complicated, but one should note that mutual recognition with respect to X implies the parties have an overlapping appreciation for the import of X. If we recognize one another's rights, then both of us 1) are aware that the other party has rights, 2) care about the import of rights, and 3) are prepared to acknowledge rights claims from the other party.

³ I take a process to be sequence in which each component takes the material provided by earlier components, performs some special work, then passes on its results to the next component.

When people talk about recognition, they often muddle together separate processes. If someone asks us to recognize a persecuted group they might mean 1) the public in general should be aware of this group of people's existence and/or their distinct situation, 2) individuals ought to be moved by the plight of these people, 3) individuals ought to appreciate the worth of these people as people, 4) individuals ought to appreciate the worth of these people as this specific type of person, 5) collective bodies ought to treat this group as an object of concern, 6) legal bodies ought to grant collective standing to this group.

If you take a process view of recognizing, then you are compelled to demarcate different senses of 'recognizing' just to keep track of what agent is processing what information to what end. All six of the meanings above involve the recognition process, but the process is used by different agents with different goals and in different contexts.

Once the different strands are distinguished, it is easier to see where claimants disagree and where they support one another. It isn't hard to imagine two people 'disagreeing' about recognizing a marginalized group where one party is trying to discuss public attention, another party is trying to discuss collective action, and a third

Volition, order, and recursion complicate the simple picture though. Does the agent recognize in a benevolent, malevolent, or neutral manner? In what order does the agent proceed through the process and does she complete it? Does the agent proceed linearly or does she loop through some of the actions multiple times? My analysis becomes significantly more complex as one tries to account for all of these additional factors. Nonetheless, I think this analysis improves the clarity of the current philosophical discussion. Why would I favor an analysis prone to that kind of inflation?

The phenomenon itself is complex. Recognition plays an important role in neo-Hegelian normative theory, multiculturalism, so-called “identity politics,” social systems theory, and psychology. I see no good reason to think that the term is being misused in any of those contexts, but each context makes the word perform its own function. Surveying such a wide variety of uses, one might worry that the term ‘recognition’ lumps together dissimilar events. My analysis suggests that is not necessarily the case. The process of attending, categorizing, assessing, and then engaging another person could be manifested in many different ways. Even a highly diverse conversation thus may be addressed to one and the same problem. However, one has to determine which part of the process someone is interested in and in which context. A clear analysis makes it easier for us to identify genuine conflicts and to see when one theorist’s work might complement the work of another.

is trying to discuss legal standing. If we state explicitly who is doing, then those parallel discussions seem much more tractable.

What do I propose?

My first chapter addresses the analysis itself in the most abstract terms. What does it mean to attend to someone, to apply a conceptual category, to appreciate their import, and to acknowledge them by engaging their attention? After discussing the individual components, I explain how they collectively constitute a process. Each step supplies its own information until one is prepared to interact with another person. At the end of the process, you have raw data, concepts, a sense for what is at stake, and a mode of engagement to shape the interaction. I then pivot to relationships and examine the five contexts that color the significance of recognizing someone. What does it mean to be familiar with someone, to be their equal, to have role-centered relations with them, to have mastery, or to offer unilateral regard? Once I have explored those scenarios, we have a general schema for making sense of recognition. Any particular process of recognition involves an agent working through the steps so that she can make sense of her standing with another person given the kind of relationship between them.

In the next chapter, I apply my analysis to three samples from marquee theories in contemporary recognition. First, I look at Charles Taylor's *Multiculturalism* and his discussion of the Quebecois. Second, I discuss Axel Honneth's three modes of recognizing from *The Struggle for Recognition*. Third, I discuss Judith Butler's version of interpellation and her comments on social inclusion from *The Psychic Life of Power* and "Performance, Precarity, and Sexual Politics," respectively. In each case I identify distinct processes tangled together in the author's presentation. I then specify who does what to whom for what end. Then, I specify what each of the four actions look like in the relevant context.

The third and fourth chapters move beyond contemporary discussions to establish the general utility of my analysis. In chapter three I discuss Hegel's comments on contract. My purpose here is to show that the analysis can be used in historical contexts as well as in the current one. In chapter four, I take a confounding discussion from Aristotle and interpret it as an instance of recognition. My purpose here is to show that my analysis 1) can untangle various problems by forcing us to work through a situation methodically, and 2) it can help us recast discussions into recognition terms so long as the original problem has the right form. In other words, it doesn't matter what terms the original theorist uses so long as the theorist was concerned with a process of interaction that passes through the four actions I have identified.

Conclusion

The analysis that I offer is in some ways disappointing. 'Recognition' turns out to be a complicated term, so much so that some of the strong claims advanced about it are no longer tenable. The optimistic version of recognition-centric theory in which injury cleanly leads to moral conflict and on to just relations is too simple. There are other paths that the desire for recognition could take because recognizing can be done in many ways. What we lose in simplicity, we gain in clarity. The process view places some fairly rigorous limits on what can count as a single instance of recognizing and that compels us to unwind tangled accounts of recognition. Once we've clearly delineated distinct instances of the process, we have a simple procedure for interpreting what an agent is doing: how is her attention directed, how is she applying categories, how is she moved by what she is seeing, and how does she reach out to acknowledge the other person? To properly grasp what's going on, we need to answer those

questions while bearing in mind the relationship between subject and agent. Are they just familiar, are they equals, are they playing specialized parts, does one control the other, or is one concerned with the other? At the end we have a fairly clear idea of what someone is talking about and what an agent is supposedly doing.

Part 1: Analysis and Contemporary Applications

In this part, I explain my analysis of ‘to recognize’ and apply it to contemporary literature. I group the analysis and application together because my analysis originated as a response to the apparent heterogeneity of the contemporary literature. The analysis is thus intended to answer a question raised by a survey of the contemporary literature. By surveying that literature here, even in a highly selective way, one can see the importance of the question my analysis is meant to answer, and one can observe a test case for that analysis.

But I also group analysis with the contemporary literature because my analysis implies a method for interpreting claims about recognition. For any given instance of recognizing there must be an agent who proceeds through the process, a subject who is being recognized, one or more components in the process of special interest, and a purpose served by recognizing the

subject. In other words, one can get hold of the process by determining who does what to whom for what end.

My analysis suggests an approach to interpretation, and interpreting existing claims tests the validity of the analysis. The first chapter focuses on my analysis and is thus very abstract. The second chapter focuses on interpretation and is thus very concrete. Hopefully, the two illuminate one another, so that the analysis lends credence to the interpretations and vice versa.

1. My Analysis of Recognition

The act of recognizing someone can be viewed as a process. An agent goes through the process of recognizing someone so that she can engage with them. That process consists of four activities: attending to them, categorizing them, appreciating their import, and acknowledging them. The term 'to recognize' can refer to the process as a whole or to any of the parts. By focusing on recognition, theorists are focusing on an agent's experience of another person and how the agent engages with someone by addressing them.

The process view of recognizing does not imply that recognizing always proceeds in the same way. First, an agent might proceed through the activities in different orders by, for instance, adopting a posture before determining what is at stake. Second, the process can involve recursion, meaning that an agent could restart the process after gaining information from the process. Third, the agent might recognize with malevolent, benevolent, or neutral intent. I will discuss those three complications after working through the component activities.

Recognition is further colored by the relationship in which it occurs. One could analyze relationships in any number of ways, but I focus on five configurations based on the possession of authority: the absence of any role or authority, identical roles with equal authority, differentiated roles and authority, unaccountable authority, and unconditional gifts. The same process of recognizing happens in each relationship, but it looks quite different. That's because

the flow of attention, the set of important categories, how one has significance, and how one ought to express acknowledgment are all shaped by the relationship.

In this chapter, my focus lies on the shape of recognition in general as opposed to the conditions for recognizing well. Recognizing someone well and misrecognizing them both involve the four activities that make up the process of recognition. In other words, an agent could attend to someone, categorize them, evaluate them, and acknowledge them in a way that is terribly harmful. Just going through the process does not distinguish good from bad ways to recognize. In the next chapter, I'll focus on normative theories of recognizing that attempt to explain when the activities would be necessary and what would make them good.

1.1 Activities

When an agent recognizes someone, she attends to them, categorizes them, appreciates their import, and then acknowledges them. Each step in the process contributes information to the agent until, in the last step, she adopts an attitude toward the other person and expresses that attitude by addressing the subject. That last step can be understood as taking a pragmatic stance: The agent has resolved to treat the other person as an X in Y manner. That's slightly different from categorizing in which the agent cognizes the subject as a Z, because acknowledgment involves the resolution to deal with someone in a manner, whereas categorizing someone means interpreting them by means of a body of beliefs. It may be the case that Z and X generally correspond, but that is not strictly necessary.⁴ The agent's

⁴ For instance, I might categorize someone as an unwelcome guest and feel annoyed at their imposition, but decide to take a friendly stance toward them and treat them as a welcome guest. I interpret them one way but I address them in just the opposite way. In that case, the public act of acknowledgment belies the private acts of categorizing and appreciating. I show myself as one well-disposed to greet someone who I enjoy, when in fact I

pragmatic stance also communicates to the subject the way in which they are addressed by the agent. When a theorist studies recognition, they are studying the way in which agents are primed to respond to subjects or the impact that an agent's posture might have on the subject.

1.1.1 Attending to Someone

In the most primitive sense, an agent recognizes someone just when she attends to them. When an agent attends to something, she tracks the object carefully rather than losing it in the flow of sensations. By keeping track, an agent is able to collect information and is at least open to the possibility of engagement. In a stronger sense, attending to something can mean focusing on the thing's individuality. When an agent attends to something as an individual, she recognizes its particularity rather than assimilating it to an abstraction.

To experience something an agent must attend to it. Consider the basic phenomenology of a familiar place. You already know what everything looks like, so you don't feel any pressing need to attend to the details. Instead, you recognize things by means of very general categories which only require a flicker of attention. You see the desk and its stuff, the bookshelves, or the cabinets. In a familiar place, you might look right at something and not recognize it. I suspect we've all had the experience of looking for our keys only to find them sitting right on a table that we already looked at. We can lose something we're looking at because we do not attend to it in any great detail. The thing does not make an impression on us as a distinct object and therefore we do not take account of it. Instead, the thing blends into some generic category that does as much to obscure as it does to reveal. I, for instance, often lose my watch precisely

have labeled this person a nuisance and feel disposed to get rid of him. Ideally, my guest would misinterpret his situation, feel welcome, and yet still be steered out the door.

because it is always right where it is supposed to be. Why should I take note of something that I perceive as right where it is supposed to be when I'm looking for my watch?

When people desire recognition, they may just want some attention. They need to stand out from the noise of day-to-day events, but they do not necessarily want careful attention to their own special nature. The survivors of a natural disaster hope that authorities will send relief to disaster victims. They have no expectation that the government will concern itself with the unique personality of each and every victim: It is sufficient that aid groups and government agencies respond in a timely manner to 'disaster victims' generally conceived. In other words, the disaster victims hope to be recognized as disaster victims meaning that someone's attention keeps track of the disaster and keeps it in mind. They do not necessarily want any affirmation as specific people though. It may even be intrusive for outsiders to concern themselves with the personal life of a victim.

Sometimes though recognizing a person means more than just keeping track of them in general. Sometimes an agent attends to the specificity of a person. As Heidi Salaverria characterizes it, recognizing someone allows you "to temporarily break through the pre-given identities [Identitätsvorgaben]"⁵ and glimpse the other person as a specific individual (Salaverria 45). Attention of the sort Salaverria has in mind is qualitatively different from the attention discussed above. In this instance, an agent attends to someone by highlighting the person's independence from any applicable categories or preconceived notions.

⁵ The word '*vorgegeben*' means both 'default' and 'premade' so Salaverria means that we approach people with default ideas about who they are and recognizing them is a way to push aside those stereotyped, ready-packaged thoughts so that the real person can show up in our experiences instead of just another serving of our own habitual thoughts.

To speak metaphorically, both kinds of attending mean clearing a space for an experience. In the general sense, an agent clears a space for an experience to take precedence over other sensations. If you recognize your keys, then you focus on the experience of the keys as opposed to all the other sensations that you are having. In the specifying sense, you clear away your own judgments and associations so that an experience may be present to you just as itself. In other words, ordinary experiences bring with them any number of associations, presumptions, memories, projections, categories, and so forth. You have to push away those other thoughts so that something may show itself just as it is.

Neither general attention nor specifying attention are inherently moral, but they do bring with them a minor choice. By taking stock of a situation, an agent is faced with a choice to either engage or to move on. You cannot engage with something that you didn't notice, but once you have noticed it you can no longer plead ignorance. If you release something from your attention, then you've decided it is not worthy of any further regard on your part.

1.1.2 Categorizing

When an agent recognizes someone, she applies conceptual categories to them. Indeed, as we saw above, holding back those categories can itself be a challenging act of attention. Recognizing involves categorizing, because categories allow the agent to relate experiences to beliefs and plans. This aspect of recognizing has a triadic structure, to borrow a phrase from Thomas Bedorf: *A recognizes B as C*. "As C" provides A with the context that she needs to investigate or employ B.

Equating recognizing with categorizing (or identifying) is somewhat controversial due to metaphysical concerns about social identities. Those concerns are broadly legitimate, but some degree of categorizing is required for recognition because the agent needs some idea of who they are engaging with and in what context. As Judith Butler points out, categories often bring with them social roles and expectations, so categorizing someone may also saddle agent and subject with socially ascribed parts to play. Even in the absence of stereotyped social roles, an agent generally creates a model comprising both the other person's intentions and the context in which the parties relate. The social psychologist George Herbert Mead referred to this model as the Generalized Other, *i.e.* your implicit beliefs about what "everybody" is doing and how that relates to you. Categorization provides the agent with conceptual models, beliefs, priorities, and ritualized scripts for interaction all of which facilitate interaction.

Tying recognition to categorizing is more controversial than it might seem. Thomas Bedorf, a scholar of recognition working in the Levinasian tradition, argues that it is a serious conceptual and moral mistake to equate "recognition" (*Anerkennung*) with "identification" (*Erkennung*) (Bedorf 121-122). In his telling, when someone equates the two they act as though you can determine someone's real identity and then respond properly to whatever that identity deserves (Bedorf 101-102). He points out that identities don't really work that way: a person might have overlapping or contradictory identity claims, those claims could be contestable or confused, an identity that is deeply meaningful to me may mean nothing to you, and so forth.

In his telling, when an agent weighs how to recognize someone, she is not determining "*who* someone or a group *is*, but instead *as who* one *treats* him or them" (*Verkennende Anerkennung* 127, emphasis in the original). What's the difference here? They both seem to be

forms of identification but the first form is ontological and the second form is pragmatic. In other words, if I recognize you then I might think that I've grasped the key fact about your mode of existence or I might think that I've decided on a manner of handling you. When I recognize a computer, for instance, I am committed to certain factual claims about the existence of that object: I believe that I have recognized what it is. If I recognize you as the bearer of a social role, have I recognized you in the same way that I recognized the computer? Bedorf answers that I have not. He would say that I have decided on a strategy for addressing and treating you which is not necessarily connected with your mode of being and certainly not an encapsulation of your authentic self.

Bedorf asks us to consider recognition in terms of a gift that generates social obligations. You can make an offer by engaging with other people in some manner and then it is up to them to either accept your offer or reject it (*Verknennende Anerkennung* 186-187). Maybe they will be open to your overture and be supportive to you, but maybe they'll reject you and make some other offer. Moral engagement, he says, requires this touchy process of engagement and negotiation.

I broadly agree with Bedorf and yet one still cannot dismiss the role of identification in recognition. If Bedorf and like-minded figures simply mean that identifying someone does not exhaust their possibilities, then I agree. But that fact in no way implies that recognizing is not inextricably bound up with identifying. When I recognize you or anything else I am grouping my experiences of the world under some conceptual label. That label may be very generic like "person" or "the Other," but I am still applying a label. Imagine that you are engaging with someone as the Other: you aren't trying to restrict them to any specific type of person, you

aren't demanding that they behave any particular way, you are just appreciating their independence. Still you are engaged with this person *as* the Other. You are not, for instance, confused about what you are seeing. You are not carefully exploring physical sensations until you determine what you are looking at. You do not mistakenly believe that you are looking at a robot. You are not distracted and treating the person as background noise. You are engaged with the person in a specific way and you do that by applying the very special category "the Other." If you did not have some category applied to them, then you would not know what you were dealing with.

Consider what you experience when you engage with, but do not yet categorize, an object. Imagine that you saw an unusual black cylinder not unlike a trashcan. The device is highly polished, heavy, and about a foot tall. It may be the source of a low hum in the room. How would you engage with that object? You might touch it to feel if it is hot or move closer to see if the sound really is coming from it. You might turn it over or feel for buttons. The only conceptual label that you can apply is "mystery object" and so all you can do is explore your sensations until something "clicks" for you. Once you recognize it as a high-end computer, you suddenly know a great deal about the object. You would, as Bedorf noted, radically change the posture that you adopt toward the object. You would also have at hand practical scripts for interaction.

Once you know that you are dealing with a computer, you have a whole host of ideas at hand. You know things that you can do with a computer. You know things to expect from a computer. With all those expectations in hand, you can adopt a posture toward it. You might need to send an email, so you immediately look for the web browser. Or maybe you want to

avoid distractions, so you try to distance yourself from the computer. You didn't feel the need to distance yourself from "the mystery object," but now it means something different to you.

When you categorize a person something very similar happens. If you categorize someone as a mailman, then you call to mind all the procedures for dealing with mail. If you categorize him as the individual "Jack" instead, then you call to mind the things you expect from him as a person and what you might want to say to Jack. As Levinas suggested, you may even see Jack as the Other and be momentarily blown away by the freedom and majesty implicit in every human being. There are many ways you could categorize that person and each one will bring with it a host of associations.

We often engage with people by determining what social role they play. Those roles may be quite personal like "friend" or "mother," they could express jobs like "postman," or they could be social categories. It may seem strange to call social categories "roles," but as Judith Butler argues social categories generally imply a part that one is expected play. That's why her theory is called 'performative:' you expect people to perform the part that is assigned to them even when that part is something basic like gender.

The sociologist George Herbert Mead argues that you need those expectations in order to understand what you are doing. He claims that you interpret a situation by forming a model of the "generalized other," by which he means the intent and expectations of participants in an activity. He compares social life to a game of soccer. Each member of the team only knows what to do because the member can model what their teammates and their opponents are doing (*Mind Self and Society* 153-155). When you navigate a social situation, you build up a sense of what people in general are on about and what they expect you to do. You may or may

not fulfill their expectations, but you are aware of them and that awareness helps you make your way in the world. That implies that you often see yourself through the eyes of other people. You have a good idea of what I expect you to do and you can use that role-centered understanding of yourself to interact with me. As Michael Walzer argues, if we weren't meaningful to one another in that way — if you couldn't get a rough sketch of what sort of person I am and what I expect of you — then every social interaction would be baffling. A nation of truly self-made individuals would be an unpredictable nightmare of meaningless, because unrecognizable, gestures (*Politics and Passion* 15-17). You'd be reduced to piecing together every experience just as you had to piece together your understanding of the shiny, black cylinder.

1.1.3 Appreciating Import

When an agent recognizes someone, they appreciate that person's import. This means to grasp the significance of their situation and to feel the impact of that significance. The first aspect is cognitive: The agent identifies what is at stake. The second aspect is affective: The agent is moved by what is at stake. When we ask someone to recognize what is happening, we generally intend both of cognition and affection. If we told someone that they should recognize the humanity of the oppressed, then we expect them to note some facts about human flourishing and oppression, but we also expect them to be troubled by those facts.

What does someone mean if they say that they “don't recognize the authority of the court?” They are attending to and correctly categorizing the court. They are focused on engaging with it, know what it is, and know what it is capable of doing. When someone says that they do not recognize the court, they mean that they do not feel any compulsion to obey

the court. They are unmoved by the supposed normative force of the court. If they did recognize its authority, then they would feel that they ought to obey. In other words, they would appreciate the normative values at stake and they would be inclined to act based on their appreciation of those values.

