

Sinn-Kriterien (1995), *Was heißt Denken?* (2004), *Philosophie des Selbstbewußtseins* (2005), *Sprachphilosophie* (with Friedrich Kambartel, 2005), *Philosophiegeschichte* (2006), *Formen der Anschauung* (2008) and *The Pragmatics of Making it Explicit* (ed., 2008). He is the editor or co-editor of various philosophical journals, handbooks and readers, such as *Philosophische Rundschau* and *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*.

Italo Testa is Assistant Professor at the Department of Philosophy of the University of Parma, where he teaches Political Philosophy. His books include *Hegel critico e scettico* (2002), *Riconoscimento naturale e autoscienza sociale* (2002), *Hegel contemporaneo* (ed. with Luigi Ruggiu 2003), *Hegel e le scienze sociali* (ed. with Alessandro Bellan, 2005), *Teorie dell'argomentazione* (with P. Cantù, 2006), *Ragione impura* (with R. Genovese 2006), *Lo spazio sociale della ragione. Da Hegel in avanti* (ed. with Luigi Ruggiu, 2008), and *La natura del riconoscimento. Riconoscimento naturale e ontologia sociale in Hegel* (2010).

Chapter One

Recognition and Social Ontology: An Introduction

Heikki Ikäheimo & Arto Laitinen

This book focuses on the connections between two contemporary, intensively debated fields of inquiry: Hegel-inspired theories of recognition (*Anerkennung*)¹ and analytical social ontology². The aim of the collection is to make philosophical progress by bringing together the substantially overlapping but in practice so far mostly isolated debates in these fields. If recognition has social ontological significance, as it seems to have, how does taking this seriously fit with the analyses put forward in contemporary social ontology (or, as it is sometimes called by some of the main proponents, “philosophical social theory”, “philosophy of society”, or “philosophy of sociality”)? Are there ways in which theories of recognition and the current understandings in analytical social ontology could enrich one another? How do leading theorists in these fields, as well as younger scholars familiar with both fields, see the connections?

This collection draws attention to issues that are arguably best elaborated by drawing on both sources, without letting the unfruitful division of the philosophical discipline into the ‘analytical’ and ‘continental’ streams get in the way. Several of its contributors have been previously engaged in important and influential work at the crossroads of these streams of contemporary thought, and have significantly contributed to their cross-fertilization.

In this introductory chapter, we will first briefly characterize the topic of social ontology and ask whether social ontology, as it is widely practiced in contemporary analytical philosophy, could have something useful to learn from recognition-theories. Secondly, we will characterize the topic of theories of recognition and again ask whether philosophy of recognition, as it has been discussed recently, might have something to learn from the analytical tradition of social ontology. Thirdly, we will clarify some of the intricacies of the concept of recognition, and, fourthly, provide a chapter by chapter summary of the rest of the book.

1. Social Ontology

In a book preceding most of the recent debates on analytical social ontology in the English speaking philosophical world, Carol Gould points out that the term ‘social ontology’ can be understood in two ways that are not necessarily mutually exclusive.³ On the one hand, it may mean the study of the nature of social reality, of individuals, institutions, processes and so on that societies are composed of. Roughly, social ontology thus concerns those aspects of reality that social sciences study, as opposed to natural sciences. Its main task, understood in this way, is to determine the basic entities of social life, their interaction and change. On the other hand, ‘social ontology’ may mean “ontology socialized”, which is the study of “the social roots of conceptions of [...] reality”. In this sense, all ontology (of nature as well as of society) may be social. Think of for instance the sense in which the ontology of planets is social, because the criteria of “planets” are socially and historically construed by relevant experts.

In Gould’s view, the two senses of ‘social ontology’—the first having to do with the constitution of the social world and the second with conceptions of the world and their social roots—are related to the extent that conceptions whereby social reality is understood are not merely descriptive of social

reality, but partly constitutive of it.⁴ Whereas, say, Pluto, the ninth rock from the Sun, is utterly *unaffected* by whether we count it as a planet or not, the ontology of parliaments, revolutions, workers’ movements, non-governmental organizations, money, recessions, universities, and football games is doubly social, since how they are conceived is in various ways constitutive of what they are and how they play out as elements of social reality.

This collection is mainly focussed on social ontology in the first sense, but part of the practical importance of bringing together different ways of thinking about the constitution of social reality stems from the fact that philosophical accounts of it are themselves part of the repertoire of cultural representations affecting the ways in which humans actually organize and reproduce social life. Particular ways to theorize the social world may have at least an indirect role in creating or maintaining particular forms of social organization.

The branch of philosophy called social ontology is in principle interested both in what is socially constituted and in who or what does the constituting. Understood in this broad sense, we can schematically distinguish three overlapping and mutually dependent topics in social ontology:

1. persons themselves, or personhood;
2. collectives of persons (groups, collective agents, communities, societies, etc); and
3. institutions or institutional structures (systems of norms, organizations etc).

