Self-Consciousness Leads to Recognition in Hegel’s Phenomenology

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Abstract

The concept of recognition holds significant prominence within contemporary philosophy. The concept typically refers to the condition of being acknowledged, wherein one subject assumes the role of the recognizer and another subject serves as the recognized object. However, what is the nature of the relationship between the subject and the object? This paper aims to analyze Hegel’s response to the aforementioned inquiry within his renowned work, Phenomenology of Spirit. In this context, the emergence of self-consciousness is contingent upon the presence of another self-consciousness that is separate and distinct. Self-consciousness is able to attain a state of self-assurance and an authentic understanding of one’s own identity by establishing connections with others. The state of self-consciousness becomes non-existent when it is detached from external influences, as it is unable to manifest in isolation. The presence of self-consciousness necessitates the acknowledgment of the other and vice versa. The recognition in question is not unidirectional, but rather reciprocal in nature. In this analysis, the allegorical framework of the lordship and bondage relationship will be employed to argue that Hegel posits the impossibility of unequal or one-sided recognition in both the lord and bondsman positions. This will be achieved by examining the significance of recognition from both perspectives. Mutual recognition is a prerequisite for the existence of both entities, as neither can sustain itself in isolation. The sole solution lies in the reciprocal recognition between two individuals.

Introduction

Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit (first published in 1807, hereafter PG) is a work belonging to the traditional known as German Idealism that purports to tell the story of the development of the human spirit through a history of consciousness. In the section on “Self-Consciousness,” in which the allegory of the lordship-bondage dialectic is found, we find an abstract, universal consciousness bifurcated and faced with another consciousness just like itself. Each consciousness wants recognition of itself as the original and unique form of consciousness, a struggle of life and death—and enters in the relation with the other that Hegel calls the lord-bondsman relation. Through the allegory of lordship and bondage relationship, Hegel asserts that the relationship between two individuals must be recognized from both sides, not from one-sided. One-sided recognition is not enough, and there must be mutual recognition.

In chapter four of Phenomenology of Spirit, “Self-Consciousness,” Hegel mentions one of the most influential concepts is recognition. However, he does not give any definition of it. What does it mean to be recognized by someone? Or what is recognition? This is a question that some commentators such as Pinkard, Houlgate, Ikkäheimo, and Jurist try to answer. Hegel’s “Phenomenology of Spirit”: A Reader’s Guide. Bloomsbury; Pinkard, T. (1994). Hegel’s Phenomenology. The Sociality of Reason. Cambridge; Ikkäheimo, H. (2014). Hegel’s Concept of Recognition - What is it? In Christian Krijnen (ed.), Recognition - German Idealism as an Ongoing Challenge, pp. 11-38. Jurist, E. L. (1987). Hegel’s Concept of Recognition. Owl of Minerva, 19 (1), 5-22. This paper will attempt to understand what Hegel argues in Chapter Four (from paragraphs 166 to 196), especially regarding the dialectic between lordship and bondage, and how Hegel explains the concept of desire in order to explicate the transition from desire to the concept of recognition. I will discuss how Hegel’s account by following the structure of the chapter dedicated to Self-Consciousness. Firstly, Hegel characterizes self-consciousness as desire. In the second part, Hegel explains
how desire (self-consciousness) fulfills its satisfaction in relationship to another self-consciousness – i.e., why can desire be satisfied only when the object is another self (an "I"), that is, through recognition? In what follows, I will analyze why recognition, which is constituted by two self-consciousnesses, leads to a "fight to the death" and the lordship and the bondage dialectic. Then, by analyzing the lordship-bondage dialectic struggle, I will try to grasp what recognition means in the dialectic. Finally, the struggle of recognition in the lord-bondsman dialectic shows that recognition must be mutual recognition with two moments or a double-sided self-consciousness.

Self-consciousness is desire itself

The transition from consciousness to self-consciousness is one of the most crucial turning points in Hegel’s phenomenology. At the beginning of Chapter Four, Hegel explains how the experience of consciousness leads to the formation of self-consciousness as a new form of consciousness, "what the object immediately was itself... turn out to be a mode in which the objects is only for another" (PG ¶ 166).

Hegel’s account of consciousness contends that human beings are not only thinking beings (consciousness) who contemplate being and have an awareness of it in thinking, but they are also self-conscious who have the capacity to achieve consciousness of themselves as subjects. One is conscious if he/ she is being aware of the existence of objects before himself/herself. Man is not only a being that thinks or an I that thinks. A man also reveals the being that he is himself. For Hegel, human beings’ awareness of the objects in the world must come with self-awareness. One is self-conscious if he is aware of others, and the other is likewise aware of them. As consciousness, man only thinks about the things that exist outside himself, and he forgets himself since by turning outward to the world, consciousness cannot find its footing. Therefore, the more he is conscious of the thing in the outer world, the less he is conscious of himself (Kojève 1969: 37). consciousness is described by Hegel as the subject of experience. By developing self-consciousness, on the other hand, human beings expand their awareness from a consciousness of others (the things that exist outside consciousness) to a consciousness of oneself – that is, from the knowing of another to the knowing of oneself - the knowing of knowing (PG ¶ 167). Hegel asserts that the truth of self-consciousness can only be attained in self-consciousness. By seeking for truth in itself (self-consciousness), Hegel points out that self-consciousness is a development of consciousness. Self-consciousness entails being able to relate to oneself as the self who is having a particular experience (consciousness). However, without consciousness in the first place, self-consciousness cannot be achieved. On the one hand, Hegel asserts that the other (perceivable objects or another self-consciousness) was the object of consciousness that has vanished; on the other hand, this other is preserved for self-consciousness (PG ¶ 167). Therefore, consciousness turns into self-consciousness by preserving its relation to the other that is given in consciousness. In other words, self-consciousness regards itself as the truth by relating to itself, but it also relates to what is other than itself. Thus, self-consciousness continues to stand in relation to a world of perceivable objects. On this account, Hegel contends that self-consciousness does not have only one object that is itself, but also has another object – something other than it (such as an object of sense-certainty or another self-consciousness) that exists for self-consciousness, as he states:

Consciousness, as self-consciousness, henceforth has a double object: one is the immediate object, that of sense-certainty and perception, which however for self-consciousness has the character of a negative; and the second, viz. itself, which is the true essence, and is present in the first instance only as opposed to the first object (PG ¶ 167).

