

Recognition: Hegel's legacy in Ricoeur's thought

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Abstract: The aim of this essay is to pinpoint Hegel's legacy in Ricoeur's theory of recognition. By preliminarily listing all main elements of Hegel's theory of recognition, I shall point to the similarities and differences between the two authors paradigms. While Ricoeur learns a great deal from Hegel's enquiry, he also introduces some new aspects, such as the role of narrative identity, and he credits greater importance to the inter-subjective original horizon. Furthermore, I shall thoroughly investigate Hegel's suggestions on the role of love as the first and “unpolished” form of recognition. These results are partially dismissed by Ricoeur. Arguably, the relationship between the two philosophers is clearly outlined by shared claims on the relevant place of negativity and dialectic motion. Both terms prompt Ricoeur to organize his theory according to mutuality and not to reciprocity. Finally, I shall provide some closing remarks on the anthropology of gift and its complex application to the ethical and political context.

Keywords: recognition, negativity, love, inter-subjectivity.

1. Hegel and recognition: an original connection

Hegel's thought has undoubtedly provided some important seeds in the contemporary debate concerning recognition. His legacy developed through many philosophers of the 20th century, such as Axel Honneth and Paul Ricoeur. While the former paid more attention to the Social Ontology and the correlated social studies, the latter also took an interest in Hegel's anthropology. The French philosopher was greatly inspired by this source, and he introduced some new intuitions within the inner inter-subjective core of recognition. As Heikki Ikäheimo & Arto Laitinen argue: «Contrary to what was for a long time a standard interpretation in the English speaking world, on the more recent readings Hegel's central term 'Spirit' does not stand for an ethereal entity or cosmic principle determining human affairs, but rather for the historically developing concrete practices, psychological, social and institutional structures, and the realms of cultural representations of the human life-form as an interconnected whole»¹. This interpretation suggests that, beyond the traditional metaphysical interpretation of Hegel's system, another approach focusing on the worldly structure of subjectivity and on its different manifestations may be pursued in Hegel's studies.

The Subject is taken as fully determined by its relationship with the other; furthermore it is said to outline in the world an open-negative structure inhabited by dialectical motion. Hegel claims that such a subject is capable of negating every determination which is other than itself and, at the same time, it is able to give reason of its existence through specific acts of will². This negative attitude is simply part of the teleological organization, which is the core of Hegel's understanding of subjectivity as first presented in the account concerning the Idea in *The Science of Logic*. The Idea represents the inner purpose which must necessarily proceed in reality and in the immanency of Nature and Spirit. In other words, despite the fact that the Absolute Subjectivity is the beginning and the end of the whole process of thought, in order to be properly absolute it must solve every internal contradiction. It must negate again and overcome this very negation. To this aim, the subject is required to demonstrate its supremacy on the object, which should recognize it as creator or as living and powerful being. Hence the world of Nature being the absolute otherness, the Spirit should fully

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¹ Ikäheimo, Laitinen (2011, 21).

² Hegel (1978, § 4-5).

overcome this very otherness. We would like to remark that, at the end of the development of Hegel's thought, the most relevant element is paradoxically the negativity itself. What does this mean? It clearly suggests that in order to be "*ab-solutus*" the Subject can never rest quietly in itself. Every result, even the higher one, is not established once and for all and it must be negated through dialectical motion.

Hegel makes reference to the relation between two self-consciousnesses for the first time in his *Philosophical Propeadeutic*, where he claims: «Men differ from each other in what is contingent or dependent on nature and external circumstances. In the particular, however, there also dwells something universal. The particularity of a man consists in his relation to others. In this relation there are also essential and necessary determinations. These constitute the content of Duty»³. In this quote one of the most relevant topic in Hegel's philosophy is anticipated: the circularity between freedom and necessity based on the logically-ontologically structured Subject, in reference to the rational order of reality. Relation is connected to Knowledge and Freedom and, thus, to the dialectical unity between rationality and "feelings". In our opinion, Hegel's philosophy is far from being the triumph of a rational but not real Subject. Provided that a principle of unity in the whole of his thought is accepted, many references to "worldly and bodily" being may be summoned as evidence. As both the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* and *The Subjective Spirit* could show, the Spirit never leaves behind its feelings and emotions. It uses Imagination, Fantasy and Memory in order to come out of the "night of Spirit". At this stage, each of these faculties is not as completely rational as the logical attitudes of the Idea. Furthermore, as Hegel claims in his *Encyclopaedia*, this kind of knowledge does not have a proper existence. They are real only inasmuch they are called into existence by the Subject, which is real. This latter only is in the world (as living and rational being) and it is engaged in the process of self negation while coming out of Nature. If feelings are the immediate form of being they must be mediated, however, being mediated does not mean being erased. Furthermore, many other elements may be found also in Hegel's previous works in order to underline this complex feature of Hegel's philosophy.

Alice Ormingston claims that «for the Hegel of "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate", love constitutes the highest kind of knowing, higher than reflective thought. This is because love captures a deeper unity of existence, a unity of self and other, consciousness and being, finite and infinite, that is primordial and from which reflective thought has alienated itself»⁴. Love implies a reference to community and proximity and it is the first passage through which the consciousness is able to come out of the self both physically and spiritually (in general). Furthermore, reflective thinking alone is taken as "the abstract intellect" which Hegel indicates as synonymous of separation and split. As a result, this unity of theoretical active tension and passive statement (to be loved, to be perceived) has been clearly intercepted by Paul Ricoeur. As we will verify in details further on, Ricoeur formulates an anthropology of gift and he articulates his theory of narrative identity following these very hints.