This taxonomy is certainly debatable, but it is helpful for our purposes. Each of these three phenomena or spheres of phenomena are arguably ‘social’ *both* in being somehow socially constituted *and* in participating in the constitution of the other elements of social reality. They are also clearly interrelated in many ways and this is important to keep in mind when distinguishing them. It is a noteworthy fact about much contemporary analytical social ontology, that whereas the ontology of collectives (2.) and institutional structures (3.) is usually discussed in ways that attend to their interconnections, persons (1.) are mostly treated as a separate topic. In contemporary mainstream social ontology, persons are thought of as engaging in various acts or activities constitutive of social reality such as sharing intentions, committing themselves collectively to something, attributing each other statuses, rewarding or sanctioning each other’s behaviour and so on, but the social aspects of their own constitution are mostly not dealt with within the discipline. This is so despite the fact that it is a platitude of common sense, social science and philosophy that humans develop into persons only within social relations

and institutional structures, and that only individuals with person-making capacities, i.e. persons, are capable of maintaining social structures and institutions. If we are to believe the Hegel-inspired criticisms of the Social Contract -tradition, neglecting the ways in which social and institutional reality shapes individuals may lead to an unrealistic and biased view of social reality, with possibly harmful practical effects.⁵

As shown by several articles in this collection, Hegel's concept of recognition is designed to grasp processes and structures that are equally constitutive of persons, their communities and the space of norms and reasons.⁶ If contemporary recognition-theorists following Hegel's lead are able to show how this actually works, then this should be useful for social ontology by providing it with theoretical means to grasp persons not merely as constitutors of social reality, but also themselves socially constituted. Not only would this produce a more coherent picture of the social world as an interconnected whole, it would also make social ontology better equipped to address issues of political and ethical importance to do with how collective and institutional reality structures persons, as it were, from the inside, or how relations of power and authority are always already at play when persons create, reproduce or revise social and institutional reality. Such issues are of course nothing new to social science and social theory, but they are surprisingly often put aside or left under-theorized in contemporary philosophical theories of social and institutional reality, either intentionally or otherwise. This is thus one obvious place where the Hegelian theories of recognition seem to hold a promise for social ontology.

Philosophical theories of recognition may, further, be able to provide conceptual tools for systematizing various points and insights that have been made within analytical social ontology, concerning for example the phenomenon of holding others responsible, criticisable or authorized, or the phenomena of esteem, respect or 'social commitment' to other group members, or indeed the explicit use of the notion of 'recognition.'⁷

2. Theories of Recognition as Theories in Social Ontology?

In social and political philosophy, it has been impossible in the recent years to avoid hearing about the theme of 'recognition'. (For a brief outline of some of

the ways in which it has been used, see the next subsection of this Introduction.) Much of the discussion, however, has not had an explicitly social ontological agenda.

Why has it been thought then that recognition is a theme that deserves philosophical and theoretical attention? An answer given by a major part of contemporary literature on the theme is that only through recognition from others are individuals able to build and maintain harmonious or flourishing personal identities and self-conceptions. Thus, recognition from others is thought to be important *psychologically*. Furthermore, some of the recent literature also emphasizes the function of recognition in solidifying and harmonizing (or improving the ethical qualities of) social relations by including people in spheres of social life as peers, while not denying their differences. In other words, recognition is thought to be important also *socially*. Perhaps the largest part of the discussions have turned around the idea that recognition is something that individuals and groups—due to its psychological and/or social importance—demand and struggle for in the political arena, and thus that recognition is a phenomenon with serious *political* importance. If this is so, then there are numerous issues to address and debate, having to do with what exactly the needs, demands and struggles for recognition being voiced in the political realm and social life more generally are about, with what normative consequences should be drawn from the fact that humans are in various ways, individually and collectively, dependent on recognition, how to distinguish between justified and non-justified demands for recognition, and so forth.

What is striking about these views on recognition, however, is that from the perspective of what could be called 'the original idea' of recognition they shed only partial light on the importance of recognition for persons. Namely, for Hegel, the founding father of theories of recognition, recognition is not merely a phenomenon that has psychological, social and political importance in the lives of more or less fully fledged human persons and societies, but also an *ontologically* important phenomenon in that it is part of what constitutes human persons and their social and institutional world in the first place.⁸ In Hegel's view recognition is a central element of the psychological, social and institutional structures constitutive of the social world of persons. Thus, according to the original idea, recognition is a social ontological concept.

Importantly, this original idea has been taken up—more or less simultaneously with the mentioned discussions in social and political philosophy—in contemporary ‘non-metaphysical’ readings of Hegel and contemporary neo-Hegelian philosophizing more widely.⁹ These developments in Hegel-scholarship and Hegelian philosophy have, in principle, also made it much easier for analytical philosophy and Hegelian streams of thought to speak to each other, in that they have done much to free Hegel from the obscure associations attached to him and the generally bad press he has had within analytical philosophy.¹⁰ In brief, as anyone who has followed the recent wave of Hegelian literature knows, Hegel is nowadays not considered as representing a regress in philosophy back to dogmatic metaphysics that Kant already thoroughly criticized, but rather as continuing Kant’s critical program in his own way.

Secondly, even if Hegel himself lived and wrote before Darwin (and in fact did not accept evolutionism even in its Lamarckian form), contemporary readings appropriate Hegel in ways that are compatible with the nowadays indisputable fact that humans and their societies are a result of natural and cultural evolution. Thirdly, contrary to what was for a long time a standard interpretation in the English speaking world, on the more recent readings Hegel’s central term ‘spirit’ does not stand for an ethereal entity or cosmic principle determining human affairs, but rather for the historically developing concrete practices, psychological, social and institutional structures, and the realms of cultural representations of the human life-form as an interconnected whole. Many of the contributors to this volume have had leading roles in this broad movement of re-appropriating Hegel and Hegelian ideas in contemporary philosophy—and despite their differences, the concept of recognition has played important roles in their work. In short, according to several influential contemporary readings—by Robert Brandom, Robert Pippin, Paul Redding and others—recognition is a central concept of Hegel’s ontology of the ‘spiritual’ realm, which is close to co-extensive with those aspects of reality that social ontology is interested in.