From these words, there seems to be an opposition within self-consciousness between the first object – the sensuous world or perception, and the object in itself. How does self-consciousness relate to itself by relating to others than itself? According to Hegel, by returning to itself – the unity of self-consciousness with itself in its encounter with the other, self-consciousness solves the conflict between the immediate object and itself. Hegel says, "self-consciousness is the reflection out of the being of the world of sense and perception, and is essentially the return from otherness" (PG ¶ 167).

As mentioned above, self-consciousness has two objects: one is itself, as a pure I or empty I (I = I), and the
other is the object of consciousness that exists in the outer world. In relating only to itself, self-consciousness is what Hegel calls the motionless tautology of the I. Self-consciousness is first immediate as consciousness, an empty "I=I." Thus, there is no difference between two "I's" in self-consciousness as immediate - i.e., there is no difference between the first or the "subject" I and the second or the "object" I. Therefore, the new shape in its immediacy is a "pure I". The pure I is just merely one moment of self-consciousness. It is not self-consciousness. It is self-consciousness in the form of consciousness (PG ¶ 167). In order to fulfill self-consciousness, i.e., awareness of oneself as a subject, the pure I needs to be filled by otherness - another self-consciousness and not the experience of objects. At this point, Hegel makes a distinction between an empty I (pure I) – pure self-consciousness and a living self-consciousness. Pure self-consciousness is a state in which the content of relation and the relating are the same. In the pure "I," It [self-consciousness (pure self-consciousness)] is only the motionless tautology of: I am I. It is the consciousness that grasps objects without being aware of them as distinct objects. This is what happens when we have an experiences without understanding or reflecting upon them. This is not self-consciousness (living consciousness) (PG ¶ 167). There can be no movement in the pure I or pure self-consciousness (it cannot move from itself and return to itself) since it is merely the motionless tautology of: I am I. Instead, self-consciousness as living self-consciousness is a movement that returns to itself from the experience of the other. Self-consciousness, therefore, is not a state (motionless) in which the "I" is both the content of relation and the relating itself instantaneously.

According to Hegel, self-consciousness in truth is not motionless but movement – that is, "the reflection out of the being of the world of sense and perception, and the return from otherness" (PG ¶ 167). Thus, in order to have truly self-consciousness, we need an object from which self-consciousness will return into itself. In other words, self-consciousness is properly the movement of returning from what is other than itself to itself. Self-consciousness is the movement that includes the first moment in the form of consciousness connected with the second moment, the unity of self-consciousness and itself. This shows that self-consciousness must return from otherness so that it has only itself as its object – not an object in the state of motionless I (pure I), but its object is an object that gets through otherness and unity with itself. Hegel calls the process of returning from otherness to itself by which the opposition between appearance (otherness) and the truth (itself) is removed as desire in the following way:

This antithesis of its appearance and its truth has, however, for its essence only the truth, viz. the unity of self-consciousness with itself; this unity must become essential to self-consciousness, i.e., self-consciousness is desire in general... In this sphere, self-consciousness exhibits itself as the movement in which this antithesis is removed, and the identity of itself with itself becomes explicit for it (PG ¶ 167).

