

Is Recognition a Zero-Sum Game?

Ralph Shain

For society people, *chic* emanates from a comparatively small number of individuals, who project it to a considerable distance—more and more faintly the further one is from their intimate center. . . . But Odette was one of those persons . . . who do not share these notions, but imagine *chic* to be something quite other, which assumes different aspects according to the circle to which they themselves belong, but has the special characteristic . . . of being directly accessible to all.

Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*

I.

In the last two decades, a number of political theorists have published a great deal of theory that argues for the centrality of the idea of recognition. In the most prominent of these papers, Charles Taylor makes the claim that “recognition is a human need.”¹ The immediate spur for this flurry of interest has been a discussion of multiculturalism and its attendant issues, which are expressed in terms of “group recognition.”² This work focuses on the importance of group identity or social characteristics, as well as on their relation to individualism and liberalism. These issues are important,

1. Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in Amy Gutmann, ed., *Multiculturalism and “The Politics of Recognition”* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1992), p. 26.

2. Other reasons for the prominence accorded to this idea, I believe, include the lingering charisma of Alexandre Kojève’s interpretation of Hegel and the failure of socio-economic theories of human motivation of both the classical (profit-maximizing) and Marxian (class-affiliation) varieties. The desire for recognition explains cases recalcitrant to either theory, such as that of the starving artist, while subsuming the successes of both.

and there is much to be learned from this work; but what is lacking in these papers and books is an analysis of the concept that they purport to take as central: recognition. It is this concept that I will examine here, specifically by raising the question posed in the article's title.

By making "recognition" central to social theory—a move that I think is long overdue—these theorists face a serious risk if it should turn out that recognition is a zero-sum game. The prospect that social life is a zero-sum game is widely recognized as an obstacle to developing a political theory, especially by social contract theorists. John Rawls, in *A Theory of Justice*, recognizes that self-respect is a very important primary good, "perhaps the most important primary good," and that "our self-respect normally depends upon the respect of others."³ Rawls's assumption that individuals are most concerned about their own life projects raised an enormous amount of well-justified criticism for presupposing a fundamental individualism; what was overlooked, though, was the necessity of this premise for avoiding what Rawls rightly perceived to be a serious threat to any social contract theory: the prospect of the zero-sum game, which would preclude one of the fundamental requirements of justice, i.e., that social life should be mutually advantageous.⁴ Social contract theorists are not the only political theorists who worry about the prospect of the zero-sum game; egalitarian ideals in general are threatened by the hierarchical outcomes involved. It is in this broader horizon that I wish to pose the question: what happens to egalitarian ideals if recognition is—as it appears to be—a zero-sum game?

Zero-sum games, in the narrowest sense of the term, involve a situation in which no participant can gain unless someone loses. As such, they are inescapably competitive. Less narrowly, they are also thought of as situations that have dramatically hierarchical outcomes. It should be noted that zero-sum games do not necessarily have harsher outcomes than non-zero-sum games. "Running 100 meters in less than 10 seconds" is a non-zero-sum criterion, since the achievement by one person in no way precludes (or even hinders) its accomplishment by another,

3. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1971), pp. 440, 178.

4. This basic individualism is not thought by Rawls to be sufficient to ensure self-confidence; people must also "avoid any assessment of the relative value of one another's way of life" (*ibid.*, p. 442). Rawls does not discuss the possibility that the very structure of decision-making involves or implies such assessments.

whereas “winning a track meet” is a zero-sum criterion. It is easy to see that the harshness of the outcome is a function of the relative difficulty of achieving the goal, since far fewer people fall into the former category than the latter. If the bar is set low enough, a zero-sum game can have very egalitarian outcomes, with nearly all games ending in ties, such as tic-tac-toe. Furthermore, whether a game is zero-sum may depend on factors external to the criteria used to determine the winners. If a game has multiple identical prizes, it will be a zero-sum game if there are more applicants than prizes, but non-zero-sum if there are fewer applicants than prizes (as long as the rules specify that all of the prizes should be distributed). But this is all by the way. Zero-sum games typically have harshly hierarchical results, and theorists are correct to worry about them.

Without going through a thorough analysis of the full semantic potentials of the word “recognition,” we can describe three types:

(1) *Recognition as identification or acknowledgement.* In this sense of the term, one can recognize a person, but also a plant, an animal, a fact, a pattern, or a situation. This sort of recognition can have a negative or neutral valence as easily as a positive one; the added specifications needed to bring this sort of recognition in line with a positive prestige—recognizing a celebrity or being acknowledged by one—would move those situations into one of the other categories. This category is not the sort of “recognition” with which I am concerned.

(2) *Non-zero-sum forms of recognition,* such as a high school diploma or a driver’s license. Although the track example mentioned above shows that non-zero-sum criteria need not be so egalitarian, these examples are more typical. In fact, a category like “running 100 meters in less than 10 seconds” takes on the importance it does because of its exclusivity, which makes it the functional equivalent of a zero-sum criterion.

(3) *Zero-sum forms of recognition,* such as a competitive prize, a chess rating, or bridge points, as well as any sort of ranking or “best of” list.

It might be thought that recognition could not be a zero-sum game, because it is possible to achieve recognition in an entirely new category. These new categories might arise out of nowhere (e.g., inventing the Numa Numa dance, or any number of categories in the *Guinness Book of World Records*), or a particularly charismatic individual might achieve general recognition at a very high level from a field in which no one had yet done so (e.g., Muhammad Ali, Woodward and Bernstein). But it is not clear that the prestige in a new category is a gain made at no one’s expense,

or whether the prestige of others suffers. Certainly the enormous gain in prestige attached to playing the electric guitar during the British Invasion wiped out the prestige associated with playing the accordion.

In one way, I have already answered the question raised in the title: some forms of recognition are zero-sum, while others are not. But it would be premature to be satisfied with this answer, since non-zero-sum games may have zero-sum aspects or effects. This possibility arises from the reflexive aspect of forms of recognition: they compete with each other for recognition. It may be that achievements that are non-zero-sum are considered to be less important as more people attain them (and failure to attain them will carry more and more of a stigma). Non-zero-sum achievements may simply confer less prestige than zero-sum achievements. So, another way of putting the question might be: which kinds of recognition matter—zero-sum, non-zero-sum, or both? If theorists claim, as Taylor does, that recognition is a need, then which kind of recognition is needed—zero-sum or non-zero-sum? In the remainder of this article, I will use the term “zero-sum game” loosely, but in a way that captures the worries that political theorists have. To ask if recognition in this sense is a zero-sum game is to ask if recognition is necessarily hierarchical.