Appreciation may even be an integral part of that supposedly “cold” Kantian respect. When Kant describes what he means by treating a person as an “end in themselves” he stresses that you should feel the import of their contingent aims:

Humanity could indeed subsist if no one contributed anything to the happiness of others while not intentionally detracting anything from it; but this is still only a negative and not positive agreement with humanity, as an end in itself, if everyone does not also try, as far as he can, to advance the ends of others. For if that representation is to have its full effect in me, the ends of a subject that is an end in itself must, as much as possible, also be my ends. (*Groundwork* 42-43)

Note that Kant is expecting an effect in the person related to that person’s perception of value. I take it that ‘end’ is meant to be understood in the sense of ‘goal’ or ‘purpose,’ so to treat a person as a goal is to encourage them in their self-realization. It is not enough that I cognize some fact about you the cognition of that fact must also work “its full effect” on me by causing me to feel the import that your self-realization has.

The same basic idea would apply to any other way of recognizing someone as valuable. When an agent recognizes the value of another person, the agent both represents the other as the bearer of some value *and* the agent responds to that value. When I say ‘value’ though I do not necessarily mean a moral value. When predators recognize someone as a victim, the

predators see a potential for abuse and feel pulled toward that action. When one gangster recognizes another as her rival, she sees what she is supposed to do to this other person and feels inclined to lash out at them.

1.1.4 Acknowledging

When an agent recognizes a subject, the agent acknowledges them. An agent acknowledges someone by engaging their attention through some form of address. Acknowledgment can accomplish up to five things. First, it is a public display that one has taken note of another person. Second, acknowledging someone invites dialogue by showing that the agent is receptive to the other person. Third, it can answer someone's call that you exercise your agency by demonstrating that you have noted their request. Fourth, it can convey the agent's assessment of the person acknowledged. Fifth, it can ascribe something to the person acknowledged. All five of these functions move recognizing out of the private realm and into the social realm. I can attend, categorize, and assess you all in the confines of my own thoughts, but once I acknowledge you that moves us into the realm of relations between people.

At the most basic level, acknowledging someone simply means communicating that one is aware of them. One might nod at someone across a room as a sign of recognition. The gesture is meant to convey to the other person that the agent has indeed seen them and is thus taking account of them. A senator might reassure the public that she recognizes the importance of corn subsidies to the American farmer. Her comments are meant to demonstrate her engagement with farmers, their plight, and their opinions about corn policy. Recognizing someone in this way is an external token demonstrating that the interior portions of

recognizing have already taken place. The person displaying their recognition is telling the other party that they have paid attention, categorized the situation, and assessed its import and are now responding properly.

Acknowledging someone informs them that they have some amount of your attention and thus opens the possibility of dialogue. This is the unpleasant power of street corner buskers and petitioners. If you acknowledge the person gathering signatures on the street corner, then your engagement offers them an opportunity to address you. Were you to brusquely walk by without addressing them at all, then they have no reason to believe that you are open to engaging with them. Quite the opposite, your refusal to acknowledge them communicates that you do not wish to do anything with them.⁶

Johann Fichte suggests that acknowledgment can serve a more momentous purpose: accepting responsibility. Fichte argues that a person becomes aware of her own agency when she feels called upon by another to “resolve to exercise [her] efficacy” (Fichte 31). In other words, when someone asks you to act, then you feel compelled to either do so or refuse, but either way you become aware that you have to exercise control over yourself (Fichte 33). Just by heeding the summons you come face-to-face with your responsibility. If you acknowledge the person who issued the summons, then you show them that you are taking on at least the responsibility to respond. You communicate that their summons has been heeded and that whatever you do next should be taken as a response to their call.

⁶ There is a certain oddity in this situation. Steadfastly refusing to look at someone who is speaking to you is a form of communication that relies entirely on not communicating. By refusing to acknowledge them you tell them “No!”

Acknowledgment can sometimes communicate the agent's evaluation of the subject. When you engage someone's attention by displaying friendship, then you communicate that they are valued. If you engage them with a display of hostility, then you show them that they are opposed. This mode of acknowledgment can be interpreted as expressive or as assertoric. By disrespecting you, I communicate an assessment of your worth even if I do not explicitly formulate a belief about your worth. In other words, when I disrespect you, I treat you *as though* you do not deserve my regard, or *as though* you deserve to be 'put down.' I may or may not believe such things, but you would not be unreasonable if you interpreted my actions as indicative of such beliefs and attitudes. Axel Honneth, for instance, seems to interpret acknowledgment as assertoric. In his telling, when an agent disrespects someone, she implicitly says "I take note of you and I am contemptuous of what I see." The same would go, *mutatis mutandis*, for any other value-charged way of acknowledging someone.

Finally, an act of acknowledgment could ascribe something to the recipient. When the chair of a committee recognizes a speaker, she ascribes to them a special standing. When the Academy acknowledges someone for a lifetime of achievement, they ascribe excellence to the actor. In a more quotidian way, if an agent addresses someone as something — as a woman, a mailman, a superior, etc. — then she ascribes that status to them. That would tell the subject that the agent is trying to engage with them as one who bears that status.

As we shall see in the next chapter, normative theories often diverge on the issue of acknowledgment. Judith Butler focuses on ascribing roles to people. Charles Taylor focuses on ascribing legal status. Axel Honneth focuses on communicating an evaluation. Those differences in focus affect their understanding of all the other components of the process. If Butler thinks

recognizing is headed toward the assignment of social roles, Taylor thinks recognizing is headed towards the conferral of legal rights, and Honneth thinks recognizing is headed toward expressions of approval, then it should come as no surprise that they understand attention, categorization, and appreciation differently.

1.1.5 A Complex Process

When you recognize someone, you gather all of the information that you need to make sense of them and then engage their attention in some manner. You focus on them, determine who they are, assess what that means to you, and then acknowledge them. Once they recognize you, the two of you can start sorting out what sort of interaction you will have. The recognizing process primes both of you with facts, norms, feelings of import, inclinations, and models for behavior. As the process progresses, you have an increasingly clear idea of what is at stake, with who, and in what manner. But the process is not easily brought to a conclusion and it does not necessarily end well.

If any activity were missing, engagement would be difficult at best. Without attending to the other person, you would not give them a place in your considerations. Without a category, you would not have a conceptual framework to guide your expectations. Without appreciation of import, you would not feel the “stakes” of the situation or be disposed to do anything. Without acknowledgment, the two of you would not be communicating.

Recognizing one another is thus necessary, but that only means that people need to assess one another if they are going to engage with one another. That does not imply that recognizing one another is a smooth or simple process and it does not imply that recognizing

someone always entails support. The process of recognizing can be complicated by at least three factors: the agent can engage with the activities in different orders, the activities can recur, and the agent can adopt a benevolent, malevolent, or indifferent attitude.

The activities may not flow in an orderly manner. If you attended, then categorized, then assessed, then engaged that would be a thorough procedure. People are not always thorough. An agent might attend, engage the other person, then try to assess what was at stake, and finally settle on a conceptual category. That's not a sound investigative process, but it certainly could happen. When someone is in a bad mood, they already know how they are going to engage people long before they know what exactly is actually going on or even who is involved. They are still recognizing another person, they just happen to do it in a way that does not provide the best information.

Getting the best information might require an agent to loop through activities several times or even indefinitely. By categorizing a person, an agent focuses on them in a particular manner and thus attends to new information. The agent might need to do that several times to collect all the relevant data. For instance, a detective might need to look at someone as a victim, then as the resident of an area, then as a relation to another party, and so on. To fully recognize who this person is, the detective would need to loop through the process many times.

Some theorists, especially Axel Honneth, take an ambiguous stance on the moral nature of recognition. He correctly notes that bigotry, hatred, and other forms of disrespect prime the agent and communicate their significance to the subject (*Disrespect* 133-134). In that sense then, he treats disrespect as recognition. However, he also uses the term 'recognition' to mean

proper appreciation for someone's worth and the proper acknowledgment of that worth to them (*Disrespect* 138). In that sense, recognition is the opposite of disrespect. Furthermore, he describes supportive regard as an attractor, if I may borrow a term from mathematics, in that social systems will tend to converge on patterns of benevolent recognition and tend to fall away from patterns of malevolent recognition (*Struggle For Recognition* 84). Honneth's interpretation injects moral values into the term 'recognition' and asserts that attempts to recognize one another gradually converge on good states of affairs.

My analysis is agnostic about attractors but is incompatible with Honneth's moralized interpretation of recognizing. The process of recognizing, if it consists just in readying oneself for engagement, does not imply that you act with goodwill or that you promote a good outcome. This brings us back to a point raised by Bedorf: Does 'recognizing' mean cognizing the fact of someone's being or does it mean engaging in a particular manner? I've suggested above that my answer is "both." Stated that way though, misrecognition is still a subset of recognition. Misrecognition in the form of disrespect, disdain, or willful indifference entails inadequate attention, incorrect categorization, improper appreciation, or a malicious attitude. Doing something poorly, however, does not mean doing something else. Misrecognition involves all the same activities for the same purpose, but just happens to fail somewhere when considered from a moral point of view.

To his credit, Honneth does acknowledge in at least one place this issue and its larger significance. Honneth notes that some people do wish for a bad sort of recognition: The example he gives is a Neo-Nazi who wants to be recognized as superior based on his perceived membership in a supposedly superior race. The Nazi is wrong to want this, but he still has a

desire for recognition and he still expects others to engage in the activities that make up the process of recognizing. An analytic theory of recognizing has to be able to capture that desire just as much as an appropriate desire. Moralizing our analysis of recognizing only makes it harder to understand immoral forms of recognition.

1.2. Relationships

In Levinas's telling, the Other looms over you. In Butler's telling authorities recognize subjects as a way to control them. In Honneth's telling people mutually recognize one another and thereby secure their freedom. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel describes a struggle unto death that only ends with one party submitting and recognizing the other party as his master. Even if 'to recognize' has four component activities, how can it assume all of these shapes? It can because the same activities are being performed in the context of different relationships.

Relationships involve social roles and authority, *i.e.* what the parties are doing and what sort of sway they hold with one another. Among other things, when you categorize someone you identify the social role that they occupy and when you appreciate their import you feel the authority that they have with respect to you. The significance of recognizing is thus partly pegged to the significance of the roles and authority at hand.

I'll discuss five types of relationship. First, if the relationship involves no social roles or authority, then recognizing someone means simply being familiar with them. Second, if the relationship is based on identical roles with equal authority, then recognition is mutual and

reflexive meaning that whatever I recognize in you applies just as much to me. Third, if the relationship centers on differentiated roles, then recognizing someone implies identifying the part they play. The fourth and fifth relationships are both unilateral meaning that only one party has any authority over the other. In the fourth type, one party dominates the other and demands recognition while offering nothing in return. In the fifth type, one party voluntarily offers recognition while demanding nothing in return.

1.2.1 No Roles And No Authority

For most of this discussion I have taken it for granted that recognizing someone has some moral import. That isn't always the case. Sometimes you simply know who someone is and nothing more comes of it. When there is no social role or moral authority involved the process of recognizing someone means nothing more than recognizing them as familiar. This relationship does, however, ease the transition into engagement later.

A co-worker walks past you in the hall. She nods a bit and you smile. You both go on your way without feeling the need to talk. Later in the day, you spot someone in the cafeteria from a different department. You can't quite bring their name to mind, but you feel a vague distaste and quietly slip out the side door. On your way home, you bump into a neighbor on the train. The two of you chat about nothing and walk back to your respective homes together. These relationships are not terribly exciting but they are still examples of recognizing. You and your co-worker clearly acknowledged one another. You roughly categorized and evaluated the distasteful person from another department. You and your neighbor mutually recognized one another and engaged in a diverting activity together.

Recognizing, in the sense of being familiar with someone, does not provide a normative foundation for anything other than mere engagement. If you recognize me, then you call to mind some facts about me and you acknowledge that either of us could initiate conversation. Familiarity doesn't amount to much because there are no normative principles or role-centered expectations built into the relationship other than the propriety of initiating dialogue.

Still you shouldn't entirely discount being familiar. Mere familiarity opens up an avenue between you and another person. Psychological research suggests that people are less receptive to strangers, attend to them less, and are more likely to assume that the other person is hostile. It is difficult for people to begin an engagement with a stranger, and, where they do begin, they do so from a defensive stance laden with suspicion and preconceived (negative) notions. By contrast, one does not need any special reason to address a familiar person. The two of you may not like one another, but even so the mere fact of familiarity makes interaction easier. The default inclination, then, is to ignore a stranger or to recognize them in a stereotyped, superficial manner.

1.2.2 Equal Status and Equal Authority

If each person in the relationship has precisely the same status, then whatever you recognize in another applies just as well to anyone else. That means that specific, personal connections are readily translatable into general principles. If your friend deserves care because she is a person, then any person deserves some measure of care. If a person demands that you respect their rights, then that implies they should respect your rights too.

A club is trying to determine its project for the upcoming year and everyone is asked to submit ideas. If you say that as a club member you have the right to propose as many ideas as

you want, then that implies that any other club member must also have that right. Shelley, another member of the club, might agree to recognize your right to submit as many ideas as you please. Her agreement implies that *any* club member has that right and that any member ought to acknowledge that right. By recognizing your right to submit any ideas, Shelley has implicitly asserted her own right to do so as well. Shelley might even put the point explicitly and say, "I'll support you, but only if you agree that everyone else can do this as well." Whenever a claim to recognition is grounded in a shared status, an act of recognition will automatically be reflexive. Whatever you recognize in me reflects back on you. That justifies demands for mutual recognition: I'll recognize that your status implies that I respect you, but only if you reciprocate.

To paraphrase loosely R. M. Hare, if a moral principle depends on a descriptive component, then wherever that descriptive component applies the moral principle also applies (Hare 39). When you ask other people to recognize you, you are making just such a descriptive, normative claim. You are saying that considered as a member of set S, you deserve response R from others, which may include their support for you doing act A. For any other member of set S, then they too deserve R and they too are entitled to do A.

Recognition translates Hare's logical point into a social setting. If you expect me to care about you and acknowledge you in some way, then why shouldn't you do the same for me? In the breach, the gap between what principle demands and the factual distribution of recognition should, at least in Honneth's telling, motivate a person to seek redress. From the opposite side, if you and I do recognize one another then our shared endorsement of a principle should facilitate moral dialogue between us.

Let's say that you want Shelly to endorse your right to submit as many ideas as you please, but you don't want other members of the club to do so. You expect everyone to take all of your ideas seriously, but you have no intention of listening to them beyond the bare minimum. That behavior is clearly unacceptable at the level of principle, but you might imagine such a situation happening. There's no real philosophical difficulty here in that there's no confusing or subtle moral principles at play. There is a social problem here in that some people are not recognized as they should be. They are asked to respond supportively to the status one person has, but they are not given that support in response to their own possession of that status.

If you accept the view that a person's sense of self is constituted in dialogue with others, then those excluded should feel that their own validity as a person is — ever so slightly — impinged by this disrespect. If every club member gets to submit ideas and you do not, then what does that say about your standing? Why should you be ignored while still being asked to attend to other people? Why do you deserve to be treated worse? In this scenario, the demand for recognition originated in just one person, but that demand radiates outward. Everyone involved is asked to respond in a particular way to the original claimant and that expectation reflects back into their self-understanding.

If you and I do recognize one another in relation to a shared identity, then communication and consensus ought to be easier. Communication would be easier, because we've both agreed to a common framework. We're coming at the question in the same way. Consensus should be easier, because we are both motivated to uphold the principles that secure our own well-being. If you and I recognize one another's rights, then defending your

rights amounts to defending mine. Letting your rights lapse would undermine the idea that personhood deserves to be respected and thus undercuts my own self-understanding as a rights-bearing person.

Mutual recognition only functions because you and I are similar in some respect, but what if you are interested in preserving the differences between people? Demands for mutual recognition could seem stifling if you expect a person only to present themselves so far as they are like you. If I demand that you present yourself only as an American citizen, then I could use that as a way to prevent you from presenting yourself as the bearer of some other identity. You could try, but I am not willing to respond on those terms. If, for instance, your goal is to preserve a way of life, then my insistence on strictly equal recognition would be a mechanism for me not to engage with your issue. For those interested in the preservation of differences, mutual recognition can seem as much of a threat as it is an opportunity.

1.2.3 Different Roles and Different Standing

What do you do when you recognize someone as your boss? You aren't just familiar with them, but you also wouldn't expect them to have exactly the same role with respect to you that you have to them. You acknowledge that they have one part to play while you have another, but that those two parts create ties between the two of you. There are some things that you owe to this person, some things that they owe to you, and there are patterns for how each of you should treat the other. When you recognize someone as your boss you also, implicitly, recognize yourself as an employee. Your recognition is reflected back, but not the way it was before.

Functionally-differentiated roles are embedded in social systems, so recognizing a person implies that you grasp the norms and structure of that system. If you recognize someone as a doctor, then you understand what doctors do, what you should concern yourself with, and how each of you should treat the other. You might also call to mind technical information about your social structure. Recognizing a doctor brings with it some grasp of insurance practices and medical specialization and that technical information helps you to navigate the interaction. You don't ask your dentist to treat your depression, because you know that the specialty "dentistry" isn't the right place to bring up mental distress.

Just like before, the face-to-face relationship is tied into a series of logical abstractions and value judgments, but in this case recognizing someone else does not impute the recognized status back onto you. Instead, recognizing them calls to mind the relationship between their status and your status and, perhaps, the relationship between the two of you together and the ultimate ends toward which your activity is aimed. According to Talcott Parsons, where people have a systemic understanding of their relations and ends

this system would, among other things, define what they all held their relations ought to be, would lay down norms determining these relations and limits on the use of others as means, on the acquisition and use of power in general. In so far, then, as action is determined by ultimate ends, the existence of a system of such ends common to the members of the community seems to be the only alternative to a state of chaos—a necessary factor in social stability. (Parsons 265)

In other words, so far as people are able to recognize themselves as joined with others in pursuit of valid goals, they are able to develop meaningful norms and social roles to organize

life. Where they cannot recognize one another in this way, the relations between them tend to disintegrate.

In functionally-differentiated systems, recognition is asymmetric, but still somewhat reflexive. Recognition is asymmetric, because I do not have the same obligations to you that you have to me, so I may need to appreciate things about you that you do not need to appreciate in me. Recognizing is still somewhat reflexive, because my stance toward you implies something about your stance toward me.

1.2.4 Unilateral Authority

What does recognition look like when only one person is supposed to be recognized? You would adopt a stance toward someone and feel some normative obligations toward them without any expectation of reciprocity. Unlike the last two relationships, what you recognize in them in no way reflects back on you and you do not necessarily have any moral leverage with them. There seem to be two candidates for this kind of relationship: Levinasian recognition of the Other and submissive recognition of dominance. Those two have very different stakes, but the same shape.

When Levinas asked you to recognize the Other, he explicitly said that you should not think of yourself and the Other as only relatively distinct. Levinas asks you instead to relate to the Other as something unique, as something set apart from you and from any social category that the two of you might share. Because the Other is entirely set apart from you, recognition can only flow one way. You recognize something about them, but that does not imply anything about you and you have no grounds to expect anything out of them.

How should you interpret this activity? Levinas describes it as the experience of transcendence. Bedorf re-interprets it as gift-giving, which puts the impetus in you rather than radiating out from them. The anthropologist Inga Clendinnen describes a third possibility in *Aztecs*, her study of Aztec social life. Aztecs tried to solicit a response from the gods by displaying their total dependence in face of divine power. A one-sided act of recognition might indicate that only one party is in a position to offer anything to the other.

