Fichte's Role in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit,* Chapter 4[*]

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	In this paper I return to the familiar territory of the Lord-Bondsman "dialectic" in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* in order to raise the question of the relation of Hegel's use of the theme of recognition there to Fichte's. Fichte had introduced the notion of recognition in his *Foundations of Natural Right*, to "deduce" the social existence of humans within relations of mutual recognition as a necessary condition of their very self-consciousness. However, there it *also* functioned as part of a solution to a problem within the work on which the theory of rights was meant to be based, the earlier *Foundation of the Complete Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794-5. In Hegel's classic account in chapter 4 of the *Phenomenology* we find recognition offered as a solution to a problem within an account of "self-consciousness" that has a number of clearly Fichtean features. But I suggest that to the degree that the lord-bondsman episode there expresses any "theory of recognition", it is not Hegel's *own* theory but rather his interpretation of *Fichte's*, a theory of which he is critical. Freed from this misleading assumption that the "lord-bondsman dialectic" represents something deep about Hegel's own philosophy, we might then be more able to get clearer about Hegel's *actual* views about recognition and the role it plays in *his own* philosophy.

Introduction

Prior to Kojève's well-known account in his *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* there seems to have been relatively little interest in Hegel's concept of recognition—*Anerkennung*.[1] After Kojève, however, a popular view of Hegel's philosophy emerged within which the idea of recognition played a central role: what distinguishes us as self-conscious beings from the rest of nature is that we are driven by a peculiar type of desire, the desire *for* recognition leading to struggle's *over* recognition. While Kojève directed attention to the importance of Hegel's use of notion of recognition in the famous dialectic of "lord and bondsman" in chapter 4 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*,[2] his reading, inspired equally by Marx and Heidegger, was nevertheless difficult to reconcile not only with the more systematic features of Hegel's philosophy, but also with what Hegel had to say on the topic of recognition within chapter 4, but especially, elsewhere in the *Phenomenology*.[3]

Since the 1970s, *another* picture of the way in which the notion of "recognition" plays a role in Hegel's thought emerged emanating from the work of Jürgen Habermas, and then developed by Axel Honneth. [4] Habermas had directed attention to Hegel's earlier *Jena* manuscripts in which, he claimed, Hegel had reworked the notion of recognition from Fichte's theory of rights into a complex intersubjective theory of the formation of the human subject. But while Hegel's sketches there had promised a new and genuinely post-metaphysical way of thinking about human existence, this line of thought had been aborted, or at least compromised, by the time of the writing of the *Phenomenology*. In that work, the concept of recognition was reduced to the single function of its role in the constitution of self-knowledge, and this represented a *regress* in Hegel's thought, away

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[1] Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, trans. James H. Nichols Jr., (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969). Kojève's account was originally given in his lectures on Hegel in Paris in the 1930s, the subsequent popularity of his account owing much to the transmission of his views by authors such as Sartre and Lacan.

[2] G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (*Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1969), vol 3), English translation by A. V. Miller *Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). References to Hegel's *Phenomenology* will be given parenthetically, the page number of the German edition following the paragraph number of the English translation.

[3] For early criticisms see George Armstrong Kelly, "Notes on Hegel's 'Lordship and Bondage'", *Review of Metaphysics*, 19, 4 (1966): 189-217; and H.-G. Gadamer, "Hegel's Dialectic of Self-Consciousness", in *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutic Studies*, translated by P. Christopher Smith, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 62n7. More recently, Robert R. Williams has pointed to the "distortions of recognition" in the post-Kojèvean "standard interpretation" in *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 10-13. For my criticisms of Kojève see, Paul Redding, "Hermeneutic or Metaphysical Hegelianism? Kojève's Dilemma", *The Owl of Minerva*, 22 (1991): 175-89.

[4] J. Habermas, "Arbeit und Interaktion. Bemerkungen zu Hegels Jenenser Philosophie des Geistes" first published in H. Braun and M. Riedel, (ed), *Natur und Geschichte. Karl Löwith zum 70*. Geburtstag (Stuttgart, 1967) translated as "Labor and Interaction: Remarks on Hegel's Jena *Philosophy of Mind*", in *Theory and Practice*, trans. John Viertel, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974): 142-169; Axel Honneth, *Kampf und Anerkennung. Zur moralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte* (Suhrkamp, 1994), translated by Joel Anderson as *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996).

from a promising intersubjective or dialogical approach to subjectivity to a more "monologic" or consciousness-centred and, ultimately, pre-Kantian "metaphysical" one. In relation to the theory of recognition, this was a regress, in fact, to the role played by the conception of recognition in Fichte's own philosophy, the conception of which the pre-*Phenomenology* Hegel had been critical.[1]

Then, from about the late 1980s, a third picture of Hegel emerged in which recognition played an important role. Interpreters advancing this view commonly rejected the traditional "metaphysical" interpretation of the mature Hegel held by Habermas and others, and regarded Hegel's generally "recognitive" approach to "spirit" as being central to his *success* in avoiding such pre-Kantian metaphysics. They thus tended to see greater continuity within Hegel's use of the theme of "recognition" throughout his work than had proponents of the second approach. Different versions of this third view of Hegel can be discerned in the writings of Robert Pippin, Terry Pinkard, H. S. Harris, and Robert Williams, for example. [2] Elsewhere I too had attempted to sketch a picture of Hegel which has these general features. [3]

In this paper I wish to return to the familiar territory of the Lord-Bondsman "dialectic" in the *Phenomenology* in order to raise the question of the relation of Hegel's use of the recognition theme there to Fichte's. My suggestion is a straightforward one. Fichte had introduced the recognition theme in his *Foundations of Natural Right*, to "deduce" the social existence of humans within relations of mutual recognition as a necessary condition of their very self-consciousness, but it *also*

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[1] Habermas, "Labor and Interaction" 162. Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 62. Honneth's summation here indicates how much this view incorporates the Kojèvean reading of the *Phenomenology*: "The *Phenomenology of Spirit* allots to the struggle for recognition – once the moral force that drove the process of Spirit's socialization through each of its stages – the sole function of the formation of self-consciousness. Thus, reduced to the single meaning represented in the dialectic of lordship and bondage, the struggle between subjects fighting for recognition then comes to be linked so closely to the experience of the practical acknowledgement of one's labour that its own particular logic disappears almost entirely from view" (62-3).

