Social and Institutional Dimensions of Axel Honneth's Theory of Recognition (by Marcin J. Byczyński, 2021).

A Book Review with a Contextual 'Surplus'

Ewa Nowak

(Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań; ewanowak@amu.edu.pl)
ORCID: 0000-0002-5722-7711

Abstract: The review addresses the recent monograph Social and Institutional Dimensions of Axel Honneth's Theory of Recognition by Marcin J. Byczyński (Łódź University Press, Jurisprudence Series, Vol. 17/2021, pp. 1–273). Jakub Kloc-Konkołowicz was the external reviewer of the doctoral dissertation which gave rise to the book. The essential contributions of this book are discussed against the background of former and pioneering recognition research from the Polish context, including this by Jakub Kloc-Konkołowicz and Marek Siemek. In addition, they are supplemented by Hegel's three rights of freedom and further vital themes. This provides the following review with a contextual 'surplus.' Byczyński's monograph considerably advances an important Warsaw-Poznań research strand and is notable for its originality among the books devoted to Honneth's Theory of Recognition.

Keywords: Recognition; struggle for recognition; Honneth's Theory of Recognition; Jakub Kloc-Konkołowicz; Marek Siemek.

The year 2021 saw the publication of Marcin J. Byczyński's monograph *Social and Institutional Dimensions of Recognition in Axel Honneth's Theory* (Jurisprudence Series, Łódź University Press, pp. 1–273). It was based on a doctoral dissertation written under the supervision of Prof. Karolina M. Cern (AMU Poznań), and reviewed by Jakub Kloc-Konkołowicz and the present author. I would like to take this opportunity to present this noteworthy monograph to a wider audience.

In his monograph consisting of three chapters (I: "The Elements of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Philosophy in Axel Honneth's Theory of Recognition"; II: "The Shift from the Subjective to the Intersubjective Level"; III: "Characteristics of the Subjective Level of the Theory of Recognition"), the author examines to what extent Honneth's conceptualizations and references to socially and historically situated struggles for recognition, areas of deficient recognition and "disrespect" (Byczyński cf., 12) have been inspired by Hegel, and to what extent they reach beyond Hegelianism to finally "create a normative theory of politics" (Byczyński cf., 9; comp. Claassen 2014, 67). The author further examines Honneth's position in respect of his predilection for the sociability-fostering and reification-preventing facets of recognition on which his original threefold typology of recognition and the corresponding three types of harm [*Missachtung*] (Byczyński cf., 257;

Byczyński 2017) was focused, later supplemented by its intrasubjective and institutional facets. He revisits Honneth's milestone-works, including *The Struggle for Recognition. The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (1996/1994[1]); *Disrespect. The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (Honneth 2007/2000[1]); "Grounding Recognition: A Rejoinder to Critical Questions" (Honneth 2002); "Organized Self-Realisation: Some Paradoxes of Individualization" (Honneth 2004); *The I in We. Studies in the Theory of Recognition* (Honneth 2012/2010[1]), and *Freedom's Right. The Social Foundations of Democratic Life* (Honneth 2014/2011[1]).

Essentially, Axel Honneth's theory is about a modern – no longer natural and immediate, but mediated by rationality, freedom and social normativity – "system of ethical life," which Hegel failed to wholly elaborate. Such a system – however, only as a "natural" one – was speculatively outlined by Hegel in his *System der Sittlichkeit* of 1803. The vehicle of this new system would be precisely the reciprocal and universal recognition of modern individuals. As it turned out, the "struggle for recognition" (depicted vividly, but again speculatively, in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*) has not yet ended in the real world. It makes not only "the first formative stage" of modern sociality and "the formative process of subjective Spirit" (Honneth 1996, 33–34). Its impetus eludes the methodological and normative apparatus offered by Hegel's Philosophy of Right, explicitly interested in what is "real" (not only "reasonable"). "Methodologically, the transition to intersubjective forms of the realization of the will no doubt serves to introduce the dimension of experience whose absence is precisely what had left subjective Spirit's instrumental experience of itself incomplete" (Honneth 1996, 36).