Levinas continues his description of “absolute alterity” to stress how one-sided and peculiar⁷ this supposed relationship is:

The relation between the Other and me, which dawns forth in his expression, issues neither in number nor in concept. The Other remains infinitely transcendent, infinitely foreign; his face in which his epiphany is produced and which appeals to me breaks with the world that can be common to use (*Totality and Infinity* 194).

The action radiates out from the Other and affects you by “appeal.” I interpret this by analogy to the power of beauty. When the dawn breaks its appeal draws you to it. In a certain respect, the experience of beauty calls for a response. The Other and the dawn are both passive attractors, but nonetheless work some change in you. The Other shows themselves as

⁷ Strictly speaking it is not clear that “absolute alterity” is a coherent concept. The Other and I do have things in common and so cannot be utterly and entirely different. Perhaps one is supposed to take Levinas’s point in a very restricted sense. My reworked version of the claim would read:

When we consider another person as “the Other” we pay attention to the fact that they are another, independent person. Their independence is the one and only focal point here and thus we stress their difference from us. When we look at someone this way, we are not trying to compare them to us or measure them and us against a common standard. Instead, we are trying to appreciate what it means for someone to be their own, special being.

My rephrased version is definitely less exciting and presumably loses much of the special emphasis that Levinas intends. Nonetheless, by minimalist version can be interpreted literally, whereas Levinas’s version requires some sort of metaphorical gloss.

transcendent and you relate to that transcendence by feeling the import of the situation. It would make no sense for you to demand reciprocity, because you are merely witness to an event.

When Bedorf describes one-sided recognition, he locates the act and its impetus in the agent. He claims that when you encounter the Other you freely adopt a stance toward them and that stance constitutes a gift of recognition (Bedorf 160). The act of recognition “establishes a social fact” in being offered, but what is to come of that fact (Bedorf 162)? The fact of a gift calls for some sort of response, but there is no way for you to control the manner in which the response comes (Bedorf 162-163). “Recognition remains unstable in this sense” that a request for recognition opens up “a normative space, which is not already determined” (Bedorf 157). *Something* has to come back as a response, but you do not know exactly what it will be because the gift is only an opening move. Later on you may establish a new norm and engage in either equal or functionally-differentiated forms of recognition. At the moment, though, you are unilaterally establishing the fact of contact and it lays entirely out of your hands how the Other will respond if indeed they do more than respond with silence.

Inga Clendinnen offers a different perspective in her study of Aztec life. Mesoamerican religion in general stressed the pitiable state of man before the gods including ritual self-harm “to so pitiable a state as to force the manifestation of his Spirit through the intensity of his suffering...The suppliant strives to extort a response from the sacred powers by the extravagance and extremity of his suffering, by calling and crying upon them, or standing mute in an anguish of desire” (Clendinnen 70). In Clendinnen’s telling, the spectacle of “wholehearted dependence, with the wholeheartedness coercing response” was meant to compel the god to

meet his obligations *precisely because* the god was unilaterally powerful (Clendinnen 71). Instead of transcendence calling for a response, the Other calls out by means of their utter helplessness.

Clendinnen's description of Aztec life calls to mind a qualitatively different unilateral relationship: domination. Tyrants, slavers, and imperialists do not usually feel their power as a burden. They tend to use their strength to demand that the weaker party recognize the mastery of the powerful. To adopt Kantian terms, masters expect to be recognized as an "end in themselves," *i.e.* as a goal that justifies actions, while treating their subordinates merely as a means.

What does it mean to recognize someone in the context of domination? The subjugated party recognizes their master with no expectation of recognition in response. Their relationship is not founded on equality or common purpose. Their relationship is founded on the absolute authority of one party over another. Recognizing someone's dominance then could mean acquiescing to their demands. The master claims the power to set the subjugated party's priorities and the subjugated could recognize that fact by obeying.

Domination is peculiar in that it involves a normative demand addressed to a person who is denied normative standing. The dominant party makes a normative appeal that the subjugated *ought* to obey them. The dominant party expects the subjugated person to attend to them, to be moved by their concerns, and to approach them with deference and obedience. The dominant person should be important to the subjugated person. At the same time though, the subjugated person is treated as though they had no right to direct themselves. If they were free to dispose of themselves, then they wouldn't be dominated by someone else in the first

place. Yet the power of self-direction is the only thing that allows them to meet the demands made on them.

Domination is often dressed up as desert and this ruse adds a complication to recognition. Clendinnen tells us that the Aztecs understood their empire as a resurrection of the Toltecs, a semi-mythical empire of artisans and philosophers (33). By claiming that mantle, the Aztec Empire sought legitimacy both for its worldly power and for its symbolic ascendance. The Aztecs were to be treated as *the best* of Mesoamerican society, which *deserved* tribute from self-consciously lesser peoples. The Aztecs “sought to exact from towns in their immediate vicinity not so much maximum tribute as acquiescence, preferably voluntary, in that Mexica claim to Toltec Legitimacy” (33). In a word, the Aztecs wanted to be recognized as dominant in a material and in a cultural sense. In the material sense, they wanted people to voluntarily surrender valuable goods to them. In a cultural sense, they wanted others to publicly acknowledge Aztec claims to a superior way of life. There is no talk of reciprocity in either of these. The Aztec Empire was not promising citizenship, trade benefits, or mutual acknowledgment. They were demanding submission.

You don't have to be an especially acute psychologist to see how the Aztec fascination with “Toltec Legitimacy” may have been something of a delusion. Any domineering polity or privileged social group has a rather obvious motivate to regard itself as superior to those over whom they have dominion. The subjugated were not so convinced. When the Spanish provided an excuse for mass rebellion most of the Valley of Mexico joined contributing more than 70,000 soldiers — 99% of the army — to the siege of the Aztec capital at Tenochtitlan (Hassig 148). During the period of Aztec ascendance, the dominated polities publicly recognized the Aztecs as

superior, but that obviously did not mean very much. Those public displays of submission were just that “displays” meant to flatter the conquering power.

1.3 Conclusion

I have described what I take to be the four activities that together constitute recognizing and which can also be called recognizing in their own right. Those four activities are attending to someone, categorizing them, appreciating their import or the import of their situation, and acknowledging them by engaging their attention. I then observed that recognizing presumes a relationship and the character of that relationship will color the character of recognition. I divided relationships into five types and explored the nature of each type of relationship.

My analysis offers a framework for relating disparate claims about recognition. Some seemingly incompatible claims may in fact relate to different activities or relationships in which case they are not strictly speaking contradictory. At the same time, the profusion of possibilities is itself reason for caution. Any account of recognizing that assumes one can only proceed through a rigid process is likely to discount the actual range of possibilities. This may present a serious problem for moral theories that attribute an innate direction to the desire for recognition.

2. Contemporary Applications

My analysis of recognition helps us interpret the philosophical literature on recognition. Each theory is presumably addressed to one or more actions that compose recognition. Each theory will also privilege some relationships over others. We can clarify our understanding of a theory by making those actions and relationships explicit. In this chapter I demonstrate this process by interpreting samples from three important figures in the contemporary literature.

I'll interpret claims from Charles Taylor, Axel Honneth, and Judith Butler. I've chosen these three because they represent a wide range of views about recognition and what it can accomplish, and because they are all widely cited figures. What I do here could be replicated for the rest of their work or for work done by other figures. My aim is thus to show the viability of my interpretative method, but not to exhaust the interpretation of any one of these three figures.

I've chosen samples to highlight a distinctive element of each theorist's work. For Charles Taylor, I've chosen to work with his claims about community rights as presented in *Multiculturalism*. For Axel Honneth, I focus on the three affirmative attitudes that he cites as the core of recognition in *The Struggle For Recognition*. For Judith Butler, I've taken her comments on interpellation in *The Psychic Life of Power* and her comments on precarity in "Performance, Precarity, and Sexual Politics."⁸

⁸ I chose those two texts because I take them to describe the two halves of an order of recognition, *i.e.* the social template that determines who gets recognized as what. When people address you as a recognized kind of person, they interpellate your identity — addressing you as an X saddles you with the responsibility to perform as an X. When people exclude you from the order of recognition, then they do not know what to make of you and do not perceive any clear responsibilities toward you (since they have no ethical relationship with you). Interpellation describes what it is like to be included, precarity describes what it is like to be excluded.

My presentation involves two steps per figure. First, I'll introduce the part of the figure's work under discussion. Second, I'll apply my analysis to the claim under discussion. As part of the second step, I will highlight who recognizes, who is recognized, what activity is most salient, and what purpose(s) recognizing serves. I do this to show how each figure is concerned with a different configuration of activities, relationships, and agent/subject pairs.

2.1 Charles Taylor: The Rights of Communities

Charles Taylor's essay "The Politics of Recognition," published in the volume *Multiculturalism*, is one of the touchstones of contemporary recognition literature, because it unites concerns with personal identity, cultural differences, and political rights. I'll focus on his claim that a cultural group may deserve recognition from the state in the form of rights. I interpret Taylor's claim as a relationship between state and communities that is expressed primarily through legal standing and is justified as a means for self-realization for members of the community. I then argue that 'recognition' in this context primarily means attending and acknowledging in the context of a role-differentiated relationship. Finally, I point out how different this analysis would be if one shifted to the tolerance aspect of multiculturalism instead of the rights aspect.

2.1.1 Taylor's Argument

According to Taylor, the search for authenticity has encouraged a "politics of difference" in addition to the more familiar "politics of equality." Whereas the latter stresses the fundamental equality of all people, the former stresses the unique

character of each person or group of people. Advocates for the politics of difference ask us to recognize:

the unique identity of this individual or group, their distinctness from everyone else. The idea is that it is precisely this distinctness that has been ignored, glossed over, assimilated to a dominant or majority identity. And this assimilation is the cardinal sin against the ideal of authenticity. (Taylor 38)

In other words, people want to be recognized (appreciated) for who they are and that entails recognition (acknowledgment) from others, perhaps even acknowledgment from governing bodies.

Taylor turned to a now-famous test case involving the Quebecois (i.e. the French Canadians) and the Meech Lake Accords, which would have modified the Constitution of Canada. The French Canadians, as an ethnic and linguistic minority, were concerned with the preservation of their unique culture and their political autonomy within the Canadian province of Quebec (Taylor 52). Their goals went beyond the normal demands for devolution in a federal system. The French Canadians sought recognition as a “distinct society” and, consequently, permission for the government of Quebec to pursue policies explicitly aimed at promoting the French-Canadian way of life (Taylor 52-53). If adopted, the Meech Lake Accord would have granted the French Canadians a special legal status not possessed by the English Canadians and given Quebec special legal powers. What’s more, those powers would be directed at producing “communal goals,” a task which may be incompatible with certain forms of political liberalism.

For Taylor, the pursuit of cultural recognition turns into a question of political liberalism: Is there a political solution which is both liberal and responsive to difference in the way sought by the French Canadians? Taylor answers that a society can indeed hold to political liberalism while still recognizing difference and, if necessary, granting some entities the power to pursue their collective goals (Taylor 61). He clarifies that not all rights should be relativized, “there would be no question of cultural differences determining the application of *habeas corpus*, for example,” but there may be a need for “cultural rights” if a group of people believe their way of life is imperiled (Taylor 61). Native Americans, French Canadians, and other minority groups may, he says, require legal recognition if they are to survive at all much less to thrive.

2.1.2 Applying the Analysis

When Charles Taylor argues that Canada could recognize the distinctiveness of French Canadian culture, how is he using the word ‘recognize?’ Which activities that compose recognition would be most salient and what sort of relationship do those activities take place in? I’ll start by describing the case in the simplest terms. Then I will address the activities and the relationship.

Here is what I take to be the Meech Lake Accord’s relevant points:

1. The French-Canadian people constitute a “distinct society” from the English-speaking majority.
2. So far as something is a “distinct society” that society is warranted in pursuing its collective goals through legal means.
3. The government of Quebec is the proper authority to pursue the welfare of the French-Canadian people.

4. The federal government ought to recognize 1-3.

That summary leaves no doubt about the agent: Canada's federal government would be doing the recognizing in this case. The government is supposed to recognize a group of people, a legal principle, and the powers of a subordinate government.

"Recognizing" would entail changes to the Canadian legal code and perhaps revisions to Canadian jurisprudence to accommodate those changes. The point of recognizing the French Canadians is to help them maintain their way of life by highlighting and supporting their distinctiveness.

What would this look like as a process? The Canadian government would identify the French Canadians as a "distinct society." In this step, the key act is assigning this legally-significant label to a sub-population in Canada. The government is then supposed to draw the conclusion that as a "distinct society," the French Canadians *ought* to maintain their cultural integrity and *rightly* pursue their collective goals. This strikes me as a matter of appreciation: The Canadian government is supposed to conclude that any distinct society deserves a special kind of treatment because of its intrinsic value to its members. But a legal right requires an agent to bear the right, which a cultural group cannot do on its own. The federal government would then acknowledge the government of Quebec. That means that the federal government (especially the courts) will address the government of Quebec as the bearer of this right and will respond appropriately when Quebec raises certain concerns.

Appreciation and acknowledgment are the core of this argument, but both are meant only in fairly restricted senses. Appreciation is important because it links the

mere fact that a subpopulation exists to the legal system of rights. If distinct societies do not deserve to be preserved, then identifying subpopulations is meaningless. But Taylor and the French Canadians do not just want the public to respect French Canadian culture, they want to take political action. Acknowledgment then is the actual purpose: Once the federal government acknowledges the government of Quebec, the political program can unfold. In this case, “acknowledgment” means publicly affirming the special standing possessed by the government of Quebec.

Spelled out using my analysis it is easy to see where problems could (and did) arise. How does one properly identify which sub-populations constitute a “distinct society?” Why does the status “distinct society” imply the normative principle that the society ought to continue existing? Even if the right to self-preservation applies to “distinct societies,” how does one determine the proper agent to exercise this right? If an agent is lacking, must one create one? The questions are easy to adduce, because they emerge from the process view. If the federal government must go through those steps, then how should it proceed and why?

Taylor’s argument presumes the existence of a federal state structure because it requires a regional government to act as the agent of the subpopulation. I take it then that the relationship here involves role-differentiation. There must be a federal government that acts as the guarantor of universal, human rights and as the adjudicator of competency for subordinate powers. In addition, there needs to be a regional power that can properly identify the collective goals of cultural group and act for their benefit. When the federal government recognizes the subordinate one, it grants the local

government special competencies and does not demand the same kind of acknowledgment in return. The French Canadians, for instance, do not recognize the federal government as the agent of sub-population.

This arrangement does not, however, imply the fragmentation of the state. As Taylor suggested, cultural differences have no meaningful impact on fundamental rights nor, I would add, on basic public utilities. The water must stay on in French Canada just as it does in English Canada. In other words, the subordinate government is expected to recognize the federal government as a legitimate authority possessed of competencies beyond those of the regional government. Indeed, the regional government must submit to review by the federal powers lest it violate minority rights within the region.

Once we make this relationship component explicit it seems obvious that Charles Taylor's version of multiculturalism only applies in very limited circumstances. There has to be a minority population intent on preserving a distinct way of life that faces serious political pressure to dissolve, a regional government that roughly encompasses the group's geographic extent and is competent to act as their agent, as well as a higher government both willing to defend universal rights and willing to acknowledge a special power within its territory. Should any part be missing, then the basic relationship envisioned by Taylor falls apart.

The discussion above amounts to an analysis of 'multiculturalism' taken to mean "the recognition of cultural rights," but consider how little this has in common with other meanings assigned to the term. If you took 'multiculturalism' to mean something more like "widespread and thorough tolerance of cultural difference" then the agent

would be most citizens, but not necessarily the government. Those citizens would recognize cultural groups by appreciating their right to go about their business. In other words, people would respond to outsiders by feeling a minimal amount of goodwill and, perhaps, some acknowledgment by way of public agreeableness. That is a reasonable enough use of the term 'multiculturalism' and yet it implies an entirely different kind of recognition.

2.2 Axel Honneth: Love, Respect, and Esteem

In *The Struggle For Recognition* Axel Honneth argues that people need recognition from others if they are to develop a healthy "relation-to-self" (*Selbstbeziehung*) (Honneth xii). In Honneth's telling, 'recognition' primarily means expressing support to another person. Specifically, Honneth contends that people need support for their bodily integrity, their moral capacity, and their productivity in the form, respectively, of love, respect, and esteem. People need to be recognized in those ways, because such recognition helps them gain "a form of trust directed inward, which gives individuals basic confidence in both the articulation of their needs and the exercise of their abilities" (Honneth 174).

2.2.1 Honneth's Argument

Honneth argues that people come to understand themselves in relation to the way others address them. What's more, the patterns of recognition prevalent in a society will affect the opportunities they have. He claims that love, respect, and esteem are especially important, because they are the "intersubjective prerequisites for self-realization" (Honneth 175). In other words, a person needs to be loved, respected, and esteemed if they are going to fully flourish

(Honneth 95). I'll follow the course of Honneth's argument and describe each of the three and the purpose it serves.

Honneth takes 'love' to mean "primary relationships insofar as they - on the model of friendships, parent-child relationships, as well as erotic relationships between lovers - are constituted by strong emotional attachments among a small number of people" (Honneth 95). He supports his use of the term in this way by noting that Hegel argued lovers "confirm each other with regard to the concrete nature of their needs" and in this experience of mutual confirmation "both subjects know themselves to be united in their neediness, in their dependence on each other" (Honneth 95). Love is thus a pattern of recognition in which people feel approval of one another and express encouragement to one another. They do so in light of their mutual support and mutual neediness, where 'neediness' should not be read in a pejorative sense. In this context, 'neediness' is meant to capture the physical limitations as well as the social character of human life. We do, in many ways, need one another and generally we hope that those needs will be met by our intimate associates.

What does Honneth expect love to accomplish? After an extended sojourn into psychoanalysis, he informs us that someone who is loved develops a "mature confidence that one's own needs will lastingly be met by the other, because one is of unique value to the other" and, having discovered this one develops "the 'capacity to be alone'" (Honneth 104). If someone is loved, then she believes 1) she can depend on those around her, 2) she is valued by them, and 3) she need not cling to others. Love relationships are marked by a strong affirmation of the other person, but at the same time a sense of ease and confidence which allows both parties to be themselves. On one hand the other person is "released" in that you

acknowledge their independence and at the same time the other person is “emotionally tied to the loving subject” (Honneth 107). As a practical matter then, a person who is loved learns to see themselves as secure, because valuable. Further, that sense of security allows them to be who they are, while at the same time maintaining their strong ties to the other person. Of course, love is a mutual relationship, so what is true of one party is true of the other as well. By loving one another, both parties gain a measure of security and a measure of independence.

Honneth places the experience of love at the root of “every other form of reciprocal recognition” (Honneth 107). Unless someone possesses “basic confidence in themselves” then they will not be open to any ethically demanding relationships with others: Someone must believe that she is valuable and valued before she will risk any demanding, reciprocal interactions. To set aside his terms for a moment, if you do not believe yourself to be physically safe or worthy of care, then why would you demand mutual respect or mutual esteem? If you believe yourself to be worthless or take it on faith that others will abuse you, then you have no good reason to stand on your rights or to expect admiration for your work, because you do not believe that people value you at all.

Honneth addresses respect as a matter of legal recognition, in particular recognition as an equal and free citizen.⁹ His turn is not so drastic as it seems: According to Honneth, “legal recognition” primarily means that two parties are “aware of the social norms by which rights and duties are distributed in their community” (Honneth 109). This formulation is too weak for his purposes because one only recognizes another's rights when one is aware of those rights *and* one cares about them. That quibble aside, it is clear that Honneth's idea of legal

⁹ The term ‘respect’ here is being used in the Kantian sense of ‘regard for the value of personhood.’ He uses ‘esteem’ to indicate the other sense of ‘respect’ meaning ‘admiration for an accomplishment.’

recognition is far more personal than it seems. 'Legal recognition' implies that one person regards another as entitled to specific "rights and duties."