Hegel asserts that "self-consciousness is desire in general," but what does he mean by his concept of desire in the Phenomenology of Spirit? In what follows, I will try to give an answer to the question. On Hegel's account, the purpose of self-consciousness as desire seems to negate and destroy the independence of the other which it confronts, to consume it, and get the satisfaction of some certainty, as follows: "certain of the nothingness of this other... it destroys the independent object and thereby gives itself the certainty of itself as a true certainty" (PG ¶ 174). Thus, by destroying the external object, desire tries to satisfy consciousness and to prove that consciousness is a self-sufficient being; all other beings simply exist for the satisfaction of individual desire. Therefore, desire is a power that modifies the desired object into something mine. Kojevè asserts that someone becomes aware of himself when he becomes aware of his desire. He asserts that man is lost in thought until desire for something arises. It follows from this that when a desire for something arises, man is simply brought back to himself. In such a case, man realizes that, in addition to that thing, there is himself, which is not that thing. And the thing appears to him as an object, as an external reality that is not within him, that is not he, but a non-I. So, Kojevè claims that "desire is always revealed as my desire, and to reveal desire, one must use the word 'I.'" (Kojevè 1969: 37). It is very consistent with McDowell's assertion that "desire functions as a figure for the general idea of negating otherness by appropriating or consuming, incorporating into oneself" (McDowell 2003: 6). For Kojevè, this desire is called biological - natural or animal desire - thirstiness. He maintains that desire is an intention to transform thirstiness by an action, namely, an intention to drink water or some other liquid and overcome their being which is not related to yours, that is, negate them in their independence, and assimilate them to yourself, make them yours, absorb them in and
by your I (Kojève 1969: 39). However, there resides a problem in natural desire. Once an object is destroyed or consumed, self-consciousness cannot be satisfied, or self-sufficiency no longer exists. It seems that the natural desire could not constitute self-consciousness. Hegel stresses that self-consciousness could not satisfy his desire without an object’s existence: "Desire and the certainty of itself obtained in desire’s satisfaction are conditioned by the object" (PG ¶ 175). Therefore, we cannot understand self-consciousness as the desire that seeks to destroy, absorb or consume, and incorporate the other, as Kojève and McDowell claim. Hegel goes on to say that "Thus self-consciousness, by its negative relation to the object, is unable to supersede it; it is really because of that relation that it produces the object again, and the desire as well" (PG ¶ 175). At this point, Hegel maintains that self-consciousness’ desire is different from desire, as we normally understand it as biological or animal desire - thirst or hunger in which the object (a glass of water, an apple) disappears (destroying, consuming). This is the ontological desire. In this (self-consciousness) desire, the object needs to always exist. Self-consciousness’s objects are never owned as in natural desire. Self-consciousness is less an organic given (natural desire) than a negation or transformation of what is organically given. It is the vehicle through which consciousness constructs itself from a biological into a nonbiological, i.e., distinctive human, being. Understanding desire in this way (not natural desire), we can understand why Hegel states that self-consciousness attempts to satisfy itself by negating and destroying objects, but it needs objects for self-certainty. The desire and a new object and the need for satisfaction recur again and again. Self-consciousness as desire understands that it cannot eliminate the independent object; the object is always there. The other (object) must stay there for self-consciousness’ desire. Without the existence of the object, self-consciousness cannot be satisfied with its desire. Indeed, through desire, self-consciousness realizes that it can affirm itself as a true certainty of itself only if it has the other than itself to negate: "Desire and the self-certainty obtained in it gratification, are conditioned by the object, for that self-certainty comes from superseding this other: in order that supersession can take place, there must be this other" (PG ¶ 175). Therefore, otherness is necessary and irreducible for desire. At this stage of dialectical understanding of desire, Hegel has concluded that an individual’s desire needs another desire for self-certain and recognition: "Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness" (PG ¶ 175).

**Self-consciousness finds satisfaction in another self-consciousness**

As a desire, we are told, self-consciousness cannot be satisfied with itself. It (self-consciousness) needs an other object to satisfy its desire. Hegel insisted that the object of desire is not just any object, but a living being. Self-consciousness needs otherness. However, what is otherness? According to Hegel, otherness cannot be a particular object; it must be another self-consciousness, "self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness" (PG ¶ 175). He also specifies the issue in other passages:

This other life, however, for which the genus as such exists, and which is genus on its own account, viz. self-consciousness, exists in the first instance for self-consciousness only as this simple essence, and has itself as pure "I" for object. In the course of its experience which we are now to consider, this abstract object will enrich itself for the "I" and undergo the unfolding which we have seen in the sphere of life (PG ¶ 173).

Why does Hegel declare that self-consciousness is only satisfied in another self-consciousness in the experience of desire? Hegel claims that "the object for self-consciousness has the character of negative" (PG ¶ 167). It means that the object or otherness is necessarily related to self-consciousness. The object has no independent existence of its own, but as something that merely exists for self-consciousness. On Hegel’s account, the object that belongs to the sensuous world is an ‘appearance’ and is only for self-consciousness. However, Hegel declares that self-consciousness must confront otherness’ independence in the experience of desire as he claims in the following passage.

Desire and the certainty of itself obtained in desire’s satisfaction are conditioned by the object, for that self-certainty comes to be through the superseding of this other: in order for this supersession to be, the other must be. Thus self-consciousness, by its negative relation (to the object), is unable to supersede the object; instead, because of that relation it produces the object again, and the desire as well. It is in fact something other than self-consciousness that is the essence of desire (PG ¶ 175).
Desire negates the objects in order to return to itself. At the same time, desire recognizes that it cannot return to itself without the existence of other (object) than itself to negate, which is necessary for acquiring self-certainty, and this other self-consciousness cannot supersede. The experience of desire proves that otherness is necessary and irreducible.

It seems that as desire, self-consciousness exists as a contradiction with itself. Desire affirms itself only through the other’s negation and does enjoy self-certainty while the object is there in front of it (Houlgate 2009: 15). On the one hand, self-consciousness must experience satisfaction by negating the object, for it is the truth (PG ¶ 174). On the other hand, self-consciousness cannot destroy the object since desire is inevitably conditioned by the otherness it seeks to negate. Therefore, how Hegel solves this contradiction is the crucial point in the following line.

According to Hegel, the existence of self-consciousness is possible only by relating to a realm of otherness (the external world). He tells us that "Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness" (PG ¶ 175). In other words, self-consciousness cannot exist without otherness. Self-consciousness has a double object: one is itself and the other in the external world. Without otherness, self-consciousness loses one object; "self-consciousness is only the motionless tautology of I am I," then self-consciousness does not exist. Self-consciousness in truth is not motionless; it is "the reflection out of the being of the world of sense and perception, and the return from otherness" (PG ¶ 167). Self-consciousness is returning from otherness by negating it. Without otherness, there is no negating and then no returning. In Hegel’s words, "desire’s satisfaction is conditioned by its other" (PG ¶ 175), which is essential to it.