> The implication of this for the relationship of recognition can only be that an obligation to reciprocity is, to a certain extent, built into such relations, an obligation that requires but does not force subjects to recognize one another in a certain way: if I do not recognize my partner to interaction as a certain type of person, his reactions cannot give me the sense that I am recognized as the same type of person, since I thereby deny him precisely the characteristics and capacities with regard to which I want to feel myself affirmed by him. But for the moment, such a conclusion (…) is of little interest to Hegel (Honneth 1996, 37–38).

This theory, launched in 1996, with the above thought remaining central to him to this day – Honneth occasionally, for "an exhaustive conceptualization of recognition" was not provided in *The Struggle for Recognition* (Byczyński 2021, 255). This initial work "merely referred to Hegel's philosophy of recognition or to particular phenomena of recognition intended to exemplify his theses" (Byczyński cf., 255). Nonetheless, the theory turned out early on to be one of the most influential contemporary theories representing the Frankfurt critical-philosophical school. Nowadays, perhaps more than a few decades ago, we realise that philosophy has not yet managed to utter its final word with respect to reciprocal recognition in either its theoretical or practical and normative aspects. Recent economic, migrational, ecological, political, etc., challenges provide a favourable (although frustrating in itself) opportunity to do more, not just to say more.

Arguably, the actual dialectics of recognition and non-recognition – including human relations with other entities whose naturalness has long been mastered, instrumentalised and devastated by humans – overwhelms the conceptual framework available to the social sciences and humanities at the moment. Although Hegel, the most significant among Honneth's sources of inspiration, tried to capture the dynamics of recognition in the laws of dialectics and history, he did not manage to encapsulate them or to structure them with these laws. The increasing complexity and differentiation of human relations, life forms and social practices also make the theorizations of recognition an eternally unfinished work. The expectation that philosophers will provide closed philosophical concepts – especially those that unify 'water with fire' or 'identity with difference' is, by the way, inherited precisely from Hegel.

According to Byczyński, exploration of "the merely theoretical plane of recognition (...), the refinement of the methodology of normative reconstruction, the invention of new potential contexts of application of the concept of recognition (...) and the formulation of new interpretative scenarios" does not promise "the desirable societal advancement." After all, "Honneth's concept of recognition was designed as a tool to spark normative critical reflection on social realities and the structures in which we are all functioning, to be used by any socially engaged individual, and not as yet another showpiece in the methodological toolbox of the Humanities" (Byczyński 2021, 268).

This point recalls the paragraph "On the Need of Philosophy" from Hegel's *Differenzschrift.* According to Hegel, modern men do not need philosophy or philosophical education to 'dust off the exhibits collected in the mausoleum of philosophy,' What they desperately need is 'reflection itself – as a tool for philosophizing,' or just *reflection*. Honneth's conception of recognition is certainly not another exhibit in the 'mausoleum' of philosophy. On the contrary, it provides a multifunctional vehicle for thinking and improving "realities." The necessity of thinking and critical thinking is no less imminent than the raw human and social necessities, because thinking allows them to be transformed into necessities that are substantial in terms of justice (fair treatment); therefore, in ethical and political terms; and, finally, in terms of the political transformation of societies (predominantly composed of *bourgeois*) or individuals who are not recognised or who decline to recognise fellow individuals, while this necessity arises and is normative in nature.