What we would like to remark is that according to Hegel love is the first form of recognition inasmuch as he selects this primordial world while describing the intimate orientation to the other⁵; Afterwards, this point became indirect and un-conscious despite its presence in the following works starting from the *Phenomenology* to the *Philosophy of Right*. Back to Ormingstone, also the following statement is to be taken into account: «The movement toward a community based on reason and constructed through the human will and toward a philosophy based on the concept rather than upon intuition should not lead us into thinking that Hegel meant to leave the intuitive knowledge of love behind. Rather, as a knowledge of unity, love remains the source of the modern will in its drive to

³Hegel (1986 b, § 39, 41).

⁴ Ormingstone (2004, 14).

⁵ See, Brencio (2014, 62-64).

realize its unity in the world, *albeit a source that becomes unconscious*. And the philosophical system, while it does seek to provide a higher form of knowing than Hegel had earlier conceived was possible, does not thereby seek to replace the knowledge of love»⁶. In our opinion, recognition supplanted love when Hegel understood that love alone is not sufficient to a full comprehension of the other (as cognition), according to the forms and motions accounted in the *Science of Logic*. We shall further discuss the inner core of recognition very shortly. As for now, we would like to emphasize that love paves the way to Hegel's further speculative innovations. This is so, even though love itself must be overcome by a more structured way of feeling and knowing the other, by recognition. To say the least, love is missing the rational knowledge of the other. Jean Hyppolite focuses on a particular interpretation of Hegel's theory of recognition; according to him «Self-consciousness, [...], comes to exist ("exist," here, does not mean merely the *Dasein* which is characteristic of things) only by means of an "operation" which poses it in being as it is for itself. And this operation is essentially an operation on and by another self-consciousness. I am a self-consciousness only if I gain for myself recognition from another self-consciousness and if I grant recognition to the other. This mutual recognition, in which individuals recognize each other as reciprocally recognizing each other, creates the element of Spiritual life—the medium in which the subject is an object to itself, finding itself completely in the other yet doing so without abrogating the otherness that is essential to self-consciousness»⁷. The expression "mutual recognition" used by Hyppolite opens the way to the complete reception of this issue by Ricoeur. By reading this passage, in fact, it may be clearly grasped how recognition is related to an anthropological basic level. Recognition develops in an inter-subjective field and within a social and political community. Each level has an inner articulation. Based again on Heikki Ikäheimo & Arto Laitinen's remarks, many different meanings of recognition may be identified in Hegel: «Firstly, 'recognition' can be used as synonymous with '*identification*' (or 're-identification'). In this sense *anything* can be recognized [...] identified numerically as the entity it is, qualitatively as an entity with certain qualities, and generically as belonging to a certain species. Secondly, 'recognition' can be used roughly synonymously with '*acknowledgement*'. In this sense, recognition or acknowledgement has *evaluative or normative entities or facts* as its objects, so that we can acknowledge something as valuable, as valid, as giving reasons, and so forth. Thirdly — and this is the paradigmatic sense of 'recognition' at least in most Hegel influenced discussions — there is a sense of 'recognition' in which it seems only *persons* (and perhaps groups or collectives of persons) can be recognized»⁸. All these meanings, as we shall argue, are fully assimilated by Ricoeur, consistently with Hegel's description of the Spirit's adventure in the world. The Spirit arises from Nature (which means that intuition could not be left behind), becoming self-conscious subject through its relation to the word and to the others. Then, it discovers language which is the first and privileged *locus* where the self tests the community. It improves, at the same time, its power in the world through its consistency as an existing reality sure of itself⁹.

These different levels could overlap one another because of the structure of the subject as accounted by Hegel. Indeed, based on logical categories, life is always crossed by two parallel powers: the Theoretical and the Practical one. They assume step by step different forms, first of all as Idea, then as Spirit. This continuity represents the ontological complexity of Hegel's system, where every determination includes some traces of the previous one and it also simultaneously has the seeds of the next one. Knowledge and Action are united in a living tension. Its structural multiplicity has greatly attracted Ricoeur's attention on this topic.

⁶ Ormingstone, (2004, 11).

⁷ Hyppolite (1974, 166).

⁸ Ikäheimo, Laitinen (2011, 23).

⁹ See, Hegel (1977, 64-66).

Furthermore, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* testifies of the fundamental layout of Hegel's latest thought. In its foreword, Hegel writes: «The proposition should express what the True is; but essentially the True is Subject. As such it is merely the dialectical movement, this course that generates itself, going forth from, and returning to, itself»¹⁰. This quote attests the identification between subject and Truth resulting from the dialectical movement. In other words, the subject, far from being motionless, is movement itself. During motion, it discovers its familiarity with the theoretical comprehension of the world. Some pages earlier, Hegel remarks: «Further, the living Substance is being which is in truth subject, or what is the same, is in truth actual only in so far as it is the movement of positing itself, or is the mediation of its self-othering with itself. This Substance is, as subject, pure, simple negativity, [...]; it is the doubling which sets up opposition, and then again the negation of this indifferent diversity and of its antithesis [the immediate simplicity]. Only this self-restoring Sameness, or this reflection in otherness within itself - not an original or immediate unity as such - is the True. It is the process of its own becoming, the circle that presupposes its end as its goal, having its end also as its beginning; and only by being worked out to its end, is it actual»¹¹. We can now stress the importance of life from two different but convergent perspectives: a) the living subject is connected to Truth and to its theoretical-rational representation. It means that the subject is able to judge and beforehand judge itself as its own object; b) there is a direct identity between life and desire. The first point has been thoroughly examined in the previous lines of this section in relation to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, while the second one is still to be investigated.