[2] See Robert Pippin's comprehensive, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), and, more specifically, on the theme of recognition in Hegel, "What is the Question for which Hegel's Theory of Recognition is the Answer", *European Journal of Philosophy,* 8, 2 (2000): 155–72; and Terry Pinkard's *Hegel's Phenomenology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) and *German Philosophy 1760–1860: The Legacy of Idealism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). While having many internal differences to the Hegel of Pippin and Pinkard, I would count Henry S. Harris's account of Hegel as sharing these general features. See his *Hegel's Development: Toward the Sunlight 1770-1801*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), "The Concept of Recognition in Hegel's Jena Manuscripts", *Hegel-Studien* 20 (1977): 229-48, *Hegel's Development II: Night Thoughts (Jena 1801–6)*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), and *Hegel's Ladder*, 2 vols, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997). Robert R. Williams, in *Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other*, (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1992), and *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) extends the work of Ludwig Siep (*Anerkennung als Prinzip der praktischen Philosophie: Untersuchungen zu Hegels Jenaer Philosophie des Geistes*, (Freiburg: Alber Verlag, 1979) to give a comprehensive ethically focussed account linking Hegel's early work to his mature *Philosophy of Right*. Allen Wood, in *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), also stresses the role of recognition in Hegel's ethics, although disassociates it from Hegel's more systematic thought.

[3] In *Hegel's Hermeneutics*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

functioned as part of a solution to a problem internal to the work on which the theory of rights was meant to be based, the *Foundation of the Complete Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794-5. When we look to Hegel's classic account of recognition in chapter 4 of the *Phenomenology*, we find it there offered as a solution to a problem within an account of "self-consciousness" that has a number of clearly Fichtean features.[1] I suggest then, that to the degree that the lord-bondsman episode reflects any "theory of recognition", it should be read not as reflecting Hegel's *own* theory but rather Hegel's interpretation of *Fichte's* approach, an approach of which he is critical?[2] Freed from this misleading assumption that the "lord-bondsman dialectic" represents something deep about Hegel's own philosophical position, we might then be more likely to get clearer about Hegel's actual views about recognition and the role it plays in his philosophy. Here, I undertake only the negative side of this task, in an effort to separate Hegel from the "theory of recognition" commonly regarded as his own.

1. The Fichtean Character of Self-Consciousness in the *Phenomenology's* Chapter 4.

Hegel introduces the principle of recognition with a sentence that commences the much read eight- or nine-page section headed "Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage" within chapter 4: "Self-consciousness" we read, "exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only as something recognised or acknowledged [*anerkannt*]" (§ 178). The last paragraphs of the preceding dense and difficult section had been concerned with the question of the nature of the "object" capable of satisfying some (self-conscious) *desire* [*Begierde*]. Self-consciousness, it had been there claimed, could achieve "satisfaction" in nothing less than "another self-consciousness" (§ 175), and the resulting structure of two self-consciousnesses existing "for each other" was described as characterising an "absolute substance", what Hegel calls "spirit", within which "different, independent self-consciousnesses" could be unified but opposed in a way such that each enjoyed "perfect freedom and independence" (§ 177). To understand exactly what problem the use of *Anerkennung* was meant to solve here we must recall the broader context within which this claim is made.

In the *Phenomenology*'s initial three chapters, together comprising section "A: Consciousness", we philosophical readers—the so-called "phenomenological we"—had been meant to follow the

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experience of a subject through a series of possible "shapes" of what Hegel calls "consciousness", a generally realistic orientation within which that which is *known* within experience is taken to be an *independent* "in-itself" [*das Ansich*].[1] But what had supposedly been learnt within the course of such experience through the various "shapes" was that this independent in-itself was in fact "a manner [*Weise*] in which the object is only for an other" (§ 166, 137); and so, by the beginning of chapter 4, consciousness has been replaced by another more "idealistic" outlook that Hegel calls "self-consciousness". Self-consciousness, as described in the opening paragraphs of this chapter, has distinctly Fichtean characteristics.

The idea that each object of conscious awareness is really a way of existing *for* a conscious subject recalls a type of Kantian idealism, but while Kant had contrasted these knowable, subject-related appearances to the "things-in-themselves" which finite conscious subjects *cannot* know, the shape of self-consciousness with which Chapter 4 starts—"self-certainty"—takes what had been taken to be an independent "in-itself", as something *entirely* of its own determining. It is this elision of any independent "thing-in-itself" as contrasting with that appearance which exists *for* consciousness that brings the orientation of self-certainty into the orbit of Fichte's radical reinterpretation of Kant, a reinterpretation that Fichte, and following him, Hegel, had regarded as reflecting the "spirit" rather than the "letter" of Kant's transcendental idealism.[2]

It is usual to think of Fichte's variation on Kant here as having emerged from his response to Schulze's sceptical criticism of both Kant and Reinhold in the work, *Anaesidemus*.[3] There Schulze had directed a broadly Humean criticism at the ideas that one could infer from the representations (*Vorstellungen*) of one's acquaintance to *either* some "thing-in-itself" causally responsible for them

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[1] That is, the attitude of consciousness is to take things *as experienced* as being just as they *would be* "anyway", were they *not* being experienced. These various "shapes" of consciousness had been differentiated by their respective assumptions regarding the fundamental characteristics of that independent "in-itself".