Byczyński begins by identifying the Hegelian inspirations to which Honneth owes his Theory of Recognition, at least in its original shape from 1996. I will point out at the very outset that I am not certain whether, as Byczyński maintains, Axel Honneth declares the Hegelian dichotomy of morality and ethicality[1] to be "useless" (Byczyński 2021,

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1 I prefer to use the term "ethicality" as a broad equivalent of *Sittlichkeit,* because not every ethicality in Hegel strictly designates 'social ethics,' practiced and *lived* ethics, thus, 'ethical life.' There is a socially constructed morality; an abstract ethicality of (socio-ethically justified) laws of right, as well as a 'rightful' personal ethicality with which any modern individual is – or should be – equipped; an ethical 'drive' and 'attitude' to transcend oneself (as opposed to egocentrism); natural and 'immediate' ethicality as archaic and nearly animal; natural ethicality, ultimately

38), or whether it is rather Hegel himself who challenged dichotomies and oppositions, specifically in his outline of normativity for the modern age. This outline differs from the model associated with the pre-modern or even archaic social formations where an individual (and therefore also moral) subjectivity had little importance [*nichts*]. It enjoyed neither a reflective character, nor the "right to self-determination," nor the right to be recognised. The individual followed its inner and natural "ethical drive" [*Trieb*] prompting it to transcend (its immediacy and self-certainty) and orient itself towards the fellow individuals, to bring about a "unification" [*Einssein*] and a "permanent relationship" [*ein fixiertes Verhältnis*] with them. Within this relation occurred "the absolute sublation of subjectivity's all particular determinateness," as described in Hegel's *System der Sittlichkeit* (2002; see also Quante 2002)[2].

Well, if this is Hegel's speculative account of the "natural" and "immediate" affection of love, then this type of incentive remains foundational for marriage and family (both in the relations between spouses[3] and between parents and children) as their "ethicality." Moreover, it remains a relevant *argument* for the public institutions such as the courts and family law when the "institution of family" is considered and its wellbeing, rights of family members, their prospects, etc. are determined. Thus, not all pre-reflective "instincts, affects, noble impulses of the heart and conscience" (cf. Byczyński, 103–104) are "irrational" and will be 'sublated,' once reflection arises in a subject's mind and institutions are beginning to rule. However, "only under the assumption that family and state have their origin in free will can free will function as a critical legitimising instance of existing relationships" (Jaeschke 2016, 340).[4] Finally, this not necessarily irrational – let me stress again – but relatively limited (because it requires privacy, closeness, intimacy) and contingent sphere of natural and spontaneous ties – even if motivated by a feeling of deep sympathy, care, love, devotion, respect (even for Kant it is a "feeling")

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accepted by Hegel as an unwritten and therefore natural (customary) law; ethicality of a relation between enemies at 'ethical war' with each other; ethical affections and virtues; finally ethicalites 'mediated' and transformed by reflection, recognition, normativity, institutions; the social and political 'ethical' order (not to mention that Hegel's state, *including legal institutions*, has its 'ethicality' or ethical qualities); and 'system of ethicality/ethical life.' All these ethicalities are spread across the works of Hegel.

2 Although "imperfect," "a drive" – also compared by Hegel to "light" due to its guiding function (it "affects the single individual") – "goes at the same time beyond the single individual, though this transcendence is here in general something negative and indeterminate. The satisfaction itself is nothing but the union of concept and intuition. Thus it is a totality, living but formal, precisely because this level, at which it is, is itself a determinate one, and thus absolute life hovers over it just as much as it remains something inner" (transl. by Harris & Knox, according to Hegel 1976, 102–103).

3 Together with their 'animal' sexual instincts.

4 Therefore, we are no longer considering a situation in which a subject merely senses a 'lack' in itself and, not yet self-aware, desires to satisfy this sensation by assimilating or using the 'other' (like air and food); but a situation in which a practical relationship with another subject is established to satisfy various needs reciprocally within this relationship. The need to recognise "personal qualities" and "the content of identity" (Byczyński cf., 103) will also fall under this "relation," elevated to a norm. It seems that the overlooking of any explanation that still has coverage in social practice to this day could imply at least an epistemic misrecognition.

is not sufficient for Hegel himself, who seeks a higher – more reliable or "more formal" (Byczyński cf., 65) – instance of ethicality; nor is it sufficient for Honneth (as he advocates a 'tripartite' pattern of recognition encompassing love, rights and esteem/solidarity) and other scholars whose names this review mentions.

