Social Equality, Recognition and Preconditions of Good Life

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Abstract

In this paper I analyze interpersonal and institutional recognition and discuss the relation of different types of recognition to various principles of social justice (egalitarianism, meritarianism, legitimate favouritism, principles of need and free exchange). Further, I try to characterize contours of good autonomous life, and ask what kind of preconditions it has. I will distinguish between five kinds of preconditions: psychological, material, cultural, intersubjective and institutional. After examining what the role of recognition is among such preconditions, and how they figure in the work of Honneth, Fraser and Taylor, I suggest a somewhat complex and hopefully rich picture of interpersonal and institutional recognition as a precondition of autonomous good life.

The leading idea of this paper is a combination of the ancient idea that good societies are those which enable and promote the good life, flourishing or well-being of the citizens, and the modern idea, that the citizens are to be taken as autonomous individuals. Theories of recognition, from Fichte and Hegel onwards, provide a promising theoretical framework for trying to see people at the same time as individuals and as members of a social whole. This paper tries to outline ways in which interpersonal and institutional recognition figures as a constituent and precondition in the lives of modern autonomous individuals.[1]

This talk is inspired by the theories of recognition by G.W.F. Hegel, Axel Honneth, Charles Taylor and Nancy Fraser in particular.[2] In the first part of the paper I ask what is recognition, especially interpersonal and institutional recognition, thus continuing my joint efforts with Heikki Ikäheimo to analyze

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[1] A talk based on this paper was given in the Social Inequality Today -conference 12th November 2003 at Macquarie University, organized by the Center for Research on Social Inclusion. Some of the points were discussed also in a separate workshop on recognition. I wish to thank all the participants for very fruitful discussions, to which I owe a lot.

[2] See the references in the bibliography to Honneth, Taylor, Fraser, Hegel.

this concept.[3] In discussing different types of recognition, I also discuss various principles of social justice (egalitarianism, meritarianism, legitimate favouritism, principle of need and free exchange).

In the second part, I try to characterize contours of good life, especially the good life of autonomous individuals, and ask what kind of preconditions it has. I will distinguish between five kinds of preconditions: psychological, material, cultural, intersubjective and institutional. The point is to examine what the role of recognition, as defined in the first section, is among such preconditions. I will also ask whether recognition is not only a prerequisite, but a constituent or ingredient of good life. Some of the comments I make concern the difference between recognition and redistribution as debated by Fraser and Honneth.

What is recognition? Conceptual clarifications

One central idea behind the discourse on recognition is that self-relations of persons are dependent on the ways that others see and treat us.[4] Self-esteem depends on social esteem, self-respect on respect, basic self-confidence on love and care, self-consciousness on communicative treatment, self-images on other's views. As Charles Taylor (1992) has stressed, due recognition is a vital human need. Denied recognition can cause self-hatred and other forms of negative self-relations. The point can be put by saying that healthy self-relations are dependent on the recognitional environment consisting of the ways that other persons and institutions take us.

Following Hegel's views, Honneth and Taylor and Fraser maintain that modernization has meant that an *egalitarian* sphere of recognition has emerged: instead of slavery or castes or hereditary hierarchical social statuses all human persons are nowadays taken to be free and equal, and to possess equal standing. This means that various features (gender, 'race', class, outlook *etc*) ought to be treated in a difference-blind fashion. In practice this battle against unjustified prejudices is still going on, but at the level of ideas, universalism is more or less universally accepted. Taylor uses the term "politics of universality" of such difference-blind views, and Honneth relates the term "respect" to this basic egalitarian tendency to grant all autonomous persons an equal legal and moral standing.

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[3] See the references in the bibliography by Ikäheimo and Laitinen; for responses to some of our suggestions, see Honneth 2002 and Honneth 2004. Some of the points made here are more thoroughly discussed in Ikäheimo and Laitinen (forthcoming). Unlike in Laitinen 2002a, I focus here on recognition as a precondition and constituent of good life, and not of personhood as such.