The specific question that I raise is not discussed in the literature. In the next section, I will examine Taylor’s “The Politics of Recognition” in order to show how a number of problems arise from a failure to address the issue explicitly. But to say that the question is not discussed is not to say that it is not answered. There is an implicit assumption that recognition is not a zero-sum game. Sometimes this assumption is made explicit, as in the following footnote from a paper by Nancy Fraser:

Here I am assuming the distinction, now fairly standard in moral philosophy, between respect and esteem. According to this distinction, respect is owed universally to every person in virtue of shared humanity; esteem, in contrast, is accorded differentially on the basis of persons’ specific traits, accomplishments or contributions. Thus, while the injunction to respect everyone equally is perfectly sensible, the injunction to esteem everyone equally is oxymoronic.⁵

Although widely assumed, neither Fraser nor any of the other theorists argue for the possibility of a universal, equal recognition or respect. I think

5. Nancy Fraser, “Recognition without Ethics?” *Theory, Culture & Society* 18 (2003): 39n6.

this may be due to the general assumption that it has been proven by Hegel in the master-slave dialectic. I will return to this issue in the third part of the article.

II.

Taylor's argument proceeds through two phases. In the first phase, Taylor characterizes the shift in European history to democratic political systems as a shift from a politics of honor to a politics of recognition. According to Taylor, honor differs from recognition and, although supplanted as a basis for politics, continues in awards:

I am using honor in the *ancien régime* sense in which it is intrinsically linked to inequalities. For some to have honor in this sense, it is essential that not everyone have it. This is the sense in which Montesquieu uses it in his description of monarchy. Honor is intrinsically a matter of "*preferences*." It is also the sense in which we use the term when we speak of honoring someone by giving some public award, for example, the Order of Canada. Clearly, this award would be without worth if tomorrow we decided to give it to every adult Canadian.⁶

The key figures in his story are Rousseau, Kant, Herder, and Hegel. With Rousseau, the idea of individual authenticity becomes central, and the political ideal becomes one of mutual, equal recognition. Kant shifts the idea of individual dignity from emotion to rationality, and Herder establishes that authenticity/dignity can be thought of as cultural as well as individual. Hegel establishes that human beings are "dialogical." Of these figures, Rousseau is central for Taylor's account, as he mediates between the old idea of honor and the Stoic/Christian discourse that condemned the seeking of honor. Rousseau's solution to the problem is equal honor: "The answer seems to be equality or, more exactly, the balanced reciprocity that underpins equality."⁷

In the second phase, Taylor deals with three examples: Quebec, Rushdie, and canon formation in universities. With the example of Quebec, we get to the central, twofold point of Taylor's essay, which is to provide an analysis of Québécois cultural separatism in which: (1) it is seen as a kind of liberalism rather than a kind of communitarianism;⁸ and (2) this

6. Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," p. 27.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 46–47.

8. There is a shift in the terms of discussion here. In phase one, Taylor speaks in terms of Kant and Rousseau and honor and recognition. In the second phase, Taylor speaks in

kind of (or interpretation of) liberalism is understood to be superior to the individual rights version, because it is more difference-friendly and more suited to multiculturalism. In discussing canon formation, Taylor wishes to distinguish himself from other multiculturalists by establishing his position as less extreme.

Not everything goes smoothly in the move from the first to the second phase of Taylor's argument. To begin with, Taylor never explains how Quebec separatism avoids the problems that he finds in Rousseau. The first phase ends with a discussion of the political problems that arise from Rousseau's theory. The flaw is that in order to achieve mutual, equal recognition, a community requires a common purpose. For Rousseau, "equality of esteem requires a tight unity of purpose that seems to be incompatible with any differentiation."⁹ As Taylor points out, "This has been the formula for the most terrible forms of homogenizing tyranny, starting with the Jacobins and extending to the totalitarian regimes of our century."¹⁰ The Quebec case of linguistic and cultural separatism is one of common purpose, so it would fall prey to Taylor's objection to Rousseau. Taylor's point would seem to be that, unlike the Rousseauian case, the common purpose of Quebec separatism is compatible with some differentiation. This leaves us with the unsatisfying conclusion that we should accept Quebec separatism because it is not one of "the most terrible forms of homogenizing tyranny."

Next, Taylor fails to address the issues raised by the concepts of potentiality and actuality. In the first phase, Taylor discusses the Kantian idea that respect for human individuality involves respect for rational *potentiality*, whereas some multiculturalists demand respect for cultural *actuality*. According to Taylor: "But at least in the intercultural context, a stronger demand has recently arisen: that one accord equal respect to actually evolved cultures."¹¹ A number of problems internal to Taylor's argument arise here, problems that touch on the heart of the issues involved in hierarchy and recognition.¹² First, Taylor fails to discuss the possibility that

terms of liberalism, and the theorists he refers to are Ronald Dworkin, John Rawls, Bruce Ackerman, and Michael Sandel. This shift does not affect my argument.

9. Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," p. 50.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

12. I am only raising internal criticisms. Excellent external criticisms have been provided by Jürgen Habermas and Anthony Appiah in their replies to Taylor. These are included in Gutmann, ed., *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition"*.

one could make a minor conceptual change in the canon-formation view by requiring respect for cultural potentiality, bringing it into line with the Kantian view. Of course, this may be a minor conceptual change, but it is doubtful that it would be considered to be a minor change in terms of the demands of multiculturalists for cultural respect. This suggests a second problem, which is that the Kantian idea of respecting rational potential cannot be accepted at face value and meets with crippling objections.

Any view that puts itself forward as a theory of equal, universal recognition faces two problems (obviously enough): (1) universality¹³ and (2) gradation. The concept of “potentiality” is introduced to solve the problem of universality, as Taylor points out. But it fails to do so, since potentiality, as usually assessed, is something that some people do not have (for example, I have no potential to be a star in the World Cup). And potentiality, as usually considered, fails the second test as well: potential is something of which one can have more or less. These two problems will be central to the analysis that follows, since for any characteristic that is proposed as deserving of recognition, it would need to be established that it is universal and non-graded.¹⁴ This latter problem is elided through use of the phrase “mutual recognition,” because mutuality is not the same as equality. A chess grandmaster and master recognize each other mutually through their respective rankings, but their recognition is not equal.