Modern moral subjectivity with its "right to self-consciousness" [*das Recht auf Selbstbewußtsein*] and "right to self-determination" [*das Recht auf Selbstbestimmung*] takes a different position than a natural, instinct-driven subjectivity. This shift can be seen, for example, in 1821 *Elements of Philosophy of Right* (Hegel 2009). Transcending oneself still defines ethicality by virtue of a genuine attitude [*Gesinnung*] (with reference to a 'drive' – which is "very non-Kantian," as Walter Jaeschke [2016, 198] puts it). Attitude has a rich content to be realised in the objective world. However, this content does not have a uniform normative value, it is not "entirely legitimate" (Byczyński cf., 25).

Projects of good life represent advanced, reflected and justified content. However, moral self-determination may also take contingent, intuitive forms; sometimes extremely subjective content claims universal recognition or dogmatic status; this ambivalence was portrayed using the example of conscience in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. But mature moral subjectivity is not only self-reflected and aware of the burden of its rights. The moral will's purpose is both self-fulfilment [*Vollkommenheit*] and the good of others with reference, both in Hegel and Honneth, to the Aristotelian or "aristotelising" model of a good society (Kloc-Konkołowicz 2015, 8). Its limitation is fellow individuals' freedoms. Thus, the genuine 'attitude' combines several uses: moral (for itself, subjectively) and ethical (for and with others, intersubjectively), while at the same time knowing how to find its way among political and legal institutions. This, however, does not imply a blurring. On the contrary: transcending rigid dualisms of the past and defining a powerful capacity for multiple tasks, with a broad spectrum of morality. Equipped with this capacity, the agent will be able to differentiate and, at the same time, balance in practice triple right of freedom to self-determination in the three different, inalienable spheres of human-social practice. After all,

> Morality, ethicality [*Sittlichkeit*], the state interest (...) are each a distinctive right [*jedes ein eigentümliches Recht*], because each of these forms is the determination and the existence of freedom [*jede dieser Gestalten Bestimmung und Daseyn der Freiheit ist*]. They can only come into collision insofar as they stand on the same line of being rights [*Rechte zu seyn*]. If the moral standpoint of the spirit was not also a right [*Recht*], freedom in one of its forms, it could not come into collision at all with the right of personality or another (Hegel 2009, § 30, 46).

This account of *the rights* of freedom could be a prelude to the normative theorisation of recognition by Hegel. It opens one's eyes to the diverse normativities in Hegel, starting with the individual right of freedom, though of course this applies to reflective freedom (or will, respectively). The diversification concerns the content and scope of these "rights." There is no stable relationship between them apart from the one that presupposes the dialectical transformation of the moral and the ethical rights to the

superior ethicality of legal rights in which they are still identifiable as e.g., rights (and duties) of a rightful person, family's rights as a "personality," etc. It allows us to consider the growth and complexity of modern "individual freedom," and also the formation of normative moral consciousness in such a way that it will "internalise ethicality" or show "ethical potential," as Byczyński puts it, though it will not exhaust itself in ethicality, since ethicalities can be various, and only the one embedded in the laws of right would be universal. The right of morality can oppose that of ethicality by virtue of a "logically and genetically original freedom" (Byczyński cf., 39) which is "absolute" in the sense that individuals can fight for new rights or justice which are denied recognition and validity in the light of the prevailing ethicality (ethicalities), legislation, or political regime[5].