[2] J. G. Fichte, *Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Academie der Wissenschaften*, (Stuttgardt Bad-Cannstadt: Friedrich Frommann, 1964-), vol I. 186n, translated as "Review of Anaesidemus", in George di Giovanni and H. S. Harris, *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 171n3. (Further references to Fichte's work will be given parenthetically with the volume and page number of the German edition followed by the English translation designated "E".) C.f., Hegel, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, translated H. S. Harris and Walter Cerf, (State University of New York Press, Albany, 1977), 79).

A caveat is in order here, as it would be far too simplistic to attempt to *identify* the orientation of "self-consciousness" with Fichte's philosophical position: the attitude of "self-consciousness" is surely meant to represent a much more general cognitive attitude than that articulated in Fichte's or any other philosophical account. Nevertheless, it could be argued that Fichte was in many senses the first philosopher *of* self-consciousness, and that it is in his philosophy that one finds one of the clearest and most explicit expressions of the type of orientation to which Hegel alludes at the outset of chapter 4.

[3] G. E. Schultz, *Anaesidemus, oder Über die Fundamente der von dem Herrn Prof. Reinhold in Jena gelieferten Elementar-Philosophie*, (orig. 1722) reprinted Manfred Frank, (ed), Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1996. Translated in part in di Giovanni and Harris, *Between Kant and Hegel*.

or the mind itself as the faculty responsible for their generation.[1] Fichte's response here was complex. First, he agreed with Schulze as to the illegitimacy of the former inference, thereby ruling out the intelligibility of any independent "thing-in-itself" doctrine within transcendental idealism. But along with this, he criticised, as involving a category mistake, the underlying *conception* of the mind implicit in the *second* of these two inferences. There, the mind is thought of as another type of entity regarded "in itself" and Fichte criticizes Schulze's inability to think of the faculty of representation as anything other than a "thing [*Ding*]"—"Is it" Fichte mocks, "round or square?" (I.11; E 143) That is, in setting up the picture to which he applies the torch of Humean scepticism, Schulze construes the mind as a "thing-in-itself, *independent* of his *representing* it" but he also thinks of it as "a thing *that represents*", but surely this is not the way to understand *self-consciousness*.[2] To counter Schulze's implicit hypostatising of the mind Fichte goes on to claim that "the faculty of representation exists *for* the faculty of representation and *through* the faculty of representation" (I.11; E 143).[3] That is, the mind is not the sort of thing that can be possibly considered "in itself" *independent of* how it is *for itself*, as Schulze seems to assume.

Fichte attempted to combine the two ideas about the mind implicit in his critique of Schulze: the idea that what or how the mind was "in itself" was necessarily "*for* itself", and the idea of its having a form of being other than that of a "thing", a conception to which he opposed that of the mind as the process of *self-positing*.[4] If we think of positing x as something like the *activity* in which we become aware of x, then the mind was by its very nature, self-positing, and what it was aware of in this awareness was itself *as* that very activity, not some quasi-object underlying that activity and *acting*. This anti-hypostatizing idea he tried to capture with the neologism of the mind

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[1] The first of these two criticisms was famously made against Lockean realism by Berkeley, but Berkeley's idealism testified to his retention of the idea of a mind (God's mind) as responsible for the mind's representations. Hume effectively extended Berkeley's own criticism of the inference to the thing in itself to the mind. Schultz was applying Hume's two-pronged sceptical approach.

[2] We might clarify Fichte's point here by thinking of the second "inference" of which *Schulze* was critical as like that made by Berkeley when he inferred the existence of a *divine* mind rather than an external object from the fact of the resistance of the contents of his *own* mind to his will. But Fichte alludes to the fact that for Kantian self-consciousness, it is a question not of one mind inferring to some *other* mind, but a single mind's awareness of *itself* as somehow actively engaged in the production of its own representations.

[3] Cf., "All the claims of Anaesidemus against this procedure are based merely on the fact that he wants the absolute existence [*Existenz*] or autonomy of the *ego* to be valid *in itself* (just how and for whom we do not know), whereas it should only hold *for the ego itself*. It is *for* the *ego* that the *ego* is *what* it is, and is *why* it is. Our knowledge cannot advance beyond this proposition." (1.16; "Review of *Anaesidemus*" 147).

[4] Günter Zöller neatly captures Fichte's complexly dual conception of "I-ness" as "the act-character or agility (*Agilität*) of the I, according to which the latter is not a thinglike being with a predetermined essence but a doing that first brings about what it is; and its character as intelligence or of being-for-itself, according to which nothing can have being with respect to the I that is not *for* the I." *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy: The Original Duplicity of Intelligence and Will*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 60.

as a "*Tathandlung*", something that was factual in the way an action or performance was factual rather the way than an object was factual (I.8; E, 141).

In Part III of the 1794-5 *Wissenschaftslehre*, the part devoted to the foundations of *practical* knowledge, Fichte developed some consequences of this fundamentally anti-hypostatizing conception of the I sketched in the "Anaesidemus Review". Much of the 1794-5 *Wissenschaftslehre* is devoted to an attempt to reconcile an apparent contradiction implicit within the three logical principles articulating the notion of self-positing from which that work had commenced. The first "absolutely unconditioned" principle had expressed the I's absolute self-positing—"I am I" (I. 94; E. 96). The second, the "principle of opposition [*Satz des Gegensetzens*]" proceeded from the fact of empirical consciousness in which the I is aware of, and so *posits*, something *other than* itself, a "not-I [Nicht-Ich]".[1] The empirically *determined* I of the second principle is, of course, inconsistent with the absolutely self-positing I of the first principle, and the third principle, attempting to reconcile the first two, has the I positing both itself *and* the not-I as somehow opposed. The relation of the I (now finite because of its opposition to the not-I) and the not-I within this third principle could now be understood in either of two ways: first, with the not-I determining the finite I, a direction of determination we think of as basic to *knowledge*; next, with the finite I determining the not-I, a direction of determination we think of as central to intentional *action*. The last two parts of the text, parts II and III, therefore considered the structures of theoretical reason and practical reason in turn, and it was within these parts that Fichte attempted to address the problem of how to reconcile the infinitude of the absolutely self-positing I with the finitude of the "divided" I of the third principle.