He is specifically concerned with modern legal recognition in which "legal subjects recognize each other as persons capable of autonomously making reasonable decisions about moral norms" (Honneth 110). To summarize, modern rights are ascribed to anyone just as a person as opposed to specific privileges and duties ascribed to social groups like the clergy or the landed aristocracy. But if modern rights aren't concerned with social status or with personal excellence, then what is it that one is recognizing? The answer, he says, lies in the capacity to reach agreement. In other words, modern legal systems assume that one must gain the consent of the governed and that presumes that the public in general is capable of making morally-salient decisions about legal norms. In plain language, the modern legal system treats people as though their consent is important and it does so because it treats everyone as capable of moral decision making (Honneth 114). To recognize someone's rights would thus mean, at the very least, treating them as one who is capable of moral reasoning and whose consent is important.

Honneth argues that being treated that way teaches a person to respect themselves as a moral agent. At very least, being respected should cause one to think of oneself as a "morally responsible person" (Honneth 118). If you were not capable of moral responsibility, then people would not address you as one who ought to be responsible nor would they treat your consent as important. In effect, the legal order says that all people are to be respected because of their personhood and, if people actually do that, then everyone will see themselves as worthy of respect merely because they are a person. But that doesn't mean that they will just feel entitled. Instead, it means that they expect to be treated as one who can account for their

actions and demand accounts from others. Everyone will learn to expect moral reasoning from themselves.

Honneth finishes his presentation with esteem. By 'esteem' Honneth means "the graduated appraisal of concrete traits and abilities" generally within the confines of some cultural context (Honneth 113). You esteem someone because they are good at something or because they have a good trait, where determining what counts as 'good' may require context and where judgment usually involves a scale from more to less. Unlike legal recognition, which is universal and absolute, social esteem is variegated: This person may be quite estimable for his wit while the other is only somewhat laudable for his patience.

Honneth has in mind social esteem for contributions to the collective work of a society. He claims that people wish to be recognized for "accomplishments that they precisely do not share in an undifferentiated manner with others" (Honneth 125). In this context "accomplishment" is judged in relation to one's contributions to the "practical realization of society's abstractly defined goals" (Honneth 126). Summing up then, he claims that people want to be appreciated for their distinctive contributions to what "we" (however that may be determined) are trying to accomplish.¹⁰

¹⁰ There is a very serious theoretical problem in this formulation. Ludwig Siep argues in "Recognition in Hegel's *Philosophy of Spirit*" that Honneth's claims about collective work are unrealistic in any modern setting (Siep 119). There is no reason to believe that whole societies are engaged in a common work toward which all people contribute and thus people often have little or no reason to esteem one another.

I believe Siep may be correct, however my focus here is on what Honneth takes recognition to be and not whether his theory is fully sound. My task is to describe what actions Honneth is working with even if there is good reason to think this theory cannot function as stated.

2.2.2 Applying the Analysis

Even though I've only taken a subsection of the whole argument, Honneth's theory is clearly quite involved, but applying my analysis helps us see what is at stake and where some serious problems lie. I'll start with a basic analysis of who does what to whom, then apply my analysis in terms of activities and relationships.

In Honneth's telling the agent and the subject are always individual people. That may be surprising since he talks of 'legal recognition' and 'social esteem,' which imply collective agents, and also talks about identities and social movements, which imply collective subjects. Recall though that he glossed 'legal recognition' to mean an agent acknowledging the duties and rights ascribed to a person by their society's legal structure. Similarly, 'social esteem' was glossed as appraisal in relation to society's collective goals. So, the acts are legal and social, respectively, because an agent thinks about the law or thinks about social goals while interpreting another person. Legal and social bodies are objects of contemplation, but not the actual agent doing the recognizing. For all his abstruse language about social dynamics and psychoanalysis Honneth's implicit action theory is really quite straightforward: One person recognizes another person.

But what does he mean by 'recognizing?' Obviously, he means loving, respecting, and esteeming, but he also means a public, reciprocal exchange. Honneth is concerned with situations in which people show one another that they have similar, supportive regard for one another. In his usage, love exists when people feel care for one another's neediness and express support for one another's independence. Respect exists when people feel due regard for one another's moral competency and engage one another as moral agents. Esteem exists

when people feel appreciation for one another's good work or good traits and express that approval to one another.

What does he expect this to accomplish? Now we hit a problem because 'this' in the previous sentence is overburdened. Sometimes, Honneth offers a theory of moral motivation: If agents feel the significance of other people's value, then those agents will be motivated to treat others well. Sometimes, he offers a theory of moral development: If subjects are treated as valuable, then they learn to appreciate themselves and live up to their potential. Sometimes, he offers a theory of social stabilization: If people mutually recognize one another, then both parties will acknowledge the validity of norms that stem from that recognition.

His theory has one further complication. It's not clear how 'identity' works in his theory. On one hand, he addresses himself to 'identity' in the sense of a relation-to-self. In other words, my identity is self-understanding developed in part through my experience of recognition by others. He claims that disrespect and other forms of misrecognition are attacks on the individual's identity. A person expects to be treated as one who matters and misrecognition suggests that they do not. On the other hand, he addresses himself to social movements and the struggle for political rights. In the latter context, 'identity' would apply more to social categories, *e.g.* 'White,' 'Black,' 'Christians,' 'Atheists,' and so on. Recognizing one of those identities does not obviously follow from recognizing the personal identity of individual people or even recognizing the personal identity of every person subsumed under one of those categories.

To see how that follows let's apply my process analysis. First, let's discuss the relationship, because Honneth is explicit about the kinds of relationships he has in mind. Then, we'll go through the process from an agent's perspective using 'respect' as the example mode.

Honneth is clear that he is concerned with reciprocal recognition, meaning instances in which each member of the relationship recognizes the others. Although the people involved may have some role differences, they must have a fundamental commonality in terms of warm regard, so the relationship is supposed to be equal and reciprocal. In other words, both people in a loving relationship recognize one another in the same way, *i.e.* by expressing love for one another, and the same goes for respect and esteem. Reciprocity is key for Honneth, because of its mutually obligating character: Whatever I recognize in you considered as a person reflects back on me considered as a person.

That simplifies description, because whatever the agent expresses to the subject will be expressed back by the subject to the agent. In fact, Honneth's entire thesis about relation-to-self can be rolled into this analysis as well. The subject supposedly takes an outside perspective on herself and thus recognizes (attends to) herself the way the other person does, then categorizes herself, appreciates herself, and even engages with herself as the other person is doing. By going through the agent's perspective then we get the subject's response and the subject's self-recognition for free.

What process does the agent go through when she recognizes someone in the form of respect for their rights? In the context of modern theories of right, every person is endowed with rights just as a rational being. That means that the agent is supposedly obligated to attend to any person who initiates a rights-based claim. Every person's attention is thus open to any

other person's claims so far as that claim will engage with fundamental rights.¹¹ When the agent recognizes the subject, she categorizes the subject as "morally autonomous" or "a person" or some similar formulation intended to capture the whole of humanity considered as morally competent reasoners. That means that the agent should focus only on personhood, the mere status of being a morally competent reasoner, and set aside other possible categories like "political rival" or "personal friend." According to Honneth, the agent should respect another person's autonomy in a rich way: it should have cognitive, passionate, and active components. This is the moral motivation component of his theory. It is not enough to *label* them as a moral being, the agent must also be *struck* by the import of that label and be respectful. In other words, the agent should show the other person that her rights are being respected, encourage her to act as morally competent, expect and give reasons to her, and so forth. At this moment, the subject would then recognize herself through the eyes of the other person and, hopefully, reciprocate.

Let's return to the question of 'identity' that I mentioned above. What has the agent identified? She has identified the patient as a person and we glossed that to mean "morally competent reasoner." If we were talking about love, the agent would have identified her as a finite, dependent being. If we were talking about esteem, the agent would have identified her as a productive, valuable being. What has the agent appreciated? She appreciates the subject's capacity for self-direction and potential for giving and expecting reasons. In the case of love, she might appreciate the specifics of this person's bodily needs (a bad back, strong thighs, etc.).

¹¹ The scope of attention is much smaller in love and somewhat in esteem. One only attends to one's intimate associates in terms of love and one only esteems those whose work one understands.

In the case of esteem, she would appreciate the subject's talents, style, work, or whatever else makes that person valuable as opposed to universal sources of value like rationality.

Now, how does that relate to social struggles and 'identity' considered in that light?

Well, in one respect this treatment would be quite good for a formerly marginalized person.

Let's imagine one is a member of a persecuted minority like the now-dissolved Cagot of the French/Spanish border region.¹² A Cagot would very much like other people to appreciate their finitude, their rationality, and their merits. In that respect then, being recognized would address the needs of the Cagot individually and, by induction, the Cagot-community collectively. Rather than being despised, they would be able to participate in public life just like anyone else and, indeed, the dissolution of the Cagot as a social category affected just that integration.

However, notice that 'Cagot' is never the target for recognition. The agent does not attend to the person as a Cagot, she does not categorize them as a Cagot, she does not appreciate the supposed import of Cagot-ness, and she does address the subject as a Cagot. On the contrary, the agent's attention is focused on the person as a finite being, as a rational being, or as a meritorious being. Neither Cagot-ness nor the Cagot, taken as a collective body, are ever recognized by the agent. You can see the point clearly by contrast with Taylor. In Taylor's work the French Canadians collectively were recognized as was the supposed value of their distinct society. No equivalent comes into play here and it is not clear how it could. A person and a collection cannot have a mutual, equal relationship. A person and an essence cannot have a

¹² The Cagot are a fascinating case of persecution because no one, including the people once bearing the label, know where the social category came from or why. They looked like their neighbors, practiced the same religion, and spoke the same language. The only distinguishing feature was the mere fact of some families being labeled "Cagot."

mutual, equal relationship. A person cannot feel the import of a collection's finitude, its rationality, or its personal merits, because a collection does not have physical form, a mind, or personal works. Perhaps one could appreciate a community's merits if one has in mind certain practices peculiar to that group, but that greatly stretches the terms Honneth has offered.

Honneth's theory has many moving parts but breaking it into the fundamental actions that compose recognizing makes it easier to grasp. What he calls "patterns of recognition" or "modes of recognition" are three distinct ways of running through the process. To distinguish those, one simply asks how attention is directed, how is the person categorized, how are they appreciated, and how are they addressed. His theory also addresses different functions: moral motivation, self-recognition, and social stabilization. Moral motivation is really a matter of appreciation, or how an agent is moved by the significance of the other person. Self-recognition is an interesting application of the process where one person acts as both the agent and the subject. The person does that by taking another person's acknowledgment as a cue for self-attention, -identification, -appreciation, and -address. Social stabilization is presented as a natural byproduct of moral motivation and reciprocal relationships: If recognizing you as a person moves me to treat you well and whatever I do to you reflects back on me, then my act of recognizing your personhood should nudge you towards treating me well as a person too.

Working through the process of recognizing also highlights some strange features of Honneth's theory. Despite his own talk of social groups and social struggle, there's no obvious bridge between his "patterns of recognition" and identity-based political movements. At least, identity groups are never the objects of recognition when you apply his theory carefully. Instead, individuals are always the subject and their particular traits are always the specific

object of attention. It may happen that being recognized will greatly improve the life of a marginalized group. That improvement occurs iteratively: Member A does better, Member B does better, and so on until the set is exhausted. The group itself is never the object of attention, improvement, or empowerment.

2.3 Judith Butler: The Part You're Given

Judith Butler interprets recognition in terms of 'interpellation'. 'Interpellation' is a word taken from an essay by Louis Althusser¹³ and I take it to mean 1) the act of addressing someone as though they bear a social role, and 2) a person's self-understanding in response to being so addressed. "Friends, countrymen, Romans" interpellates the audience as the bearer of three roles and thus (hopefully) induces the audience to think of themselves as friends to the speaker, fellow citizens, and members of a shared tradition.

I take samples from two of Butler's comments on interpellation: "'Conscience Doth Make Subjects of Us All'"¹⁴ from *The Psychic Life of Power* and "Performance, Precarity, and Sexual Politics." In *The Psychic Life of Power*, Butler argues that if an agent recognizes a subject as bearing a social role, then the agent imputes a performance to the subject. The subject can make herself recognizable by training herself to perform the role well, but at the cost of confining herself. In "Performance," Butler considers the pitfalls of both being recognized and of not being recognized. Being recognized, she says, can be constricting because one is acknowledged and appreciated only so far as one conforms to expectations. Not being

¹³ The essay in question is "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses."

¹⁴ The chapter title is itself wrapped in quotation marks, hence the unusual formatting.

recognized is positively dangerous, because authorities do not feel obligated to pay attention to the unrecognized and may even be at a loss as to how to treat those who are excluded.

Recognition, as Butler describes it, is thus perilous, perhaps even ominous. Recognition is perilous, because it seems to involve an intrusive force that one nonetheless desires and, in any case, cannot do without. It is ominous, because it seems as though anonymous social forces compel people to limit themselves in order to make those people intelligible. Even if one is intelligible to one's society, that alone does not ensure that one will be respected in the way Taylor or Honneth hoped. Someone might be intelligible to a social order and thus capable of raising some concerns or pursuing some goals, but still find themselves denigrated, oppressed, or stereotyped. Indeed, some degree of control and subordination seems intrinsic to Butler's conception of recognition. After all, whoever shapes the order of recognition influences who will count, in what way, and to what end.

2.3.1 Butler's Argument

Butler argues that societies employ an order of recognition in which types of people are allocated specific roles and privileges. A person would thus be recognizable to the extent that they can be sorted into a socially significant type. Once they have been sorted, their peers will expect them to play their part, so to speak. There is an advantage to this, however, in that recognizable people can make claims on their peers. If one is recognized as an X and X's deserve Y treatment, then one can always demand that others live up to their obligation to supply Y. The core of her thesis then is that people are assigned a role, that role is bundled with normative expectations, as a person masters their role they gain in the social status proper to that role, and that status can be used to make normative claims on other members of the

society. In Butler's telling recognition comes from above: Powerful agents determine who is recognized and in what way. Because it is always somewhat imposed, recognition could be confining just as much as it could be liberatory. Finally, every order leaves some people unaccounted for and thus open to mistreatment or willful disregard.

Butler draws on Louis Althusser's notion of "interpellation," or the idea that a powerful authority can saddle you with an identity by addressing you in a certain way. Restating Althusser, Butler asks us to consider an "exemplary and allegorical" event: a policeman calls out to a person, the person turns around, and the person "accepts the terms by which he or she is hailed" (*Psychic Life of Power* 106). Butler suggests that the allegory should be taken as a literal manifestation of a general social process (*Psychic Life of Power* 106). In other words, one is not literally told "Hey, you, think of yourself as a man" or "Hey, you, think of yourself as a citizen," but a variety of events metaphorically address one as a man or as a citizen and the impact of those events is essentially the same as a literal address. But what is the impact of being addressed?

Butler notes two obvious moments of significance, but also draws out a strong claim from the mere act of turning. First, when the policeman calls out to someone this serves as a "demand to align oneself with the law" (*Psychic Life of Power* 107). I take this to mean that the call is an expression of authority. Anyone who hears the call will interpret the speaker as one who believes themselves to have the right to make demands on others. Second, the person's response to the call marks her "entrance into the language of self-ascription — 'Here I am' — through the appropriation of guilt" (*Psychic Life of Power* 107). In other words, the person being addressed accepts that she is the one being addressed and acknowledges the manner in which

she is being addressed. Think of the pragmatic force of yelling “Waiter!” at someone: You expect them to think of themselves as a waiter and respond appropriately. Those are the obvious parts, but Butler insists the act of turning is itself of allegorical significance. She points out that yelling at someone is not itself a demand to turn around, yet the person addressed responded as though such a demand were made and as though they were obligated to indulge such a demand (*Psychic Life of Power* 107). According to Butler, the person addressed must have “some readiness to turn” that symbolizes a person’s “movement of conscience” (*Psychic Life of Power* 107). I take this to mean that an appeal to another person would only be effective if they were already primed to respond to appeals in general, although Butler goes beyond that mundane point to stress that one’s inclination to respond lies in a primordial sense of guilt.

One’s conscience compels one “to turn toward the law prior to any possibility of asking a set of critical questions: Who is speaking?” Why should I turn around? Why should I accept the terms by which I am hailed?” (*Psychic Life of Power* 108). I take this to mean that people feel moved by their own sense of responsibility to respond and this self-ascribed responsibility proceeds any consideration of the speaker’s actual authority. Said plainly, by default people feel like they have to respond to a claim on them and that default response allows the speaker to ‘frame’ the upcoming interaction.

Simply by speaking first, the speaker imputes something to the subject and the subject will have to respond from that starting position. If someone yells “Waiter!” at you and you turn to respond, then you momentarily behave as though you were a waiter just because you did respond to the call. That’s true even if you only turn to say “I am not a waiter.” It’s true,

because you nonetheless felt addressed by the call and felt the need to shake off the position you've been put in. In other words, even freeing yourself from improper address means acknowledging that you feel the force of the claim made against you.

I'll set aside the bulk of Butler's exploration on the theme of 'conscience' to focus on her remarks about skill and identity. She claims that to be a "subject," *i.e.* a recognizable person in good standing, "is to be continuously in the process of acquitting oneself of the accusation of guilt" (*Psychic Life of Power* 118). To be someone recognizable you have to make yourself fit for a certain sort of work by mastering a skill and "the more a practice is mastered, the more fully subjection is achieved" (*Psychic Life of Power* 116). What does it mean for "subjection" to be achieved?

On one hand, "performing skills laboriously works the subject into its status as a social being" because you limit yourself in a narrowly graspable social role with definite expectations and patterns of behavior (*Psychic Life of Power* 119). In that aspect, "subjection" means subjugating yourself to the expectations of your society so that you can be recognized by the others as a person in good standing.

On the other hand, "subjection" means internalizing the rules of a skill such that one begins to embody them (*Psychic Life of Power* 119). In that sense, "subjection" means reshaping your own desires, practices, and expectations so that you can play your part well. Recall, though, that Butler argues one responds to a call even before one is prepared to assess the authority of the speaker. I take it we are not discussing a free and informed choice, but rather a formative experience. People call on you to respond in certain ways, you learn to respond by practicing the skills that they expect of you, and that practice then shapes your self-

understanding and your sense of responsibility. After the process is well advanced, then you have a set of conceptual tools for thinking through choices, but those tools are preloaded with the normative assumptions others put on you.

Given the somewhat ominous explanation that she gives for recognizing-as-interpellating you might think Butler rejects the value of recognition. Not so. She explains:

The desire for recognition can never be fulfilled – yes, that is true. But to be a subject at all requires first complying with certain norms that govern recognition – that make a person recognizable. And so, non-compliance calls into question the viability of one’s life, the ontological conditions of one’s persistence. We think of subjects as the kind of beings who ask for recognition in the law or in political life; but perhaps the more important issue is how the terms of recognition – and here we can include a number of gender and sexual norms – condition in advance who will count as a subject, and who will not.

(“Performance, Precarity, and Sexual Politics” iv)

Butler’s point is that people desire recognition, yet both being recognized and being unrecognized are painful. If you are recognized as this-or-that, then you could face expectations that stifle or limit you, which I discussed above. The far worse fate is to be unrecognizable.

An unrecognizable person faces a psychic crisis alongside a political quandary. Psychologically, you have to ask what it means to be someone who doesn’t belong or even worse someone who society says should not exist. Politically, you have to wonder what will come of you if you don’t count. If you are treated as a non-person, then your future does not seem safe.

In reference to the latter, Butler asks us to consider so-called “stateless persons” who do not have recognized citizenship in any polity (“Performance” vi). Stateless people then fall into a decidedly unpleasant situation in which they have no formal body obligated to protect their rights and well-being. Whoever they appeal to is, by the nature of their situation, not the proper authority to recognize their call. At least statelessness is usually an accidental exclusion.