For instance, modern institutions (subjective rights, family law code) take into account moral, ethical and legal rights to self-determination in the case of dissolution of marriage[6] and non-familial forms of life as a consequence. At the same time, they promote ethicality to be cultivated in its most traditional, immediate forms, that is, familial and marital. In either case, individuals articulate their moral and ethical claims or reasons, however, a superior ethical – and institutional – jurisprudence is necessary to dissolve their marriage as an ethical (in a twofold sense) and legal institution. "To be sure, marriage *ought* to be indissoluble, but here again we have to stop at this 'ought'"; "it is because marriage depends entirely on feeling, something subjective and contingent, that it may be dissolved"; "yet, since marriage is an ethical institution, it cannot be dissolved at will but only by an ethical authority, whether the church or the law-court. If the parties are completely estranged, e.g. owing to adultery, then even the ecclesiastical authority must permit divorce"[7] (Hegel 1991, § 176).

Hence, the three "rights" of freedom relate to each other and co-regulate distinct areas of social life, though Hegel does not develop this transformative multi-normative concept for the whole of an increasingly antagonistic and complex modern society. In an ideal case, "the right of individuals to their specificity [*Besonderheit*] is just as contained in ethical substantiality [*in der sittlichen Substantialität*], for specificity is the outwardly appearing manner in which the ethical [*das Sittliche*] exists" (Hegel 2009, § 154). And vice versa: the realization of individual freedom finds a space for itself – and has normative provision – in the sphere of ethicality, including that at the level of law and jurisprudence, which will be encouraged by Honneth as well.

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5 Honneth gives here examples of social protest and strikes, as well as ethical warfare in Hegel (in turn, the armed struggle of the people for the sovereignty of their country is most just under natural law in Fichte).

6 For Hegel, marriage (matrimony) is not limited to a contract. "It is precisely a contract to transcend the standpoint of contract," to transform the immediate organic-ethical unity with the individuals as "accidents" to an ethical institution. Therefore, also its dissolution must be ethical (Hegel 1991, §§ 62, 176, 180).

7 Contingence, e.g. caprices, selfishness manifested e.g., by squandering family wealth and other disorders of recognition leading to the "disintegration" of the family, makes it necessary to transform natural (moral or ethical) "customary occurrences" into "a rule by positive legislation" (Hegel 1991, § 178).

This is an anticipation of what Axel Honneth's Normative Theory of Recognition will develop and offer, the ground for whose analysis in Byczyński's monograph is prepared by a not yet that sophisticated but explanatorily useful concept of recognition in Marek Siemek. One can agree with Byczyński with regard to the fact that in reference to Hegel (and Fichte) "the concepts of individualization, socialization and universalization have been very clearly elaborated by Siemek" (Byczyński cf., 25). Although Siemek favoured legal institutions connoting the "formal distances, measures and relations" (Siemek 1998, 103) between individuals, his "mechanism of recognition" is comprehensive:

> In Hegel's philosophy the personal aspect of the individuality (though here fused with subjectivity) results from the relation of one individual to another by reference to the results of autonomous reflection realised in action. In this relation, in turn, an individual's very identity manifests itself as reflectively related to reality. Precisely for this reason, this (...) should not be interpreted in the sense of a 'pure' intersubjective recognition of subjectivity, nor in the sense of the recognition of the latter as an 'abstract form of subjectivity.' The relationship is personalizing and realised in practical action (Byczyński cf., 219).

Addressing initially "one of the new, purely social forms of antagonistic competition of human aspirations, needs and interests" (Siemek 1998, 78) in more liberal than communal terms, Siemek saw its ethical potential from the beginning. But if it was only potential, he vehemently advocated for a rational and effective legislation to enforce the recognition that one individual owes to another. To him, the rationality of institutions meant as much as

> a fundamentally non-fundamental rationality (...) a legitimate and rule-governed rationality of an agreement, of a just exchange, of reciprocity of benefits and interests (...) which sets the uniform norms and measures for all interested parties. Therefore, it is also only a limitative rationality of distinctions and proportions (...).