Given the current state of discussions, it seems that theories of recognition might however have much to gain from detailed acquaintance and communication with the theories in contemporary social ontology by Bratman, Gilbert, Miller, Pettit, Searle, Tuomela and others. For instance, the nature of groups and institutions have been analysed in these theories in much more detail

than in the Hegelian tradition, and the same goes for examining how the social and institutional aspects of normativity relate to the possible pre-institutional aspects of normativity, for example in the theories of Joseph Raz and David Copp.¹¹ If contemporary advocates of Hegel want to start developing a Hegelian view of groups, institutions or normativity, they will be saved from re-inventing the wheel by using the existing accounts, as points of comparison. Currently, the Hegelian theories of recognition are relatively quickly satisfied by the general Hegelian idea that the same process that constitutes an “I” or person also constitutes some kind of “we”, without really looking into the different kinds of forms of collectivity or “we-ness” as loci of collective action, collective commitment and so forth. Also, whereas elaborations on the nature of *freedom*, especially with regard to the question how institutions can actualise freedom, are a distinct strength of the Hegelian theories, the ontology of institutions is often not developed in detail in contemporary Hegelianism. All in all, furthering the exchange between research on recognition and on contemporary social ontology promises to be of mutual benefit.

As for the contemporary debates about the “politics of recognition”—they too would benefit from the co-operation of social ontology and the more ontologically inclined Hegelian theories of recognition. For example, a worry has often been expressed that talking about recognition between groups easily leads to a reification of groups or collective identities, and thereby to a neglect of questions of dissent within groups, the irreducibility of personal identity to collective identity and so on. Sometimes one reads sweeping claims that such reification and the corresponding suppression of “difference” is essential to the idea of recognition in general. While we take this to be a gross simplification, it is in our view fair to say that the debates on politics of recognition suffer from a lack of adequate theoretical attention to the ontology of groups, collectives and collective action. There are numerous important issues to be scrutinized in this regard for those who are willing to draw on the best work done in the two contemporary fields of inquiry that this book aims to draw closer together.

3. What is “Recognition” in the Relevant Sense?

So far we have said next to nothing about what exactly is the concept or phenomenon of recognition that is the topic of the aforementioned debates and

of this book. Next, we want to make a few basic distinctions that should be useful for clarifying the conceptual landscape around the rather slippery term ‘recognition’. While it is clear that not all authors use the term in the same way, the different uses do not comprise a chaos, but tend to cluster around certain central meanings that are related in interesting ways.

First of all, there are three everyday usages of the term, all of which are present in the literature, sometimes connected in useful ways, other times confused in less useful ways.¹² One of them is arguably the paradigmatic sense that provides unity to most, even if not all, recent discussions in political philosophy and neo-Hegelianism using the term, and it is helpful to distinguish it from the other two. Firstly, ‘recognition’ can be used as synonymous with ‘*identification*’ (or ‘*re-identification*’). In this sense *anything* can be recognized i.e. identified numerically as the entity it is, qualitatively as an entity with certain qualities, and generically as belonging to a certain species. Secondly, ‘recognition’ can be used roughly synonymously with ‘*acknowledgement*’. In this sense, recognition or acknowledgement has *evaluative or normative entities or facts* as its objects, so that we can acknowledge something as valuable, as valid, as giving reasons, and so forth. Thirdly—and this is the paradigmatic sense of ‘recognition’ at least in most Hegel-influenced discussions—there is a sense of ‘recognition’ in which it seems only *persons* (and perhaps groups or collectives of persons) can be recognized.¹³

It is recognition in this emphatically *interpersonal* sense—which it may be best to distinguish from the two other senses by reserving the terms ‘*identification*’ and ‘*acknowledgement*’ for these respectively—that is at issue in Hegel’s fable of the “master and bondsman,” and that arguably forms the guiding thread running through most of the literature explicitly or implicitly inspired by Hegel’s elaborations on recognition.

What is then recognition in the interpersonal sense? Is it one single phenomenon, or are there perhaps several forms or dimensions of recognition? Those who think recognition has only one form subscribe to what might be called a *one-dimensional* view of recognition, whereas those who think recognition comes in several forms subscribe to a *multi-dimensional* view of recognition. If there are several forms or dimensions, what are they, and how are they related? Are they merely connected by something like family resemblances so that interpersonal recognition is a cluster- or family resemblance

concept, or are they related in more systematic ways so that recognition could perhaps be seen as a genus-concept in the traditional sense, covering the different forms as its species?

On what maybe the most influential recent Hegel-inspired account of recognition, that of Axel Honneth’s, recognition has several—and more exactly three—forms. Honneth calls these love, respect and esteem, respectively.¹⁴ Very generally speaking, all three are on Honneth’s account different kinds of positive or affirmative responses to persons, each to a different aspect of their personhood or personal identity. Love relates to persons as singular, needy beings capable of happiness and misery; respect relates to persons as capable of rational self-determination and bearers of rights and duties that follow thereof; and esteem relates to persons as having particular qualities, capacities and achievements that merit evaluative affirmation by others.