In addition, as desire, self-consciousness confronts an object, negates this object by consuming and absorbing it, and in doing so, restores explicit self-certainty. However, it seems that desire’s satisfaction of self-consciousness is only temporary, and self-consciousness can never reach its goal—satisfaction. Hegel asserts that once desire completely negates and destroys an object and removes its self-sufficiency, the satisfaction of self-consciousness no longer exists. Thus the object’s disappearance leads to subjects (self-consciousness) disappearing as well (Neuhouser 2009: 43-44). On Hegel’s account, to achieve full self-consciousness, it must have an independent other that remains in existence - it cannot be a particular object like water or food which ceases to exist when destroyed or negated. Self-consciousness needs an object that can be negated and exist last long, not merely temporary, satisfaction before it (self-consciousness). Accordingly, desire as self-consciousness can only achieve satisfaction if it can find a stable object (without disappearing itself or reducing to nothing) in the external world. We need an object that satisfies two conditions: on the one hand, it is the independent object; an object must always remain. On the other hand, since the object must remain, it is useless for me to destroy and negate the object. In other words, desire as self-consciousness affirms the self and negates the other. It also affirms the other and denies the self simultaneously. The only solution is to have an object that not only remains but negates itself. In Hegel’s view, if I cannot gain self-certainty by negating the other - since desire wants to have the other, control and use the other, but desire also shows the difficulty in having, the resistance and independence of the other. Desire illuminates self-consciousness that there is an other and that this other has an independence that cannot easily be eliminated. Self-consciousness must take a different direction to fulfill its desire. According to Hegel, in order for a subject to complete its self-consciousness, it needs another subject that carries out the same negation ‘within itself’ that the former had only performed upon natural reality: "On account of the independence of the object, therefore, it can achieve satisfaction only when the object itself effects the negation within itself; and it must carry out this negation of itself in itself, for it is in itself the negative, and must be for the other what it is " (PG 175) and remains in being in so doing. Thus, self-consciousness does not need to negate the other since the object will negate itself, submit, and recognize me (self-consciousness). This object can only be another self-consciousness, a living self-consciousness. That is an object which is also a subject as I am: an object that is both an object (negated) and a subject (lasting). On Hegel’s view, the object in relation to self-consciousness can negate itself and remain in, so doing cannot be a living thing; it is precisely another self-consciousness. He asserts that only self-consciousness can abandon itself or reduce itself to nothing and remain "for itself" a genus or be aware of itself as a pure I (PG ¶ 176). In other words, self-consciousness can be aware of the "unity of itself in its otherness" only in relation to another self-consciousness. Reciprocal recognition between
two subjects or two selves is only the solution in the experience of desire. In this way, Hegel concludes that self-consciousness is compelled to confront another self-consciousness by the experience of desire.

Two self-consciousnesses require mutual recognition

The experience of desire shows that self-consciousness is undeniably dependent on another self-consciousness, or in Hegel’s view, the satisfaction of desire is really a duplication of self-consciousness (PG ¶ 176). Therefore, self-consciousness can only achieve its satisfaction and become acknowledged through another self-consciousness. This is how Hegel begins section A of chapter four of Phenomenology, “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” (PG ¶ 178). In Hegel’s account, the “in and for itself” self-consciousness is a spiritual unity that is contingent upon a doubling of this unity. This doubling of self-consciousness is identified with recognition (Hudson 2010: 142-43). Self-consciousness seeks to demonstrate that it is for itself, its own self-certainty. It wishes to demonstrate that it is self-sufficient. It does not care about any other. It is not for another. It wants the other to recognize it, and it does not need to recognize the other at all (Kain 2005: 46). However, in order for self-consciousness to become more complete, it must recognize itself through another self-consciousness.

Accordingly, Hegel means that self-consciousness is only explicitly self-certain when another recognizes it. This statement is seemingly Hegel’s introduction to the concept of recognition in the Phenomenology. The concept of recognition plays a central role in the Phenomenology of Spirit, and it is key to understanding the allegory of the lordship and bondage relationship in the Self-Consciousness chapter. However, Hegel never defines what recognition actually means in this chapter. Therefore, as I mentioned at the beginning, various attempts have been made to clarify what recognition precisely means; to craft a robust view of recognition, Heikki Ikäheimo provides a helpful way to formulate recognition relations. Following Ludwig Siep (2014), Ikäheimo distinguishes between vertical and horizontal forms of recognition. The “vertical recognition” refers to recognition between individuals, on the one hand, and something higher than them (individual persons) on the other hand, such as the state, social norms, social institutions, and God (in religious imagination). There are two direction in the vertical axis. In the upwards, persons “recognizing” or adopting the social institutions of their society. In the downward direction, the state recognizes its citizens by providing them rights and ensuring that these rights are protected. In contrast, “horizontal recognition” concerns recognition between individuals. The horizontal axis refers to several names such as interpersonal recognition or intersubjective recognition (2015). “Conceptualizing Causes for Lack of Recognition: Capacities, Costs and Understanding,” in: Studies in Social & Political Thought 25, 1-15. Ikäheimo, H. (2017). Recognition, Identity, and Subjectivity. In Michael J. Thompson (ed.), The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Theory, pp. 567-585. Ikäheimo, H (2013). “Hegel’s Concept of Recognition—What Is It?” in: Recognition – German Idealism as an Ongoing Challenge, edited by Christian Krijnem, Leiden, 11–38. In this form of recognition, Ikäheimo distinguishes several sub-forms that differ from each other in important ways such as mediated by norm and purely intersubjectivity recognition which come in two futhers modes: the conditional and the unconditional (Ikäheimo 2017: 569-571). Elliot Jurist suggests that, according to Hegel, there are four senses of recognition: religious, which describes the relationship between an individual and God; social – an individual’s relation to society; interpersonal – explaining an individual’s relation to other individuals; and self-knowing – describing an individual’s relation to oneself (Jurist 1987: 6). According to Jurist, the last two senses of recognition, one’s relation to other individuals and one’s relation to oneself, are intertwined for Hegel. However, self-knowing sense is Hegel’s recognition in the lordship and bondage dialectic since it has two dimensions: self to itself and self to objects whereas interpersonal sense seems to confine recognition to the external realm: between selves (Jurist 1987: 9). These clarifications shed some light on the questions concerning what Hegel means by recognition. However, not all of these senses apply to Hegel’s account of recognition, especially in the dialectical relationship between the lord and bondsman. In what follows, I will examine what Hegel means by recognition based on chapter fourth of the Phenomenology of Spirit.