Rationality and autonomy both face problems of gradation. Some are more rational than others; some are more autonomous than others. Rousseau’s “common purpose” does not escape this problem, since some contribute more than others to a common purpose. Of course, here we have left behind the Kantian use of “reason” and “autonomy” as non-empirical (i.e., noumenal) concepts. A Kantian can appeal to the noumenal nature of these concepts in order to say that they are universal and non-graded, since one can say whatever one wants about non-empirical concepts. But this strikes me as a refutation of, rather than a support for, the Kantian view.

Leaving aside a priori thinking, we can note that potential plays an interesting role in the economy of recognition. Being judged according to

13. By “universality,” I mean all human beings. Equal recognition for all citizens of one country is not sufficient, since it does not provide a concept of equal human rights. In fact, it is likely to be destructive of such a concept, since it is likely to result from, or result in, competitive and destructive nationalism.

14. Also, that it is of merit. Cases where people desire negatives exist, but I am leaving them aside to simplify matters.

potential when young (as opposed to being judged according to achievement) is a great privilege. But this only holds true when one is judged according to one's own self-image and one's own desires. If judged according to another's desires and self-image, as in the case of Kant's criticism of the South Sea Islanders in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, such judgments denigrate rather than respect others.

Aside from these two criticisms, there is another that is more important for an analysis of recognition. This third problem is the way in which ideas relegated to the concept of "honor" reassert themselves as intrinsic to recognition in Taylor's analysis of canon formation. As Taylor points out in his discussion of canon formation, one needs to know about a culture in order to recognize it; not to know anything about it is not to recognize it but to condescend to it:

Moreover, the giving of such a [favorable] judgment on demand is an act of breathtaking condescension. No one can really mean it as a genuine act of respect. It is more in the nature of a pretend act of respect given on the insistence of its supposed beneficiary.¹⁵

This would seem to contradict Taylor's discussion of the recognition of individuals in the first phase of his essay, where the concepts of rationality and potentiality are introduced to obviate the need to know anything about an individual. Stated more generally, in the first phase, Taylor treats honor as entirely separate from recognition; being lauded for excellence is a question of honor and is not a matter of recognition.¹⁶ But in discussing canon formation, assessment of excellence is treated as part and parcel of cultural recognition.

This unresolved tension in Taylor's discussion is not due to his analysis; it is embedded in the political common sense of democratic politics. Although Taylor wants to direct our thinking about liberalism toward authenticity and away from individual rights, his main strategy is to appeal to political common sense in order to argue that Quebec linguistic separatism accords with liberal ideals. Looking too deeply into the pre-suppositions underlying this common sense is, therefore, not in Taylor's interest.

15. Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," p. 70.

16. See the first quotation from Taylor in this section.

III.

As I noted earlier, I think that the assumption that politics can be based on mutual, equal, universal recognition is based on the idea that Hegel has established this as true. This assumption is made explicit in the interpretations of Hegel by Alexandre Kojève and Robert Williams.¹⁷ They see Hegel as attempting to base a universal egalitarian political theory on the concept of recognition. I find this interpretative direction plausible and will work within its terms in this section of the paper. Other interpretations are also plausible, but I will not spend time trying to establish the truth of any particular interpretation, as my interest in this paper is recognition, not interpreting Hegel.¹⁸ Those who find these interpretations implausible—either because they think it obvious that Hegel’s political theory does not aim at universality (or equality), or because Hegel does not rely on the concept of recognition to achieve these ends—can skip to section IV.

Taking his cue from Fichte, Hegel relies on recognition as a condition for the emergence of self-consciousness. Hegel introduces this idea at a particular place in the *Phenomenology*: at the origin of self-consciousness. Leaving the stage of consciousness, the self has learned that it cannot take the external world (objects or forces) as “absolute,” but that they are perceived through the self (transcendental apperception).¹⁹ The self at this point is conceptually impoverished, thinking only “I,” “I,” “I,” and, experiencing desire, wishes to internalize everything by devouring it. However, in devouring others (as one devours animals and plants), one fails to become certain of one’s own value and to attain what one truly desires, which is recognition. Recognition, in Hegel’s terminology, is a return of a self-consciousness out of another self-consciousness. In order for this return to be recognition, “the second consciousness must do ‘in-itself’ what the first consciousness is doing in it.”²⁰ In other words, the master values himself as the master and is recognized as a master because

17. Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1969); Robert W. Williams, *Hegel’s Ethics of Recognition* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1997).

18. For the same reason, I will not concern myself with the differences between Kojève’s and Williams’s interpretations.

19. See Robert Pippin, *Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989).

20. *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit: Selections*, trans. Howard Kainz (University Park, PA: Penn State UP, 1994), p. 52. See also pp. 60–61.

the slave also values him as the master.²¹ Rather than run through all of the (well-known) details of the section, I will list a few important points: Two selves fight to the death for recognition. One must risk one's life. But if one dies, then recognition is not achieved.²² If one surrenders, he becomes the slave of the other. The winner becomes the master. However, the master's victory is supposedly unsatisfying, because the recognition attained is unsatisfying. The master's life is one of pleasure, which perpetuates itself indefinitely. There is no dialectical continuation of the master's life; it is a phenomenological dead end. The slave, through work, continues the dialectic.

Let us consider how the problems of universality and gradation, raised earlier, apply to Hegel's scenario. The master/slave dialectic does nothing to confront the problem of universality. It suggests that one must recognize someone else, rather than simply thinking "I," "I," "I"; but that is a far cry from establishing that one must recognize everyone else.

The problem of gradation is not discussed explicitly here either. Instead, Hegel finesses the problem by limiting his scenario to two combatants. With enslavement, the value of the slave's desire is diminished. But it only reduces to zero because only two people (or two positions) are involved, allowing for a binary, non-graded value of desire—all or nothing. If the scenario included others, then there could be degrees of value to the desire of others. For example, there could be masters with fewer or more slaves, and even the relative desire of different slaves could have greater or lesser value. This problem is an especially pointed one for Hegel, since he convincingly argues, in the *Science of Logic*, that mere quantitative change can, and frequently does, result in qualitative change. So the desire of three can differ qualitatively from the desire of two. Even if the desire of the slave can be unsatisfying for the master, the desire of a second slave can be relatively more satisfying.