There is a further sense of ‘recognition’ that is closely reminiscent of interpersonal recognition—and therefore easily confused with it—but is arguably not quite the same thing. One of the potentially confusing similarities is that also this further sense of ‘recognition’—let us call it *institutional recognition*—has persons as its objects. Whereas interpersonal recognition focuses on persons *per se*, institutional recognition focuses on persons as bearers of institutional, or, to use Searle’s term, deontic powers (which it is further good in turn to distinguish conceptually from non-institutional deontic considerations familiar from Kantian and other moral theories—whether one thinks any of such considerations are valid or not). Utilizing Honneth’s triadic division, loving, respecting and having esteem for the other can all, as forms of interpersonal recognition, be understood as responses to persons that are not explicitly concerned with, or conditional on, their institutionally created deontic powers, such as rights or duties.¹⁵ In contrast, institutional recognition concerns institutional deontic powers explicitly.¹⁶

It may be, further, useful to distinguish between two senses of ‘institutional recognition’. One is the granting of deontic powers to persons by the appropriate authorities, and another is responding appropriately to persons as bearers of particular deontic powers they have been granted previously. For example, a police officer is granted particular powers, such as the right to arrest people in certain circumstances, and the duty to protect them in other circumstances. Whether one wants to call the granting of deontic powers ‘recognition’ maybe

a matter of taste, but it is certainly conceivable. The other sense of ‘institutional recognition’ is rather commonsensical. One responds to a police officer as a bearer of the relevant deontic powers appropriately, for instance, by not resisting arrest, or by not obstructing her from fulfilling her official duties.

In contrast to interpersonal recognition, these forms of ‘institutional recognition’ are in a distinct sense ‘impersonal’ even though they have persons as their objects: respecting John as a reasonable man capable of self-determination responds to him as an irreplaceable person, whereas ‘respecting’ his (or him as giving an) order to stop after speeding on a highway responds to him as a bearer of a role or position. We say in the latter kinds of cases that what takes place—both the ordering and the obeying—are not to be ‘taken personally’. Similarly, while granting deontic powers is typically conditional on certain features of the object person, any set of deontic powers or the institutional roles or positions they comprise are still fundamentally transferable to other persons (whereas John’s self-determination is not). In real life, the interpersonal and the institutional forms of ‘recognition’ may co-exist and mingle in many ways, but there are many obviously bad ways of their getting confused that lead both to dysfunctional interpersonal relations and dysfunctional institutions.¹⁷

As to interpersonal recognition, there are further questions concerning its nature as, on the one hand, *responsive to persons* or something about them, and, on the other hand, *creative or constitutive of persons*, something about them, or the life-form of persons more generally. One can debate about how these responsive and constitutive aspects of interpersonal recognition are related, what exactly is it that different forms of interpersonal recognition respond to, what exactly are they constitutive of, and how. As pointed out above, the general Hegelian idea is that interpersonal recognition is in various ways constitutive of psychological, social and institutional structures comprising of ‘spirit’ or the human life-form, but different authors cash out this general idea in quite different ways. Also, there are complex issues about how interpersonal recognition is related to different forms of identification, to institutional recognition, and more generally to the acknowledgement of norms, institutions and so on. Even if one takes interpersonal recognition as the central phenomenon, a full picture of the social world needs to have these closely related phenomena in view as well. These are all issues that the contributions to this collection are engaged with.

4. Chapter by Chapter Outline

This book is divided in three parts. The first part focuses on the social constitution of *personhood*. The second part addresses the role of recognition in the *human life-form as a whole*, or in what Hegel calls “spirit”. The third part discusses the role of recognition in various central elements of the human life-form, especially the nature of *collectives and institutions* and their relationships.

While the three parts have been arranged thematically, there is also a kind of historical progression: the first part discusses the introduction of the concept of recognition in Hegel, and the essays comment ways in which he preserves or modifies central Kantian themes. The second part discusses further the systematic place of recognition in the views of Hegel and surveys its developments in Marx, Dilthey, Gadamer, and the contemporary Hegel-influenced theories of Taylor, Ricoeur, Pinkard, Brandom and Pippin. The third part focuses largely on questions explicitly addressed by contemporary analytical social ontology, for example by Searle, Gilbert and Tuomela.

The chapters are thematically intertwined in many further ways and could have been grouped differently as well. All of them are self-standing essays, suitable for being read on their own in whatever order.

Part One: Recognition and the Social Ontology of Personhood

The first part of the collection focuses on the social constitution of personhood, examining whether the same processes that constitute social practices or the whole human life-form are also constitutive of persons themselves—that is, whether humans become and are persons only by being initiated in and participating in the lifeform. The *locus classicus* for this idea is Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where he argued that a self-consciousness is an essentially social achievement in that it only exists in a relation with another self-consciousness, and *is* only as recognized. In a recent influential essay, reprinted here, Robert Brandom tackles these claims in an original manner. His essay is followed by two new essays (by Robert Pippin and Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer), which comment Brandom’s claims critically while also developing independent lines of argumentation.