[4] See Honneth 1992, Hegel 1977.

Yet, as Taylor and Honneth among others have pointed out, all difference-sensitive treatment is not unjustified. Differential esteem based on desert, merits or achievements or contributions is quite justified, and such social esteem is relevant for one's self-esteem. Thus it makes a legitimate difference over and above the equal basic standing, to ask what kind of person is in question. And quite naturally, special relations and attachments between people (friendship, family relations *etc*) make a difference in how we treat one another. Thus, as Taylor points out, there seem to be legitimate forms of "politics of difference" which are not difference-blind, and Honneth stresses that love and social esteem differ from respect as forms of recognition. Before discussing the different types of recognition more closely, let us take a look at the phenomena of recognition at a general level.

Identification, acknowledgement, recognition

Instead of starting head-on by defining necessary and sufficient conditions of recognition, I wish to build up a paradigm case of full-fledged recognition. Such a case has several defining features, and it is a further question whether cases that lack many or even any of these features count as recognition at all. The theory of recognition presented here is part of a shared project with Heikki Ikäheimo.[5]

In one sense of the word, anything can be "recognized", that is, noticed, distinguished from its surroundings as "something", identified and re-identified: cats, mats, airplanes, shadows, persons, laws, dollars, groups, states. Whatever x is, it can be recognized as x, or some kind of x, or especially the very individual x that it is. Following the suggestion of Heikki Ikäheimo, we can agree to reserve the term "identification" for this broad family of senses of the word "recognition". The point is to distinguish this from two other surface usages of the term, in order to avoid confusion. The phenomena of recognizing the type of an airplane, re-identifying a criminal and having legal rules that are publicly recognizable all are cases of "identification" in this sense. This stipulated, technical sense of "identification" covers that meaning of "recognition" in which we can recognize anything, not only persons or only values or norms.

In another sense of the word, we recognize norms, values, claims or considerations when we sincerely accept or endorse them or think they are valid, relevant or justified. Now this sense of 'recognition' is relevant for understanding social reality and human life: we live in a space of concerns or space of reasons, and understanding our concerns or the claims we endorse is

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[5] See the references in bibliography.

crucial in understanding our actions and reactions. I think it is equally important to the joint efforts of Fraser and Honneth concerning the relations of recognition and redistribution, to distinguish recognition of values from recognition of persons.[6] Again, it may be useful to reserve the term "acknowledgement" to this kind of endorsement or approving awareness of evaluative and normative elements (see Ikäheimo 2002b, Ikäheimo & Laitinen, forthcoming). The point is that such abstract things as values or norms do not have a self-relation, the values and norms simply cannot care whether they are recognized or not. They cannot have experiences of being misrecognized. Yet this kind of acknowledgement of values and interpersonal recognition are intimately intertwined.[7] Again, the term "acknowledgement" need not readily have the connotations meant here, the stipulative point is to distinguish these phenomena from interpersonal recognition, where insults and effects on self-relations are possible. "Acknowledgement" in this stipulated sense covers the cases where the objects of acknowledgement are evaluative features and normative entities, not themselves persons or recognizers of any other kind.

Now there are all kinds of bearers of value, or all kinds of things with normative implications, or objects of concern. We live in a "moral space"(Taylor) or in a "practical reality"(Dancy), our whole world is value-laden and laden with reasons for action. Interpersonal recognition covers a major area of our practical concerns, for example, the rights of persons, or concern for the well-being of persons (and other recognizers apart from persons). But also pieces of art or the wilderness embody values and there are norms concerning our proper treatment of them. These "bearers of value" can be moral *patients*, objects of moral concern, but they cannot have a self-relation and cannot be recognized in the sense that recognizers can be recognized.[8] We clearly are concerned about other things as well as other