According to Hegel, I am a self-consciousness who seeks recognition by another self-conscious being (PG ¶ 178). Therefore, the existence of another self-consciousness is a condition for obtaining recognition by another self-consciousness. Since being acknowledged or recognized means that one (a subject) seeks to be recognized
by another as self-sufficient (another self-consciousness) - a thing or mere object cannot recognize others. In other words, a complete self-consciousness only exists through acknowledging or recognizing another (Lynch 2001: 36). Therefore, there must be two subjects or two self-consciousnesses in the process of recognizing or acknowledging. For Hegel, in the process of recognizing, another self-consciousness faces self-consciousness: "Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it has come out of itself. This process has a twofold significance: first, it has lost itself, for it finds itself as the other being; secondly, in doing so, it has superseded the other, for it does not see the other as an essential being, but in the other sees its own self" (PG ¶ 179). By this, Hegel raises the issue of what he calls the process of recognition. In this process, each self-consciousness must recognize the existence of others as independent and equal to mine. For Hegel, it seems that recognition consists of two movements according to a twofold significance.

First, self-consciousness has lost itself, for it finds itself as another being. This movement is an act of self-negation in which the recognizing self-consciousness loses itself and becomes the recognized self-consciousness, or in Hegel's terms, self-consciousness has lost itself. In this movement, for Hegel, self-consciousness is aware of itself in others; and the other self-consciousness sees itself in the first self-consciousness simultaneously. As explained before, a self-consciousness desires another self-consciousness to satisfy self-certainty. Self-consciousness only attains self-certainty when the other self-negates or loses himself since self-consciousness cannot negate another self-consciousness (a subject). By negating itself, i.e., it loses itself since self-consciousness becomes a mirror for another, and the other again becomes a mirror for the self, simultaneously.

For Hegel, the first self-consciousness gets self-certainty or finds itself in a second self-consciousness by losing itself for the second; however, at the same time, the second-self-consciousness also negates itself when it encounters the first self-consciousness to acquire a certainty of itself because it finds itself as the other being – the first self-consciousness (PG ¶ 179). It seems that the first movement or the act of self-negating or losing itself of self-consciousness is not enough to acquire an explicit self-certainty for self-consciousness. Another movement of the process of recognition is necessary to achieve a self-certainty of self-consciousness. The second movement is the supersession of otherness. In this movement, Hegel states that "in doing so (find itself or self-certainty) it (self-consciousness) has superseded the other, for it does not see other as an essential being, but in other sees its own self" (PG ¶ 179). By stepping out of itself – it proved that it could not obtain self-certainty - self-consciousness requires the substitution of the other since it sees the other not as an essential being but just as a mirror of itself. For Hegel, in order to attain certainty of itself, self-consciousness needs to displace and substitute the otherness, "it must supersede this otherness of itself" (PG ¶ 180). However, Hegel claims that this supersession is ambiguous because when self-consciousness supersedes the other to acquire certainty of itself, it also supersedes itself since otherness is actually itself. Self-consciousness sees itself in and by the other (PG ¶ 180). By superseding the other, self-consciousness attains a certainty of itself in the other, but in doing so, it supersedes its own self, and then, it loses the certainty of itself because otherness is actually its selfless. In facing up with the other, it has regarded itself as the other.

Accordingly, it seems that self-consciousness cannot get self-certainty – as it finds itself by superseding its otherness. However, in paragraph 181, Hegels asserts that the ambiguity in otherness's supersession is equally an ambiguous return into itself. Self-consciousness comes back into itself or finds itself through the substitution process, which has two dimensions. First of all, by superseding its otherness, self-consciousness becomes itself – a certain of itself as "equal to itself." Second, when self-consciousness becomes itself, it also gives the other self-consciousness back to itself at the same time (PG ¶ 181). As a result, we see that the first self-consciousness does not destroy otherness; instead, it preserves and gives freedom to the second self-consciousness by letting it (second self-consciousness) go free.