In Chapter 2, “The Structure of Desire and Recognition: Self-Consciousness and Self-Constitution,” Robert Brandom focuses on the difficult question of

how desiring animals come to develop relations of recognition whereby they distribute authority amongst themselves and thus institute a space of normative statuses. He conceives the transition from desire to recognition as a transition from the tripartite structure of want and fulfillment of biological desire to a socially structured, reciprocal, reflexive recognition. Brandom proceeds by reconstructing Hegel's notion of experience and self-consciousness and argues that at the center of Hegel's phenomenology of consciousness is the idea of experience being shaped by identification and sacrifice. Experience is the process of self-constitution and self-transformation of a self-conscious being that risks its own being. Ultimately, at the center of the Hegelian notion of selfhood is the realisation that selves are the loci of accountability. To be a self, it is concluded, is to be the subject of normative statuses that refer to commitments; it is to be able to take a normative stand on things, to commit oneself and undertake responsibilities.

Brandom's chapter shows more generally how the coming about of selves or persons as undertakers of commitments and as subjects and authorities of normative statuses, on the one hand, and the coming about of the world of collectively administered norms, on the other hand, can be seen as aspects of one and the same process in which recognition, as Brandom defines it, is a central factor.

In Chapter 3, "On Hegel's Claim that Self-Consciousness is 'Desire Itself' (*Begierde überhaupt*)," Robert B. Pippin provides a rival take on the connections between desire, self-consciousness and recognition in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel's text is very dense and has given rise to various interpretations. Hegel makes the claim that self-consciousness is "desire itself" (*Begierde überhaupt*), and that it finds its satisfaction only in the recognition of another self-consciousness. Pippin's essay sheds light on these claims, commenting also Brandom's chapter, and illuminates the nature of Hegel's view on the fundamental dependence of self-conscious beings on one another. The very core feature of free persons, their self-consciousness, is inherently social.

On Pippin's view Hegel treats self-consciousness as (i) a practical *achievement*, the result of an attempt, never as an immediate presence of the self to itself, and (ii) sees such an attempt and achievement as necessarily involving a relation to other people, a social relation, which is inherently normative.

To interpret Hegel's claims, in Chapter Four of *Phenomenology*, one has to take a stand on how the preceding discussion bears on them. Pippin argues that Hegel did not make a fresh start, merely changing the subject, or merely reconsider the same questions discussed in previous chapters, but continues his argument of the previous chapters by addressing new questions. Pippin stresses that Hegel's overall argument can best be understood as modifying central Kantian doctrines.

In Chapter 4, "Intuitions, Understanding, and the Human Form of Life," Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer, who elsewhere has defended yet another reading of Hegel's argument in the chapter of *Phenomenology* in question, addresses a question that he thinks is not adequately dealt with in Brandom's approach. How does (inferential) *sapience* or *understanding* relate to (non-inferential) human *sentience* or *intuition*? He explores "intuition" and "understanding" as the two "roots" of human sapience. First, he emphasizes the need for an appropriate notion of logical analysis for a *philosophical* anthropology, which does not merely describe particular behaviour or reconstruct phylogenetic histories as *evolutionary* anthropology does, but focuses on the most basic and general conceptual distinctions between life-forms.

Stekeler-Weithofer then argues that human personhood is a matter of being actively engaged in joint practices embedded in a cultural history. He interprets consciousness as involving jointly exercised intentional control, which already appeals to generic norms and practical traditions and therefore cannot be reduced, as Brandom's analysis suggests, to sanctioning behaviour of individuals. Stekeler-Weithofer's radical claim is that learning the central person-making competence, namely conceptual understanding, takes place in cooperative relations that involve recognitive attitudes between participants in a thick ethical sense. This means that the ontology of the human life-form is fundamentally ethical.

Part Two: Hegel, Marx, and Beyond: Recognition, Spirit, and Species Being

The second part has four essays, focussing on Hegel's usages of recognition in the context of his theory of spirit more generally. This part contains a re-examination of Hegel's view on recognition by a pioneer and central reference in the contemporary revival of interest in recognition, Ludwig Siep, as well as essays by Heikki Ikäheimo and Paul Redding on Hegel's social

ontology and his full theory of Spirit. Finally, an essay by Michael Quante discusses the role of recognition in Marx, who is probably the most influential philosopher of all times influenced by Hegelian ideas.

In Chapter 5, “Mutual Recognition: Hegel and Beyond”, *Ludwig Siep* re-examines the role of recognition as a principle of practical philosophy that he discussed extensively in his pathbreaking 1979 monograph *Anerkennung als Prinzip der praktischen Philosophie* (yet to be translated in English). Since then, he has developed his views further significantly. This paper makes an overview of some of the most important recent work on recognition, as well as examines the central claims of his early book both in light of recent developments in the field and his own subsequent work. He starts with general comments on the significance of recognition in Hegel’s writings on objective spirit, and then sketches what he considers to be the main internal problems of Hegel’s theory of recognition within his philosophy in general. Siep also discusses what he sees as problems in the recent theories of recognition, and in the final section puts forward his own current view of the role that the concept of recognition can play in social philosophy, suggesting that it is more limited than argued for in his 1979 book.

Chapter 6 by *Heikki Ikäheimo*, “Holism and Normative Essentialism in Hegel’s Social Ontology”, focuses on two important features of Hegel’s social ontology. He starts by pointing out a lacuna in contemporary analytical social ontology, namely a lack of attention to the ontological constitution of the arguably central entities of the social and institutional world—persons. What he calls Hegel’s “holism”, is Hegel’s attempt to grasp the constitution of persons and the rest of the social and institutional world as an interconnected whole. The second feature of Hegel’s social ontology is his Aristotelian “normative essentialism”. Ikäheimo argues that at least a sweeping rejection of normative essentialism in social ontology is self-deceptive, and then continues to reconstruct the rational kernel of Hegel’s quite ambitious brand of normative essentialism.