> [However] it turns out that the universal rationality of what is common to all human beings arises and develops only in the process of individualisation. It is the own self-confidence and self-affirmation of each individual "I" that only gives meaning to all general concepts, values and duties. But this "I" with all its "ipseity" and "selfness" remains here, so to speak, in the service of the common "We." The "interiority" of subjective self-confidence essential for "moral" consciousness in Hegel's sense, consists, after all, in the internalization and subjectification of the universally binding principles of the rational community. In what has validity for each individual subject, a universal form of intersubjective universal validity always 'shines through' and paves the way (Siemek 1998, 103 and 47–48; comp. Siemek 1995, 93).

Before Axel Honneth's account became known in Poland through Jakub Duraj's excellent translation (2012) of *The Struggle for Recognition*, the latter topic was explored by Siemek as a predictor for finishing the "unfinished project of modernity" (in Habermas' words) which was gaining momentum in the face of the 1989 democratic turn.

As is shown in Byczyński's book, the most constructive – and instructive – component of Honneth's approach is his application of philosophy to the "normative

construction" of unjust and pathological institutions, especially those critical for social reproduction. Normativity is here equivalent to intersubjective conditions and structures that provide individuals with realisation of their freedoms in a socially inviolable way, or – preferably – a way beneficial for the community. Consequently, morality and ethicality need an explicit normative shape so that "every moral attitude is an ethical attitude, but not every ethical attitude will be a moral attitude," and "the dichotomy of morality and ethicality will be consciously abandoned by Honneth as inadequate" (Byczyński cf., 40 and 42–57). Henceforth, ethicality is to be an indispensable condition for the development of socially responsive moral attitudes and socially responsible use of freedom (or its "rights," respectively).

However, I would not speak here of "cancelling the distinction" between morality and ethicality. It is more about training an individual agency in practicing the duty of recognition in context, where the reasons for recognition can be experienced and then internalized as "standards of ethical intersubjectivity" and "norms of recognition." "As we establish intersubjective relations with the social environment, we acquire specific skills that allow us to learn the content of our own identity (...), to articulate this content in a socially understandable way, and thus to act in such a way as to enable the fulfilment" (Byczyński cf., 43). "Having cancelled the opposition between autonomy and authenticity," Honneth allowed "a weak social criticism," but not paternalism, elitism, despotism, revolution, indoctrination (Byczyński cf., 44 and 79), and further – normative or normative, totalistic or "decontextualized," etc. pressures or powers which could interfere with the exercise of freedom. Compared to Hegel, the "absolute" moral freedom is here not just limited, appropriated or colonized by the *normative* context. Rather, its "right" is counterbalanced by the ethical duty of recognition. In this respect it is worth mentioning that Honneth delves into transcendental, speculative, or declarative recognition patterns with moderate interest. Instead, he addresses the real socio-normative patterns and outcomes of the notorious lack of recognition. If applicable, he draws on Hegel's socio-economic *Realphilosophie*, while unfolding its hidden potential.

Focused first and foremost on the normative and institutional dimensions of recognition, Byczyński seeks to approach recognition in Honneth as (1) a comprehensive philosophical *principle* that would reflect "the dynamics of recognition theory," (2) a normative, socio-ethical principle to articulate a universal duty of recognition, and (3) an explanatory model very useful in demonstrating that "individualisation and universalization" are not only not contradictory, but conditioned by each other. If individuals legitimize widely appreciated values and "projects of the good life" (Byczyński cf.) identifiable in the good of the community e.g., "by participating in certain institutions and thus by acting within them," it allows them to mitigate certain "troublesome effects of the progress of individualisation" (Byczyński cf.).

From work to work, Axel Honneth recontextualized his concept of recognition, still, an "exhaustive conception" was not offered, as Byczyński would expect. The present

author suggests that, in closing the concepts, thinking reason [*denkende Vernunft*] must begin its work from scratch. Meanwhile, the contemporary era brings so many new and rapid challenges that the concept of recognition should be in permanent progress to keep up with them. This is precisely Honneth's strategy.