According to Stanley Rosen: «in subsection B of chapter 1, on the life process, Hegel in effect repeats his analysis of desire and the struggle for recognition that serves in the *PS* [Phenomenology of the Spirit] to account for the origin of self - consciousness and individual personality»¹². This quote ties together all components of Hegel's concept of recognition, which is not only made of struggle and violence, but it is part of a multiplicity and reality called Person.

Proceeding along this line of thinking, Robert Brandom, one of the most important scholar and commentator in Hegel's studies, may surely provide useful insights. In one of his essay he writes: «Hegel's metonymic image for this point concerns the important case of making the initial transition from being merely a living organism, belonging to the realm of Nature, to being a denizen of the realm of Spirit. The key element in this index case is willingness to risk one's biological life in the service of a commitment—something that goes beyond a mere desire»¹³. The mentioned risk is connected to the opening to the other, as the self has the tendency to re-create an ideal original identity looking for what it is missing. This passage sheds light on a line of thinking directly connected to Paul Ricoeur: movement stands for the irresistible power to come out of oneself, an original *dynamis* by which the self finds the others in the world. This movement is never a subject's "Triumphal March", as it can easily get lost in natural behaviour and beliefs, far from being Spirit. For this reason desire is only one step of a complex chain.

Edmund Husserl describes a monadic subjectivity which gathers itself through its intentional (cognitive) acts; in this experience it moves within the perimeter of a world where it encounters other subjectivities belonging to an original "Community"¹⁴. This point is directly linked to the role credited to Imagination and Fantasy (*Bildbewusstsein* und *Phantasie*) by Husserl's perspective¹⁵. The same

¹⁰ Hegel (1977, 40).

¹¹ *Ivi*, p. 10.

¹² Rosen (2014, 468-469).

¹³ Brandom (cit. 2011, Ikäheimo, Laitinen, 2011, 28).

¹⁴ See Husserl (1989, § 52).

¹⁵ One of Ricoeur most important essays on the relationship between Husserl's Phenomenology and P. Ricoeur makes explicit reference to the topic of the "Origin". See, Ricoeur (1986, 285-295). This issue is also very useful for a better understanding of Ricoeur's early views of recognition.

elements, although with some important differences, play a relevant role also in Hegel's anthropology¹⁶. Imagination and Fantasy allow to gradually activate knowledge as the subject opens its first windows on the world. This world is first "its" world and slowly becomes the community world, at least according Hegel¹⁷. Based on these concepts and through the mediation of the phenomenological approach, Ricoeur takes the role of desire as the bridge to recognition, as it shall be stated in the following. But the road, as previously argued, is rather dangerous especially since such an outstretch is not indispensable. It has to be chosen by (two or more) subjects together. The correspondence between desire and recognition deserves further attention. In our opinion, a thorough investigation of desire discloses a clear link to otherness, and not simply to need. Need, however, forces the subject to come out of itself. In this respect, desire is addressed not to a thing, or to a general object, but specifically to another person. What is missing is precisely the other, inasmuch as it is perceived as a member of an original lost unity. Such a unity, of course, never existed, but this feeling and the strong link to the other which it generates are able to move the subject beyond the immediate self-certainty. Hence, as we have previously claimed, interaction takes place through feelings. On the other hand, this immediacy must be removed by dialectical motion, thus introducing what is referred to as recognition. Consistently with the line of thinking we have been sketching, we would like to mention Alexandre Kojève's remarks. While commenting upon the link between desire and mutual recognition, he agrees on the pivotal role of the dialectical overcoming, as he suggests that the «(unconscious) Desire of a being is what constitutes that being as I and reveals it as such by moving it to say "I. . . ." Desire is what transforms Being, revealed to itself by itself in (true) knowledge, into an "object" revealed to a "subject" by subject different from the object and "opposed" to it. It is in and by [...] his" Desire that man is formed and is revealed - to himself and to others-as an I, as the I that is essentially different from, and radically opposed to, the non-I. The (human) I is the I of a Desire or of Desire»¹⁸. The transition from desire to recognition is described by Hegel himself in these terms: «Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged»¹⁹. The unconsciousness of desire (derived from love) develops into full-fledged recognition at ethical and political levels. Once again, Robert Brandom's remarks on the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* clarify this development by describing the transition from desire to recognition as «the shift from consideration of particular merely *biological* creatures impelled wholly by *natural impulses*, in relation to their species, on the one hand, to consideration of genuinely *social* self-conscious individuals motivated by normative relations of *authority* and *responsibility* within their communities, on the other»²⁰. Similarly, one may also agree with Robert Pippin when he claims: «if a self-conscious consciousness is to be understood as striving in some way then the most immediate embodiment of such a striving would be a self's attention to itself as a living being. That is how it is immediately for itself in relation to other objects. Living beings, like animals, do not live in the way non-living beings [...] merely exist; they must strive to stay alive, and so we have our first example of the desideratum, a self-relation in relation to objects»²¹. We do agree with Pippin since there is indeed a double movement which links knowledge - as consciousness - and life - as desire. Whenever the subject turns its attention to the objects, it generates a judgment as Kant understood it, namely as made of experience plus some of the subject's cognitive structures. The judgement is

¹⁶ See, Stäler (2003). This book reveals a surprising point of convergency between Hegel's and Husserl's understanding of consciousness.