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[6] See Laitinen 2002a

[7] Laitinen 2002a

[8] If we can *identify* anything, and *acknowledge* normative entities like norms, values or claims, and if we can *recognize* only other *recognizers*, then we may need one more term for the 'recognition' or 'appreciation' or proper treatment of such bearers of value like works of art or such animals, which are not recognizers. The point is that there is a form of distorted evaluation, where one in principle acknowledges the norm that "do not destroy valuable works of art", and the norm "sexual obscenity should be avoided", and identifies something as a valuable but obscene work of art, and destroys it. Yet it may be clear to everyone that this was an exaggeration, that it was not *that* obscene. This mistake in all-in judgement-in-situation led to mistreatment and mis-appreciation of a valuable work of art. Mis-treatment of the work of art is not as such misrecognition, because the work of art cannot care (although it may imply misrecognition of other people who therefore cannot engage with that work of art). And again, what was not properly acknowledged was the claim "in this case, the valuable work of art should not be destroyed". But it was not this claim that was destroyed, on the contrary this claim may be all the more supported when people realized how exaggerated the deed was. What was destroyed, and in that sense 'mistreated' or

recognizers. And if we bear in mind that various virtues or goals of excelling in different practices are strongly valued or "acknowledged" objects of our concern, we see that many morally, normatively or evaluatively motivated social struggles are not literally struggles for recognition. Yet, I think, Honneth's point that social struggles are morally motivated and not merely based on self-interest, is a valid one.

These suggested usages of "identification" and "acknowledgement" leave the term "recognition" to be used for proper interpersonal or "inter-recognitional" recognition. Only recognizers can be recognized in this strict sense. Such circularity is not vicious or uninformative: one can characterize the class of potential recognizers without referring to "recognition". One could equally well say that only agents of "acknowledging" can be recognized, or only beings capable of having evaluatively and normatively laden views about others can be recognized. Or, that only those beings whose self-relation can be affected by their interpretation of the attitudes of others, are potential objects of recognition. As it happens, agents of acknowledgement and beings whose self-relation can be affected in that way are one and the same class, paradigmatically human persons. I will use the term "recognizer" to refer to such beings capable of acknowledging, recognizing and having self-relations.

The general form of mutual recognition

Let us start from the general form of *mutual* recognition: *mutual recognition is a matter of two recognizers mutually taking each other as recognizers of some kind and accepting the normative implications of such takings*. This is, to use Heikki Ikäheimo's phrase, my view concerning the *genus* of mutual recognition, whereas various kinds of respect, esteem or love and so on are its *species*. What distinguishes recognition from misrecognition is that the former is an *adequate* response to the normative requirements in question. These normative

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'misappreciated', was the work of art. Thus there seems to be a sense in which, say, "recognizing of the value of old manuscripts" cannot be analyzed to recognizing persons and acknowledging norms and values, and identifying the thing as a manuscript. To say that the relevant thing is to identify it *as a valuable* manuscript may seem like a good move, and it suggests that one did identity it as a manuscript but did not see it in the right light, as a valuable one. The downside of this move is that it inflates the meaning of 'identify' to cover all the elements of interpersonal recognition as well: everything that A does in recognizing B is actually included in A identifying B, if identification means seeing the evaluative features in the right light. I think that it is correct to say that one has not comprehensively understood B, if one has not understood B's evaluative features and normative status, but it is less clear to me whether one can nevertheless fully correctly *identify* B and yet be mistaken or ignorant about some of B's features.

requirements are related to the evaluative features that persons can instantiate, but the levels of norms and values are mutually irreducible.[9]