In some cases, legal systems were designed to exclude “subaltern” groups, *i.e.* to make the subordinated people unrecognizable as proper citizens. In cases like that “the only way to lay claim to rights is through assimilating to those juridical structures which were not only built upon the effacement and exploitation of indigenous cultures but continue to require that same effacement and exploitation” (“Performance” x). Because these people are excluded, they do not have the social cachet or the legal power that they need to protect themselves. Perversely, they are told that they can gain social and legal recognition, but only so far as they abandon whatever distinguishes them from the dominant party. In some cases, they are not even offered that much, but instead are offered some degree of recognition if they submit to second-class citizenship. In other words, they are offered partial recognition if they are willing to play along with their own subordination.

There is a long juridical history of recognizing some people specifically as those who are not recognized by the political order.¹⁵ When a political authority designates a person as one outside the social order that person loses their ability to raise political claims or even the right to expect minimal decency. In Germanic societies, outlaws were literally outside the law in that any person could kill the outlaw without thereby being guilty of murder (Agamben 104).

¹⁵ See *Homo Sacer* by Giorgio Agamben especially section 6 “The Ban and the Wolf” for an extended discussion.

Obviously, that's an extreme case in which a person is acknowledged only so that they may be denied any recognition as a properly human person. Still, this extreme case exemplifies the force of non-recognition: To be denied recognition is to be denied the hope of rational relations. In the case of stateless persons this means that the person is not allowed to enter into a relationship with the governing bodies that straddle the earth. Everywhere they turn they are someone else's problem.

Butler stresses that "the terms of recognition – and here we can include a number of gender and sexual norms – condition in advance who will count as a subject, and who will not" ("Precarity" iv). How do stateless persons or medieval outlaws help us make sense of this? I take it the claim works something like this. A culture is composed of social roles by which people are recognized. In other words, someone is recognized when they can be sorted into a meaningful social category. Once someone is sorted, the rest of society knows what to expect of them and how to treat them. But those who are not sortable are much like refugees or outlaws in that they have a special category "unsorted." Someone who is categorized as "unsorted" does not get a social role: People do not know what to do with them or what to expect of them. It's not that they are simply ignored rather they are acknowledged but only in a highly restricted way. Society at large identifies these people as a sort of glitch. They are an input that the system cannot process.

Butler paints a picture of people trapped between a somewhat exploitative system of recognition and the terrifying prospect of non-recognition. To be recognized is to be addressed on someone else's terms. The more one conforms to those expectations, the more clear and accountable one becomes, but at the cost of remodeling oneself to suit the authorities that

address you. To be unrecognized is to be left in doubt about one's own standing and perhaps in serious physical vulnerability. The more one stands outside the order of recognition the more one stands exposed to abuse simply because one has fewer strong ties to the rest of society.

2.3.2 Applying the Analysis

What does Butler's theory of recognition look like in terms of actions and relationships? I'll present a simplified analysis of who recognize whom as what and to what end. Then I'll turn to my process view of recognizing with a special focus on categorizing and appreciation.

Butler's account of recognition seems to have two layers: an action theory and a sociological theory. At the level of action theory, Butler's recognition has the following structure: Authority A recognizes Subject B as Category C and expects Performance D. She further argues that B internalizes D so that she may be easily recognized by others and even comes to understand herself through her performance of D. At the sociological level, Butler claims that powerful social actors determine the patterns of recognition in a society, *i.e.* who gets recognized as what and to what end. Ordinary people will act by applying the patterns that were established at the sociological level. For instance, if political leaders decide that some group of people will be excluded from legal protection, then that sets a pattern. Anyone recognized as a member of the excluded group is not able to gain legal standing and so cannot call on the state for protection. Ordinary people will then make use of that category when they recognize the members of that group. I'll start with action theory and then come back to the sociological point.

Who plays the part of Authority A? In her example Butler offers a policeman, but she also asks us to read her example as an allegory. She also applies interpellation in non-judicial

contexts like race, gender, and sexuality, where there are no formal authorities like police or judges. I take it that anyone can act as an authority, in this special sense, so long as they impute a social role to others with the expectations that the others will respond as one who performs that role. In other words, everyone acts as an authority sometime or another because all of us call on others to respond to us using the terms we have offered to them.

I see an anodyne meaning in this and a somewhat more troubling one. In the anodyne sense, Butler is describing what happens when you try to get someone's attention in a particular manner. If you call out "Hey, Professor!" then you expect the subject to behave as a professor when they respond and the same would go for any other social role. In the more troubling sense, Butler is describing how agents can constrain people by dictating social roles to them. If a bigot yelled a racial slur at you, then the bigot is trying to get your attention as the member of a maligned group and to respond as one who is socially ostracized. To take a more subtle example, imagine that a society expects men to be aggressive and expects women to be demure. If Butler is correct, then the members of that society would subtly train men and women to live out those roles and to think of themselves in terms of those roles.

Where do these social roles and expectations come from? I take it ordinary people treat recognizing as purely receptive. In other words, it feels like you see the category when you encounter someone and it feels like your expectations come along as part of that experience.¹⁶She argues that recognizing is at least partially active, because the agent is taking a social category and projecting it onto the subject. Your seemingly passive experience of a

¹⁶ For what it's worth, Honneth and Taylor also act this way. They discuss recognizing the value that people actually have. In other words, their theories are response theories too, because they expect us to see and respond to something that is really there.

person is really an act of apperception in which you combine raw sensations with social categories to create the experience of a person as a C.

But that just brings us back to the question: Where do the roles and expectations that will be projected come from? This is where Butler's sociological argument comes to play. Ordinary acts of recognizing require a social pattern of recognition that can be put to work. That social pattern is produced and sustained by powerful actors. Those powerful actors demand that people respond in a particular manner and those demands become templates for further, ordinary interactions. For these agents, recognizing is almost entirely active, because their acts of recognizing constitute the patterns that other people take for granted.¹⁷

At the sociological and action theory levels, recognizing has the same purpose for Butler. For the agent, recognizing someone as a C allows the agent to get the other person to respond in a particular manner. The agent is thus able to set the initial parameters of the encounter by addressing the subject. Over the long run, subjects gain the benefits of recognition by playing well the part that was assigned to them. If subjects live up to the expectations of others, then the subjects make themselves more recognizable and thus prove they are members in good standing with the community. Butler's work implies that control over a society's patterns of recognition would grant one far reaching power over social life and, perhaps, even over individual's sense of themselves.

¹⁷ As an aside, I think this is the point where one often falls into a muddled debate between 'constructivism' and 'naturalism' in which one party contends social roles are largely generated by social practice and another party argues that social categories are grounded in natural types. Phrased that way, I don't think these are exclusive choices. It may be that some category has a natural foundation, which may even improve fitness for a set of social roles, and yet the expectations put on the members of that category could still be largely derived from social practices. For instance, "left handed people" is a naturally derived category: There are people who by facts of their biological makeup write better with their left hand. Left handed people are naturally less fit to be copyists in languages written left to right and naturally more fit in languages written right to left. Draughtsman then would be a social role with natural foundations in handedness. However, there is also a long running, minor prejudice against left handed people. That seems to be a social status that is derived entirely from social practices.

What sort of relationship does Butler imagine between the subject and the agent? The agent acts as an authority figure and the subject feels compelled to respond. As one-sided as this may sound, Butler does remark that the relationship only works because of the subject's readiness to respond to the agent's call. In the most general sense then, this is a relationship between someone who holds another to account and someone who feels the need to answer the call of the first. To get more specific one would have to know how the agent calls on the subject. In general, though, the agent will address the subject as one expected perform a social role. Their relationship will be centered on the roles that the two are supposed to play.

What does Butler's version of recognizing look like when broken down into activities?

First, social patterns will shape the way that ordinary agents attend to one another. In Butler's language, only some social groups are recognizable and only some social performances are sufficient to prove one is in good standing. I take that to mean that ordinary people will tend to pay attention to others so far as a socially significant category can apply to those people. Butler seems to be saying that we keep watch on one another so far as we expect certain important performances. If it looks like someone ought to be playing a part, then we watch to see if they do it well. That means that our attention will generally fall on them only so far as we are able to assess them in relation to the part they are supposed to play.

If that's so, then categorizing is of great importance for two reasons. First, the social categories at hand have a prejudicial effect on attention, but also a prejudicial effect on categorizing. When an agent categorizes someone, she will reach for those social categories with which she is already familiar. To say that someone is recognizable, would thus mean that the person calls to mind a category that applies to them. As mentioned above, the process of

categorizing is so seamless in ordinary cases that we easily confuse reception and application. It feels like the category is being read off of the person, but in fact our attention was already priming us to apply the category to the subject.

As you can see, there's something circular at work here. Social categories shape the way an agent attends to others. Because the agent's attention is focused that way, the agent rapidly applies her social categories to the subject. Once the category is applied, the agent will watch the subject to see if the subject conforms to the category.

According to Butler, appreciating someone's social category means expecting a performance from them. As I understand it, Butler's argument about interpellation does not necessarily imply anything about the agent's volition toward the subject. If I recognize you as one who ought to perform D, then I will judge you based on how well you do. I appreciate your import only in the sense that I've formed expectations that I will use to hold you accountable. This strikes me as a very different mode of appreciation than that described by either Honneth or Taylor. Those two expected the agent to be moved by the presence of value in the subject. Butler only expects the agent to adopt a standard for judging the subject.

Butler's version of recognition can thus be done cynically. It doesn't actually matter if the agent *believes* in the validity of the category she uses nor does it matter if the agent *feels* that the performance at hand is important. What matters is that the agent demands the subject perform the part well. Imagine a cult leader, who knows that their work is hokum. When the cult leader addresses her followers, she calls on them to perform social roles in the cult. The leader herself knows that the categories are groundless and that the attendant norms are pointless. Nonetheless, she wants people to perform their parts for unrelated reasons such as

monetary benefit or the feeling of power. The cult leader acts as though the roles are valid and important and that's all that matters. Just by addressing others that way, she is trying to persuade them to identify with the roles that are assigned to them.

Because Butler's version can be cynical, we cannot conflate 'acknowledgment' and 'support.' In Honneth or Taylor to be acknowledged was akin to being validated. But in Butler's telling being acknowledged just means being called upon to act a certain way. Butler points out that recognizing is not always as explicit as it appears in her allegory. Subtle social pressures can, metaphorically, call on subjects to play their part. In other words, we nudge one another toward "staying in our station" and the cumulative effect is to hold one another to the standards of our social role. Imagine a community that discriminates against women's participation in public affairs. Someone might explicitly call on women to think of themselves as purely domestic - and historical examples abound - but the expectation may also be expressed in many indirect ways. For instance, if women are consistently praised for domestic activities but ignored when they try to venture into public affairs, then the effect is to acknowledge them only when they "do as they ought." From the side of sanctions, if women are chided for being demanding but rewarded for being agreeable, then one is indirectly calling on them to avoid contention and be pliant. All of those little pokes and prods amount to calling on someone as a domestic, pleasing person and not as a public, contentious one. According to Butler that still counts as recognition because the subject is being trained in the performance of their part even if it is never stated forthrightly.

2.4 Conclusion

In the comments above I took three arguments from the literature on recognition and interpreted them using my analysis. Applying the analysis helps us see the internal complexity of these arguments. Even though I took small samples, each theorist turned out to be addressing more than one instance of recognition. In other words, the flexibility of the word 'recognition' allows one accidentally to shift between slightly different topics. Focusing on the process of recognizing forces you to untangle the different layers. That's because any shift in agent, attention, category, appreciation, or acknowledgment becomes readily apparent when you try to move through the process. Working through the process also brings out which actions loom large in a theorist's remarks and which ones fall to the wayside. Making each step explicit also helps the reader see what an author attributes to each step. For instance, Honneth and Taylor have similar views on appreciation, whereas Butler clearly means something different. The Honneth/Taylor version cannot be done cynically, but the Butler version obviously could. Noting differences like that makes comparative study easier.

Part 2: Transition to Historical Figures

If my analysis is sound, then it should help us with more than just the contemporary literature. After all, interpersonal recognition is presumably primeval — people have always made sense of one another and addressed one another — so the phenomenon should turn up in one guise or another in many political or ethical discussions. If I've correctly determined the components of recognizing, then we should find analogues in those earlier discussions. We can then apply my analysis to historical sources and clarify them in just the same way that we clarified contemporary discussions.

I've chosen two test cases to demonstrate my analysis' utility: a passage from Hegel and a passage from Aristotle. Both of those figures are clearly used by the contemporary literature, but neither one are participants in it and they have concerns that are markedly different from those *ala mode*. In other words, they don't talk the way contemporary theorists talk and they aren't trying to fight the same battles that contemporary theorists are fighting. Being relative outsiders, they are especially useful as test subjects. If my analysis works on them, then one has some reason to think the analysis is not just fit to the concerns of the moment, but may be tracking something of enduring interest to the study of recognition.

3. Recognizing Property in Hegel's Abstract Right

In the *Philosophy of Right*¹⁸ Hegel describes contracts as a “relationship of will to will” and insists such relationships are “the true distinctive ground in which freedom has its existence” (PR 102).¹⁹ He sees contracts as a matter of mutual recognition and believes that such recognition is important for one's freedom, but what sort of recognition is at stake and how does it impact one's freedom?²⁰

We can improve our understanding of Hegel's claim about contracts using the method demonstrated in the last chapter. First, we need to summarize the relevant passages from Hegel. Then, we'll need to distinguish parallel instances of recognizing by determining who is recognizing whom and to what end. Finally, we can analyze each instance as a process by stating what the agent attends to, what categories she employs and how she employs them,

¹⁸ Henceforth abbreviated as PR.

¹⁹ Hegel speaks of the will to mean one's faculty of self-direction. He also uses the term to stress the distinction between a person as a natural object (i.e. a physical body) and a free being (i.e. an autonomous agent). My physical body relates to the chair as one object to another and so their relationship is purely a matter of physics. My will relates to the chair as a free being to a piece of property and so my will freely disposes of the property. The causal relations between physical objects are described in terms of necessity, whereas any relationship involving a will must be described in terms of freedom and choice.

²⁰ The literature is already quite robust. Much like the discussion of 'recognition' in general, the discussion of Hegel's theory of contract has multiple, incompatible schools. For instance, Renato Cristi argues in “Hegel on Property and Recognition” that Hegel intends to defend absolute, natural property rights against redistribution and documents a number of theorists claiming precisely the opposite. In “Recognition and Property in Hegel and the Early Marx” Andrew Chitty explains Hegel is concerned with the social relations through which people objectify their freedom and acknowledge one another as equal. Chitty then argues that Marx was inspired to use Hegel's ideas as the foundation for Marx's own rejection of private property. Alan Patten, in Hegel's Idea of Freedom, notes that many people see Hegel as defending freedom from interference and then tells us Hegel regards property and property relations as social structures that support the development of moral capacities and self-awareness in individuals. In summary, Hegel might be talking about natural property rights or the social construction of property rights; he might be talking about the objectification of freedom and expressions of respect or, accidentally, explaining why private property undermines equality; he might be talking about providing the open space to freely use arbitrary freedom or he may be talking about the social practices that teach us to be free.

what strikes her as salient about the object of her attention, and how she engages other people in light of what she has seen and appreciated.

I identify three instances of recognizing in Hegel's theory of contract. One recognizes another as an owner of property, which entails appreciation of their freedom. One recognizes oneself by attending to the other person who is recognizing one as free. Finally, one recognizes the authority of the "common will" that comes into being through agreement.

According to Hegel, contracts necessarily develop out of the concept of property because one wishes for one's will to become "objective" to oneself (PR 104). For Hegel, one's will could become objective in two senses. First, Hegel means that we need property so that we have a space in which our will can be freely active. Second, he means that property serves as an occasion for other people to respect our will thereby proving that our freedom matters. The two senses of "objective" are connected by Hegel's idea of property, which he describes as a matter of investing one's will into an object. With his idea of property in hand, we can discuss why contracts might be so important. Then we can discuss what Hegel takes a contract to be and how one is formed.

3.1 Property

In the section titled "Abstract Right" from the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel makes use of a metaphysical distinction between "will," on one hand, and "thing" on the other (PR 73). In his usage, things are physical objects related by natural necessity. A will, as a free being, is capable of free relations with other wills or with things. I take it Hegel's discussion of property and contract is meant to explain how merely natural relations can be superseded by free relations

between wills. Each stage of the discussion is supposed to show us how freedom can get a foothold in the world of things beginning with a person seizing an object and ending with two wills relating to one another as free beings.

For Hegel, taking possession of property is the first step in the realization of one's freedom:

The circumstance that I, as free will, am an object to myself in what I possess and only become an actual will by this means constitutes the genuine and rightful element in possession, the determination of *property*. (PR 77, emphasis in original²¹)

I see three claims of note here. First, the freedom of one's own will becomes an object to oneself when one possesses something. Second, possessing an object makes one's will into an "actual will," which it was not before. Third, the import of making a will actual is what justifies property as opposed to the mere physical act of possession.

3.1.1 Freedom Becomes an Object

We should take Hegel literally when he says that possession makes one's freedom an object. His discussion indicates that a thing becomes a piece of property when someone "should place his will" in it (PR 81). By "place his will" and similar formulations, I believe Hegel is stressing the volitional character of property. To own something is not just having it, but also intending to make use of it and seeing it as an extension of yourself. One's will is "in" the object in that one has intentions for the use of the object and one takes the object to be an extension

²¹ Because Hegel makes frequent use of italics for emphasis and because the translator preserved those italics, I have not added any emphasis of my own (PR xxxvii). It should be assumed that all emphasis is original in subsequent quotations.

of your personal sphere. Such an investment changes the mere thing into an extension of our freedom. At the same time, it also changes our freedom from something private to something public. When we take possession of something, “the existence which my willing thereby attains includes its ability to be recognized by others” (PR 81). In other words, my will is initially something that only I experience, but once I expand the scope of my will into property, my will becomes a feature of the world and is thus recognizable to others. Hegel’s description of the will and the body are helpful here. He argues that for one’s will your body becomes yours only once it is “taken possession of by the spirit” (PR 79). I take it we are to imagine the will’s scope of action gradually expanding. The will is originally just capable of thought and abstraction. Then the will seizes on the body as a mechanism through which the will can be active. Next the will “invests itself” in external objects. Finally, the will strikes up relations with other wills.

3.1.2 Will Becomes Actual

Hegel clearly believes the will’s investment into an object and the will’s recognizability make it actual. The will is actual in one sense, because it is actually directing the course of events. It becomes actual in another sense, because it now exists for other people who ought to take stock of it before acting. Compare those two modes of actuality with Hegel’s explanation of freedom:

The absolute determination or, if one prefers, the absolute drive, of the free spirit...is to make freedom into its object — to make it objective both in the sense that it becomes the rational system of the spirit itself and in the sense that this system becomes its immediate actuality. (PR 57)

I gloss “the rational system of the spirit itself” to mean the set of normative principles that a rational agent uses to determine the appropriate course of action. I take “immediate actuality” to mean the state of affairs in which one finds oneself. In other words, the “absolute drive” of a free person is to have one’s freedom be acknowledged as normatively important to other people and to have one’s freedom expressed in the state of affairs one inhabits. Even more simply, one hopes that others will take your freedom seriously and you hope to be in control of your life. Both of those happen when you have property. By respecting your property other people recognize your freedom and by having property you are able to express your will in the world around you.

3.1.3 The Right to Property Depends on Personality

Hegel argues the right to property exists, because property is so important for the development of freedom (PR 93). When you take possession of a thing, you and the object are physically relating to one another: The thing called ‘a human body’ moved another thing. That one thing moves another doesn’t mean anything at all so far as we are concerned with freedom. Indeed, Hegel is trying to explain how the world of freedom is quite distinct from the world of things and their physical relations. The act of possessing a thing can only become important to freedom once the activity of the will is involved. As we’ve already seen, Hegel thinks the will requires an object and thus invests itself into things. So, for Hegel, when we talk about property as something to be respected, we are really talking about a person’s will entering the world and the relations between wills implied by the presence of a will in the world (PR 102).