Because Hegel's account is so sketchy, it is worth examining Kojève's and Williams's interpretations. Although these interpretations expand on

21. Kojève provides, as a definition of recognition, the felicitous phrase "the desire of the desire of the other" (Kojève, *Introduction*, p. 7). This may be a bit narrower than Hegel's view, but it fits quite well with the master/slave scenario, which Kojève treats as the education of desire.

22. Why couldn't killing the other satisfy the desire for recognition if the look in the eye of the one killed shows that he knows he is defeated? Couldn't the memory of this look satisfy the desire?

Hegel's account by saying more about what one is being recognized for, neither escapes these difficulties. In fact, they show only more clearly that Hegel's scenario faces these problems. Kojève's interpretation fleshes out Hegel's account, making it easier to see how the problem of gradation arises in the text. In terms of gradation, Kojève's account jumps from terms that are gradated to terms that are binary/non-gradated. On the one hand, the struggle is one for "pure prestige," and prestige is gradated.²³ (That Kojève is referring to our common concept of prestige here is illustrated by his examples of a medal or the enemy's flag.)²⁴ But he then switches to using binary, non-gradated terms of recognition between "autonomous" and "dependent" existences. Although Kojève does treat these terms as binary,²⁵ he never establishes that they are so. As I noted earlier, autonomy and dependence are matters of degree.

The same oscillation between gradation and non-gradation occurs in Williams's interpretation. Williams uses binary terms to describe recognition: whether one "counts" or "doesn't count" for another. Following Kojève, Williams treats the master/slave scenario as the transition from the non-human to the human—that is, as the transition to autonomy. Risking one's life allows one to realize one's autonomy in both senses of "realize": one comes to be autonomous and to know that one is autonomous.²⁶ Autonomous and non-autonomous existence are thus binary, non-gradated states, whereas respect and honor are both forms of recognition,²⁷ and thus recognition is gradated. Williams, however, has a solution to this problem: the concept of a "threshold of the ethical." In other words, there is a minimum of recognition that is necessary and satisfying; above this level, presumably, recognition is superfluous. In this way, recognition can be both binary and gradated, and the binary aspect is taken to be of greater significance. Whether or not this claim accurately reflects Hegel's views is of little consequence for my argument; of greater significance for my purposes here is the fact that Williams says nothing to establish the plausibility of this claim. Williams needs to demonstrate that the "threshold" is more important than the gradation in order to establish that recognition is non-hierarchical.

23. Kojève, *Introduction*, p. 7.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

25. See *ibid.*, p. 20.

26. Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, p. 60.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

An analysis of Hegel's treatment of recognition must extend beyond the master/slave scenario. If we consider the immediately succeeding sections of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the later System, Hegel's view can be construed in the following way. The desire for recognition finds some sort of fulfillment in obedience to law (primarily, property law), whereby in obeying, one is "recognizing" others as law-abiding, since one would not obey if one thought others would not obey. This is what it means to recognize someone as a "person."²⁸ This "recognition" results in an equilibrium whereby all members of a society act in harmony without force, discussion, or other coordination. However, this sort of recognition is too abstract, since it is not granted on account of any particular characteristics of the individual. If we think of Hegel's recognition as granted for being a person, then his view is subject to his own criticism here. As Steven Smith has pointed out: "One difficulty with this right of recognition is that it is every bit as formal and abstract as the deontological ethic Hegel often claims to attack. The idea of personhood is itself based on an abstraction from all empirical characteristics and attachments we develop in the course of our lives and histories."²⁹

Another problem with stopping at the concept of "personhood" for elucidating the concept of recognition would be the failure to take into account prestige or "honor," in Hegel's term. Honor falls within the definition of recognition in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, to the extent that I have been able to reconstruct it above. And Hegel seems to treat these concepts as continuous in the *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*.³⁰ Hegel's treatment is significant, because it shows that Hegel did not think that recognition based on personhood, the sort of recognition that might be achieved if the combatants in the master/slave scenario were sufficiently reflective about their experience, would be sufficient. In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel hoped to solve the problem of the need for recognition (here, "honor") through the guilds ("corporations") to which all workers would belong. Since different professions have different levels of prestige, the

28. In the *Phenomenology*, the world of the Roman Empire, in which the concept of a "person" arose, is a horror show. Nevertheless, the concept of personhood has some validity and thus is taken up into later institutions.

29. Steven Smith, *Hegel's Critique of Liberalism* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 125.

30. *Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, ed. M. J. Petry (Dordt: D. Reidel, 1979), 3:71 (sec. 436).

problem of gradation is not addressed. And it seems to me implausible that the unemployed would achieve equal recognition merely through guild membership—even though the improvement of their economic circumstances would be a laudatory goal. Further, we can note that if problems from the inabilities of civil society to gratify citizens' desire for honor lead to unrest that can threaten social stability, then the equilibrium arrived at earlier in the dialectic involving personhood and obedience to the law is not really so "equilibrious." This sort of recognition cannot really be said to satisfy the desire for recognition, since honor is a form of recognition.

One way of attempting to save Hegel's position is by pointing to the distinction between vanity and recognition, putting all desire for prestige on the side of vanity. However, the texts do not support this interpretation. In the section of the *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit* on recognition (section 436), Hegel treats honor and fame as virtues in his clarifying "remark." In a qualifying sentence, which was (according to M. J. Petry) added to the remark for the 1830 edition, honor and fame may become separated from "what is substantial" when cultivated for their own sake.³¹ So the desire for fame and honor are not matters of vanity per se. And this is what we would expect from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where Hegel scorns those who try to distinguish their own individual desires from the "way of the world." Society works through individual desires, and these are lauded, since they arise from the effective substance of spirit. In the section on the "Animal Kingdom of Spirit," which involves a struggle for recognition, Hegel could have condemned the search for prestige and distinguished it from the desire for recognition. But he does not do so. Instead, he refutes this position with an argument similar to the one that he uses against the "way of the world." In each section, the individual who is concerned with their own personal action/contribution must learn that when they act for themselves, they are acting for others as well. In the latter section, as in the former, those who condemn others for taking a proprietary interest in the results of their action are not vindicated, but instead they are refuted since their condemnations similarly make claims of proprietary interest.