Considered in its theoretical capacity as "intelligence in general", the I must be regarded as *dependent* on the object (not-I) known. This theoretical attitude, therefore, in general expresses the orientation Hegel had explored in Chapters 1-3 as "Consciousness". But this is in clear conflict with the fundamental conception of *self-consciousness*, the idea that "the I, in all its determinations, must be absolutely posited by itself, and must therefore be wholly independent of any possible not-I" (I.249, E220). The contradiction here cannot, Fichte suggests, be resolved *within* the framework of theoretical reason itself, and in Part III, in the context of the I's *practical* capacities, he offers a resolution by appealing to his strongly actional conception of the I as a *striving*.

From the practical perspective, all theoretical cognition must be interpreted in the light of the conception of the I as striving: "all reflection is based on striving, and in the absence of striving there can be no reflection." (Fichte 1982, 258).[2] In the course of such primordial striving, a subject

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[1] Here the I am, Fichte says, "conditioned as to content".

[2] On Fichte's primordially *striving* subject, see Zöller*, Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy*; Wayne M. Martin, *Idealism and Objectivity: Understanding Fichte's Project* (Stanford: Stanford University Press). 1997, ch 6, and Simon Lumsden, (2004), 'Fichte's Striving Subject', *Inquiry*, 47, 2 (2004).

experience "checks [*Anstossen*]" to its striving which it in turn strives to overcome. Fichte intends us to understand such restrictions as being experienced *negatively*, as restrictions to the I's freedom, as obstacles which, from the perspective of the striving, *ought not* to exist.[1] The striving doctrine now promises a resolution of the contradiction between the absolute self and the conditioned self since the content correlative to the absolute or independent aspect of the I will be presented to the I not as a *fact* but as the content of a *demand*, something having the modality of an "ought to be" rather than an "is". When Fichte later goes on to identify this demand that "everything is to be dependent upon" the I with Kant's *categorical imperative* (I, 260 fn; E 230 fn 2) we grasp something of his relation to Kant's idea of the "primacy of practical reason". Kant had meant by this idea that practical, not theoretical; reason could be "pure" and dependent on nothing other than itself. In contrast, Fichte's claim for the primacy of practical reason was stronger: "it is not in fact the theoretical which makes possible the practical" he asserts, "but on the contrary the practical which makes possible the theoretical" (I, 126; E 123).[2]

We can recognize Fichte's "striving" conception of self-consciousness in the second paragraph of chapter 4 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* where Hegel describes the immediate conception of self-consciousness as "*Desire* in general [*Begierde überhaupt*] " (§ 167). Self-consciousness, so conceived, has two moments: in the first of these, "otherness is for it in the form of *a being*", while in the second, self-consciousness is aware of its own unity with itself—it is, Hegel says, appealing to the Fichtean formula, the moment of "I am I". Of these two moments, it is the latter that is regarded as the "truth" of self-consciousness, while the former, corresponding to the original "in-itself" of consciousness, now has the status of "appearance [*Erscheinung*]" (§ 167). With this, Hegel brings out an aspect of Fichte's position that we might describe as a normativised essentialism: considered *generically* the I is self-identical and independent, considered as an *individual*, the I must "find itself" to have contingent, limiting features. The somewhat Aristotelian "movement" which is proper to it, then, will be one in which its essence is expressed, and the antithesis between essence and appearance removed.[3]

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[1] Thus, the I's basic experience presupposes a type of inarticulate desiring or "longing [*Sehnen*]", an "original, wholly independent manifestation of the striving that lies in the self" (I. 304; E. 267). It is only on the basis of this longing that the self is "driven out of itself; only thereby is an external world revealed within it" (266). Desire or longing is not an optional *addition* to consciousness. "Anyone who wants to be relieved from desire" as he puts it later in his 1796–9 lectures, "wants to be released from consciousness" (Fichte 1992, 295).

[2] Indeed, Fichte's apparent absorption of theoretical into practical reason here might be seen as a consequence of the initial elision of the "thing-in-itself" doctrine. Without any independent source of an external given that in Kant's account restricted the theoretical use of reason to a "regulative" *rather than* "constitutive", there was now nothing to prevent "pure" reason manifest in practical use, theoretical too.

[3] As Allen Wood has stressed, for Fichte, the I's *certainty* about its own content or substance, its ability to ascribe to itself intentions or purposes in a way such that it could not *misidentify* the subject whose intentions they were, that is,

But if this is meant to refer to Fichte's conception of self-consciousness, then surely Hegel's characterization of this conception of self-consciousness as *Begierde überhaupt* calls for comment. As we have seen, for Fichte, the primacy of *practical* reason was, as the allusion to the categorical imperative indicates, the primacy of the practical or moral *faculty*, which, following Kant, he called this the faculty of *Begehrung*. Hegel, however, uses the etymologically related term "*Begierde*", also translated as "desire", but having more corporeal connotations of a word like "appetite".[1] Interpreted as referring to Fichtean self-consciousness, Hegel would seem to be appealing to the *negating* orientation of appetite towards its objects, conveyed by the link between appetite and *consumption*.