¹⁷ Differently, some commentators claim that Husserl established the primacy of the community in relation to the monadic self.

¹⁸ Kojève (1969, 3-4).

¹⁹ Hegel (1977, 111).

²⁰ Brandom (2011, 36).

²¹ Pippin (2011 cit. Ikäheimo, Laitinen, 2011, 66).

(synthetically just) a sum of data and simultaneously also the process through which consciousness may judge itself as “judging” as well as “judged” while it is acquiring self-consciousness. Consciousness is able to double as subject and object precisely thanks to the specific nature of the judgement itself. While the object can vary, consciousness instead "maintains" itself. Nevertheless, it does not remain the same since, as we emphasized earlier, it comes out of itself. It then goes out and comes back, persisting along time. This point was not fully grasped by Husserl and his pupils as they criticised Hegel's consciousness as an idealistic substance. The desiring subject emerges from Nature and overcomes the natural immediacy of a simple living being through the exposition to the (O)ther. But the other, followed by objects, animals and the whole world becomes the subject itself (it is Spirit too). In other worlds, desire is the felt (as a feeling) and known (as theoretical consciousness's act) negation of the desiring attitude which emanates from the subject. Only through the affirmation-negation of itself, the subject emerges as self-conscious, it stands out of Nature although never suppressing it. It finally discovers its dependence from desire itself. It is desiring desire as Pippin writes²² in reference to Hegel's expression "*Begierde überhaupt*". Desire coincides with the living quality of the living being, but it diverges from the animal instinct as it is not fleeting. Additionally, we would also claim that this "general" desire, this living and disruptive power, refines itself during the journey of Spirit along the world. In particular, it evolves from a form of desire partially still connected to some sort of egoistic ground (the need, the desire of dominion), to a different quality or kind. When self-consciousness meets another self-conscious desire, it progressively develops, through the action of negation as dialectical motion, and reaches a social status. This process could be read as the encounter between the negative power of desire and another negative presence. It resists and does not pass over. At the beginning it may cause pain, then it may generate respect, as Honneth remarked. Our claim is that desire gives way to a higher level of fulfillment, that is real and complete satisfaction. It is well beyond need, even though need is its starting point. Ricoeur understands this account of recognition as (temporally) fulfilled desire.

Hegel's subject overcomes the simple bodily condition of the immediate subject and switches to the life of Spirit, where desire develops as (re)cognition. We remind the reader that this cognition is not exclusively *a priori* but is also fertilized by experience. In order to find these claims corroborated by Hegel's words, two different passages at §175 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* may be mentioned. Here, Hegel is providing an account of the desiring self-consciousness which «in this satisfaction, however, experience makes it aware that the object has its own independence. Desire and the Self certainty obtained in its gratification, are conditioned by the object, for self-certainty comes from superseding this other: in order that this supersession can take place, there must be this other. Thus self-consciousness, by its negative relation to the object»²³. The role of the negative is brought again to our attention, as the rational motion proving that life comes to reconciliation after its split. Only at this stage the subject is fully able to come out of itself and find its satisfaction. Desire reaches its internal and external peak with recognition, inasmuch as the higher desire is embodied by another subject, the only one which is able to resist to its power without becoming an object. It is nothing less than the strongest negative presence. In this regard, the end of the paragraph is remarkable: «In the sphere of Life, which is the object of desire, *negation* is present either *in an other*, namely in Desire, or as a *determinateness* opposed to another indifferent form, or as the inorganic universal nature of Life. But this universal independent nature in which negation is present as absolute negation, is the genus as such, or the genus as *self-consciousness*. *Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness*»²⁴. This satisfaction is the result of mutual recognition as real and

²² *Ivi*, p. 14.

²³ Hegel (1977, 109).

²⁴ *Ivi*, p. 110.

complete negation is achieved through mutual recognition only. The transition from a living being, provided only with feelings and needs, to a full subject has its acme in the above described fulfillment. Such a result has nothing to do with an egoistic will which recognizes only to the aim of being recognized, in reciprocal exchange. We strongly disagree with this kind of interpretation of Hegel's recognition.

On the topic of the persistency of the basic vital element within the desiring consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, Terry Pinkard wrote: «But living individuals emerge from the process of life and assert themselves against it, maintaining themselves as individual organisms against their environment and dealing with their environment in terms of what satisfies their desires»²⁵. Consequently, the mere anthropological level is completed and the social and political levels are reached. We would like to point out that at this basic point, that is already a dialectical result, there is neither violence nor struggle. These two elements come only later with the well-known "figure" of the Master and Servant and their dialectics. One may claim that the structure of Hegel's subject portrays violence as it uses its power on objects. It completely transforms them according to its will. Doubtless, Hegel employs splendid words to describe the power of the human hand, in particular concerning the Slave's work. In our opinion, war, conflict, etc., are inherent to human nature, but recognition is an antidote to them. Differently, Man's full power on Nature is explained by the incapability of the latter to oppose the greatest negation. Our claim is that Hegel's theory is an inter-subjective philosophy, even though it originated from a subjective outlook; what has been argued so far implies a peculiar kind of subject which from the very beginning is addressed to the other.