Of course, one might claim that recognition is achieved only at the end of the chapter on *Geist*, when confession and forgiveness comes into play. This would seem to have been Hegel's thought on the matter, since he does specifically say that by confessing and forgiving, the "acting

31. Ibid., 3:71.

consciousness” and the “judging consciousness” come into a relation of equality and recognition, and absolute spirit is referred to as “a reciprocal recognition.”³² This section seems to have dropped out of the scholarly discussion of recognition, perhaps because it may be thought to be theologically grounded. These worries are, to some extent, well-founded, as Hegel introduces in this section the concepts of worship, religion, and God. I will venture some comments on this “enigmatic” section as if it does not have theological presuppositions, while still regarding its function as the transition to “Religion.”³³

The chapter on “Conscience” is clearly a culmination toward which the phenomenology has been heading since the master/slave dialectic. In that section, the concept of *Geist* is announced as “an I which is a We and a We which is an I,” a sociality/community that is achieved in the section on Conscience. The struggle for recognition, which resulted in an unsatisfactory unequal recognition, here achieves a satisfying equal recognition. This equal recognition is, indeed, absolute spirit, the culmination of the entire book.

“Conscience” is introduced to resolve the antinomies of the earlier sections of the “Moral” worldview. In acting pursuant to one’s conscience, one can be confident that one is doing the right thing, staying true to oneself at the same time that one connects with others. One is recognized for acting from conviction, and this recognition is the social glue that binds the community together. In order to secure one’s actions, and thus also one’s recognition, one needs to express in language that one is acting from conviction.³⁴ Although acting from conviction is the social glue, speech in which actors attest to their conviction is needed for this glue to set.³⁵

32. G. W. F. Hegel, *Spirit: Chapter Six of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. Daniel E. Shannon (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub. Co., 2001), pp. 154, 157.

33. The epithet is Robert Pippin’s, in his essay “Recognition and Reconciliation: Actualized Agency in Hegel’s Jena Phenomenology,” in Katerina Deligiorgi, ed., *Hegel: New Directions* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s UP, 2006), p. 139.

34. Hegel’s justification is that speech is a special medium connecting people, because in speech one hears oneself speaking at the same moment that others hear one speaking. This is the point that Jacques Derrida takes to be the moment of atemporal univocity, the apogee of metaphysics. Following Derrida’s idea that Hegel’s point has to do with the univocity of speech, Hegel’s argument would be that language cannot be interpreted in different ways by the participants, while their actions can. If one does not follow Derrida here, Hegel would seem to have no argument whatsoever. Hegel also argues that one cannot lie about acting from conviction, or that lying cannot be an issue.

35. Speaking also demonstrates one’s awareness that acting from conviction is not a retreat inward but establishes a connection to others.

This type of recognition has three important characteristics. First, acting from conviction is treated as a simple either/or, so there is no gradation. Second, this recognition is a matter of seeing that someone else is like oneself. Third, in order for this recognition to be satisfactorily achieved, a problem called the “antithesis of singularity and universality that is involved in acting,” which has popped up in earlier sections of the chapter on *Geist*, must be overcome. In overcoming this problem, there is a reconciliation between action and judgment involving confession and forgiveness. There is also, as one moves through the chapter, a shift away from the individualism of the concept of duty, as one is supposed to realize that the “spirit certain of itself” is as much the broader community as the individual.

The antithesis of singularity and universality is worked out through a dialectic involving an “acting consciousness” and a “judging consciousness.” The problem is that thought, and thus purpose, is universal, but action is always singular. It arises through the engagement of a particular individual with particular desires and inclinations in a particular situation. There would seem to be a disproportion between one’s purposes and one’s actions in all cases. This disproportion allows the judging consciousness to refuse to recognize the acting consciousness, alleging that the act was not performed out of conviction but instead out of a particular interest, such as ambition or the pursuit of fame. This discussion of fame and ambition as motivations, cropping up as it does where equal recognition is achieved, is of great significance.

It might be claimed, because Hegel does not use the word recognition to specifically refer to fame or ambition, that he would reserve the term for the recognition achieved between the actor and judging consciousness. But Hegel never explicitly says this. Instead, I think it would make more sense to say that fame and ambition are types of recognition that need to be treated here because they are part and parcel of the striving that led to the struggle that instigated the master/slave dialectic. Hegel’s point in discussing them here is in no way to delegitimize them. On the contrary, as in the earlier sections on the “Way of the World” and “Animal Kingdom of the Spirit,” the pursuit of fame and ambition are validated. The “antithesis of singularity and universality” turns out, at least at this point, not to be much of an antithesis at all. Every action, according to Hegel, has a universal side and a particular side. It is here that he quotes the saying: “No man is a hero to his valet; not because he is not a hero, but because the valet is a valet.” It is the judging consciousness that is in the wrong here, as it is the

moral valet of the acting consciousness. The acting consciousness must be brought to see the disproportion between purposes and actions, and to acknowledge its hitherto unperceived “hypocrisy” through a confession to the judging consciousness. One should not be misled by the reference to the acting consciousness as “evil” into thinking that it is in the wrong. It is only mistaken to the extent that it fails to make the proper connection between its motivation and its action and to see itself as necessarily situated in a larger whole.³⁶ It is the judging consciousness that really takes a beating in this section. It claims to be judging on the basis of the universal, but it fails to connect with others—specifically, the actors. It judges on the basis of whether actions are based on conviction, but, as the “beautiful soul,” it is unable to act. These deficiencies are its “hypocrisies,” which are discerned by the acting consciousness.

Problems crop up every step of the way in this section. The claim that acting from conviction or “Conscience” does justice both to the singularity of the individual and society is obscure.³⁷ The claim that language is more determinate than actions is unpersuasive, and the argument that lying is not at issue in expressing one’s conviction is impenetrable. Also, Hegel makes little attempt to say which parts of earlier stages are retained in this section, although some must be. However, I will focus on three problems with this section that are most relevant to the issue of universal, equal recognition.