Up to this point, Hegel shows that two equal movements constitute recognition in which self-consciousness becomes certain of itself: on the one hand, by negating itself, the recognizing self-consciousness becomes a recognized self-consciousness; on the other hand, self-consciousness must supersede its otherness to find itself as a certainty of itself. We see that recognition requires both self-consciousness, and each of them
has a critical role in the process of recognition. "Each sees the other do the same as it does; each does itself what it demands of the other, and therefore also does what it does only in so far as other does the same" (PG ¶ 182). With these words, Hegel asserted that recognition is a mutually dependent process between two self-consciousnesses in which "each is for the other what the other is for it" (PG ¶ 186). In this process, the first self-consciousness cannot do anything without the second self-consciousness, and the first self-consciousness only recognizes itself as long as it recognizes the second self-consciousness and vice versa. Hegel accordingly writes, "action by one side (one self-consciousness) only would be useless because what is to happen can only be brought about by both" (PG ¶ 182). Recognition in this way requires a corporate action of both self-consciousnesses "because it is indivisibly the action of one as well as of the other" (PG ¶ 183). This recognition must be interpreted as mutual recognition because none of them could become self-consciousness without the recognition of the other (Lynch 2001: 37). Thus, self-consciousness itself has attained its satisfaction in another self-consciousness: an assurance of an independent, self-sufficient life. It is only when these self-consciousnesses "recognize themselves as mutually recognizing one another" that each comes to a more complete self-consciousness (PG ¶ 184). Indeed, total self-sufficiency (complete recognition) can only be found in the entire ensemble of subjects, as well as the relationships they form among themselves in order to satisfy their desire for recognition (Neuhouser 2009: 47). From Hegel’s point of view, we see that both self-consciousnesses play crucial roles in the process of mutual recognition. In Hegel’s account, recognition in the strictest sense means that individuals "recognize themselves as mutually recognizing one another" (PG ¶ 184). In other words, recognition in the fullest (complete) sense means that I recognize the other someone who recognizes me while they recognize me as someone who recognizes them. This conclusion seems very consistent with Ikáheimo’s account on horizontal recognition. In other words, we can say that the recognition between two self-consciousness in Hegel’s view is horizontal recognition. This recognition is also coherent with Jurist’s account on self-knowledge sense in which "the two conditions which are established for "recognition proper," mutuality and equality" (Jurist 1987: 9). Can we apply the division of recognition by Ikáheimo and Jurist to the lordship and bondage dialectic? What Hegel means by recognition in the allegory of the lordship and bondage relationship partly correspond to what Ikáheimo and Jurist analyze theorize, as I will explain in the following.

Incomplete recognition in the lordship and bondage dialectic

As we saw above, the condition for the possibility of all recognition is to recognize the other, and recognition is a mutually dependent process between two self-consciousnesses. Mutual recognition is reciprocal when self-consciousness regards the other as another self-consciousness and not a thing. Mutual recognition requires two participating self-consciousnesses. Each consciousness needs the other’s recognition as a self-sufficient being in order to be able to recognize itself as self-consciousness. This process occurs for both self-consciousness simultaneously. Thus, each self-consciousness is certain of itself; however, it has no truth without the other. Self-consciousness only has true self-certainty when it is a being for itself and a being for another (PG ¶ 186). However, as we shall see, the idea of recognition of the other is not unproblematic, and mutual recognition does not come easily.

According to Hegel in paragraph 180, in order to acquire self-certainty, self-consciousness must supersede its own self and then destroy the other independent being (other self-consciousness) by superseding it. Each self-consciousness will attain certainty of itself in relation to the other self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is interconnected with the other and vice versa. Therefore, it seems that two self-consciousnesses will foster peaceful coexistence. For Hegel, however, the temptation to control and make others one’s own will arise in self-consciousness to ensure certainty of itself. As we know, self-consciousness seeks to satisfy itself in other
self-consciousness because, in other self-consciousness, it can have a certain object. Hegel contends that self-consciousness is recognized by the other, and it recognizes the other simultaneously (PG ¶ 180). The problem is that one (self-consciousness) is recognized as a person by the other, but it does not want to recognize the other (self-consciousness) as human in return, i.e., the lord, while the other recognizes but is not recognized by other (self-consciousness) in return, i.e., bondsman in return. Others’ existence is both a condition for the certainty of self-consciousness and a threat to the certainty of itself. Therefore, the confrontation between two self-consciousnesses will appear to prove their reciprocal independence, which results in a fight to the death or “life and death struggle” between lordship and bondage. A fight to the death between lordship and bondage is just an allegory that expresses a struggle between two self-consciousnesses who exist in a state of primitive equality. In Hegel’s text, there is a fight between master and servant, but no one dies in the lordship and bondage relationship. The name “lordship-bondage dialectic” makes it easy to overlook the fact that they (lordship and bondage) are willing to risk death rather than remain dominated. Hence, they turn their original relation into a struggle between a lord and his bondsman rather than a struggle between equals (Kohn 2005: 506). There is just a lord and bondsman resulting from the struggle to the death, and the latter, like a dead man, is incapable of satisfying the other’s demand for voluntary affirmation of his self-certainty. The existence of Lord and bondsman as extremes, opposed to one another in the lordship-bondage dialectic, is a one-sided and incomplete recognition. This recognition corresponds to the model of vertical recognition in Ikáheimo’s account. According to Ikáheimo, the relationship between lordship and bondage begins with a mutual relation between subjects, seeking to complete annihilate the challenge of the other. In the lordship and bondage dialectic, the lord and bondsman relationship illustrate a horizontal relationship between two individuals (lord and bondsman) that forms a mutual recognition — two desiring subjects encountering each other since they “recognize themselves as mutually recognizing one another” (PG ¶ 184). At the next step, a struggle between them leads to a lord and bondsman relationship. At this stage, there is no longer equality, since, one consciousness is in the top position, and the other is in the bottom position. It is a vertical relationship. Two beings (lord and bondsman) are split up into two extremes — “opposed to one another, one being only recognized, the other only recognizing” (PG ¶ 185). Accordingly, Ikáheimo claims that the lordship and bondage relationship begins with a horizontal relation, but it ends with a vertical relation. In other words, the lordship and bondage relationship is to be read “as being horizontally or vertically related” (Ikáheimo 2013: 25). Therefore, in Ikáheimo’s view true (reciprocal) recognition is eliminated in a lord-servant relation. It seems that Ikáheimo’s analysis of recognition is consistent with Hegel’s allegory of the lordship and bondage relationship. However, it is not exactly what happens in Hegel’s Phenomenology. The Chapter Four of Phenomenology is not about social practices or historical processes at all as Ikáheimo’s analysis. The relation between lord and servant is meant to signify a relation between two individuals. The “I-We” dimension of recognition is asymmetrical, as is obvious in the relationship between state and citizen does not happens in Phenomenology. The relation between lord and servant in Phenomenology is the “I-You” that applies to the norm of reciprocity. According to Canivez, therefore, true recognition standards are explicitly stated in Phenomenology in the horizontal dimension, and in Philosophy of Right as regards the vertical (Canivez 2011: 852).