Provided that our argument is convincing, one may be willing to read again Terry Pinkard concerning the comparison between the two desiring subjectivities, notably when he says: «The organism thus stands in an implicit self-relation in that its active dealing with the world is always in terms of what is necessary for it or its species to survive. The objects of the world count for it as having such and such properties only in terms of how they contribute to the satisfaction of the organism's desires»²⁶. The main reference here is to the human living organism, however the same may be arguably applied in reference to the world; desire of desire: recognition. All the previous remarks are aimed at introducing our perspective concerning Hegel's theory of recognition. We believe, in fact, that this issue spreads further over the magnificent image of the Servant and Master (which reveals the inner, natural and necessary interconnection between different self-consciousnesses). Furthermore, the living individual's primitive relation to the world follows the first steps of subjectivity and completes itself as necessary and higher stage. As this topic survives also in Hegel's subsequent works, it is fair to claim that it is philosophically much more relevant than what Hegel explicitly admitted. In *The Science of Logic*, Hegel introduces a form of subjectivity characterized by one last form of inner split. The split survives in the Idea as pure thought thinking itself. However, some other elements, such as the structure of the living subject and consequently the Knowing and Good Idea, take shape before that. Therefore, a mechanism of mirroring subjectivities may be clearly discovered in Hegel's "system". However, this approach should preliminarily set aside the theological remarks which have been included by the continental interpretation of the latest part of *Wissenschaft der Logik*. The first element of the mirroring structure is introduced in the logical sphere, while the second element belongs to the Philosophy (or Science) of Spirit²⁷. Concerning both elements the same peculiar attitude of the subject may be pointed out as a desiring impulse which culminates in self determination-alienation in relation to the other, as argued in *The Science of Logic*. Such a desiring structure, purified of the feelings still included in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, is

²⁵ Pinkard (1994, 48).

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ See, Hösle (1987, 390).

stratified in the Idea in continuity with its origins in the "Living" Idea. Hegel describes the Idea as «the *adequate concept*, the objectively *true*, or the *true as such*. If anything has truth, it has it by virtue of its idea, or *something has truth only in so far as it is idea*»²⁸.

As stated in the *Phenomenology*, the Truth coincides with the subject. Therefore the teleological orientation to purposes is arguably the same motion which moves the subject itself towards the others. Only by negating itself, as first immediate affirmation, the subject is able to reach its individual identity which is, according to the language of the concept, the unity of particular and universal. This motion is simultaneously unity and negation inasmuch as it originates from the Idea reflecting upon itself. It becomes its own object. And the immediate form which has itself as an object, it is, properly speaking, *Life*. Furthermore, Hegel himself claims that it is: «*first of all, life*. It is the concept which, distinct from its objectivity, simple in itself, permeates that objectivity and, as self-directed purpose, has its means within it and posits it as its means, [...] The idea, on account of its immediacy, has *singularity* for the form of its concrete existence. But the reflection within it of its absolute process is the sublation of this immediate singularity»²⁹. This immediacy, one may add, must be permeated by the mediation of the concept and it presupposes coming out from the self. Once more, a self's (*ex*)posure sprouts out. The inner core of desire may be described also in logical terms. As living subject, indeed, the Idea must negate itself. «It is *impulse*, [...]; its impulse to realize itself is not, strictly speaking, to give itself objectivity, for this it possesses within itself, but to give itself only this empty form of immediacy»³⁰. It is my claim that even the highest practical subjectivity needs an object and, in particular, the world as fulfillment of its desire. The reference to an "empty form of immediacy" should be the proof of the dialectical tension inside the subject: it maintains its unity only going out of itself by paying attention to an external object. It may sound rather strange, but even the Idea needs something outside, and is not hard to think of this split as coming from inside the Idea itself. The reflection upon oneself and the action about oneself are the components of the double movement we have previously outlined concerning the phenomenological subject. After this outcome, the Idea becomes "Absolute" and its absolute transparency is longing for an external object, taken as the consequence of the Idea's freedom to negate itself. The world of Nature is now fully determined and Spirit arises from it. Hence the Spirit claims for itself its identity as living being, and accordingly its understanding and acting features. The Absolute Idea is the higher point of the dialectic motion and consequently also the higher point of negation; the higher negation amounts to overcoming the "perfect" purity of the Idea which is itself evolving into a completely different sphere. As a result, having established a realm that is fully other than itself, the Absolute Idea may be finally acknowledged as pure thinking or just "thinking".

The whole heritage of Hegel's line of thinking, and in particular the place of the other-oriented subjectivity (as a desiring organism), is collected, among the others, by Ricoeur.

2. Hegel-inspired elements in Ricoeur's theory of recognition.

Paul Ricoeur's last book is titled *The Course of Recognition*. From the very title, it states that recognition is not a simple and linear face-to-face relation. On the other hand, the text outlines the organization of self identity, ranging from its natural manifestation to ethical and political choices and expressions. In other words, recognition is described as a course. The relevance of such an approach in Ricoeur's enquiries is proven by the underlying development displayed by Ricoeur's older

²⁸ Hegel (2010, 670).

²⁹ *Ivi*, p. 676.