The first of these is the question of universality. The question of the scope of the terms “Conscience” and “Geist” is unavoidable. Who has a conscience? According to Hegel, conscience is a historical product. Initially, only post-Kantian Germans have a conscience, although conscience presumably can and will spread much farther afield. Conscience arises as a late stage of *Geist*, so now we must consider the scope of *Geist*. Does *Geist* consist of all human beings? all language speakers? Europeans? Christians? German-language speakers? Post-Kantian Germans? European Christian German-language speakers? The question has been pursued by readers

36. Hegel says on two occasions that the acting consciousness is “taken to be evil” by the judging consciousness. It is not clear that the acting consciousness should be thought of as evil; the withdrawal of the judging consciousness fits most directly Hegel’s definition of evil. The exact way in which evil in the conventional sense is forgiven through these two dialectical figures is not very clear, but the conclusion that it is indeed forgiven through them is inescapable.

37. Is this established solely by the idea of acting from conviction, or does it require all of the steps that occur in this section?

of Hegel without result, and I think there is no answer to this question. Similarly, we need to know who participates in the final reconciliation of the acting consciousness and judging consciousness, after they acknowledge their likeness to each other in their deficiencies (“hypocrisy”) and forgive each other. Commentators tend to spend their time pointing out which Post-Kantian historical or literary figures were Hegel’s models for the various positions in this section. But we need to know the scope of this recognition. Who can recognize? Who can be recognized? Must one live at the time (and after) these historical figures live out this dialectic? How explicit must one’s understanding of the dialectic be? How explicit must one’s confession be? Does it even need to be explicit at all? Again, I think that there are no answers to these questions in Hegel’s text. I would opt for a broader interpretation in which all of the dialectical tricks that Hegel uses to broaden the scope of *Geist* would also be brought into play here.³⁸ Indeed, the “confession” is stated in terms so general (may one say “abstract”?) as to make it perfunctory, perhaps even dispensable. But it would also appear that all of the reasons that scholars have provided for thinking that various “others” are excluded from Hegel’s conception of the spiritual community apply as well.

The second problem I wish to raise has to do with, to put it very mildly, unpleasant aspects of this scene of recognition as mutual confession and forgiveness. The final turn takes place after the acting consciousness has discerned the deficiency of the judging consciousness and admitted its own. The judging consciousness refuses to acknowledge its own deficiency, becoming the “hard heart” that refuses to soften its condemnation of the acting consciousness. Moltke Gram has argued that Hegel derived the figure of the “hard heart” from nattering nabobs of negativity (not Gram’s phrase) like Hölderlin (or his characters), who judge the world only in terms of sweeping condemnations of political oppression and destructive mediocrity.³⁹ The reconciliation that takes place after the “hard heart” is broken and returns the confession it has received and forgives the acting consciousness has momentous implications that go far beyond the particular individual(s) on which Hegel modeled this figure. “The wounds

38. These dialectical tricks would also bring back the problem of gradation, since one of the terms in the various oppositions involved (e.g., implicit/explicit) is valued more highly than the other.

39. Moltke Gram, “Moral and Literary Ideals in Hegel’s Critique of ‘The Moral World-View,’” in Jon Stewart, ed., *The Phenomenology of Spirit Reader: Critical and Interpretive Essays* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), pp. 327–29.

of spirit heal without leaving scars.”⁴⁰ Here we have made the transition to absolute spirit. What has happened here?

I suggest that *Geist* is forgiving itself for all of the atrocities that its actors have committed over the course of its development. The “acting consciousness” and the “judging consciousness” are both parts of the social subject that is *Geist*, and the actors in the previous historical worlds making up the development of *Geist* have made the error attributed to the acting consciousness: they failed to discern the larger whole of which they were part. Slavery, the Terror, and all of the atrocities of the slaughterbench of history are wiped away: “spirit in the absolute certainty of itself, is master over every deed or actuality and can throw them away and make as if they never happened.”⁴¹ In sum, through the continuity provided by their *Geist*, contemporary members of the community of “equal recognition” forgive their forebears (and contemporaries⁴²) for their atrocities. Only this sort of forgiveness explains how the proposed solution to an abstruse problem in the Kantian theory of moral action can enable the transition to absolute spirit.⁴³

The third problem to be mentioned here has to do with the two types of recognition with which we are left at the end of this chapter of the *Phenomenology*, one of which is hierarchical (fame/ambition) and one of which is not (equal recognition of confession and forgiveness). Both are legitimate and necessary, according to Hegel. But I see no argument for the claim that the egalitarian version matters more than the hierarchical kind. As Pierre Bourdieu has pointed out, egalitarian ideals can always be interpreted as a matter of making a virtue of necessity by those in the subordinate levels of the hierarchy. I would suggest that if Kojève’s discussion of what is at stake in the master/slave dialectic has had such appeal, it is because his definition of what is at stake (desire for the desire of the other) seems, rather obviously, to cover recognition. Mutual recognition in

40. Hegel, *Spirit*, p. 156.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

42. I do not see how this conclusion can be avoided, given that the various positions occupied in the *Phenomenology* (and argued therein to be historically refuted) still existed, and were known by Hegel to exist, in Hegel’s time.

43. In his later System, Hegel makes the involvement of the reader in historical atrocity even tighter, since the achievement of the System is not merely a cognitive achievement but also an act of will. In completing the system, the reader must actually will it in its entirety, including world history. Thus, according to Hegel’s later System, understanding the world requires that one be an accomplice in its atrocities!

terms of a very abstract deficiency has far less appeal, to the point of not seeming much like recognition at all. It should also be kept in mind that hierarchical recognition of fame brings with it its own privileged terms and practices of forgiveness.

Hegel, then, cannot solve Taylor's problem. So what can be learned from Hegel's treatment of recognition? Exactly what generations of readers of Hegel have learned: that recognition must be concrete.⁴⁴ And it must be concrete in two ways, one external to the one recognized, one internal. First, self-perception and self-evaluation are intersubjective—or, to use Taylor's word, "dialogical." There must be others who grant recognition in concrete ways. Second, recognition can only be granted because of a particular characteristic of the person recognized. This latter point derives from connecting the master/slave scenario to Hegel's critique of Kant's deontological ethic, which abstracts from all empirical characteristics, an abstraction that Hegel thinks is at the root of the tragedy of the Terror.