Of course, it was definitely not the case that either Kant or Fichte conceived of moral behaviour as in any way naturalistically *grounded*—that would reveal a "dogmatic" point of view antithetical to the transcendental idealist position. Nevertheless, there seems something appropriate to Hegel's characterization of the "negating" attitude of Fichte's moral subject with the use of the appetite-consumption conception. The familiar opposition of Kantian moral motivation to given inclinations on which Fichte draws can, for example, suggest a view of moral desire as a type of *higher-order* desire to be freed from, or to *negate*, any determining first-order desires or natural drives felt as determining the I's activity from *without*. That is, it could be said that such higher-order desires treat those first-order desires just in the way that *they* treat *their* objects—by negating them—and so, as such, are strangely modelled on them. In fact, Fichte seems to have built this radically negating attitude into the logical structure of his very conception of self-consciousness by the second principle in which the object of consciousness is conceived not just as *different to* but as a *negation of* the I. Later, in the "Second Introduction to the *Wissenschaftslehre*", Fichte will claim that "to the idealist, the only positive thing is freedom: existence, for him, is a mere negation of the latter" (I, 499; E 69).

As Hegel presents it in the *Phenomenology*, the inadequacy of a generalized "appetite" model *as* a model of self-consciousness reveals itself in the inability of the mediating object of self-consciousness, the not-I, to do the job of mediation successfully. Just as the satisfaction of an appetite removes its object, self-consciousness on this model would be self-extinguishing as the resisting object is *required* for individual striving. In order to be ongoing, self-consciousness would *require* the objects over which it exercised its power to constantly reappear, just as hunger eventually returns after satisfaction. In its own self-conception as *essentially* autonomous and self-

itself, was based on the fact that such self-ascription was for Fichte "not fundamentally a matter of theoretical observation but an act of self-definition".

[1] H.-G. Gadamer drew attention to the specificity of Hegel's term in his criticism of Kojève's interpretation, "Hegel's Dialectic of Self-Consciousness", 62n7. H. S. Harris comments that *Begierde* "seems to represent Aristotle's *orexis* (generally called in English "appetite")", although he thinks it encompasses also Platonic *eros* (*Hegel's Ladder, volume 1,* 320). Both connotations, I believe, can be incorporated into my Fichtean contextualization of the term.

related, moral self-consciousness will then be, contradictorily, *dependent* on those natural desires, and hence "life", as a source for such apparently independent objects.

However, this shouldn't be seen as (and neither does Hegel intend it as) some simple *reductio* of Fichte's position. Fichte, of course, was fully aware of this feature of his account of self-consciousness, and in itself, there seems nothing particularly incoherent in about it: it was just this aspect of the I's *finitude* in relation to its *essential infinitude* that Fichte had meant to capture with the striving doctrine. In fact, we might think of this consequence of instantiating moral self-consciousness within some process of "life" as part of Fichte's answer to those hypostatized and other-worldly aspects of *Kant's* own conception the moral self, an answer that stresses the necessarily embodied and located nature of the moral subject.[1]

Hegel was an acute critic of the strong hint of otherworldliness implicit in Kant's moral philosophy, and from this point of view Fichte's reinterpretation would be an advance. Hegel's criticism of Fichte on this point, I suggest, concerns not the *fact* of the dependency of Fichtean self-consciousness on "life" but the limited conceptual resources with which Fichte conceives of the nature of this relationship, and this will separate their differing interpretations of the principle of recognition. Following Fichte Hegel will introduce the mediating perspectives of recognized others to overcome this problem of the negativity that the "object" has for practical consciousness, but Fichte's mediations are such that recognition is *itself* afflicted by the problems besetting the "appetite" model of self-consciousness. To see this, however, we must look to how Fichte's account of self-consciousness in the 1794-5 *Wissenschaftslehre* has prepared the ground for his introduction of the principle of recognition in the work on natural right.

2. Self-consciousness and Recognition in Fichte

In the 1794–5 *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte's invocation of the primacy of the *moral subject* in Part III had allowed the idea of the I's external limitation to be replaced by the *normative* idea of its *self*-limitation. It was with this idea that Fichte tried to suggest an answer as to how the *check* "would not set bounds to the activity of the self; but would give it the task of setting bounds to itself" (I, 210; E, 189), and it was this idea that pointed to his subsequent analysis to the role of "*Anerkennung*" in the *Grundlage des Naturrechts* in the following year.

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[1] Here there would seem to be a certain parallel between Fichte's approach and the way that Thomas Nagel conceives of these issues (*The View from Nowhere*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). Considered in terms of my rational essence, I must conceive of myself as capable of an aperspectival "view from nowhere", but rationality must be individuated, and individuation inserts me into the world *somewhere* in particular. The "view from nowhere" need not be taken in the sense of that of an otherworldly subject—an incoherent notion—but only in the sense of "nowhere in particular", the telos of an actually located subject who strives to discount all the contingent factors contributing to their particular view.

In Part One of that work, devoted to the "Deduction of the Concept of Right", Fichte starts with an initial "theorem" which parallels his claim of the primacy of the practical conception of the I from the *Wissenschaftslehre*, "A finite rational being cannot posit itself without ascribing a free efficacy [*freie Wirksamkeit*] to itself" (III, 17; E 18).[1] With the second theorem, however, Fichte introduces his new radical claim of the necessity of intersubjective existence of a being capable of ascribing such free efficacy to itself: "The finite rational being cannot ascribe to itself a free efficacy in the sensible world without also ascribing such efficacy to others, and thus without also presupposing the existence of other finite rational beings outside of itself" (III, 30; E, 29).

Fichte's "proof" here starts with a restatement of the contradiction from the *Wissenschaftslehre* between the absolute independence of the I and its limitation by the object or "not-I". The practical I must think of the object of which it is conscious as both conditioning it and as having no independent efficacy (E 31). The solution to this contradiction then offered is to "think of the subjects' being-determined as its *being-determined to be self-determining*, i.e., as a summons [*eine Aufforderung*] to the subject, calling upon it to resolve to exercise its efficacy [*sich zu einer Wirksamkeit zu entschliessen*]" (III, 33; E, 31). This "summons", which replaces the vague "*Anstoss*" doctrine of the 1794-5 *Wissenschaftslehre*, must be conceived as coming from *another rational being*.[2] Fichte then goes on the "third theorem" to claim that "the finite rational being cannot assume the existence of other finite rational beings outside it without positing itself as standing with those beings in a particular relation, called a relation of right" (III, 41; E. 41).