Several comments are in place. First of all, this suggested definition or characterization concerns recognizers in general, whether they are individual human beings, groups or states. There are interesting questions concerning the capability of any of these to be a recognizer. Humans are not recognizers when they are born, and totally disintegrated groups or states cannot have shared attitudes or joint actions that it takes for them to count as agents of recognition. Things are complicated by the fact that recognition from others seems to play a significant role in the development processes where human persons learn to be agents of recognition themselves.[10] The same goes for the process where a less integrated group of people turns into well integrated one capable of having the needed attitudes, or where a state-candidate turns into an independent state. It seems that relations of recognition between the citizens, and the recognition that the citizens give to the state for its legitimacy, and recognition received from other states are all different relations of recognition, which are necessary for a state to exist as an agent of recognition.[11]

Secondly, the normative implications in question depend on whether we have a case of interpersonal recognition between two persons, or international recognition between two states or peoples (e.g. concerning their independence and the right to govern themselves and status as a self-governing political whole), or perhaps between two, say, cultural groups. In addition to such horizontal cases, we have vertical cases, between an individual and a state, or between a state and an international organization like United Nations, or between a state and a minority group *etc.* Adequate recognition and

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[9] Laitinen 2002, Honneth 2002. The question concerning the relation of the deontic layer of norms, reasons for action, oughts on the one hand, and values, evaluative features, goods on the other hand is a general issue, not restricted to issues of recognition. In Laitinen 2003 I criticize Kantian and Habermasian tendencies to divorce these issues too sharply, but I also criticize Charles Taylor for his relative neglect of the deontic layer of norms, oughts and reasons for action.

[10] See Laitinen 2002a

[11] Groups of people and institutions can recognize and be recognized *to the extent* that groups and institutions can have the relevant attitudes. And I think groups and institutions can indeed be agents and have the relevant attitudes, states can recognize each other, states can recognize individuals as citizens, cultural groups may display disrespect towards one another *etc.* Mere collections of individuals, mere aggregates, cannot be collective agents, but groups which are sufficiently integrated wholes can, given that they have some more or less institutional forms of opinion-formation (*see* Pettit: *A Theory of Freedom*). But it is important to note that cultures or cultural horizons, as opposed to cultural groups, cannot strictly speaking recognize other cultures. Cultures, literally speaking, do not have attitudes, as opposed to individuals and groups, which are acculturated to such cultures. (see Blum)

misrecognition differ in how well the normative implications are taken into account.

Thirdly, recognition can in principle be analyzed in terms of attitudes, action or statuses. We can say that a "practical" view of recognition focuses on action, whereas a "symbolic" view focuses on attitudes and their expressions. But perhaps we do not need to choose between these two views. Attitudes and actions are intertwined, as action expresses attitudes. Perhaps neither mere attitudes without the relevant practical behaviour, nor mere "external" action in conformity to the rules without the genuine attitudes counts as proper recognition.[12] In proper recognition, the person both has the relevant attitudes and this shows in the way the person acts.

But it is also quite common to analyze recognition in terms of A granting B the status C (and respecting that status in one's attitudes and behaviour). In some cases of recognition, this is the most plausible suggestion that comes to mind (say, citizens are those who have been granted the status), but there are also cases of recognition in which it is hard to see what the "status" is, say in admiring someone as a good guitar-player or a virtuous person, and whether there is any specific "granting" apart from forming the relevant attitude. If one gets a prize or medal, this is of course something that is granted, but not all cases of admiration are accompanied by external symbols. Furthermore, a case where A's status as a citizen (granted by the state) is respected by B seems less a case of *granting* a status than having the right kinds of attitudes and behaving in the right way. Further, the statuses are granted on the basis of something, that one cognizes and sees as normatively requiring, or permitting, the granting of the status. Thus, it seems that "granting a status" is sometimes the appropriate thing to do, but it is only a subclass of all the appropriate things to do which count as recognition. Thus, recognition seems to be the right kind of action for the right kind of attitude, and in some cases the right thing to do may be to grant some or other status. In the same sense, being recognized (*Anerkanntsein*) sometimes means that one has acquired some public normative status, sometimes that one is treated and thought of in certain ways.