Further, Byczyński would have expected a sound distinction between "authorial statements," "reconstruction of the cited authors' positions," and "interpretation of their contributions" (Byczyński cf., 260). Another challenge in dealing with Honneth's theory was for him to distinguish between descriptive and prescriptive contents, intertwined due to the hermeneutic circle[8] (see also Claassen 2014):

> For it is not clear whether the act of recognition and the relationship associated with it are intended (from the subjective perspective, that is, of the subject involved) to serve (a) the realization of the value of individual freedom, (b) the realization of some other recognized values, (c) the realization of one's own aspirations or interests, or (d) to enable the realization of the aspirations and of other individuals (Byczyński 2021, 262).

This weave is also embedded in a horizontal and, at the same time, vertical normative structure due to the fact that individuals struggling for recognition are thereby struggling for their rights and justice. After all, "justice is defined by Honneth through a network of social relations of recognition that guarantee the individual due respect for their qualities, abilities and normative claims. Justice itself is thus ethical in nature, its possibility being contingent upon the 'social integration of the individual in question'" (Byczyński cf., 43).

If I correctly understand Byczyński's position on the matter of individual freedom, he agrees with Honneth that it is a "fundamental value" and "normative basis" also of a "robust conception of progress" (Byczyński cf., 209), and, considered in terms of personal autonomy, it is "gradated" (Byczyński cf., 42). It is not only about the quantitative aspect or proportion (more or less morality at the expense of ethicality, or vice versa), but also about the gradient, the infiltration of morality with ethicality, or the interpenetration of morality with ethicality. He further adds that the individual freedom may turn out to be nothing more than one of the 'historical representations' of some other, even more fundamental value. This reflects Byczyński's rather pronounced communitarian inclinations. However, Honneth remains committed to Hegel on this matter and defends individual freedom: if we can still reflect on the contemporaneity along with Hegel, "the individual must in some way find his or her own interest, satisfaction or account in the fulfilment of his or her duty" [*das Individuum muß in seiner Pflichterfüllung auf irgend eine Weise zugleich sein eigenes Interesse, seine Befriedigung oder Rechnung finden*] (Hegel 2009, § 261).

In general, social patterns, norms of recognition, and the theory itself require

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8 The intertwining and complementary of descriptive (epistemological, cognitive, etc.) and normative aspects belongs to the very foundations of recognition theory, with the predominance of the former aspects in Hegel and the latter in Fichte (Kloc-Konkołowicz 2015, 6). Further, all the aspects contribute to the 'exhaustive' concept of recognition, including its historical and dialectical dynamics.

continuous improvement. While pondering Honneth's theory, one should, Byczyński advises, pay close attention to the matter of "normative reflection on actually realised values" and axiologies to which Honneth devotes comparably more space than e.g., the discourse theory:

> Normatively reconstructed values thus set normative purposes intentionally pursued by a community (...) universally recognized values give meaning to and create a context for understanding all practices – both those undertaken within institutions and in the area of interpersonal relations, and furthermore constitute individual subjectivity. It follows (...) that the concept of recognition is a 'comprehensive' one (Byczyński 2021, 10–11).

Byczyński's monograph is representative of the recent trend in critical social philosophy set by such works as *Anerkennung als Verpflichtung. Klassische Konzepte der Anerkennung und ihre Bedeutung für aktuelle Debatte* (Kloc-Konkołowicz 2015), *Axel Honneth and the Movement of Recognition* (Sperrotto 2022), *Recognition and Power: Axel Honneth and the Tradition of Critical Social Theory* (van den Brink & Owen 2010), and *Kultur der Anerkennung statt Menschenfeindlichkeit: Antworten für die pädagogische und politische Praxis* (Borstel & Bozay 2020). In the Polish context, research on the theory, practice and normativity of recognition was launched by Marek J. Siemek (e.g., Siemek 1995, 1998, 2000, 2003; comp. Kloc-Konkołowicz 2007; Nowak 2003, 2016) in two philosophical institutes, Warsaw and Poland. And here also it has a notable continuation.