3 Recognition, Life, and Spirit in Hegel

Within the *Foundation of Natural Right*, this notion of a *demand* for me to limit my own determinate action becomes then the basis upon which Fichte develops his explicitly *normative* theory of rights in part one of, an approach which at a general level has features in common with the account Hegel was to employ later in his own account of "abstract right" in the *Philosophy of Right*. (Hegel, 1991)[3] Like Fichte, Hegel did not seek to ground the relations of right on any account of moral subjectivity. Rather he treated the contractual relation as a matter of the mutual recognition by the contractors of each other's abstract rights as proprietors.[4] But in terms of Hegel's *broader* conception of recognition, this legalistic approach to recognition was regarded as one-sided: in

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[1] There is a difference here in as much as the self-ascribed "free efficacy" is not that of moral freedom but that of the more limited rational pursuit of self-ascribed goals. Fichte was to grapple with the conditions of moral freedom in the *System der Sittenlehre* of 1798, but although there may be some a suggestion there of the role of recognition it is not as explicit as in the *Rechtslehre*.

[2] "But if there is such a summons, then the rational being must necessarily posit a rational being outside itself as the cause of the summons, and thus it must posit a rational being outside itself in general…." III, 39; E 37.

[3] G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, (*Werke*, 7), translated as *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet, (Cambridge: Cambridge 1991).

[4] Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, § 71, Zusatz.

fact, we could say that in its *formal* character Fichte's conception of recognition testified to the fact of its still being in the thralls of the *appetite model* of self-consciousness. In the formal recognition of the other's right, recognition is just *the other side* of an act of negation or annihilation of one's own desire: to acknowledge another's right to, that is, ownership of, some object is just to restrict the "sphere" of one's actions such that that object is excluded from this sphere. But this limitation of the scope of one's own interested actions is itself, as the context of the economic contract brings out, simply in the service of a *further* interested intention. Thus, in Hegel's treatment of "abstract right", the following analysis of "wrong"—*Unrecht*—is meant to exhibit the limitations of the conception of recognition of abstract right. It is the contingency of one's act of recognising the other's right, the fact that the act of recognition *per se* is not the deeper intention expressed, but just a *means* for realizing an underlying ego-centric economic interest, that is manifest in crime. Thus in Hegel's treatment, the abstract, legalistic sphere of the recognition of rights found in "civil society" is dependent upon *another* realm within which recognition functions differently—that of the family, both of these spheres becoming necessary for the support of the *moral* subjectivity that for Fichte defines the human essence.[1] While Fichte treated the family as a *natural* institution that was subjected to the norms of right, as it were, from *without*, for Hegel, the family was a more *immediate* form of objectified spirit itself, requiring its own distinctive type of recognition, one based on expressions of love rather than self-interest. In the *Phenomenology*'s account of the recognitively structured life of the lord and bondsman, this same one-sided *instrumental* status of recognition that is later seen in the *Philosophy of Right*'s account of *abstract right* is evident.

While the question of its significance may be puzzling, Hegel's actual *story* of the lord and bondsman in chapter 4 of the *Phenomenology* is itself reasonably clear, at least in its broad outlines. We are being introduced to the realm "spirit", a realm of self-conscious life which is differentiated from *mere* life by the constitutive processes of recognition. Thus, in contrast with the type of life and death struggles making up the organic world, we view a contrasting type of existence involving a different type of struggle terminating in something *other than* the death (the negation) of one of the antagonists. This new type of antagonistic existence can be stabilized in conventional forms of life in which individuals live out distinctive existences *via* differentiated and coordinated social roles. In the simple model, the victor and vanquished within a struggle become lord and bondsman: "two opposed shapes of consciousness; one … the independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself, the other … the dependent consciousness whose essential nature is simply to live or to be for another" (§189; 150). But the capitulation of the vanquished protagonist that

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[1] In the family, members are conscious of the genus as their essence (there the participants grasp themselves primarily *as* family members), and recognition is not *opposed* to felt impulses or affections but is in immediate identity with them. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §§158–180. This institutional context of recognition in turn refers back to Hegel's treatment of recognition in his pre-*Phenomenology* Jena writings.

establishes such a relationship also testifies to the complexity of intention of which such a being is capable. In capitulation the bondsman chose life *over* the actual objects for which he had struggled. The vanquished's capitulation can be regarded as act of recognition establishing this new institutional relationship—a type of Austinian performative, perhaps—but it can also be viewed as an instrumental act in the service of an underlying, essential and interested end, "desire".

With his instituting recognitive act the bondsman has, we might say, *committed* himself to this normative identity in *exchange* for his life and he *holds himself to* this commitment in his continual acknowledgement of the other as *his* lord by treating him as such.[1] This structure of holding and being held to such commitments is constitutive of such social roles and is, for Hegel, fundamentally *conceptual* or rule-governed, the interactions of lord and bondsman being mediated by the linked pair of action-guiding concepts, "lord" and "bondsman". The society of lord and bondsman thus instantiates, although in a primitive and inadequate way, the type of structure that responds to the initial inadequacies of the appetite model of self-consciousness. Here "*self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness*" (§175; 144), one that "effects the negation within itself". But the bondsman has only negated desire in a superficial and limited sense. In the face of conflict, the original particular desire was renounced—its original object not pursued—because this was the way in which the bondsman had satisfied a deeper, more articulate desire, the desire for continued life itself—the desire for the *universal* accounting for the renounced object's *very desirability*.