Fourthly, this is an analysis of *mutual* recognition.[13] Mutuality, in its *symmetrical* form, demands four things: 1) A takes B as R, 2) B takes A as R, 3)

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[12] In Laitinen 2002 I favoured the practical view, but I did not consider the option that both the attitudes and acts are necessary for recognition, or at least for the central cases of recognition.

[13] Mutual recognition is inherently dialogical, and therefore "recognizee-sensitive", whereas "recognizee-insensitive" or "recognizee-centered" forms of recognition are monological,

A takes A as R, 4) B takes B as R. That is, both take each other to be "R", namely *recognizers,* for example free and equal citizens, or human persons, or states. This is the outcome in Hegel's analysis in *Phenomenology* and elsewhere.[14]

Hegel stresses that self-relation and recognition are mediated by one another[15]: "Each is the mediating term for the other, through which each mediates itself with itself and coincides with itself. Each is for itself and for the other an immediate self-existing being, which at the same time is such only through this mediation. They recognize themselves as reciprocally acknowledging each other."(Hegel, PhG, #184) Or as Ludwig Siep (1977, 137) puts it: "Recognition, as a double-signifying act of two self-consciousnesses, is a relation in which the relata relate to themselves through the relation to the other, and relate to the other through their own self-relation. Thus, the self's relation to itself is made possible by the corresponding relation to the other."[16]

Hegel's ideal type of mutual recognition "as reciprocally acknowledging each other" takes place in a theoretically fictitious plane where there is only one

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focussing on the attitudes of only one of the participants. See Ikäheimo 2002b and Ikäheimo & Laitinen (forthcoming).

[14] This kind of mutual recognition of each other as recognizers can take place not only between two individual self-consciousnesses, but in principle between any two recognizers, for example between a state and an individual. The state considers itself to be a recognizer itself, it assumes it has the legitimate power to grant citizenship. The state recognizes the individual by granting it citizenship and rights. The individual takes the state to be a recognizer and thinks that something actually happened when the state granted citizenship, unlike if it was his neighbour's child who wrote the certificate. The individual takes herself to be a recognizer and thinks that the normative power of the state to recognize is ultimately based on its legitimacy among the citizenry.

[15] "But this action has the double significance of being just as much the doing of the one as the doing of the other. For this other is likewise independent, self-determining, and there is nothing in it except what originates through it. The first does not have a merely passive object before it as in the case of desire. Rather the other is an independent being existing for itself. Consequently the first may not use the other for its own ends unless the other does *for itself* what the first does. The movement [of recognition] is therefore without qualification the doubled movement of both self-consciousnesses. Each sees the other do the same that it does. Each does itself what it requires of the other, and does what it does only insofar as the other does the same. A one-sided action would be useless, since what is supposed to happen can only come about through the joint action of both."(Hegel, PhG #182), "The action has double significance not only because it is an action directed at itself as well as at the other, but also because it is the joint indivisible action of the one as well as the other."(Hegel, PhG, #184), "Each is the mediating term for the other, through which each mediates itself with itself and coincides with itself. Each is for itself and for the other an immediate self-existing being, which at the same time is such only through this mediation. They recognize themselves as reciprocally acknowledging each other."(Hegel, PhG, #184).

[16] Translated in Williams 1997, 51.

person there to recognize me. Of course, when the learning process is over and I have a decentred worldview in which there is room for other self-consciousnesses apart from me, I routinely expect there to be other persons apart from me, and I seldom make mistakes in telling persons from other beings. Others do not have to engage in a struggle to get recognition from me if I presume that, say, each adult human is in fact a self-conscious, sane, rational, responsible recognizer (although I am aware that such expectation may in some cases turn out to be too optimistic). I encounter similar taken-for-granted recognition in the expectations of others, so none of them alone has the full responsibility of recognizing me. Thus there are empirical complexities produced by the number of people we encounter in real life, but it seems that on a general level it is true that one's self-relations and relations of recognition are interconnected.