Ikäheimo claims that three principles are central to Hegel’s social ontology—concrete freedom, self-consciousness, and interpersonal recognition—and discusses in detail how these are related and how they are essential to both Hegel’s holism and his normative essentialism. He then focuses on the question what exactly interpersonal recognition must be if it is to execute all the tasks it has for Hegel, criticizes construals of the concept that are

inadequate in this regard, and spells out the content of recognitive attitudes in a way that in his view is adequate, by means of the concepts of freedom, affirmation and significance. Ikäheimo continues by suggesting ways to understand the teleological nature of Hegel’s normative essentialism, and concludes by pointing out three features of the young Marx’s reinterpretation and utilization of elements of Hegel’s social ontology.

Paul Redding’s essay “The Relevance of Hegel’s ‘Absolute Spirit’ to Social Normativity” (Chapter 7) goes to the heart of the Hegelian conceptual apparatus. It examines, first, Hegel’s notion of recognition and his normative approach to social life, and argues that individual subjectivity must be conceived so that its reduction to the status of *mere* bearer of social norms can be avoided. Here Redding sides with Gadamer’s criticism of Dilthey’s more empiricist transformation of Hegel’s ‘objective spirit’ in Dilthey’s influential distinction between natural sciences and *Geisteswissenschaften*.

Secondly, in line with Hegel’s ‘original idea’, Redding explores recognition not only in relation to subjective and objective spirit but also in relation to *absolute* spirit (roughly, collective self-representations in art, religion, and philosophy). Redding argues that the notion of recognition can be used to relieve even the concept of *absolute* spirit of the charges (still shared by Dilthey and Gadamer) of Hegel as positing a pre-critical ‘spiritualistic’ ontology. Redding argues that neither philosophy nor theology is for Hegel a matter of pre-critical metaphysics, to which he is often taken to be committed.

The contribution by *Michael Quante*, “Recognition as the Social Grammar of Species Being in Marx” (Chapter 8), discusses the social ontology of the young Karl Marx from the point of view of the concept of recognition, arguing for a much stronger presence of central Hegelian motives in his thinking than usually acknowledged. Quante examines the nature of Marx’s essentialism and analyses in detail his notion of ‘species being,’ locating its historical background in Hegel’s thought and its interpretations and modifications by Ludwig Feuerbach and Moses Hess. Quante’s claim is that in his 1844 writings Marx developed a conception of recognition, in close connection to the theories of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* and his *Philosophy of Right*. For Marx, this concept has both anthropological and evaluative significance, and it is an essential element both in determining the features that non-estranged social organisation has to have, and in making explicit which features make the division of labour in capitalist societies alienated.

Part Three: Groups, Institutions and Recognition

The third part of the book discusses more specific themes of contemporary analytical social ontology by Searle, Gilbert, Tuomela and others. It has five essays—one of them by Gilbert herself—addressing issues to do with primitive forms of sociality, group-formation, institutional power, and the tricky question of how the instituting “we” and the instituted “we” relate to each other—all from the point of view of the idea of recognition.

In her paper “Mutual Recognition and Some Related Phenomena” (Chapter 9), *Margaret Gilbert* continues to develop her influential Plural Subject account of social reality, and discusses three closely related phenomena. In her terminology, one is *common knowledge* of co-presence. Here she draws on Charles Taylor’s challenge to conventional accounts of common knowledge. The second and third phenomena are what she calls *mutual recognition* and *joint attention*. Gilbert suggests that common knowledge of co-presence is essential to mutual recognition, and this, in turn, is essential to joint attention. Gilbert suggests that, through mutual recognition subjects constitute a fundamental kind of social group, arrive at *sociality*, and thereby pave the way for constituting concrete groups with more concrete character.

In Chapter 10, titled “Social Space and the Ontology of Recognition”, *Italo Testa* discusses central concepts of John Searle’s influential theory of social ontology and asks how the concept of recognition relates to them. Testa points out that certain holistic properties of individuals and social realities are *sui generis* social phenomena—ontologically subjective or, more precisely, *ontologically intersubjective*—insofar as they do not exist independently of the existence of a certain type of interaction, namely interaction characterized by recognitive relations. Testa goes on to articulate these properties with the help of the notions of constitutive rules and deontic powers. He then argues that recognitive phenomena, which on a Searlean account are specific to human interaction, are in part proper to animal interaction as well. This suggests that recognitive relations could play a constitutive role that is much broader than appears to be the case on the Searlean account.

In Chapter 11, “Recognition, Acknowledgement, and Acceptance”, *Arto Laitinen* discusses three phenomena all called “recognition”. The first is mutual recognition between persons in the Hegelian or Honnethian sense, which Laitinen examines in the first section. Secondly Laitinen studies, by

drawing also on the work of Rovane and Gilbert, whether recognition of persons is necessary, sufficient and/or paradigmatic for the existence of groups. While mutual recognition has an inherent tendency towards group-formation and is certainly paradigmatic and desirable for the formation of groups, it is not sufficient for the existence of groups. (He admits that there might be (somewhat exotic) counter examples to the claim that it is necessary.) In the third and fourth sections Laitinen discusses responsive “acknowledgement” of reasons and institutive “acceptance” of social norms, constitutive rules or institutional facts, and asks what over and above mere “identification” the relevant attitudes are. He also argues that it is crucial to distinguish these two phenomena that have often been conflated—there are reasons that do not originate in the acceptance of social norms, and occasionally social norms fail to have genuinely valid normative implications to be acknowledged. It is one thing to accept that a social norm is in force and another thing to acknowledge its valid normative significance. Laitinen further points out that acceptance and acknowledgement typically enable new ways of (mis)recognition concerning persons.