³⁰ *Ivi*, p. 729-730.

works. In one of these essays he writes: «the opposition of conscience in the struggle for mutual recognition will be a revelatory element of their existence to each other [...], a dialectical order that is simultaneously the history, real or ideal, of the opposition through which the [self]consciences become as such in their reciprocity»³¹. This passage allows us to formulate three interconnected claims: 1) the core features of recognition were clear to Ricoeur from the very beginning of his production (Hegel is one of the several sources of his thought); 2) the first impression concerning recognition is connected to the principle of struggle between two opposed self-consciousnesses. Afterwards, Ricoeur progressively abandoned such a standpoint moving towards a different perspective; 3) at first Ricoeur used the terms *mutual* and *reciprocal* as synonymous - thereafter, in his latest works he took a habit on distinguishing these words. Few more words should be spent on the difference between *mutual* and *reciprocal* in Ricoeur. While the latter term stresses on equivalent exchanging, the former, instead, describes an asymmetric relationship of the self in relation to someone else and vice versa. As to the second kind of relation, its independence from any egalitarian comparison guarantees its freedom. Mutuality is synonymous of gratitude. This philosophical and lexicographical solution elucidates an inner and not forced (by anything and by no one) form of recognition. Only this solution produces a form of recognition that is free from the formal and impersonal command of the Law. This point is very important since it underlines the specific meaning of recognition as interpreted by Ricoeur, and it points out that it derives from a living process. Recognition does not result from a contract in which the interdependence between subjects is only formally established, nor it is an example of egoistic feeling felt by one subject with some expectations. According to Ricoeur, recognition is rather the peak of self-identity, as according to Hegel, even though some differences certainly subsist. Concerning the genesis of recognition, its seeds sprout when Ricoeur writes: «I treat myself as a you which in its external appearance is a presentation to the other. From this viewpoint, to know myself is to anticipate my presentation to a you. On the other hand, knowledge of myself is always to some extent the guide for deciphering the other, even if the other is in the first place and principally an original revelation of empathy. The you is an other myself. Thus the concepts of subjectivity, valid directly for *my fellow man* and going beyond the sphere of *my* subjectivity, are formed in mutual contact of reflection and introspection»³². This long quote presents many elements I would like to thoroughly investigate: a) a transition occurs in which Ricoeur leaves behind the concept of struggle and imagines recognition as linked to the Self's identity. The topic of violence, although widely treated by Hegel, falls through and leaves its place to the mutual and free attestation of the "Being in relation" with the other; b) We used the term attestation inasmuch as it is close to testimony and to knowledge. Both these meanings grow as more prominent in Ricoeur's later understanding of recognition, following the full acknowledgement of the importance of the "Hermeneutic of the Self". The Self is not a solid rock, but it is rather a subject in evolution through its self interpretation and, at the same time, the reading of others. The French philosopher described the (S)elf as living "tale". According to this approach, the Self is to be narrated to others simultaneously with its reflection upon itself. The first purpose of the narration is to tell something (about the Self) to the other, an other like me; c) Ricoeur, diverging from Hegel's first steps, does not believe in the role of love as instinctive power, nor in the function of any other feeling implying identity-fusion. On the same list, Ricoeur includes also Empathy, even though in the previously quoted passage, it entailed the reference to an ideal-original sphere prior to the manifestation of the subject's conscious will, based on which rational and narrative life are possible.

The evolution towards a communicative and shared feeling is confirmed some pages later, when in two capital passages Ricoeur claims: «The act of Cogito is not a pure act of self-positing: it lives

³¹ Ricoeur (1986, 354). Our translation.

³² Ricoeur (1966, 11).

on what it receives and in a dialogue with the conditions in which it is itself rooted. The act of myself is at the same time participation»³³ and then: «In the background of epistemological dualism there is the *practical* incompatibility of necessity and freedom. Freedom and necessity negate each other mutually. The *negative* moment is what must be clarified. This turn of events is not without importance because the moment of the *no* will always be retained in some way in the *yes* of consent. Thus an understanding of negation is essential for a consideration of freedom»³⁴. What do these quotes actually mean? In our opinion, the former anchors the problem of identity in an inter-subjective space and time; any attempt to speak about "participation" entails the constitution of some common sense concerning knowing and acting. Thanks to this common sense it is possible to recognize and to be recognized without the dictatorship of need; more exactly, recognition is achieved by employing the disruptive feeling connected to desire as well as its released energy. The latter quote, instead, makes reference to desire and to its negative genetic function. Desire is much more than simple and natural need. By saying "more than simple need" we mean that our needs are certainly fundamental but not definitive and conditioning elements within an inter-subjective desire. After all, as argued by Hegel, the subject builds itself on a "natural" ground. Some of Hegel's commentators, such as Levinas, criticize him as they read in Hegel's recognition only the necessities and needs of the self during self-consciousness' experience. On the contrary, as we tried to argue above, they mostly fail to take in to account the function and articulation of subjectivity in Hegel's description according both to the phenomenological (and proto-phenomenological) perspective and to the logical and spiritual ones. Ricoeur, instead, is the contemporary philosopher who best grasps the specific feature of Hegel's account. Furthermore, his position is remarkably similar to Hegel's, as he understands the role of the negative as a moment of higher affirmation which stands along the course of recognition. A further important step is provided by the book *Oneself as Another*, together with *The Course of Recognition*, a masterpiece in Ricoeur's philosophy. The book starts off with a "mission" statement: the philosopher clearly explains what kind of otherness has a leading role in his book. Thus, Ricoeur claims: «A kind of otherness that is not (or not merely) the result of comparison is suggested by our title, otherness of a kind that can be constitutive of selfhood as such. *Oneself as Another* suggests from the outset that the selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought of without the other, that instead one passes into the other, as we might say in Hegelian terms. To "as" I should like to attach a strong meaning, not only that of a comparison (oneself similar to another) but indeed that of an implication (oneself inasmuch as being other)»³⁵. This long quote is very important as it proves that the relationship between the Self and the (O)ther must be read not as a reciprocal exchange, but as a mutual original interdependence. Their identities are shaped by this interconnection and without it they could not fully exist. The Self summons and recalls the Other in a common life perspective. Descartes' subject is no longer in its rock solid dome as this latter is shattered and the subject is "forced" to come out of itself. Ricoeur's subject is depicted according to this movement, precisely as Hegel's subject also was.