With regard to the external characteristic, I think we can extend Hegel's account and say that recognition manifests itself in one or more of three ways. Recognition is manifested through emulation, association, and/or gratification. Emulation and association are relatively straightforward; people try to be like and associate with those whom they admire. They also aim to give things of value to those whom they admire, and this is what I mean by "gratification." Recognition of a musician or a band involves copying their style (emulation), wearing their T-shirt (association), or paying the musician/band for the T-shirt (gratification). Of course, these are merely the first examples that leap to mind, and one could come up with innumerable others. Recognition may, but need not, involve all of these three. All of these ways of recognizing others are matters of degree.

There may be other ways of manifesting recognition. One candidate would be understanding. A scientist might think that his or her recognition is wanting if others know them as "a famous scientist" (say, as a Nobel Prize winner) but know nothing of their work, even if they wish to associate

44. We may actually want to credit Fichte with first claiming that recognition, to be genuine, must be concrete. He says that one must be recognized by a particular person, that one must "actually *act* in the sensible world" in order to recognize someone, recognition must involve people who reciprocally interact. J. G. Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*, ed. Frederick Neuhouser (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), pp. 42–43.

with and gratify the scientist.⁴⁵ This might be thought of as a deficiency of gratification. Others may wish to buy the scientist drinks but be unwilling to grant their time to study the scientist's work. (I am sure anyone reading this realizes how valuable giving time is, especially the time to study difficult work.) On the other hand, others do their best to hide the steps taken to achieve a result. For example, those having cosmetic surgery would prefer that others not understand how they achieved their beauty. The desire to understand the work that goes into producing beauty would seem to be a deficiency of recognition rather than a manifestation of it.

We can also extend Hegel's account of the internal characteristic of recognition. This latter establishes that there is a veristic aspect to recognition. Since one can only be recognized if there is a particular characteristic, activity, or achievement for which recognition is granted, the person must actually have the characteristic for which they are being recognized. So, if the Grammy awards are a means of recognizing musical ability or achievement, Milli Vanilli was not recognized when they won one. (If the Grammys are a means of recognizing contribution to the production of musical spectacle, then we will need a different example.) This is not a trivial implication. It establishes that recognition is not the same as symbolic power. Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power involves the ability to obtain one's desires from others, but it does not differentiate between cases where someone has a particular ability antecedent to the obtaining of their desire and cases where they do not. This distinction is otiose on Bourdieu's view, because through acts of consecration, awards create the abilities and achievements for which they supposedly are bestowed. Hence, misrecognition is the key concept for Bourdieu, not recognition. A discussion of these concepts is beyond the scope of this paper, but a few points can be made here. The Milli Vanilli example shows that Bourdieu's universalization of his concept of "acts of consecration" is an exaggeration. Second, to the extent that Bourdieu thinks that his theory of the struggle for symbolic power serves to capture the insights of Hegel's master/slave scenario, as suggested by his reference in *Distinction*, this would be an internal problem for Bourdieu's theory.⁴⁶

45. Here there are two levels of understanding. One level is understanding the meaning of the theses or equations; the other, deeper level is understanding the accomplishment of discovering or proving those theses.

46. "Verbal virtuositities or the gratuitous expense of time or money that is presupposed by symbolic appropriations of works of art, or even, at the second power, the self-imposed constraints and restrictions which make up the 'asceticism of the privileged'

What else can we conclude from Hegel's account? Can we conclude from the master/slave scenario that recognition must be mutual and equal? The conclusion is drawn from Hegel's claim that the master is unsatisfied with recognition from the slave. Some of the problems with this conclusion have already been addressed. In addition we can note that the master has achieved recognition: the slave gratifies and emulates (to the extent possible, that is, the slave wanted to be a master before capitulating) the master. What more is there?⁴⁷ Hegel's answer is that there is recognition from an independent (*selbständig*) consciousness, not a dependent consciousness. We have already seen that the reduction to two positions is unjustified and merely finesses the problem of gradation. Once we add more people to the scenario, we can say that there would be recognition from a more talented slave or a less talented master. At best, we might conclude that there is something vaguely unsatisfying about being at the top of the hierarchy—especially if we consider understanding to be a manifestation of recognition and can establish that those who are lower in the hierarchy are incapable of understanding those above them. But there seems no reason to conclude that a failure to achieve complete satisfaction is somehow a “refutation” of a social situation that provides a reason to think that there could be a better one. Constant striving might be a bad infinity, but this is hardly a refutation. Since recognition must be earned for a specific characteristic (even if this characteristic is inherited), free bestowal to all could not satisfy the desire for recognition.

Can we conclude from Hegel's account, as Williams does, that recognition cannot be coerced?⁴⁸ This would only be true in some cases, depending on what people wanted to be recognized for. If one wanted to be recognized for having power, as the combatants in Hegel's scenario

(as Marx said of Seneca) and the refusal of the facile which is the basis of all ‘pure’ aesthetics. are so many repetitions of that variant of the master-slave dialectic through which the possessors affirm their possession of their possessions.” Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1984), p. 256.

47. Sometimes it is claimed that the master is dependent on the slave for recognition, and that this dependence is what leaves the master unsatisfied, as it turns him into a slave. But there is an important asymmetry between the dependence of the master and the dependence of the slave. The master is dependent on having a slave, not on any particular slave. The slave is dependent on this particular master. The economic consequences of this asymmetry were drawn out by Marx. I see no reason to think that the recognition satisfaction would be more deficient than the economic satisfaction derived from this asymmetry.

48. Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, pp. 59, 63.

do, then recognition can be coerced. If one valued force, then losing a contest of force—being forced—is a legitimate (and perhaps the only) way to obtain one’s recognition. If one were concerned with recognition for something other than force—say, one’s achievement as a poet—then it would indeed appear to be the case that recognition could not be coerced. There are two cases that raise difficulties, because they suggest that even in this case force can lead to, or has an important role to play in, recognition. One involves the case of murdering one’s competition. Suppose one is considered the fifth-best living poet. One way to become the best living poet is to improve one’s poetry. But another would be to kill the four better poets. (And what about the case where the other four died of natural causes?)⁴⁹ A second, more serious difficulty concerns the way power is needed to attain success in life’s endeavors. As Bourdieu points out, to be a successful artist requires a certain amount of privilege, since one needs to spend long hours of unpaid labor attaining mastery. One also needs to establish contacts with leading figures for one’s apprenticeship. An aspiring artist who has to work at Starbucks will be at a competitive disadvantage with those who have more resources and the leisure that they bring. Whether people desire recognition for power or for other matters is an empirical matter.