The contribution by *Titus Stahl* (Chapter 12), “Institutional Power, Collective Acceptance, and Recognition”, is concerned with the role of recognition in institutional power, which is a subclass of social power that rests on (collectively) accepted status functions. Stahl analyses this in terms of entitlements and capacities of persons to influence other people’s reasons to act by issuing demands that a system of status functions entitles them to issue.

Stahl argues for a specific ‘recognition account’ of institutional power. At the core of the recognition account of A’s institutional power in a group is the readiness of the group-members to grant each other the authority to sanction each other’s behaviour in regard to some norm or rule R, which in turn prescribes the members to respect the institutional obligations entailed by A’s institutional status entitling A to make legitimate demands on the group members’ behaviour.

In “The Problem of Collective Identity: The Instituting We and the Instituted We” (Chapter 13) Vincent Descombes tackles the issue of whether groups or their constitutions come first. He articulates and defends Hegel’s somewhat paradoxical view that in some sense it is impossible, always too late, for a group to make a constitution for itself. He starts with Hegel’s discussion

of the question “Who is to frame a constitution?” and introduces a distinction between two concepts of a social context for action, one atomistic and the other holistic or moral (*geistig*). Next, Descombes explains the Hegelian notion of a “spirit of the nation” by reference to Montesquieu. Montesquieu, the author of *The Spirit of Laws*, introduced a social concept of institution, as opposed to a merely political one, pointing out that legislators could establish laws, but that they could not establish manners and customs. Thirdly, Descombes raises the question whether a group of individuals could establish an institution by an act of collective commitment. He argues that the collective subject of institutions could not be expressed by what the linguists call an “inclusive We” (restricted to the present persons) since the personal exercise of instituting powers requires that an institutional context is already given.

Notes

¹ See for example ed. A. Gutmann, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994 (including Charles Taylor’s highly influential essay “The Politics of Recognition”); A. Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Cambridge Mass., MIT Press, 1995; A. Honneth, *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2007; N. Fraser and A. Honneth, *Recognition or Redistribution: A Philosophical-Political Exchange*, London, Verso, 2003; P. Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 2005; S. Thompson, *The Political Theory of Recognition: A Critical Introduction*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2006; eds. B. v. d. Brink & D. Owen, *Recognition and Power*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007; J.-P. Deranty, *Beyond Communication: A Critical Study of Axel Honneth’s Social Philosophy*, Leiden, Brill, 2009; eds. H.-C. Schmidt am Busch & C. Zürn, *The Philosophy of Recognition: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2010. See, further, L. Siep, *Anerkennung als Prinzip der praktischen Philosophie: Untersuchungen zu Hegels Jenaer Philosophie des Geistes*, Freiburg, Karl Alber, 1979; A. Wildt, *Autonomie und Anerkennung: Hegels Moralitätskritik im Lichte seiner Fichte-Rezeption*, Stuttgart, Clett-Cotta, 1982; R. Pippin, *Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989; R. Pippin, *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008; R. Brandom, *Making it Explicit: Reason, Representing and Discursive Commitment*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press,

1994; T. Pinkard, *Hegel’s Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994; R. Williams, *Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other*, Albany SUNY Press, 1992; R. Williams, *Hegel’s Ethics of Recognition*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997; P. Redding, *Hegel’s Hermeneutics*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1996. A more extensive bibliography on recognition can be found in the internet at www.recognitionforum.com.

² See for example D. Lewis, *Convention*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press., 1969; M. Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, London, Routledge, 1989; M. Gilbert, *Living Together: Rationality, Sociality, and Obligation*, Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield, 1996; M. Gilbert, *Sociality and Responsibility: New Essays in Plural Subject Theory*, Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield, 2000; M. Gilbert, *A Theory of Political Obligation: Membership, Commitment, and the Bonds of Society*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006; P. Pettit, *The Common Mind*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993; P. Pettit, *A Theory of Freedom*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2001; J. Searle, *The Constitution of Social Reality*, New York, The Free Press, 1995; J. Searle, *Making the Social World: Structure of Civilization*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010; R. Tuomela, *A Theory of Social Action*, Dordrecht, Reidel, 1984; R. Tuomela, *The Importance of Us*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995; R. Tuomela, *Cooperation: A Philosophical Study*, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 2000; R. Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Social Practices: A Collective Acceptance View*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002; R. Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007; eds. H. Ikäheimo et al. *On The Nature of Social and Institutional Reality*, Jyväskylä, SoPhi, 2001; M. Bratman, *Faces of Intention*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; M. Bratman, *Structures of Agency*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007; and S. Miller, *Social Action*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

³ C. Gould, *Marx’s Social Ontology: Individuality and Community in Marx’s Theory of Social Reality*, Cambridge, Mass., The MIT Press, 1978, xv–xvi. Gould’s book was central in giving the term ‘social ontology’ wider currency. An even earlier usage of the term in this sense is J. B. Gittler’s “Social Ontology and the Criteria for Definitions in Sociology”, *Sociometry*, vol. 14, no. 4, 1951, pp. 355–365.