We argued in the previous paragraphs that in this book the Self is testimony of its life. More precisely, Ricoeur claims that the self is fundamentally attestation and «attestation can be defined as the assurance of *being oneself acting and suffering*»; it is again «a confidence stronger than any suspicion»³⁶. We believe that the word 'testimony' has a double meaning: a) it refers to saying and supporting the truth; b) it implies a subject participating in an inter-subjective network of relationships (i.e. the community). There is also who argues, reading this work and in comparison with Levinas,

³³ *Ivi*, p. 18.

³⁴ *Ivi*, p. 444.

³⁵ Ricoeur (1992, 3).

³⁶ *Ivi*, p. 22.

that «something essential to the notion of (ethical or moral) injunction is lost, since the voice of conscience does not come from someone else; the being-in-debt of Dasein is not owed to someone else. The inner voice and attestation loses, in Ricoeur's view, its ethical gravity separated from the injunction of the other. On another hand, though, Ricoeur raises an objection against an injunction from the other which would not also be an attestation of the self, but an irruption of the absolute exteriority of the other, not as such capable of being received by the self»³⁷. One may also add that such an irruption would certainly also fail to be recognized.

The injunction entails taking care of the other and holding responsibility in his/her regard. It also introduces the idea of an ethical life and the account on Justice, as it happens in Hegel's text on *Objective Spirit*. Recognition is here exalted in the link between individual citizens and the State, and among citizens themselves. As to this point, the two philosophers develop their arguments in parallel.

The previously presented remarks and quotes show that Ricoeur, more than Hegel, takes the relationship and community as the original realm pertaining to the subject itself. While the negative subjectivity in Hegel could build its second nature in the Objective Spirit, according to Ricoeur the inter-subjective space is right from the start the Self's space. In other words, we think that Ricoeur overcomes Descartes' position more radically than what Hegel does. Ricoeur's ethical solution is formulated according to the previously outlined understanding of the Self's space, however this does not mean that is more consistent than Hegel's, nor that it is immune to contradiction.

Ricoeur's last work fully applies Hegel's strategy (from *theoresis* to identity and from identity to *praxis*). Its last step is called "mutual recognition". Here, the philosopher starts off acknowledging his debt to Axel Honneth, although he underlines that the German thinker does not pay sufficient attention to many important spheres, such as: recognition between the Self and Nature; filiation relationships and also recognition of authorities³⁸. This point is worth of emphasis not only since it registers the lack of an anthropological stance in Honneth, but, above all, since it tries to re-establish the value of the immediate state of feelings³⁹. Thus, Ricoeur is well aware that in order to outline a complete theory of recognition the self must be taken as a "living" Self which starts as an organism, precisely as Hegel would claim.

Some sort of archaeological digging through the constitution of Ricoeur's model of recognition has been now provided. At this stage, it is possible to introduce some major differences between Ricoeur and Hegel. Ricoeur's specific claims, however, are engrafted into the ground previously ploughed by Hegel, but not only by him. It is not surprising that, standing on such a rich soil, Ricoeur announces that his theory is a "rulegoverned polysemy" in which every meaning is as important as the others. The transition through the space of meaning from one sense to the other is also fully relevant. Ricoeur, in fact, identifies three different meanings of recognition. They are notably: 1) To grasp (an object) through the mind, images, perceptions having to do with it; know it by heart, etc.; 2) To accept, take to be true; 3) To bear witness through gratitude that one is indebted to someone for (something, an act)⁴⁰. The first meaning is close to Kant's judgment including the role of Imagination and Memory as theorized also by Hegel and Husserl (polysemy may well be taken also as multiple philosophical origins). The second meaning is linked to the theoretical faculty and, through it, to the constitution of the subject, as Hegel argues since his early writings and in particular in the *Phenomenology*. The third meaning introduces Ricoeur's most innovative contribution, through the

³⁷ Lewis (1991, 26-27). See also: Ricoeur (1992, 409).

³⁸ Ricoeur (2005, 186 and ff).

³⁹ Concerning Hegel's early attention to love, as previously accounted, and to some religious-immediate human community in his *Early Theological Writings* and notably in the fragment on *Love and The Spirit of Cristianity and its Fate*, see, Hegel (1961, 302 and ff, 182 and ff).

⁴⁰ See Ricoeur (2005, 12).

adoption of the anthropology of gift and then, consistently, of its ethical and political consequences (and difficulties).

The limited aim of this essay does not allow an exhaustive articulation and elucidation of Ricoeur's whole theory of recognition, as it is very complex and it deserves a dedicated space of scholarly discussion. Nevertheless, we shall focus on some points which are directly inspired by Hegel. By thoroughly investigating Hegel's theoretical proposal, Ricoeur rediscovers notably his understanding of the *Anerkennung*. Ricoeur explains that Hegel's concept is rather close to inter-human feelings such as love, familiar relationship, and many other feelings accounted for also in previous works (possession, dominion, etc). All these natural expressions are connected to the immediate identity which must be overcome by dialectical motion. To "overcome", according to Hegel's logical-epistemological meaning, would signify to be negated in its first natural and external claim but, at the same time, maintained in a conceptual unity with its other. There is no opposition and, let me slightly hazard, no conflict, as previously claimed. Arguably, the higher goal of Hegel's recognition is precisely to overcome both conflict and struggle, and Ricoeur perfectly grasps this point.