IV.

One way of thinking of the issues at stake in this paper is to consider it as an episode in the dispute over the status of morality. For Kant, morality was internal to human life because it involved laws that reason sets itself. However, to Hegel, Kantian morality appears to be an external “ought.” Hegel followed Fichte’s introduction of the concept of recognition because he thought that it provided a way of grounding moral claims internally to human life, specifically through desire. If my analysis is correct, he failed to do so, and claims for universal, mutual, equal recognition remain external oughts, no different from the claims that we should value ability at tic-tac-toe more than ability in music, chess, or basketball.

In no way should this be taken as an argument in support of a Kantian approach. Some of the flaws in Kant’s approach have been pointed out above, and there are many others. We can follow Taylor in seeing Kant and

49. Here again it seems that memory—specifically with regard to the way one has attained one’s position—has a role to play in any analysis of recognition.

Hegel as trying to extend and work out problems in Rousseau's attempt to mediate between condemnations of honor and discourses of honor. But it would appear that the entire tradition is a failure.⁵⁰ The sheepishness with which Taylor raises the metaphysical presuppositions of this tradition is worth considering:

The politics of equal dignity is based on the idea that all humans are equally worthy of respect. It is underpinned by a notion of what in human beings commands respect, however we may try to shy away from this "metaphysical" background.⁵¹

And yet ideas of essentialism, and especially attempts to base politics on some human nature, have been thoroughly discredited.

Taylor's account of the shift from aristocratic politics to democratic politics should be seen as part of an account of how a political system, based on a set of mistaken presuppositions, came to be replaced by another political system, more just, whose rhetoric invoked a different set of mistaken presuppositions. When one (or some) social hierarchies came to be correctly seen (most notably by those in power) as baseless, a discourse of equality arose. This discourse of equality initially attempted to justify itself by claims about natural rights, and then split into two separate traditions: one turned to recognition, the other (outside the scope of this essay) turned to utilitarianism. The discourse of equal recognition arose for two reasons, which can be designated as Marxian and Wittgensteinian, respectively. First, this discourse was (and is) useful rhetorically for gaining support from groups that think (wrongly) that they will share equally in the benefits. In addition to this ideological function, this discourse is the sort of overgeneralization from one or few examples that typically leads to metaphysical beliefs: the idea that recognition is equal sometimes is taken to be sufficient justification for thinking that it can be equal all of the time. The idea of a recognition that is equal and universal as relied upon by theorists is typically metaphysical in a second way, in that it is supposed to provide all of the benefits of recognition without any of the detriments.

It cannot be denied that this mistaken metaphysics has led to, and still leads to, positive consequences. In the eighteenth century, hierarchies of

50. It is curious that Mill is never mentioned in Taylor's genealogy of liberalism.

51. Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," p. 41.

aristocracy and slavery were widely seen to be groundless; since then, others—such as racial, colonial, and sexual hierarchies—have followed. In addition, I understand that this sort of discourse provides solace for destitute, homeless people. And, in the last fifty years, Kantian discourse has possibly done more to spread ideas of human rights internationally than other sorts of discourse. For these reasons, theorists are rightfully worried about any critiques of ideals of equality.⁵²

In addition to these pragmatic uses of egalitarian discourse, appeals to “equal recognition” have strong emotional resonance. Partly, this is a matter of mistake. I think much of what is called to mind by the phrase “equal recognition” is a matter of politeness, of not making a public display of one’s successes, and this hardly falls within the concept of recognition. Partly, this is a matter of thoughtlessness. People think of the “equal recognition” they desire from those above them in various hierarchies, but they fail to think of the “equal recognition” that they disdain for those at lower places. And partly, this is a matter of the powerful experience of comfort and freedom that sometimes can be attained in equal recognition, when one interacts socially with those of equal social status. These experiences have this power, according to Bourdieu, because they form a sort of oasis, where one feels as if one has stepped out of social hierarchy.⁵³ But these “utopian moments” are thoroughly conditioned by broader social hierarchy and can in no way be extended universally.

But these positive consequences and powerful experiences in no way make this discourse of equal recognition any more tenable. To the extent that they require more grounding than the unmasking of specific claims of privilege, universal rights will need to find some other sort of intellectual grounding. I hope to have shown that appeals to the concept of recognition are not more successful in grounding democratic politics than appeals to natural rights.

52. I think these worries are valid but exaggerated. Prior to World War II, the rhetoric of utilitarianism had far more progressive influence than Kantian rhetoric. Even in the last sixty years, in which Kantian discourse about “human rights” has led the way in international law and constitutional change, at the local level I wonder if utilitarian considerations are not still often more influential.

53. Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1991), p. 71. Additional qualifications are needed for this claim, as Bourdieu uncharacteristically exaggerates the extent and availability of this zone of freedom. The rules of the broader hierarchies traverse relations among equals through their relations to those broader hierarchies. A prime example relates to Bourdieu’s own discussion of the “trajectory” of social actors.

Bourdieu's theory comes closest to modeling society as a zero-sum struggle for recognition, given the proximity of his concept of symbolic power to the concept of recognition.⁵⁴ But in establishing the distinction between the two concepts, we can raise the question: what motivates people more deeply, recognition or symbolic power? If the answer is recognition, then we have one small—perhaps very small, compared with the ambitions of theorists to ground all of democratic politics on the concept—internal moral check on the struggle for power.⁵⁵

54. Although it may seem as if Bourdieu treats the maximization of symbolic power as the only goal in life, his theory does include another. People seek comfort, specifically the comfort to be found in living within a habitus within which one grew up. Of course, the convergence of these two goals can only be attained by those at the top of the hierarchy. This is part of the meaning of privilege.

55. Many thanks to Kevin Thompson, Dan Breazeale, and Jim Wilkinson for discussions about Hegel and Fichte which saved me from a number of errors.