In the ensuing pages we learn how this embryonic society of lord and bondman is unstable and how each member actually comes to take on the characteristics of the other. This dialectical development follows from the initial *non-reciprocal* distribution of independence and dependence, "one being only *recognized*, the other only *recognizing*" (§185; 147): *qua* condition of self-conscious life this social arrangement does not live up to its essence. As we have seen, the bondsman, by his self-denial, effects negation within himself, but the same cannot be said for the lord. His self-consciousness still remains modelled on immediate *appetite* and its satisfaction, and this means that as a structure of recognition, that obtaining between lord and bondsman will be rent by contradiction. The lord cannot become adequately conscious of *himself* as a self-conscious individual in the recognition of the bondsman, because, treating him as a thing, he doesn't explicitly *recognise* the bondsman *as* a self-consciousness. And so *qua* object for the lord, the bondsman "does not correspond to its concept" (§192; 152), and in failing to recognize the bondsman as a self-consciousness, the lord negates the very conditions for his own self-consciousness.

As for the bondsman, "just as lordship showed that its essential nature is the reverse of what it wants to be, so too servitude in its consummation will really turn into the opposite of what it

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[1] Thus, the bondsman "sets aside its own being-for-self, and in so doing itself does what the first does to it", the act which Hegel describes as the first "moment of recognition" (§191; 152).

immediately is" (§193; 152). In the work performed for the lord, the bondsman himself, by working on and transforming the objects of the world, learns to *master* it. He attains the *negating* orientation to the objective world that goes beyond the more primitive orientation of the lord whose negations essentially are tied to the satisfactions of immediate desire. It is thus the bondsman who "through his service … rids himself of his attachment to natural existence in every single detail; and gets rid of it by working on it" (§194; 153). Moreover, in the transformations of natural objects brought about by his work, the bondsman has the chance to recognize his own *negating* activity: "Through his work ... the bondsman encounters himself [kommt ... zu sich selbst]" (§195; 153). With this then, we can see the beginnings of a *dynamic* process internal to this proto-society that puts it on a developmental path. It will be the servile consciousness marked by formative activity and "*inhibited* desire [*gehemmte* Begierde]" (§195; 153), and not the lord, who will inherit the earth. At the *telos* of this process will be a society of self-mastering agents interacting within reciprocal relations of recognition—modern civil society. But Hegel's final paragraph of this section signals a warning concerning how to understand the labouring self-consciousness's final victory: "In fashioning the thing" he remarks, "the bondsman's own negativity, his being-for-self, becomes an object for him only though his negating the existing *shape* confronting him" (§196; 154). That is, ultimately, it would seem, as a vehicle for or model of self-consciousness "fashioning" self-consciousness ultimately suffers from the same limitations as self-consciousness as appetite.[1] The contradiction between the I's essential infinitude and its contingent finitude in the Fichtean account is, for Hegel, like the lump in the carpet, able to be pushed around by various "mediations" which offer local solutions, only to show up elsewhere.[2]

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[1] The bondsman's initial orientation was that of fear—fear of the lord, but also fear of something more general that had been represented by the lord, "the fear of death, the absolute Lord" (§194, 153). This was the attitude of the bondsman as it initially had been "in itself", but its concluding attitude, its explicitly "for self" moment, is that the shapes of the external realm confronting him are negated. Again, the truth of self-consciousness can only be understood as the mediated unity of these two moments. "If consciousness fashions the thing without that initial absolute fear, it is only an empty self-centred attitude; for its form or negativity is not negativity *per se*, and therefore its formative activity cannot give it a consciousness of itself as essential being" (§196; 154.)

[2] It is traditional to see the limitations of the lord-bondsman relation as residing in its non-reciprocity, and if we see the system of universal "abstract" right promised within the modern world as the ultimate outcome to the historical dynamic set in operation by the lord-bondsman relation, then we can see this as realizing the reciprocity essential to recognition. But this is only *one* of the limitations of the lord-bondsman form of intersubjectivity, another is its ultimate contextualization within the desire model of self-consciousness, and Hegel's treatment of abstract right in the *Philosophy of Right* identifies this as a sphere in which recognition works *internal* to the model of desire as well. The lord-bondsman episode has taught the lesson that finite individual existence, and hence "life", is necessary for self-consciousness—the insight manifested by the capitulating antagonist, and displaying a more intelligent form of practical reason to that of the lord.

4. Hegel's implicit diagnosis of the logical limitations of the Fichtean conception of recognition in chapter 4

I have suggested that for Hegel, Fichte's innovative use of the concept of recognition is compromised by the theoretical context in which it is introduced: the conception of self-consciousness in which I grasp myself as a normative autonomous essence limited by the contingencies of my particular insertion into the world. Hegel's *ultimate* diagnosis of Fichte's problem, I suggest, will be a "logical" one, consequent upon what he sees as the limitations of the "essence-accident" categories, and the corresponding operation of "negation", employed.[1] However, such considerations are not meant to be *presupposed* by the presentation of the *Phenomenology*, so in this final section I want to try to say something about what we might learn about the inadequacies of the Fichtean account of self-consciousness from a point of view to which we readers—the "phenomenological we"—might be entitled in chapter 4.

Early in chapter 4, in discussing the negatively construed object of a desiring self-consciousness, Hegel notes that: "*for us*, or *in itself*, the object which for self-consciousness is the negative element has, on its side, returned into itself, just as on the other side consciousness has done. Through this reflection into itself the object has become Life" (ibid.). The introduction of "life" at this point is sometimes interpreted as testifying to Hegel's covert assumption of a Schellingian "nature-philosophical" perspective,[2] but the contextualizing "*for us*, or *in itself*", alluding to the perspective of the phenomenological we, indicates how Hegel thinks that he is entitled to this notion.