Finally, it is worth mentioning how Byczyński concludes the reception of Honneth's theory by the Warsaw Professor Jakub Kloc-Konkołowicz. According to Byczyński, Kloc-Konkołowicz diagnosed Honneth's theory as a "naturalised social theory" driven by "non-metaphysical teleology" (Byczyński 2021, 209; see also Honneth 1996, in particular Part II/4), and showing a potentially high social and transformative impact. Furthermore, Honneth does not favour *ex cathedra* social critique. He relies on a critical 'surplus' immanently arising from societies' self-reflection on those forms of present awareness and knowledge that are shaping intersubjective relations and practices and determining their quality (which – if I may add this – would require something like a *normative recognition coefficient*).[9]

Again, in contrast to Kloc-Konkołowicz's work, Byczyński's book is not entirely devoted to the normative approach of recognition. It also details theoretical topics, as well as issues related to the conscious, cognitive, and epistemic dimensions of reciprocal recognition. An example of this would be the critical role of subjects' advanced self-(re) cognition in the form of "*de se* knowledge" recapitulated in chapter I.3 of the book. *De se* knowledge can be achieved by "linking oneself to the outer world" and "self-ascription of

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9   This would mean that the developed relationship between the subjects does not depend immediately on their natural needs, drives, emotions (or even the same factors as reflected and forming the content of the subjective will), but is instead mediated by such a will, which determines itself in its activities, relations and cooperation with others according to socio-normative standards. A rather complex idea of such standards arises here, but it is designed to regulate complex and demanding relations in economic, public and institutional life.

a certain attribute." This type of knowledge provides another important "vehicle" of the relationship of recognition.

Since Byczyński only briefly referred to the work of Kloc-Konkołowicz, it is worth citing here a few essential phrases from the latter. According to Kloc-Konkołowicz, in its very normative nature, recognition

> proves to be a reciprocal commitment to action and reflection. Recognition acts are not testimonials that everyone can take home to embellish their own four walls. Rather, they are an invitation from the recogniser to the recognised to also contribute something to other fellow citizens through their own expanded sphere of action. And at the same time, they are an invitation to the recognised to redefine their own position and identity (Kloc-Konkołowicz 2015, 184).

In turn, comparing his position with that of Honneth, Kloc-Konkołowicz points out the following:

> The difference between this [Kloc-Konkołowicz's, E.N.] proposal and that of Honneth, I see above all in the fact that he seems to identify the origin of the problem in an abandonment of private rights from their ethical content. I see the origin of the danger in the fact that private rights are merely understood as goods which an individual subject can claim for him- or herself, even if these goods remain out of reach for fellow subjects (or, which is even a worse case, if exercising her or his own rights, the former individual deprives fellow individuals of their legitimate rights). The activistic understanding of private rights as agency's capabilities makes it possible to expect from those who are granted their rights (...) that they do not understand the agency's capabilities they have gained in a merely negative [excluding others, E.N.] manner, but that they are also willing to make use of the same rights in a socially beneficial manner (Kloc-Konkołowicz 2015, 183).

Since Byczyński's monograph represents the broader philosophical context, but reflects this context in a rather modest way, devoting most of the attention to Honneth, it seemed reasonable to re-contextualise. The excessive presence of Hegel in this review is due to the fact that there are very few Hegelian "elements" in the first, nearly 100-page chapter of the monograph pronouncedly titled "The Elements of the Philosophy of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel in Axel Honneth's Theory of Recognition." Nevertheless, it must be highlighted here that Byczyński's monograph offers a pioneering – and exhaustive – presentation of Honneth's Theory of Recognition in the Polish-speaking context. It is a great pity that Jakub Kloc-Konkołowicz, to whose memory these and other reflections in this volume are dedicated, can no longer join the discussion.

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