3.1.4 A Relationship Between Wills

He informs us a relationship between wills is implied by the spiritual aspect of property, because “as the existence of a *will*, its existence for another can only be *for the will* of another person. This relation of will to will is the true distinctive ground in which freedom has its *existence*” (PR 102). He began this section with a metaphysical distinction between things and wills in which things had causal relationships described by physics and wills had causal relationships involving freedom and choice. I take it that Hegel, in discussing property, is trying to describe how a person’s will can exist as part of a causal web. As strange as his language may be, he’s making a straightforward point: Our reasons and choices only matter to other people who are capable of reasoning and making choices.

A person is both a thing in the form of a body and a will capable of reasoning. If we focus on the body, then it is easy to see how we can affect other things. If I have things in my possession, then my body can move them about. In that sense, my will exists in the world, but it only exists as a thing. My will is using my body to move objects and those objects are affected only by physics. How could my will be present in the world as a will? An object won’t help here, because objects don’t respond to anything but physics. Another will, however, is capable of mental representations and choice, thus it is not just limited to physics. Another will could see my body move a thing and conclude, “Ahh, here is another free being choosing to act that way.” The other will has concluded that my body is evidence of the activity of a will. If the other person gets my attention, then I too can think, “Ohh, this is not just an object in front of me, but a person who can think and make choices.”

Once the two of us are aware that we're in the presence of another will, Hegel thinks freedom has existence, but what in the world could this mean (PR 104)? Some sort of freedom already existed since each of us was privately directing ourselves and our possessions. What then changes when two people relate to one another as wills? I think Hegel is still making a literal-minded comment on metaphysics. The physical order of causes exists just whenever there are two objects to bump into one another, but an order of causes derived from freedom requires two conscious agents. In other words, when people relate to one another as people they formulate reasons for acting and share those reasons with one another. Each party considers the reasons and considers the other person's will, makes up their mind, and acts in response to the situation. Freedom thus exists in that the agents have to take stock of the other person's freedom and exercise their own freedom.

3.2 Contracts

In section 73, Hegel lays out a summary of why he thinks contract matters, how he thinks it functions, and what remains puzzling about it:

It is not only *possible* for me to dispose of an item of property as an external thing — I am also *compelled* by the concept to dispose of it as property in order that *my will*, as *existent*, may become objective to me. But according to this moment, my will, as externalized, is at the same time *another* will. Hence this moment, in which this necessity of the concept is real, is *the unity* of different wills, which therefore relinquish their difference and distinctiveness. Yet it is also

implicit (at this stage) in this identity of different wills that each of them is and remains a will distinctive for itself and *not identical* with the other. (PR 104)

His first sentence restates his understanding of property I see two mysterious claims in this passage: one regarding the unity of wills and one regarding the reality of the concept of property. Hegel seems to think that contract hinges on two wills merging in a common will while remaining distinct and this partial union somehow ensures the “concept [of property] is real.” We need to see what he makes of the partial union of wills, what he thinks a contract consists in, and to what extent he sees contract as a matter of will and freedom.

3.2.1 The “Contradiction” of Contract

Property, as distinct from mere possession, hinges on the presence of a person’s will. But, since wills can only be considered and addressed by other wills, the presence of my will in an object can only be recognized by another will. There are three elements in play here. First, as a precondition, I must be able to take possession of an object. Second, I could have a valid claim to the object for one reason or another. Third, I can have property in that other people acknowledge the significance of my claim to an object. When I contract with another person, they recognize that the object is directed by my will and hence that my will is decisive for the fate of this thing, but at the same time I hand my property over to them just as they hand something over to me. For Hegel, in the act of exchange “the following contradiction is represented and mediated: I *am* and *remain* an owner of property, having being for myself and excluding the will of another, only in so far as, in identifying my will with that of another, I *cease* to be an owner of property” (PR 104). The intuitive response, I think, is to say this is terribly overblown.

I think Hegel's point is keen albeit very literal. To have a piece of property is to have exclusive rights over it: Your will and your will alone is allowed to direct this object. But the normative aspect of property requires that your will be recognized by some other will. That's because you do not merely have possession of an object, you are making a claim to the object and only another will can recognize and respond to claims. In a contract, Hegel says, two wills recognize the claims of one another and thus establish their regard for property claims in general. The contract is proof positive that the relationship between the two wills is founded on mutual respect for the freedom of each party. But making a contract involves giving away exclusive claim to an object. So, the ritual of exchanging goods proves the participants respect on another's wills as expressed in their property, but that proof takes place by means of giving up a particular piece of property. The puzzle, which Hegel calls a "contradiction," consists in this: How can I have exclusive right to my things and you exclusive right to your things, and yet we can trade our things? If I recognize your property rights by forming a contract with you, then somehow I am recognizing the freedom of your will with respect to property, but how?

3.2.2 The Elements of a Contract

Hegel asks us to think of a contract as "the mediation of an identical will within the absolute distinction between owners of property who have being for themselves" (PR 105). In the course of the transaction, "each party, in accordance with his own and the other party's will, *ceases* to be an owner of property, *remains* one, and *becomes* one" (PR 105). The exchange can only work, he says, because the two wills reach "identity, in that one volition comes to a decision only in so far as the other volition is present" (PR 105).

To clarify, Hegel divides the contract into three elements: 1) the arbitrary will of each participant, 2) the common will that “comes into existence through the contract,” and 3) the specific goods to be traded (PR 105). For our purposes the goods themselves are irrelevant — we don’t care what people are trading, we only care about what trading requires and why it is important. The key to Hegel’s concept of contract must lie in the arbitrary will and the common will.

What are we to make of the “arbitrary will?” I take this to mean each person who will participate in the contract. Their will is arbitrary in that each person is allowed to do whatever they want with their own property and they have no other aims or normative forces confining their choices. In other words, we are thinking of someone in a very narrow manner: Here is a free will that can do whatever it wants with its stuff. With such a narrow view of agency, we need to explain why and how the arbitrary will can respect other people’s things. That I have arbitrary power over an object does not imply that I would respect your claims nor does it explain how I come to relinquish an object. So, each arbitrary will is an island separated by a seemingly endless expanse. On one island I do whatever I please with my stuff for whatever reason I may have and on your island you do the same with your stuff. What could bring us together?

Hegel answers that we can form a common will, which serves as a bridge between the participants. This, I take it, is what he means by “one volition comes to a decision only in so far as the other volition is present.” To form a common will is to agree that I shall act only if you too shall act, so that my will is your reason and your will is my reason. I, considered as one self-

interested party, act however I please, but I, considered as part of the common will, act only where you and I reach agreement.

3.2.3 The Normative Payoff

If I think about myself just as a private person with arbitrary power over an object, then I cannot explain how an agreement might work nor can I explain why you, also considered as a private person, ought to recognize my will's agency. But in a common will, we both respond to the claims of the other and thereby recognize one another's will. Through "two acts of consent" you and I make a new, common will that can give reasons to each of us (PR 106). Once we are comfortable with the process of exchange, we are accustomed to acknowledging one another as property owners. We show to one another that we regard one another's will as reason giving in that each of us is considerate of the other's consent. We also show ourselves an interesting fact: We are not just islands unto ourselves, because we are capable of regulating ourselves with respect to a common will (PR 108).

Hegel has led us on a long journey starting from physical seizure of an object and ending with a system of property rights. He argues that a thing becomes property when a will claims that thing as a means for expressing its freedom in the world. But the power to move objects is not entirely what a will wants. A will wants to be acknowledged as a free will, yet only another will can offer that acknowledgment. Two wills can acknowledge one another by exchanging goods, because the exchange only works when each party takes the consent of the other party to be a decisive reason. The process of exchange is quite odd though, because it requires something above and beyond the claim over an object. So far as I claim an object, I assert that no one else may use it. However, in the exchange I renounce exclusive use, so what is

occurring? The exchange requires us to form a common will with another person and act in response to the determinations of that common will. In other words, you can respond to agreements made with other free wills. In the case of contract, you can only form an agreement if both of you acknowledge the concept of property, *i.e.* the fact that each person as a free will has a right to claim exclusive use over things. Hegel thinks the exchange has several benefits layered on top of one another. You get confirmation that someone else respects your will as does the other person, but you also get a new vantage point on your freedom. Your freedom does not just consist in exclusive use, but also includes the ability to form and respect agreements.

3.3 Three Instances of Recognizing

I see five steps in the scenario described by Hegel and three of those are instances of recognizing someone. The first step is a person laying claim to an object. Second, the person feels that mere possession of the object is insufficient, so they are supposedly compelled by the idea of property to seek out a contract. Third, two parties form an agreement whereby each person's will is recognized by the other. Fourth, each party recognizes themselves as reflected in the other party's recognition, thus fulfilling the desire from step two. Fifth, each person recognizes the authority of the common will. The fifth step also answers the desire raised in step two, because responding to the common will entails responding to another person's will. By making the agreement, each party is affected by the will of the other thus showing the will's efficacy. We have already discussed steps 1 and 2 at length, so I will focus on three, four, and five. I'll describe the step and state who recognizes whom by what means and to what end.

3.3.1 Recognizing A Property Claim

Merely trying to reach an agreement involves a straightforward kind of recognition. At a purely animal level, one's desire relates directly to an object. If one puts aside that natural inclination and instead negotiates with another person, then one ignores the physical order of causes for the sake of an exchange of reasons. By engaging the other person, one recognizes their property claims. "Recognizing their property claims" means that one feels one must persuade another person to relinquish their claim to an object. Recognizing their property means recognizing that their will has dominion over this specific thing. Recognizing their right to dispose of the object also implies that one recognizes the freedom of their will and the import of their consent.

The agent could be any person considered as a free will. The caveat is important. Animals can bluff or threaten one another in order to acquire goods, but that sort of engagement clearly doesn't do what Hegel has in mind. It isn't enough that one person tries to get something out of another person. The agent has to be acting in their capacity as a free will.

The same restriction applies for the subject of recognition. The subject is any person considered as a will invested in an object. A person as a physical being can possess an object without being afforded any spiritual or moral significance, but again that does not capture what Hegel describes. The subject has property in the sense that the subject's will is associated with an object. The subject's will is associated with the object in that the will may direct the object as the will pleases. The subject is a free will which has the right to dispose of something.

When the agent recognizes the subject, she acknowledges the subject's authority over the object and tacitly offers to respect the subject's decisions. Although related, those are

distinct. When the agent acknowledges the subject's authority over the object, the agent is noting that the subject has arrogated the object to her person. I mean that the agent sees that the object is properly associated with this person and that person's free will is expressed in this object. The agent is making the cognitive connection between the object and the subject's will as a causal power. When the agent agrees to abide by the subject's decision, the agent shows she will act on the reasons offered by the subject. If the subject says "Stay away!" then the agent takes that as a reason to stay away. If the subject says "Let's trade!" then the agent takes that as a reason to negotiate.

If one focuses on the agent's recognition of the subject's authority over the thing, then one finds the natural right element in Hegel's theory of property. Prior to the agent's arrival on the scene, the subject took possession of the object and, by expressing her will through the object, made a claim to the object as property (Cristi 338). True, the agent's will is not yet a cause for any other will and thus not existent in that sense, but the agent's will has already laid claim to the thing and made use of the thing. The claim itself is the spiritual aspect of property, which will be recognized. When the agent arrives, she recognizing the pre-existing fact. In this circumstance, recognizing is a receptive activity: The agent perceives what has already taken place.

If one focuses on the agent's recognition of the subject's decision, then one sees the social aspect of property. When the agent agrees to abide by the subject's decision regarding property, the agent is disposed to take the subject's decision as a ground for the agent's own actions (Chitty 689). The subject's claim over the object now exists on a second level. Her will is able to influence the will of another free will, so her claim to the object exists in the realm of

freedom just as her possession exists in the realm of physics. Acknowledgment from the agent thus allows the subject's freedom to exist in a new way.

3.3.2 Recognizing Your Freedom

The subject in the prior instance of recognizing becomes the agent in a second instance. When Alice recognizes Bob as a property owner, Bob recognizes his freedom as objective (Chitty 690). Bob's property externalizes his will in the sense that his intentions exert an influence on the world. Alice then recognizes Bob's will at work and tries to engage his attention as a free person (Patten 160). Bob observes himself being treated as a will and this shows Bob that his will really is respected. Being recognized also helps Bob develop the right habits and beliefs for him to exercise his freedom well (Patten 124). According to Alan Patten:

Hegel's claim, then, is that the only way in which an agent can conclusively affirm his own sense of agency and independence is as part of a community of mutually recognizing free agents. Only in such a community do agents have truly independent grounds for taking themselves to be free. (Patten 128)

Being recognized as a property owner shows the subject how he is valued and what capacities he has. The one recognized, thus adopts a view of himself and recognizes himself as one who ought to exercise his capacities and one who ought to respond to others.

Who is the subject in this instance of recognition? In one sense, the agent from the prior instance, because their behavior is the object of attention. However, I think that misses the actual significance. When Bob watches what Alice is doing, Bob is using Alice's behavior to interpret himself. Because she respects him, he respects himself. Because she expects a response, he expects himself to find an answer. The subject then is the agent himself but

considered almost as another person. Bob sees clues to his own character in the way that Alice recognizes him, and thus can recognize himself through her eyes.

3.3.3 Recognizing the Common Will

When the parties to a contract agree to trade, they each act only on condition that the other acts. Hegel personifies their agreement as the common will, which commands each party to carry out the exchange. As in the last section, we need to divide a single person into two aspects. The common will serves as a reason that gives direction to each person's freedom. In other words, each party has an obligation to choose to do something specific, so their freedom is directed. They feel this obligation because they recognize the authority of the common will. Each party recognizes the wishes of the other and recognizes their own capacity for self-regulation.

Alice and Bob agree to make an exchange, so why should they follow through? As private people, they only have interest in their own affairs and their freedom consists in the power to do whatever they want with their own things. Nothing in that gives them any clear reason to hand over something. So clearly something more than their private sort of freedom is at work. Hegel told us that the common will acts as the mediator between the two parties. The participants only enter into the agreement on the condition that the other do so as well: I will it, but only if you will it with me. The common will is thus established in something of a strange way. Each member agrees to constrain their will, but only so far as another person also constrains their will. In effect, my choice to act depends on you making a choice to act and vice versa. In that sense the source of my action lies in you just as much as it lies in me. I take it that this weird volitional knot is what gives the common will its power. On the one hand, the

common will is something I enter into freely, but at the same time depends intimately on the free will of another person, and, even though two free acts created it, the common will is able to compel or obligate both participants.

What is the cause of Alice doing X? On one hand, Bob is the cause. If Bob had not agreed, then Alice would not have acted. In that sense then Alice is recognizing Bob's will and responding to that. But if Alice hadn't agreed too, then she wouldn't have acted. In that sense, Alice is recognizing her own will. When you recognize the common will you also recognize the will of another person and you are recognizing yourself as author of an agreement. One aspect of Alice's will is acting to constrain and direct another aspect of her will.

Binding yourself by the common will matters a great deal to Hegel, because it represents "development of the free will away from pure arbitrariness" (Brooks 34). When Alice obeys the common will, she recognizes the authority of an agreement that she committed herself too. Her will, taken to be arbitrary caprice, is thus subordinated to her will, taken as a governing capacity. Alice proves to herself as much as to everyone else that she is capable of self-control and self-direction apart from the commands of natural instinct. Desire doesn't prompt her to give up her goods in exchange for someone else's — desire prompts you to take both — her reason commands it through the common will and so she wills it.

Just as in the last instance, the agent and the subject are the same person. I take it that the common will is the subject of recognition and serves as an external representation of Alice's regulatory power. The agent of recognition is Alice in her capacity as a private, deliberating person. Alice the deliberator looks out into the world and finds a moral party making a demand on her. It just so happens that this moral party is a creation of her agreement with someone

else. Because Alice is rational, Alice acknowledges the import of the agreement, silences the demands of animal desire, and acts as she ought to. The more accustomed Alice becomes to this, presumably the more skillful she becomes at self-regulation. She gets better as she gets more comfortable taking control of herself.

3.4 Analysis Into Specific Actions

We can improve our understanding by analyzing each instance of recognizing into its component actions. As I did in the last chapter, I will take each instance and clarify what the agent attends to, how she categorizes the subject, what she appreciates in the situation, and how she acknowledges the subject. I will also characterize the relationship between the agent and the subject.

3.4.1 Property Claims

When one person recognizes another as a property holder, what steps does she take? Her attention falls first on an object but is then redirected to the will of the other person. She distinguishes the person as a free will from mere things. Because she sees the other person as a free will, she refrains from taking the object and hopes to reach terms with the other person. She then engages the other person for the purposes of exchange. Her engagement is as much selfish as it is generous: By recognizing the will of the other person she is also seeking recognition for herself. The agent and subject thus have identical standing, so whatever regard one party offers to the other, that party expects in return as well.

Why might Hegel think this process could 'objectify' freedom? The answer lies in the turn of the agent's attention. Property relations aren't really about objects at all. Property

relations are about the way one will responds to another. When the agent sees that an object is possessed by a person, her focus shifts from the object to the person. The agent cares about what the subject wills. That the subject wills something is enough to make the agent respond. As I understand Hegel, that makes the subject's freedom objective in two senses. First, the subject's will is acting on and through a physical object. Second, the subject's will is an object of concern and motive power to the agent, because the agent is willing to act in response to the subject's decisions.

3.4.2 Your Freedom

Among other things being recognized is desirable because it helps one to recognize the reality of one's own freedom. One attends to the other party's acts of acknowledgment and infer from those acts the dispositions of the other person. The activity of the other person's will thus becomes a way to understand yourself. The other person's act of acknowledgment is a source of evidence: an external representation of who you are. The agent is able to get a view of herself from the outside, so to speak.

The agent's focus initially falls on the acknowledgment expressed in the last form of recognition. The agent then focuses on what that acknowledgment implies.²² The agent tries to figure out what categories the other party is using and what import the other party assigns to those categories. The agent is trying to reconstruct the model of herself used by the other party. That allows the agent to see herself as the other party sees her.

²² In his reconstructed Hegelianism, this is the moment when Honneth would call on George Herbert Mead's theory of the Generalized Other.

In the specific case of property, the agent sees that she is being treated as one who has control over an object. The other party approaches, refrains from taking the things, and engages the agent. The agent sees the other person's restraint, infers that the other party is acting out of respect for her agency, and thus sees a model of herself as one who owns property. The category used by the other party is thus adopted by the agent, who applies it to herself.

The agent now has an external source of information about her will, which allows her to appreciate her import in new ways. Even before the other person arrives, she thought of herself as one who was free, but all that meant was that she could move around stuff. Now she has evidence that she is free in a stronger sense. Other people will acknowledge the import of her freedom and wait to see what she decides to do. Her will is real to those people, in that they take it to be an important part of the world. That allows the agent to exercise a new capacity: Now she can offer reasons to others and listen to reasons from them. That's not something she was able to do when her freedom was restricted to pushing objects.²³

Does the agent acknowledge anyone? She is attending to a model of herself, categorizing herself, and appreciating herself, but can she acknowledge herself? Not in a literal sense, but she can contemplate herself as though she were another person and, at least in Hegel's telling, that is a very important capacity.

²³ I've elided the differences, but this moment of appreciation is a point of contention in the literature. I see three camps related to Butler, Honneth, and Patten. According to Butler, the agent's self-appreciation is really a matter of internalizing social ideology, where "ideology" refers to the notion as used in Marxist theories of social reproduction. According to Honneth, the agent's self-appreciation mirrors the other party's response to the agent's value. According to Patten, the agent's self-appreciation is part of the developmental process by which people mature.