⁴ Gould, *Marx’s Social Ontology*, p. xvi.

⁵ See M. Quante, “On the Limits of Construction and Individualism in Social Ontology”, in eds. Ikäheimo et al., *On the Nature*, pp. 136–164.

⁶ For arguments for the view that recognition is, in different ways, constitutive of personhood, see eds. H. Ikäheimo & A. Laitinen, *Dimensions of Personhood*, Exeter, Imprint Academic, 2007.

⁷ On social commitments, see for example Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality*, pp.18–19, 32–45 and *passim*. For explicit uses of “recognition” in different senses,

see for example Searle, *Making the Social World*, p. 8 and passim; Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, pp. 217–218 and 470; see also Gilbert's contribution to this volume, Chapter 9; Pettit, *A Theory of Freedom*, pp. 24, 79 and passim; and P. Pettit & G. Brennan, *The Economy of Esteem*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 3, 20–21, 33 and 185–194.

⁸ Hegel took over the concept from Fichte, whose version was more rudimentary. See for example Siep, *Anerkennung als Prinzip*. On Fichte's account, the concept has less social ontological significance, although it is central for self-conscious subjectivity. In Hegel-interpretation, on the other hand, there are well known complexities. The role of "recognition" in Hegel's writings is the subject of significant debate, partly because his discussion of recognition is always embedded in larger argumentative structures. The best known textual context is the so-called "master and bondsman"-passage, and the transition from natural desire to mutual recognition between self-conscious subjects in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977 [1807], §§178–96). Whether recognition is central for Hegel's mature system, for example in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (ed. Allen Wood, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991[1821]) has divided interpreters. It is probably fair to say that any representation of "Hegel's theory of recognition" will be a selective reconstruction. Yet, interpreters as different as Brandom, Honneth, Redding, Siep and Williams all agree that for Hegel recognition is a concept with social ontological significance.

⁹ Surprisingly, also between these two streams of discussion about recognition—on the one hand in political philosophy and on the other hand in Hegel-scholarship and neo-Hegelian philosophy—there has been so far very little exchange. For one attempt at unification, see H. Ikäheimo, "Making the Best of What We Are: Recognition as an Ontological and Ethical Concept", in eds. H.-C. Schmidt am Busch & C. Zurn, *The Philosophy of Recognition*.

¹⁰ See P. Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

¹¹ D. Copp, *Morality, Normativity and Society*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995; J. Raz, *Practical Reason and Norms*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990 (1975).

¹² We are now only talking about the English term 'recognition', not Hegel's original 'Anerkennung' nor its equivalents in languages other than German or English. We have analysed these three senses in more detail in our "Analysing Recognition – Identification, Acknowledgement and Recognitive Attitudes between Persons", in eds. v. d. Brink & Owen, *Recognition and Power*, pp. 33–56.

¹³ There are many further ways in which "recognition" has been used, and there are various borderline cases between the three broad classes. H. L. A. Hart's "rule of recognition" is a borderline case between identification and acknowledgement—it is

roughly a rule for identifying the norms that are legally valid. (See H. L. A. Hart, *The Concept of Law*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1961.) Further, what we here label "acknowledgement" is quite a broad class. It covers first of all what Searle and Tuomela call "acceptance" or "recognition", which is constitutive of the institutional reality, and secondly, responsiveness to genuinely normative reasons, whether institutional or not. (Below, in Chapter 11 by Laitinen it is argued that these two should not be conflated.) Compare with David Copp's distinction between "normativity type-one" and "normativity type-two" in *Morality, Normativity and Society*, p. 10 onwards. What we below call institutional recognition of persons is another borderline case, closely intertwined with acknowledgement of norms. It is also a complicated question whether it would be misleading to count the phenomenon that Margaret Gilbert (in *On Social Facts*, and chapter 9 below) calls "mutual recognition" as just one more detailed case of interpersonal recognition in the sense of Honneth, Taylor, Hegel et al. Finally, drawing on the work of James Tully and Stanley Cavell, the term "acknowledgement" has been used by Patchen Markell, (*Bound by Recognition*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2003) in contrast to what he calls "recognition". Markell provides a detailed view of the difference between two general approaches, one aiming at recognition and the other characterized by acknowledgement. One crucial point here concerns acknowledgement of one's own finitude, and lowering one's ambition on the ideals of sovereign agency allegedly inherent in the theories of recognition. His usage of acknowledgement is thus different from any of the three things we list above (identification, acceptance/acknowledgement, and recognition).

¹⁴ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*.

¹⁵ Note, however, that in his discussion of respect Honneth himself does not clearly distinguish between the interpersonal and the institutional senses of recognition.

¹⁶ Note that non-institutional interpersonal recognition, especially respect, may however concern non-institutional deontic features, assuming there are such.

¹⁷ One aspect of modernization is usually thought to be a differentiation of interpersonal and institutional relations. Hence, one might argue that such an evaluative judgment involves a typically modern way of looking at societies. From an ontological perspective, however, it is arguable that no institutional system can exist without forms of interpersonal recognition. One can 'respect' the policeman as a bearer of institutional powers without having much respect for him as an individual person, yet it would be a completely different claim to say that there could be 'respect' for institutional powers in a society even if no-one had absolutely no interpersonal respect for any others as having (non- or pre-institutional) authority on his or her behaviour. Distinguishing between the interpersonal and the institutional is of decisive importance for clarity in social ontology.