Furthermore, Ricoeur's attention also focuses on another group of works by Hegel, generally referred to as the "Jena Sojourn", entailing one further "speculative" step. During this pivotal period⁴¹, the German philosopher not only shed light on the social inner articulation of ethical life, but also critically scrutinized all previous theories especially Fichte's account of Natural Law. It is far from our aim to underline that the social connective structure and ethical relationships are based, according to Hegel, on some sort of atomistic sum of singular parts. We shall not take sides in the debate concerning the overall continuity of Hegel's written production. We think, nevertheless, that the Jena works are perfectly in harmony with earlier and subsequent positions held by Hegel. Differently, Paul Ricoeur claims that a different perspective arose in Hegel's text of 1804-5. In this book, an interlocked sequence of levels is displayed, thanks to which the recognizing subject ceases to be a mere individual-natural being and becomes a member of the ethical context. The thus conceived society also overcomes the immediate identification of family life. However, in this identification with Right (that means that criminals are out of society, as not recognized) there is some sort of hidden resistance of love that Ricoeur grasps with no hesitation. Quoting Hegel's *Realphilosophie*, he writes that: «"In recognition, the Self ceases to be this individual; it exists by right in recognition, [...], it is no longer [immersed in] its immediate existence. The one who is recognized is recognized as *immediately* counting as such (*geltend*) through his *being* — but *this being is itself generated from the concept*; it is recognized being (*anerkanntes Sein*). Man is necessarily recognized and necessarily gives recognition. This necessity is not his own, not that of our thinking in contrast to the content. As recognizing, man is himself Mutual Recognition the movement [of recognition], and this movement is what negates (*hebt auf*) his natural state: he is recognition; the natural merely *is*, it is not the *spiritual aspect*"»⁴².

This quote includes all the elements we have been listing as affinities and differences between Hegel's and Ricoeur's theories of recognition. The two philosophers agree on the necessary overcoming of the subject's immediacy through the desiring attitude. This movement is (generally speaking) dialectical and conceptual and generates recognition, which is both a way out and a way back in relation to the subject. However, recognition is not equally taken as reciprocal as the pacts of civil society in Hegel's system (the pacts being overcome in the transition towards the State). Finally, the most important difference is the narrative identity theorized by Ricoeur, which articulates an inter-subjective original relationship. Within this network, the subject progressively discovers itself as a book meant to be narrated. This book is provided with its own existence, nevertheless, in order to

⁴¹ See Hegel (1979, 20 and ff). See also: Hegel (1986).

⁴² See Hegel (1979, 111). See also: Ricoeur (2005, 182-183).

fully preserve it, it "must" open itself to Otherness. In other worlds, like every book, it must be read and known and, then, it can be described to others. This radical (from roots) and pivotal role of the Other is not explicit in Hegel's theory.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion of this interesting review of the Ricoeur's production and enquiry on recognition, arguably the most intense after Hegel's, we would like to introduce the possible answers given by Ricoeur to the idea of an incessant struggle (for complete recognition). The provided solutions are called by Ricoeur "states of peace". As Arto Laitinen magnificently summarizes: «Ricoeur takes practices of giving and receiving gifts to be such an exemplary context. Ricoeur's main point in discussing gift-giving is to stress the role of gratitude as a response to a gift. Giving a gift in return is not the first response, nor is there a mechanic need to reciprocate: gratitude is as such an adequate way of establishing mutuality. A central meaning of the French word, reconnaissance is gratitude»⁴³. These words tie together all the suggestions we provided in this essay. Gratitude and states of peace are not stable of established once and for all. Conflict may always come back as the human subject never cancels its violence or potential violence. In Hegel's words, one may say that the work of the negative is never over, since it guarantees the mechanism of recognition itself. Without it the narrative book would remain not narrated and the identity would be wounded. Clearly, Marcel Henaff's influence and MAUSS's heritage are living and pulsing in Ricoeur's theory. We believe that precisely this not-Hegelian source is what makes Ricoeur's formulation of recognition rather fragile. This frailty is due mostly to the impossibility to spend Ricoeur's concept of recognition within the political organization of society. In other words, Hegel not only presented a more realistic view on the "civil-relationship", but also on the dialectical clashes with the universal represented by the State. Hegel's account is based on a different anthropological paradigm. There is no place for gift, but only for desire and recognition which offer some kind of "fulfillment" for the Self. In our opinion, based on its natural roots, the couple recognition-desire is more concrete than gift. However, both Hegel and Ricoeur understood that the adventure of the Self is not a soliloquy. Certainly, Hegel is heavily charged for his metaphysical Ontology, even if Nature, paradoxically, overcomes the Absolute Idea from its inconsistent self-transparency.

Inspired by Arendt's claim : «The crisis of the present world is primarily political»⁴⁴, one should be willing to seriously undertake a real and complete theory of recognition. In order to achieve such a goal, one should look at the lesson offered primarily by Hegel. We shall add few final words: whenever the element in crisis is political, the inter-subjective network is, consequently, breathless. Hence the theoretical enquiry should start from a new anthropological understanding as both Hegel and Ricoeur philosophers suggested. The subject itself, from the very start being other-oriented as desiring organism with desiring will and rationality, cannot display its activity without its desiring attitude, without recognizing itself and the Other.

⁴³ Laitinen (2011, 41).

⁴⁴ Arendt (1961, 140).

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