Early on in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel talks about the undeveloped person as “the immediate or natural will,” which contains only “drives, desires, and inclinations” (PR 45). In other words, before we’ve developed into mature people our will is hardly separate from our natural impulses. Developing as a person requires us to get perspective on ourselves. We have to ask ourselves if we should want what we want, if we should do as we do, and so forth. Much like Aristotle, Hegel seems to think we need moral education so that a good character develops to regulate and guide our impulses. In Hegelian language, we need to “objectify” ourselves in the sense of making ourselves an object of contemplation.

In that sense, the agent can acknowledge herself. She can look at the model of herself as though it were a foreign object. She can take that model and ask if this is how she wants to be and what she should do. Because she’s looking in from the outside, she can address expectations to herself. She might see that the other person is waiting for a response and so look at herself with impatience. She sees that this person needs to offer; it just so happens that “this person” is herself. We expect something like this to work when we tell people to live up to their obligations. We expect them to see our expectations for them and our disappointment, and then hold themselves to account. We hope that they will demand better of themselves or, at very least, adjust their own idea of themselves.

Thom Brooks goes so far as to argue this is *the* purpose of the section on Abstract Right. He insists “we should not read Hegel’s discussion of property in abstract right in order to develop a complete theory of property. Instead, this discussion is only meant to chart the initial development of the free will as it seeks to will the free will. This is the central problem of the *Philosophy of Right*” (Brooks 38). One might think Brooks goes too far when he insists on

“only,” but my analysis supports his general conclusion. Hegel’s discussion of recognizing property tells us much more about how people focus on their freedom and other people’s freedom than it does about the legal institutions of owning, buying, and selling. Getting ahold of one’s self is the fundamental step in self-development because every other sort of ethical development presumes such a capacity exists. Trading this thing for that thing doesn’t really measure up to learning to be a person.

3.4.3 The Common Will

What is one doing when one recognizes the “common will” formed during a contract? The agent attends to the common will in so far as it is an agreement. The agent treats this agreement as an authority, *i.e.* a reason that ought to be obeyed. The agent appreciates the authority of the agreement if she is indeed disposed to perform the terms of the agreement, because entering into the agreement set that obligation upon her (PR 109). But what does acknowledgment entail here? In one sense, the agent could acknowledge the authority of the common will by performing the terms of the contract. In a more subtle sense, the agent is once again addressing herself because she expects herself to obey an agreement. Considered as a *free* will, it isn’t obvious how a person can be obligated at all. A free will *isn’t* constrained, that’s what makes it free. So how then does one get ahold of oneself, so to speak, and use one’s own free will in a way that produces an obligation? The common will, it seems to me, represents a reason that one uses to constrain one’s own free will. In other words, you will the agreement and this creates a reason that you believe to be authoritative, and ‘being authoritative’ means that your free will ought to chose to fulfill the agreement. One, arbitrary part of your will is thus presented with another, principled part of your will and the latter is able to direct the former.

What is the agent focused on when she attends to the agreement? The agreement consists of terms, so the agent can certainly attend to those. The agreement also represents the convergence of two wills on a conditional proposition: I agree but only on condition that you agree. But the agreement is quite special for Hegel, because it represents a reason acting as an authority. I mean that a free person entering an agreement is obligated to perform the terms and they are obligated just because of the conditional convergence of wills. Their obligation marks a new stage of freedom in which the person's freedom exists by means of self-regulation. The person is free in the sense that their behavior is determined in compliance with what is reasonable. So the agent's attention must fall on the obligation itself. If the agent does not understand that forming a common will means granting authority to an agreement, then they aren't really entering into a contract.

For the contract to really exist, the agent has to categorize it as a normative obligation. By contrast, an agent could take a contract to be 'just words on a page' or mere solicitation. An agent could think those things, but if they did then they would not really be making a contract and they would not really understand what the other person is trying to do. A contract exists as an obliging force or not at all. That does not imply that the contract only exists once the agent acts to uphold it. Entering into the contract with an understanding of what it does is sufficient to make the contract exist (PR 109-100). The contract exists once two wills converge and grant binding authority to the agreement itself. My point is that both parties must understand from the outset that they are creating an authority as opposed to other forms of negotiation.²⁴

²⁴ I stress the point, because people may enter into some agreements without granting the agreement any profound power to obligate them. If I say I will come with you to the grocery, I do not mean that I have a

If the agent sees the authority implicit in a contract, then she ought to feel obligated to perform the terms of the contract. The agent should feel directed toward a specific outcome and yet not feel that this is a mere physical prompting. I mean that she should not think she ought to do something because it is convenient, because it evades problems, or any such thing. Instead, she should feel like this is the right choice to make, because her agreement constitutes a good reason. She ought to want to perform the contract she has agreed to just because the agreement represents her will at work. In a way, she should feel as though her own will is also an external source commanding her.

Acknowledging the common will means performing the terms of the contract, but also engaging herself as one capable of respecting reasons. The first sense is easy to see. The agent looks at the agreement, sees that it is authoritative, feels moved to do as she ought, and then engages with the other person as stipulated in the agreement. The more subtle sense works much like the previous instance of recognizing. The agent sees her own will invested in the common will, feels obligated to obey, and turns her focus back on her own desires and inclinations. She is able to override her natural impulses and direct herself according to the representation of what ought to be done.

Really I'm just describing the same thing from two different points of view. From one point of view the common will is an external thing to which the agent is obedient. In that case, the agent relates to a higher authority which she acknowledges. But the common will isn't

strong moral burden to tag along that would override other considerations. I am merely expressing my weakly-held disposition to do what you do.

Clarity of foresight may also have legal significance for a contract. If I agreed to terms without realizing that you were using them in some special sense, then I see no reason to think I have made a valid contract with you. I willed an agreement, but not *this* agreement and it was not *this* agreement because I did not intend to bind myself in that manner.

really an external thing at all even if it is recorded on a piece of paper. “The common will” is just her own will acting in tandem with another free will. When she acknowledges the common will, one aspect of her will is relating to another aspect of her will for the purposes of self-regulation. From this point of view then, the agent is the authority and the subordinate. As a rational being she is a legislating authority and as a natural being she is an obedient subordinate. By acknowledging the common will, she is imposing rational control over natural instincts.

3.5 Conclusion

Hegel’s text is not clear. It’s not clear because it takes up a familiar process and asks us to see it anew, which is always much more difficult than it seems. It is also unclear because Hegel’s peculiar vocabulary is tedious to keep straight, his goals are not always evident, and he shifts focus from one subject to another without informing us that he has done so (and perhaps without realizing he has done so). Because of the intrinsic difficulty of the material, because of the richness of the thought, and because of the horrid writing, Hegel’s short section on property and contract have accumulated contradictory interpretations and, as one scholar noted, simply scared people off (Brooks 30). I cannot say with certainty that I have presented exactly what he had in mind. I do not deny that there are other, plausible interpretations. Nor would I want to. My interpretation nonetheless gives us one clear and useful way to interpret Hegel. Reading him in this way clarifies what one is doing when one recognizes property claims.

I take it Hegel understands property primarily as a relation between people. To recognize another person’s property is to appreciate the significance of their freedom. In contract, your appreciation is externalized as an act of acknowledgment: You treat the other

person as though they have a right to their property and show your respect for their will.

Although attending and categorizing are important, it seems to me that appreciation and acknowledgment are thus the more salient components for Hegel. Appreciation is important for your own self-legislation; acknowledgment is important for the other person's self-understanding. Public acknowledgment is important, because it confirms for the other person that their dignity and their will have causal power. One knows that one *ought* to be respected as the owner of property, but another person's public acknowledgment shows that the moral *ought* has become an everyday reality just as it should.

There is a parallel process of self-recognition as well, which is somewhat more difficult to summarize. In this case you are both the agent recognizing and the person recognized, and I take it that attention comes to the fore. When you respect another person, you have to redirect and limit your free will. You freely constrain yourself, which is an odd thing to do. Doing this odd thing allows you to attend to your own powers of self-direction: When you see that something is important, you can override natural impulses and choose to put reasons ahead of mere desires. Once you see that, you can begin to ask sophisticated questions about self-control. What *should* I want, what *should* I respect, *etc.* Self-recognition is thus a separate instance of recognizing that can happen because you have recognized another person.

But that process of self-recognition is focused on attending. We do not yet know what exactly to make of our self-legislating capacity and we are not yet certain how to handle ourselves. In other words, the appreciation and acknowledgment components are not fully fleshed out yet. For Hegel, the missing appreciation and acknowledgment components are filled in by the rest of the *Philosophy of Right*. He proceeds on to an account of morality, customs,

civil society, and the state all to show what one should do with oneself. All of that is far beyond the scope of this discussion and involves a great many instances of recognition as well. Still, one can use my analysis to get a handle on the overall purpose of the project.

I don't think I've solved the problems of Hegel interpretation, but my analysis makes Hegel's claims clearer. Picking apart the discussion into distinct instances of recognition helps us see who is doing what to whom. Analyzing each instance into parts helps us see what precisely is happening. With the material for analyzing recognition that I have provided in mind, it is easier to see where interpreters are focusing their attention, when they may be simpatico, and when they are genuinely at odds.

4. An Instance of Recognition in Aristotle

My analysis of recognition can help us understand a theorist even when they are not concerned with the term 'recognition,' so long as their theories involve attending, categorizing, appreciating, or acknowledging. For example, my analysis of recognition can help us understand Aristotle. Although he does not use the term 'recognition' in his discussion of friendship and political regimes, we can use my analysis to clarify his point.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle offers a typology of political regimes and then claims there's a certain similarity between households and regimes (*circa* 1160b). He complicates his thesis by claiming that each regime/household pair has a form of justice and a form of friendship (1161a11). The forms of justice and friendship he describes look like an account of recognition: Citizens find themselves in a political relationship, they use that relationship to pattern their understanding of one another, and they acknowledge one another as friends when things go well. By applying my tools to social relations within different regimes, we can get a better sense of what Aristotle is looking at.

This passage is worth analyzing, because it deals with two matters of contemporary interest. First, we know that the term 'recognition' is currently of interest, but one might worry that there is not an enduring issue to sustain that interest. Finding an instance of recognition outside the current discussion is thus reassuring. Aristotle isn't concerned with modern political problems, nor with modern political theories, and he certainly isn't influenced by the contemporary terminology, but he describes what we would now call recognition. Second, Aristotle is sometimes cited as a proponent of 'civic friendship,' *i.e.* the idea that citizenship

should entail warm sentiments toward fellow citizens and a sense of common purpose with them (Digeser 106). Whatever the merits of ‘civic friendship’ itself, other philosophers have argued that Aristotle does not provide a particularly good model of it (*passim* Bentley as well as Hope). A clearer sense of what Aristotle is describing could be of use to either camp, although I think my analysis ultimately supports the skeptics.

4.1 The Passage in Question

In book eight of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle interrupts his discussion of interpersonal relationships to discuss political communities. The entire digression occupies only a few pages from 1160a30 to 1161b17, but contains a bold claim of homology between regimes and personal relationships. In chapter ten, he informs us there are three good regimes each of which can be paired with a relationship in the family. Chapter eleven describes the form of friendship present in each regime/relationship pair (or why it is absent in the case of tyranny). The first paragraph of chapter twelve transitions back into interpersonal relationships and leaves the political community behind. The passage is intriguing because it directly addresses friendship and political life, but frustrating because it is so very compact.

4.1.1 The Typology of Regimes and Their Analogues

Aristotle’s typology of regimes is quite simple. He claims there are three good regimes each of which has a corrupt form. The good regimes are kingship²⁵, aristocracy, and “timocracy”

²⁵ At the beginning of Book IV of the *Politics* (1288b10-1289b20), Aristotle explains this is the ideal list assuming no external impediments. If one could have a king of outstanding quality - I take it that means both a man of uncommon virtue and a man of complete economic self-sufficiency such that he has no ulterior motives - then one would do well to let this wise and plenipotentiary person see to affairs unobstructed. But, when Aristotle turns to the more pragmatic question of what regime is best for the ordinary situation, where one cannot assume that all goes

by which he means a system of property-based citizenship (1160a31). Each of these has a corrupt form that has a similar distribution of authority, but for the wrong ends. Kingship can decay into tyranny, aristocracy into oligarchy, and timocracy into democracy. Of the decayed forms, tyranny is the worst because the monarch seeks his own benefit at the expense of everyone else, whereas democracy is the least bad, because it is quite similar to the decent timocracy (1160b1-25). Ordered by quality then the regimes are kingship, aristocracy, timocracy, democracy, oligarchy, and tyranny.

Aristotle suggests “one could find likenesses and, as it were, models of the regimes in households too,” which implies social relations are similar in form to personal relations (1160b23). I take it that Aristotle is describing what we would now call ‘social hierarchy.’ Each regime alots power and prestige in its own way, thus creating different social hierarchies. Aristotle’s claim is that each social hierarchy has some similarity with hierarchies found in family life. Thus our understanding of family hierarchies can be somewhat transferred into our understanding of social hierarchies.

well, that all is provided, and that nothing hinders one, then he answers in favor of “polity,” or a mixed regime of oligarchic and democratic elements (1290a1-20). As a side note, in that same place he offers a more sophisticated discussion of economic and social classes. He comments that there are as many regimes as there are possible relations between social groups, where a relationship may refer to differences, superiorities, or equalities between social groups. In other words, we are asked to envision society divided into a number of overlapping ‘identity groups’ to use an anachronistic phrase, and then to imagine all the ways the groups could relate to one another. In each configuration, a group stakes a claim to recognition from other groups, because the one group is different from the other, because it is superior to the other, or because it has something in common with the other. A constitution would formalize the recognition claims between groups into rights, procedures, representatives, and so forth.

None of this complexity appears in the section of the *Ethics* under discussion. I take it then that the discussion in the *Ethics* focuses on ideal types. When we talk about fatherly rule, we are talking about an idealized fatherly rule similar to an idealized kingly rule and so forth. Presumably real family life also has a higher degree of complexity just as political life turns out to have a high degree of complexity. One could extend Aristotle’s ideal discussion of family life by using the same principles he used for political life in the *Politics*: One should determine how many salient roles there are and then determine how they might call for recognition from people playing other roles. Each configuration of roles and claims makes for one ‘constitution’ of a family relationship.

Kingship, he says, is like the relationship between a father and a son, because the father provides what is good to his children (1160b23-25). By contrast tyranny is like the relationship between a master and his slaves, because the tyrant uses the public for his own advantage (1160b25-30). We should not mistake this for a condemnation of slavery. Aristotle informs us the relationship of master to slave is correct whereas a tyrannical relationship between father and sons (or presumably between kings and subjects) is incorrect for “over those who differ, the kinds of rule differ” (1160b31). I take his point to be that fathers and children have something in common, whereas masters and slaves do not. Fathers, in his reckoning, ought to work for the benefit of their children because of that commonality. Masters, on the other hand, ought to take from the slaves for their benefit. A good monarch then is one who emulates a father and works to benefit his subjects with whom he has things in common. A bad monarch uses his subjects as slaves and pursues only his own gain.

Aristotle models aristocracy on marriage. Each party has its own proper sphere of action, but as one party is intrinsically superior they justly receive the lion’s share of good things. So in family life, Aristotle says, the husband “rules in accord with merit regarding the things over which a man ought to rule, whereas all things suited to a woman, he hands over to her” (1160b33). But if the man were to arrogate all rule to himself, then this would be like “oligarchy, for he does this contrary to merit and not inasmuch as it is better” (1160b35). Aristotle’s argument here projects gendered social roles in political life. So far as some people are better fit for rule, they *ought* to rule, but they must recognize the limits of their excellence. Presumably then political aristocrats are better than other people in some domain and thus entitled to political supremacy within that domain.

Aristotle has very little to say about either timocracy or democracy. He informs us that a timocracy is like the relationship between brothers, whereas democracy is “found especially in households where there is no master...and in those where the ruler is weak and each person has license to act as he likes” (1161a4-9). He compares timocracy to brotherly affection, because only age separates brothers and, if the age difference is great enough, brother’s no longer feel much connection with one another (1161a6). His point, as I take it, is that the social division in a timocracy rests on a fairly trivial difference. Those who rule are not beneficent fathers or experts, but simply those who cross a property threshold. In the same manner, the dividing line between brothers is nothing very major just the fact that some are much older than others. In a democracy, one does not even bother with that small a distinction: There is no meaningful hierarchy and so everyone is left to their own devices.

4.1.2 Friendship and Justice

By itself Aristotle’s typology would not be terribly interesting, however he appends the claim that “friendship appears in each of the regimes to the extent that what is just does as well” (1161a10). As before, Aristotle attempts to describe the behavior of a regime by analogy to more familiar behavior in family life. Somehow the friendship and justice peculiar to each family relationship is supposed to explain how a political community operates. He concludes with a discussion of tyranny, which is said to have little friendship because “what is just does not even exist” (1161a34). I take it the defects of tyranny are meant to illustrate the good regimes by contrast: Being the worst of regimes, tyranny is a mirror image of the good life.

Kingship and paternal rule, Aristotle says, exhibit the same sort of friendship. In both cases friendship consists of “superiority in granting benefactions, for he benefits those over

whom he is king — if in fact, being good, he cares for them so that they fare well” (1161a13). By “superiority in granting benefactions” I take it Aristotle means that parents and kings give to their subjects good things, which the subjects cannot reciprocate. In exchange, children honor their parents and subjects honor their king. Aristotle concludes “what is just in these cases, therefore is not the same for both, but it does accord with merit, since the friendship does as well” (1161a20-23). I gloss this to mean that each party receives what they merit, although what they merit is different, and so their friendly affection is also different. The king bestows what is good on his subjects and they feel strong affection in return or the parents provide for the wellbeing of their children and the children honor their parents in return.

Aristotle’s comments on aristocracy and timocracy are very brief, hence somewhat cryptic. He informs us the “the friendship of a husband for a wife is the same as that in aristocracy, for it accords with virtue, and to the better person goes more of the good and to each what is suited to each” (1161a24). Among brothers and timocrats, people are broadly equal, so they express their friendship by ruling “in turn...and on an equal basis” (1161a25-29).

Aristotle informs us all of the degenerate regimes are short on justice and thus short on friendship, but tyranny is the worst of all. Since the tyrant and the populace have no common advantage, what is just does not exist in a tyranny (1161b30-35). His claim that what is just does not exist in a tyranny follows from his thesis that for political communities “the advantage held in common is what is just” (1160a10-15). I take that to mean every political community is a community just so far as it has a common advantage as its purpose. If that common advantage is apportioned according to merit, then each party receives what is just. It seems that where justice is done, friendship should follow. But a tyrant and his subjects are much like a master

and his slaves in that they have no aim in common: One simply preys upon the other. There is no question then of distributing the common good according to merit, since there is no common good.

Aristotle slightly hedges his claim because:

there seems to be something just for every human being in relation to everyone able to share in law and compact. There is friendship, then, insofar as the slave is a human being. So, to a small degree, friendships and what is just exist even in tyrannies; but in democracies, they exist to a greater degree, since those who are equal have many things in common. (1161b7-10)

His addendum helps to clarify what he has in mind by justice and friendship. Clearly his understanding of justice revolves around proportional distribution and commonality. People can only have just relations where something common exists between them and, even then, only in proportion to their merits. But “common” appears to be ambiguous, sometimes meaning that they have an aim in common and sometimes meaning they have some sort of similarity.

4.2 Who is doing what to whom?

I take it Aristotle is describing patterns of recognition within regime/relationship pairs. In other words, there’s a paternal pattern of recognition found in the relations between parents and children, on one hand, and found between a benevolent king and his subjects, on the other. I take it each regime/relationship pair has 4 components:

1) The distribution of authority

- 2) The pattern of distribution for goods
- 3) The pattern of affection.

The first component explains why a relationship, a regime, and a corrupt regime are all similar. For instance, as Aristotle describes them fatherhood, kingship, and tyranny all involve a unilateral actor and a subordinated public. The second component is a gloss on Aristotle's meaning of justice and the third a gloss on his meaning of friendship in the political context.