The four conditions 1-4 are not sufficiently detailed, as they could be true by accident, as it were, without being interconnected in any way. As such, the four conditions allow for cases in which A and B have never met, and have only heard of each other on the radio, and they have no idea that they have heard of each other on the radio. Maybe this is quite acceptable, certainly this is not a case of *misrecognition*, and maybe such "disconnected" forms do count as recognition, although they cannot have effects of self-relations, because the recognizer is not aware of them.[17] But maybe we do not want such cases to count as recognition at all, once we analyze paradigm cases of full-fledged recognition (which need not be a matter of face-to-face encounters, but which it is easiest to imagine that way), which is more demanding in terms of the kind of mutuality in question.

These more demanding, "connected" forms of mutuality can be illuminated, when we focus on cases which are not strictly symmetrical over and above the minimum that both take each other to be recognizers. Take a case where an art-critic takes a guitar-player to be an excellent artist. This is not symmetrical: the guitar-player does not in return take the art-critic to be an excellent artist.[18]

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[17] Although it makes a huge difference if I can really take it for granted that everyone tends to take everyone, including me, as a person. Really encountering misrecognition is painful, but also to know that one would encounter misrecognition somewhere, say in some officially racist state, may have bad effects on one's self-image.

18 Honneth stresses, following Mead's idea of division of labour, that in a good society everyone has a task or a role in which one can try to make a contribution to society and gain social esteem. One can think that "it does not matter that I am no great guitar-player, my contribution to the society comes through my work, and I do my work well. Although I am no celebrity and get no society-wide attention to my contributions, our occupation (say, teachers or truck-drivers) in general enjoys social esteem, and it is clear that the society needs us." So in a good society everyone would be socially esteemed for something. Heikki Ikäheimo has pointed out connections between this and mutual gratitude. I would like to add

But it is still mutual in some sense, because the attitudes of the guitar-player make a constitutive difference to the role that recognition plays in self-relations. What matters here is whether the guitar-player takes the art-critic to be a good art-critic, and thus a relevant and competent judge in this issue. If the critic understood the artist in the light that was intended and made good points, then his criticism cannot be just brushed aside. Positive comments from competent judges and significant others matter more. In the paradigmatic cases, recognition is relevant to self-relations.

In a less paradigmatic case, if A takes B to be an excellent guitar-player, but B does not know of this, or does not care about A's views (because he does not take A's judgements as competent or relevant in general), or does not think that this particular judgement is well-founded (say, the critic did not realize the ironic allusions, which were the point of the piece), or is not centrally concerned about what other people say about his guitar-playing (say, because he identifies himself more with his professional role), it may be that this criticism does not affect the self-relation of B at all.[19]

In general, the attitudes of B determine whether A *relevantly* and *successfully* takes B as X. Some of these attitudes are: B knows of A, B thinks of A as a competent judge in this case and B knows of and understands and accepts A's judgement that "B is X", and that it matters to B what others think of her X-hood.[20] This also implies the minimal mutuality that both take both to be recognizers in general.

Can we say that such features that figure in "successful" or "relevant" recognition, are necessary conditions of recognition? With some qualifications, we can say that every form of recognition necessarily presupposes that both take both to be recognizers. The qualifications concern potential persons (or potential recognizers in general) and imaginable cases, where there is some kind of esteem and some kind of love, but yet no judgement concerning the status of the other as a recognizer.

What about the cases where B does not take A to be generally a competent or relevant judge in the issue at hand? Are they cases of recognition at all?

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that there are other forms of esteem and appreciation, which are forms of recognition relevant for self-esteem, over and above the gratitude for one's contributions. See Laitinen 2002a.

[19] For closer analyses of these less paradigmatic cases, and some views of what conditions are sufficient or necessary, see Ikäheimo & Laitinen (forthcoming)

[20] There is a further question whether we want to say that the judgement "A is X" is true? If so, it should leave room for the possibility that "A is X" comes to be true in these processes of recognition. Furthermore, we may want to say that there is mutual recognition, even though the evaluative views of both the recognizer and recognizee could be further criticized.