From the agent's subjective point of view, intention might be experienced immediately as directed to the "negation" of some given situation in an attempt to make it conform to one's will, but from the reflective point of view of the phenomenological observer it is the sort of attitude that is expressed in the teleological action of an interested embodied agent whose drives or desires lead her to interact with others in order to realize those desires.[3] In short, "we" can already appreciate that an immediately desiring subject, some *for-us* objectified self-consciousness, necessarily belongs to the interactive realm of "life", and we can do this because of what we have learnt about

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[1] If, *qua* free rational agent, one conceives of one's relations to the limiting factors defining one's contingent situation in the world on the model of "negation"—the model of generalized appetite—one is, presumably, from Hegel's standpoint, in the thralls of a logically inadequate account of "negativity".

[2] Ludwig Siep *Der Weg der Phänomenologie des Geistes*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), 100) raises the question as to whether Hegel simply assumes metaphysical nature-philosophical notions here. Jon Stewart (*The Unity of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, 117) defends Hegel against any such "vitalist" interpretation by construing "life" as a purely *logical* category, while Robert Williams, (*Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 48) interprets "life" here in essentially *practical* terms. H. S. Harris (*Hegel's Ladder 1,* ch. 7) has an extensive account of Hegel's use of this notion here, grounding its introduction in the earlier account of "understanding". Here I broadly follow Harris's suggestion.

[3] Indeed, Fichte himself, in the *Foundations of Natural Right*, had effectively used the same distinction between our "reflective" consciousness, and that of the subject under examination, to enable an apparently "dogmatic" nature-philosophical perspective onto self-consciousness.

"objects" of consciousness from following the lessons of "consciousness" through the "shapes" of sense-certainty (*die sinnliche Gewissheit*), perception (*die Wahrnehmung*), and understanding (*der Verstand*).

Consciousness had started out taking the immediate qualitatively determined "this" of sense-certainty as the *truth* of its object and had come to learn that such immediately perceivable quality is just an aspect of the more complex object of *perception*, the changeable property of some underlying substrate. But in turn perception came to learn that that *its* object was in truth more complicated again, the distinction between perception and the understanding roughly enacting the distinction between the everyday common-sensical and modern scientific views of the world. From the point of view of perception, the world is simply an assemblage of propertied objects; from the point of view of *the understanding* however, such objects will be integrated as interacting components of a single, unified, law-governed world.[1]

Here it is worth recalling that Kant himself had thought of the law-like behaviour of the components of the *natural* world as revealed by science as modelling the normative or *rule-governed* moral behaviour essential to self-conscious subjects.[2] Thus, having learnt the truth about "objects" from chapters 1-3, we philosophical observers at the beginning of chapter 4 might thus anticipate that something like "the moral law" should turn out to be the proper object of desire, and that this will be the "truth" that the active self-conscious subject with which it starts, the subject of *self*-certainty, the practical analogue of *sense*-certainty, must ultimately learn. Furthermore, it seems clear that the forms of practical self-consciousness analogous to "the understanding" are to be the ones found in the final section of chapter 4, "B: Stoicism, Scepticism, and the Unhappy Consciousness", where Hegel announces a "new shape" of self-consciousness, "free self-consciousness", which "is aware of itself as essential being, a being which *thinks*" (§ 197).

If we now reflect on the shapes of self-consciousness encountered up to this point, it seems clear that the *lord* and *bondsman* exemplify practical forms of rationality paralleling *sense-certainty* and

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[1] "*Self*-certainty", the immediate form of self-consciousness, is the practical analogue of *sense*-certainty. Here a felt appetite is directed to some particular sensuously presented "this" in which desiring self-consciousness is aware of itself. At its most basic, my desire is directed to *this* sensuous thing before me, and presented to me just *as* this appealing sensuous quality whose independence I will strive to overcome. Self-certainty must learn that the immediate "this" is not the *truth* of its object. It will have to learn what *we* phenomenological observers know: that its object is *not* a mere nothing but must also have the aspects analogous to the perceptual object of consciousness (the desired object must have the universal property of *being living*) and, crucially, to that of the understanding.

[2] For example, in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (trans and ed Mary Gregor, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Kant claims that physical laws can give a type of symbolic presentation to the *moral* law when he introduces the notion of a "*Typus*" or "type" of pure practical judgment. "[W]hat the understanding can put under an idea of reason is not a *schema* of sensibility but a law, such a law, however, as can be presented *in concreto* in objects of the senses (*das an Gegenständen der Sinne in concreto dargestellt werden kann*) and hence a law of nature, though only to its form; this law is what the understanding can put under an idea of reason on behalf of judgment, and we can accordingly, call it the *type* [*Typus*] of the moral law" (60).

perception. While the lord immediately identifies with his own immediately given urges, and treats all obstacles as "nothings" to be annihilated, the bondsman works on given objects rather than consumes them, being directed in this by a *telos* that is provided by the expressed appetites of the lord. Similarly, the bondsman's activity testifies to a capacity to dis-identify with his own immediate urges, and replace them by those of the lord. That is, the bondman's practical relation to both objects and himself, his capacity to transform both through labor, manifests a grasp of the difference between normative essence and their given appearance and is a form of cognition equivalent to theoretical cognition's *perception*. Thus, recognition as introduced with the lord-bondsman relation can be seen as solving the problem of mediation between these two limited cognitive attitudes. However, these *limited* categories of essence and accident, inadequate for either science or morality, are of course *just* the same category pair that had been employed in Fichte's conceptualising *of* self-consciousness from which chapter 4 had started. It is Fichte, not Hegel, who is the philosopher of the "dialectics of labor" over other forms of interaction. The development of this form of recognition in the modern system of abstract right will realize the essential *reciprocity* missing in its immediate form, but it will nevertheless be still constrained by this limited cognitive structure. If we are interested in *Hegel's* views about recognition in the *Phenomenology*, rather than his views about *Fichte's* use of the concept, we should be looking elsewhere, and not at chapter 4.

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