In Jurist’s account, self-knowledge sense could be applied to recognition between two self-consciousness in the lordship and bondage dialectic since self-knowledge has two dimensions: the first dimension dealing with the self in relation to others; the second dimension dealing with the self in relation to itself (recalls two objects and two movements in self-consciousness). However, Hegel’s recognition in lordship and bondage is not exactly in this sense. Although recognition results from a struggle, which includes facing one’s own death as in tragedy, Hegel’s recognition differs from Jurist’s self-knowing sense. On one hand, the lord and bondsman’s struggle for life and death is a paradigm in which two consciousnesses desiring recognition fail to perceive each other; they, therefore, fail to attain the situation in which both viewpoints, the lord and the bondsman’s, achieve reciprocal recognition (Wenning 2018: 484). On the other hand, tragic recognition exposes a different kind of recognition that is not mutual or reciprocal. According to Menning, the most important is that “tragic recognition breaks with the desire for being recognized as sovereign that was at the basic of the lordship and bondage dialectic” (Menning 2018: 485). Antigone’s unconditional commitment to burying her brother exemplifies the value of natural, instantaneous, and desireless ties. Sibling bonds
indicate kinds of direct recognition that are not motivated by want, such as the desire for recognition. (PG ¶ 457-58). Siblings do not have to prove themselves to each other in order to be recognized. They are both free and connected by brotherly or sororal ties that exist prior to any notable achievement or battle for recognition. Therefore, we can conclude that Hegel’s view of recognition as based on desire differs from Jurist’s self-knowing sense, which is influenced by the notion of tragic recognition that derives from clashing value spheres.

In what follows, I contend that according to Hegel, this resolution obviously proves unsatisfying because meaningful recognition can be provided only by an equal. Hegel goes on to assert that “we have now to see how the process of this pure Notion of recognition, of the duplicating of self-consciousness in its oneness, appears to self-consciousness. At first, it will exhibit the side of the inequality of the two... one being only recognized, the other only recognizing” (PG ¶ 185).

Through a life and death struggle, each self-consciousness acquires its self-certainty and the recognition of independence from the other (PG ¶ 187). The staking of one’s life through a life and death struggle shows that self-consciousness gains its freedom, ”showing that it is not attached to any specific existence” by seeking others’ death (PG ¶ 187). Destroying the other proves that self-consciousness is a subject and free being – not dependent on others, recognized by the other, and not recognizing the other. However, if self-consciousness succeeds in destroying the other, this would eliminate the other as its source of recognition. Indeed, self-consciousness can become what it is only through another self-consciousness. Self-consciousness sees itself in the other. Without the other (self-consciousness), self-consciousness is just a thing. According to Hegel, in death, ”the two (self-consciousness) do not reciprocally give and receive one another back from each other consciously, but leave each other free only indifferently, like a thing” (PG ¶ 188). Self-consciousness cannot attain certainty of itself; it is just merely an inanimate object in the death of the other (Lynch 2001: 38). Seeking the death of the other to affirm one’s independence by subjugating the other is vanishing because self-consciousness realizes that ”life is essential to it as a pure self-consciousness” (PG ¶ 189). Therefore, two extremes – lord and bondsman– do not try to seek the other’s death but choose to accept their own existence. Both lord and bondsman learn that life connected with the other is better than no life at all since if the combatants die, nothing happens. Even if one dies, it (self-consciousness) does not work. I cannot get recognition from a corpse (Neuhouser 2009: 47). In other words, neither one achieves recognition, with the death of either. Indeed, the lord and bondsman accept the new relationship in which they are coexistent but inequitably as a second solution (Nguyen 2020: 4). The lord controls the bondsman, and the bondsman gives up his freedom. The lord is the independent consciousness that exists for itself; the bondsman is the dependent consciousness and exists for the other (PG ¶ 190). However, this solution is also insufficient since both lord and bondsman cannot have real recognition – this is incomplete recognition, as I shall explain in what follows.

Let us begin by considering what the lord gets in his victory over the bondsman. It seems that the lord has achieved a self-sufficient way of being, as a fully satisfied man, at the end of the fight to the death. With the subjugation of the bondsman, who was an independent and free being, the lord has gained for himself self-sufficiency. However, the lord’s self-certainty is at risk because the recognition from the bondsman is one-sided. The lord does nothing, but he gets everything from the bondsman. The bondsman is a being for the lord, produces everything, and owns nothing. He does everything to satisfy the lord’s desire (Kojève 1969: 46). Without doing anything to satisfy his desire, the lord gets everything from the bondage. The lord’s achievements are the product of the bondage’s labor. However, as Hegel states, ”the truth of the independent consciousness is accordingly the consciousness of the bondsman” (PG ¶ 193). By getting everything from the bondsman, the lord falls into a new dependence pattern. This kind of dependence does not yield any recognition.