4.2.1 Paternal and Kingly Rule

In Aristotle's telling, what is paternal rule supposed to look like? A father is supposed to provide for the benefit of his children not least by helping to engender them. Within the common concern of the family, it is the father's role to provide for the welfare of his subordinates. The disposition to do well by those under his power is precisely what makes the father a good person. He is just in so far as he gives to them what they need. Justice requires reciprocity but children cannot precisely reciprocate. Children do not give birth to their parents, they do not raise their parents, and so on. Instead of strict reciprocity, justice requires that each party get what is due to them based on their nature and merits. Children give what is just to their parents by honoring them in return, which Aristotle seems to take as equivalent to the distribution of good things.

What then would we expect friendship to look like in a paternal rule? The father and his children have a just relationship, because each gives to the other what they deserve, so how then should they be disposed toward one another? I should think the father would feel pleased that his children honor him and he should feel concern for their future, while also feeling a certain amount of distance. The children should be grateful that their father has provided for

them, should feel admiration and love, and, at least in Aristotle's telling, should feel respect for their father as their social superior.

Kingship (and tyranny) are like paternal rule in that authority is invested in a single person. The social structure is thus quite simple: There is one directing agent and an undifferentiated public. The king, like a father, distributes goods and services to the public out of a concern for their welfare. To balance the scales of justice, the public reciprocates symbolically, because the king (or father) does not need material support.²⁶ Affection should reflect the roles peculiar to each part of society. The king ought to feel for his people in a general sense, while the people ought to feel strong gratitude toward their 'superior,' because he benefits them so much more than they benefit him.

4.2.2 Marital and Aristocrat Rule

According to Aristotle, the relationship between spouses is similar to aristocracy in that each party is trusted with the affairs appropriate to them and because more of the good things go to the better party. In contrast to the kingly/paternal pattern, in the marital or aristocratic pattern each party has some measure of authority. According to Aristotle the benefits of their common work should then be distributed with the 'better' party getting the lion's share of the benefits. In the same way, affection should be distributed in proportion to the merits of each party. According to Aristotle, aristocrats and commoners should share the burdens and costs of governance as well. In his telling, aristocrats should not shirk their obligations and instead should take on even unpleasant tasks if the aristocrats are best suited to handle them. Should

²⁶ I am not saying that monarchy or paternalism actually work this way. I am saying that Aristotle says they work this way.

one attempt to evade their obligations, then Aristotle argues the aristocratic regime would degrade into the oligarchic regime.

If one party is superior to the other, then how can the relationship between parties be just? For Aristotle, the answer is proportionality. The better party should get more of the good things, because they deserve more. However, Aristotle does not mean that the aristocrats should simply take all that is good for themselves or force all that is troubling onto the public. That arrangement, he says, would be oligarchy, the corrupt form of aristocracy. I take it Aristotle views aristocracy in terms of competency more than advantages. In other words, the aristocrats are better because they are capable of doing more things of import to the common affairs. Because they have a greater measure of skill, they have a greater measure of responsibility and a greater claim to rewards.

Aristotle suggests that affection should also be unevenly distributed. I take it he means that those who are better ought to be appreciated and respected more than those who are less capable. It seems reasonable that respect should be limited by competency as well. One should not respect aristocrats *simpliciter*, but only in proportion to their quality and only so far as that quality is relevant to the matter at hand. Again it is worth stressing that Aristotle still expects reciprocity from aristocrats to commoners just as husbands should care for and respect their wives.

4.2.3 Timocracy and Brotherly Rule

Aristotle's "timocracy"²⁷ is supposedly similar to brotherly rule, in that all the members are basically similar but a relatively trivial difference may distinguish them. In the case of timocracy, citizenship is extended to anyone who owns at least a certain amount of property. In its corrupt form democracy, even that small barrier to citizenship is done away with. Aristotle informs us that the relationship between citizens in a timocracy is akin to the relationship between brothers. I take it he means that brothers mostly consider themselves to be equal and feel that they have much in common on account of their common origin.

Kingship depended on one party's superiority in resources and insight, aristocracy depended on one party's superiority in skill, but timocracy just depends on a marginal difference in property. Citizens don't have much claim to superiority over one another or even over non-citizen residents. It seems natural then that political authority should be more or less equally shared. That's because no one has any persuasive reason to claim a right to more power, more prestige, or more goods.

How should the citizens of a timocracy recognize one another? With respect to political power, they only have the property hurdle to focus on so anyone wealthy enough ought to be recognized as a citizen. Being recognized as a citizen does amount to much apart from the right to participate in rule. Just as brothers ought to be warm toward one another without any of

²⁷ The root here is *timē* meaning 'honor or worth' and I take it one is meant to read 'worth' in a literal sense. In other words, 'timocracy' could be casually glossed as 'rule of people with enough money.' My sense is that in an oligarchy a small number of very wealthy people control public affairs to funnel wealth to themselves and to push costs onto their subordinates. In a timocracy, anyone who clears a minimal hurdle of property ownership becomes an equal citizen with just as much a claim on government office as anyone else. In that sense, early American political life was timocratic in that the vote was tied to property thresholds.

them claiming a right to rule the others, timocrats ought to be well-disposed to one another as equal stakeholders in public affairs.

4.3 Analyzing Instances of Recognition

We can recast Aristotle's claims in the language of recognition. I reconstruct his argument as follows:

1. Similar patterns of authority are found in public life and private life.
2. Each pattern of authority comes with its own pattern of recognition.
3. Acknowledging one's place in the pattern of authority has material and affective components:
 - a) the material component entails distributing common goods and responsibilities in proportion to merit and
 - b) the affective component entails distributing respect and care in proportion to merit and need, respectively.
4. A relationship is corrupted when the participants no longer recognize proper limits.
5. In a tyranny or in slavery, 3 (a) and 3 (b) are scarcely possible at all, because the authority figure does not recognize any claim from the subjects as legitimate.

I take it the point of this argument is to show that regimes have their own character. One might think monarchy, aristocracy, and timocracy only differ in how many people have power. Not so, Aristotle says. Each regime begins from a particular situation: In a monarchy one person is totally self-sufficient, in an aristocracy some people have qualitative advantages in skill or resources, and in a timocracy everyone is similar. Each regime has its own standard for

distributing goods and responsibilities that makes sense based on the situation. The monarch is totally self-sufficient, so he ought to provide material benefits to his subjects. If the regime does well by its subjects, then the subjects ought to be well-disposed toward one another, but the meaning of 'well-disposed' depends on one's position in a particular situation. The kind of good will proper to a king in a monarchy is not the same as the good will proper to equal citizens in a timocracy.

The substance of each relationship becomes much clearer when we apply my analysis. Aristotle always describes the ruling party as the primary agent, so I will follow his lead. In each regime, I will describe what the ruler recognizes and what that accomplishes. There's no difficulty determining the relationship, since Aristotle explicitly underlines them. Kingship is a highly unequal relationship similar to that between father and children, aristocracy is a differentiated relationship with a quality hierarchy that Aristotle believes is similar to that between husband and wife, and timocracy is a more or less equal relationship between very similar people. In each regime then we need to know what the ruler attends to and what that implies given the sort of relationship the ruler has to the ruled.

4.3.1 The King

What does a king do when he recognizes someone as a subject? I take it that a king, as opposed to a tyrant, focuses on the needs of his subjects instead of their use for him. The king thus thinks of his subjects as something akin to his children. Because he sees his subjects as like his children, he is disposed to distribute public goods for the benefit of his subjects, while expecting deference from them. He acknowledges them by acting to meet their needs and, afterward, by sharing a friendship with them.

If we grant Aristotle's rosy view of kingship, then the king's attention should fall on his subject's needs. Aristotle takes it for granted that the king will be self-sufficient, so he has no need to profit from the public good. So although the king has unilateral authority, he is not the primary beneficiary of the common tasks of the city. By contrast, a tyrant looks at his subjects as a source of labor and therefore assesses them as means for his own enrichment. Even apart from differences in disposition, the king views his subjects quite differently than the tyrant does. The king collects information about the character of his subjects, their situation, and what they need to flourish just as a father tends to his children. If the king has a parental relationship to his subjects, then his attention may also fall on his subjects' happiness, in the sense of the good life for them to lead. I mean that a king may concern himself with the virtues and practices conducive to rich, full lives.

The king's paternal attention offers a model for 'civic friendship.' First, the king's focus on his subjects' welfare is much more 'friendly' than focusing strictly on law, economics, or traditional privileges. The king takes an interest in his subjects as people and is careful to consider what their lives are like. If the king is indeed concerned with the good life of his subjects and not just their material needs, then the king's attention is friendly in a second way. Friends take an interest in one another's character and encourage one another to live well.

Even if he is well disposed toward his subjects, a king sees himself as superior to his subjects. He categorizes them as his political inferiors and may even categorize them as moral inferiors. By 'moral inferiors' I mean that he may think of them as people possessed of less prudence and hence in need of guidance if they are to develop well. His somewhat condescending view is the dark side of his paternal attention: Subjects are politically inferior, in

that they have little to no political power relative to the king, but that does not obviously imply that the king is better equipped to guide them. A paternal relationship between parents and children is appropriate because children are not capable of self-direction and thus really do require benevolent interventions. The superiority of a king over his subjects is more suspect, because not so obviously justified.

I take it the king appreciates the import of his subjects in so far as he feels a responsibility toward them. Attending to their situation informed the king, categorizing them as political inferiors established the king's primacy in political affairs, but appreciation moves the king to act on their behalf. In other words, when the king appreciates what he has observed he feels that his position of political primacy obligates him to promote the well being of his subjects rather than the other way around. The tyrant, who also has political supremacy, appreciates the situation in an entirely different manner: the tyrant concludes that he ought to exploit his subjects. The king also feels entitled to be honored by his subjects. He ought to provide for them, because they are his subjects and the subjects ought to feel gratitude because he is their king. I take it these feelings are supposed to be the first-person aspect of political legitimacy. The king understands and accepts his political position including its responsibilities, the subjects understand and accept their political position, and together the two aspects of society support one another.

The king publicly acknowledges his subjects by demonstrating his concern for them and the subjects acknowledge him by displaying their gratitude and deference. The king is addressing his subjects as people who matter to him and proving his good will by doing what is required to secure the public good. The subjects may use formal titles or customs to show the

king they appreciate the dignity of his position and appreciate his governance. Public acknowledgment could also be a form of civic friendship because the interactions involve warm feelings between the participants and shared activities together. The ordinary political business of a monarchy — public occasions, court audiences, dispensation of gifts, etc — are supposed to engender personal bonds of gratitude and affection.

In Aristotle's presentation, friendship comes very late in the process after the political order is settled and after the public goods are distributed. Once those things are taken care of, then friendship can develop because the ruler and ruled have so much in common. When modern political theorists discuss 'civic friendship' they usually expect it to promote justice or encourage social stability. That may well be true, but Aristotle seems to have civic friendship as a consequence of justice and stability. When the nation is healthy, then the citizens all feel united with one another because of their experience of just relations and proper recognition. Maybe that friendship will then encourage further good behavior, I certainly expect it would, but justice and recognition come first. In fact, the 'civic friendship' may just be acts of mutual acknowledgment following in the wake of just behavior. The king does what he ought out of concern for the subjects, then both king and subject acknowledge the other party's position and legitimacy. That's a plausible gloss on what Aristotle is describing, but I'm not sure how much it adds to a modern, liberal conception of legitimacy. Perhaps 'civic friendship' of the sort described by Aristotle is just what justice and recognition look like in very small societies where the boundary between state action and personal relation is not clearly drawn.

4.3.2 The Aristocrats

Recognition in an aristocracy is, according to Aristotle, still benevolent and still concerned with the common goods of public life, but otherwise quite different from the recognition in a monarchy. When aristocrats recognize someone as a subject, they identify the other person as less skilled in some respect. The supposed distinction in quality is used to distribute rewards and responsibilities. Acknowledgment too seems to be limited by the skill of the parties in relation to the specific task at hand. Unlike a king, who has a complete supremacy over his subjects, the aristocrat only has a partial claim to superiority.

When an aristocrat recognizes a subject, he attends to the skill of both the subject and the aristocrat himself. His attention falls on their respective skill, because the aristocrat's claim to rule depends on his superior capabilities. If the task is appropriate for the aristocrat to handle, then he should claim responsibility for it and the fitting rewards. If the task is appropriate for another though, then he should let the subject handle it and allow the rewards to go to him as well. An aristocrat does not focus on benefiting his subjects the way a king did, because the aristocrat is no longer fully self-sufficient and no longer the exclusive political agent. Aristocrats will look for material advantages and do expect others to take on political tasks.

I take it that 'competent' is the key category for aristocratic rule in Aristotle's idealized telling. On a case by case basis then one must determine who is competent to handle a task even if the aristocrats are generally the better class of people. One's power of discrimination is doubly important: first in determining what sort of situation one is in, then second in determining who is fit to the task. One might recognize a situation as a matter for public assent

and thus seek a vote, but then the next day recognize a new situation as a matter of generalship and hand the matter over to the army. In the first case, it is fitting that the public be consulted and respected and in the second it is fitting that the specialists ought to rule.

If one is identified as an aristocrat, then one is supposedly entitled to a greater share of political and material benefits. The general public ought to defer to the aristocrat and the aristocrat ought to be trusted in their specialized domain. I take it then that the import of aristocracy is basically the same as the import of modern meritocracy. Inequalities in wealth and authority are supposed to be justified in light of intrinsic differences in quality. In other words, so far as someone is identified as an aristocrat that supposedly implies that they ought to have more than commoners. A commoner should thus feel respect for the skill of the aristocrat and the aristocrat should feel respect for the skill of the commoner where appropriate, but both commoner and aristocrat should accept the aristocrat's superior wealth.

The aristocratic relationship offers a different model of 'civic friendship' based on trust and mutual benefit. Both the aristocrats and the commoners work to manage public affairs and accept the responsibilities proper to their station much as friends complement one another's strengths to accomplish their goals. Their collaboration only works so far as the aristocrats leverage their superior standing for the benefit of the public and the public acknowledges the authority of the specialists. In other words, the aristocrats need to be concerned with the commoners and the commoners need to feel trust for the aristocrats. Friendly feelings help them negotiate the personal, social, and political differences between them.

Public acknowledgment is perhaps more important in an aristocratic arrangement than in a monarchy, because the distinction between aristocrat and commoner is important but

unclear. A king is obviously superior in wealth and, at least in Aristotle's telling, perhaps also in wisdom. An aristocrat needs the public to benefit him directly and can only claim to be a specialist. The aristocrat is thus making a more tenuous argument that he justifiably benefits from the public affairs because he deserves those benefits. If the public does not acknowledge the aristocrat's claims, then the aristocrat's power erodes significantly, because he needs public cooperation. Similarly, if an aristocrat does not acknowledge the legitimate skills or demands of the public, then the public has little reason to trust the aristocrat much less reason to defer to the aristocrat's judgments. The two social strata are not similar enough to relate as equals, but also not distinct enough to relate as ruler *simpliciter* and ruled *simpliciter*. Instead, they have to negotiate a delicate balance in which specialization and skill can benefit each party while one party remains politically and materially superior to another.

4.3.3 The Timocrats

Recognition in a timocracy seems the most familiar, because it is a rough analogue to modern republican mores. Assuming all goes as it ought, anyone who qualifies as a citizen considers himself a political equal with any other citizen, expects to share equally in political office, and intends to treat others as though they are his equal. Recognizing a fellow citizen entails respect for them, but also the commitment to show no favor and ask no favor. This is a very far cry from kingship and aristocracy which, in their own ways, demand hierarchy and the passionate affirmation of hierarchy.

The timocrat focuses his attention on the mere fact of citizenship. The timocrat is not concerned with the amount of wealth or skill has provided that one is able to cross whatever minor barrier separates citizen from non-citizen. Even then, the non-citizen is only excluded by

a relatively inessential fact. One could, after all, get a bit more money or perform some public service and thereby qualify. Citizenship does not admit of degrees: One is a citizen or one is not.

Since the citizens share equally in a common category, they appreciate the import of that status by extending and expecting reciprocal status. A citizen should expect other citizens to respect him and he should do the same for them. So when one recognizes another person as a citizen, one should be inclined to treat them as similar to yourself.

Mutual acknowledgment, in Aristotle's telling, takes the form of rotating offices and a friendship akin to that between brothers. I take it that timocrats take turns in office because no one of them is any more entitled to rule than any other. Public offices require citizens to carry out the functions and citizens have a duty, as shareholders in the polity, to tend to public affairs. It would be inappropriate to deny someone their say in the public concerns, because citizenship implies an equal stake in the commonwealth. I take it that acknowledging the equality of a fellow citizen does not imply belief in the strict equality of persons: One is not necessarily committed to the idea that everyone is equally good at everything. Rather, acknowledging a political equal means expressing one's acceptance that all citizens are equally members in the commonwealth.

Based on Aristotle's comments about brothers, my understanding is that fellow citizens should feel akin to one another because they have so much in common. In other words, they should address one another as friends in that they are alike and share many common activities. Perhaps they should also feel warmly toward one another because their futures are bound together: If the city does well then they will all benefit just as a family's flourishing benefits all the brothers.

4.4 Conclusion

Aristotle's discussion of friendship and justice in various regimes can be interpreted as an analysis of mutual recognition peculiar to certain social arrangements. Aristotle groups familial relationships and regimes according to the distribution of authority within the relationship. He then explains to us how members of that society will recognize their role within the common project, whether that is the flourishing of a family or the flourishing of a community. He suggests that if the participants perform their social functions properly, then mutual appreciation and acknowledgment will follow.

Applying my analysis of recognition to Aristotle's claims helps us see precisely what he has in mind. Each political regime is based on a relationship between the ruler and the ruled, which Aristotle compares to a relationship within the family. The nature of that relationship will determine what the authorities attend to and the significance they attribute to social events. When the authorities appreciate their social role properly, then they will distribute goods and responsibilities as is appropriate for the kind of relationship they have with their subjects. Just actions are themselves a way to acknowledge someone, because just action entails treating them as they deserve. But just action should also inspire another form of acknowledgement: The authorities demonstrate concern for the subjects and the subjects show gratitude and deference to the authorities. What Aristotle calls justice and friendship could just as well be called patterns of recognition within political regimes.

I take it recognizing has a complicated sequence in regimes. The governing party determines its political role and the responsibilities proper to it, then discharges the obligations that inhere in that role. As the ruling party acts, the governed party should see that the rulers act well, and as an act of gratitude they should show respect and appreciation to their governors. For the ruling party then, acknowledgment takes the form of policy while for the governed, acknowledgement takes the form of displays of affection.

As a final remark, my analysis suggests that benevolence is more important to Aristotle's ideal political theory than one might expect. After all, benevolence is not usually counted as an Aristotelian virtue. However, what is it that distinguishes king from tyrant, or aristocrat from oligarch? In each case, the ruler has a similar social position - the king and tyrant alike are self-sufficient and all-powerful - but the king is moved by his appreciation of the public's welfare. I take it then that a king focuses on his subjects' needs, feels the import of those needs, and expresses his concern through prudent public action. That strikes me as a kind of benevolence. If that's so, then perhaps Aristotle's distinction between king and tyrant, or between aristocrat and oligarch, should be read as similar roles performed benevolently or malevolently. The good ruler recognizes the import of his subjects as people, while the bad ruler recognizes the utility of his subjects as implements.

My interpretation is certainly not the only one possible and I have made no effort to deal with other possibilities. My point is rather to show that one can use an analysis of recognition to understand Aristotle's point. By interpreting these remarks as a schematic description of recognition, we see what Aristotle expects authorities to do, what he expects

them to focus on, and what he expect acknowledgment to look like. We also see that the governed have a quite different version of recognition that they owe back to the ruler.

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