According to Hegel, recognition has two movements, which come from two self-consciousnesses (lord and bondsman), ”but for recognition proper the moment is lacking, that what the lord does to the other he also does to himself, and what the bondsman does to himself, he should do to the other also” (PG ¶ 191). Both lord and bondsman do not practice the golden rule of recognition – both of them have to recognize each
other as a subject. While the bondsman does recognize the lord, the lord does not recognize the bondsman in turn. The bondsman does not try to force the lord into recognizing himself; he works and does everything for the lord. In return, the lord becomes idle and does nothing for the bondsman. Hegel contends that "the outcome is a recognition that is one-sided and unequal" (PG ¶ 191). Indeed, the lord’s recognition is an incomplete recognition or one-sided.

Hegel asserts that "a consciousness which is not purely for itself but for another is merely in the form of thinghood" (PG ¶ 189). By recognizing the lord, and is not recognized by the lord, the bondsman reduces himself to a thing that is only being for the other, not for itself. The outcome is that the lord does not have a truth of recognition as an independent self-consciousness because desire’s satisfaction of self-consciousness is only temporary, and self-consciousness can never reach its goal – satisfaction if the object is a living thing. Self-consciousness achieves self-sufficiency only with another self-consciousness object, "desire’s satisfaction is conditioned by its other" (PG ¶ 175). Indeed, the recognition the lord gets from the bondsman is not equal or reciprocal but asymmetric and one-sided.

Now, we move to the bondsman. After the struggle has ended, Hegel introduces a twist of fate in the situation of the servant. It seems that it is the servant who has fully realized self-consciousness rather than the lord. The bondage knows that the lord depends upon him for the affirmation of his position as a lordship. In addition, the servant shapes the lord’s world by working for the lord and acknowledging him as such. By negating himself and being forced to see himself as merely an object, the bondsman does to himself the same thing that the lord does to the bondsman. However, through work, the bondsman recognizes that there is no fundamental difference between the lord and himself since both of them are individuals of potentially infinite possibilities. Moreover, through the activity of work, the bondsman sets himself free since he recognizes himself in the object that he has created by working. However, Hegel asserts that the recognition that the bondsman gets by negating himself and through the act of labor is not the true recognition that requires the recognition which comes from two self-consciousness. The bondage’s recognition is also one-sided and incomplete.

In relation to the lord, the bondsman accepts to give up his independence and freedom to the lord for fear of death, and by recognizing the lord’s needs as absolute, the bondsman is a being for the lord, and he does everything for the lord. The bondsman does not have freedom and totally depends on the lordship. By superseding himself, the bondsman cannot have real recognition. According to Hegel, true recognition has two moments: first, the self-consciousness negates itself (lost itself), and then it must preserve the other self-consciousness (PG ¶ 179-180). In the lordship and bondage dialectic, the bondsman just supersedes itself to become a being for the other (the lord) without the second moment, that is, being recognized by the lord. Indeed, in itself, the bondsman only has incomplete or one-sided recognition, not reciprocal or true recognition.

According to Kojève, by working for the lord, the bondsman is active and has a direct relationship to being, as the bondsman negates and transforms the given reality, and he projects his own existence by acting (Kojève 1969: 48). Therefore, through his acting - negating his relations to the world through his working, the bondsman seems to have the same kind of freedom - in a sense, liberating himself from it - to which the lord gets by staking his life in the fight. However, the bondsman’s freedom is not like the lord’s, which is independent. The bondsman just frees himself mentally; he still depends on the lord; he is the bondage of the lord (Kojève 1969: 49). In addition, through his work product, the bondsman sees itself as an object’s existent being, which is self-sufficient and for itself (PG ¶ 196). However, the bondsman is not self-conscious because he cannot satisfy his desire in relation to other things (external world), not another self-consciousness. The result is the same as the lord, and the bondsman cannot get true recognition if his object is a living thing. In other words, neither lordship nor bondage attains complete recognition or true recognition where self-consciousness is not only recognized, but is also aware of itself as recognized by the other (Burke 2005: 214).

Mutual recognition
To conclude, by analyzing Hegel’s concept of self-consciousness in chapter four of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, we know that self-consciousness cannot satisfy itself; it needs another to fulfill his desire’s satisfaction. The process to satisfy itself as a true self-consciousness requires subjectivity to recognize the other as self-consciousness, not as a thing or an object as such. Hegel shows that self-consciousness needs recognition because it consists equally of two moments in which otherness (self-consciousness) is the crux of the process. Self-consciousness needs to be recognized by another self-consciousness, but each subject also has to recognize the other self-consciousness. Without otherness, self-consciousness cannot return or come back to itself as self-certainty. The development from recognition to mutual recognition of true recognition is an inevitable requirement of both self-consciousnesses because eliminating the existence of another or treating them as a thing means to also deny one’s own self-consciousness. From the mutual recognition point of view, we can understand the significance of the lord and bondsman’s dialectic in Hegel’s philosophy. Hegel points out that the key point to solve the struggle between lordship and bondage is mutual or reciprocal recognition. The dialectic of lordship and bondage shows that in order to live in peace and happiness with everyone, we need to escape the modes of power and domination. It requires us to get out of ourselves and actively attempt to see others as they are. It entails that we give up the self-centered notions that everything and others exist for us. Instead, we can exist together, and our needs do not triumph over the needs of others. In the end, in this essay, I have endeavored to show that after delving more into the meaning of recognition through the notion of desire, Hegel demonstrates that self-consciousness requires recognition since it is fundamentally connected to otherness and requires the ability to locate itself in that connection. As a result, transforming recognition into real reciprocal recognition necessitates not just a deeper affirmation of oneself, but also a process of allowing the other to be truly other and independent. The actual meaning of Hegelian recognition is this – mutual recognition.

**Bibliography**