Recognition matters more if it comes from a competent and relevant judge, but competence and relevance seem to come in degrees, so these conditions are better taken as qualifications of the recognition in question than as necessary conditions. It may be for example that B has no view at all concerning A's competence. Possibly even quite irrelevant recognition is just that, recognition but irrelevant.

B's self-relations depend on recognition in general, including recognition from A among others, and including this particular claim by A among other claims. Here, a holistic approach is in place. Single judgements are always interpreted against the background of one's general sense of self, and sense of how others view me. Sometimes single comments from others may have very crucial effects, often they are just drops in the ocean.

The same thing can be said of the question whether it matters to B what others say of her X-hood, for example, that it does not matter to me what others think of me as a guitar-player. Again, such mattering comes in degrees, and even irrelevant recognition is recognition.

What about the conditions that B is aware of A's claim that "B is X", and understands it and further that B accepts it, because he or she agrees with the judgement? These conditions try to analyze what "successfully" means. It seems that awareness is a necessary condition for recognition to take place, but understanding comes in degrees. Further, it seems that something can be a case of recognition even where the recognizer herself does not agree with the judgement. Indeed, often the views of competent and relevant judges are all the more relevant if they differ from my own views.

Three classes of recognition and a plurality of principles of social justice

It is possible to classify different kinds of recognition at different levels of abstraction, and with different interests. On different levels of generality, there are a different number of forms (or types or kinds or sorts or *species)* of recognition.

Related to Hegel and Honneth, I have suggested that we can distinguish three classes of recognition. Differing from Honneth's historical and social theoretical interest, I suggested a logical or systematic distinction. In the case of persons, A can relate to B in a *universalistic* way as a person, in a *particularistic* way as a certain kind of person, and in a *singularistic* way as a certain person. The same goes of course for other recognizers than persons, and a similar threefold distinction can be made for various types of

identification. It depends on one's theoretical purposes whether such a tight threefold distinction is of use.[21]

This threefold distinction is exemplified, but not exhausted, by three different principles of distribution relevant to the theme of social justice and social equality: *egalitarian* universalism distributing to each equally (independently of *which and what kind* of person is in question), *meritarian* principle of desert distributing to each according to his or her achievements (independently of *which* person is in question) and *favouritistic* principle of legitimate "nepotism", in which someone distributes to those, whom she owes special responsibility, like her children or other persons to whom she has special attachment to (independently of *what kind* of person the person in question is). Nepotism is criticizable only when it replaces other (e.g. egalitarian or meritocractic) valid considerations.

Of these, the principle of equal respect is egalitarian at two levels. While all normative principles are egalitarian *at a metalevel* so that the principle applies to all people in the same way, equal respect is egalitarian also *at the substantial level* suggesting that the basic rights and basic standing of persons ought to be distributed in a uniform and difference-blind fashion. There may be other principles like the principle of desert, which is egalitarian only at the metalevel, but substantively leads to differential distribution, in accordance to the different merits of people. As Nancy Fraser (2003) among others has suggested, the egalitarian principle of equal standing of persons has relevance in various contexts, including the civil rights, basic moral and political rights but also in terms of "participatory parity" at workplace, at family and at society at large. Everyone ought to be entitled to minimum welfare and equal standing as a participant of the social life, totally irrespective of their merits. But on top of that, I think Axel Honneth is right to suggest that social esteem, which is often connected to economic rewards, is dependent on the actual contributions. So there are different kinds of recognition, leading to substantively different principles, equal difference-blind respect and difference-sensitive esteem for example.

The threefold distinction I have suggested is illuminating only in some contexts and for some purposes. For example, it draws a relevant distinction in what "politics of difference" may mean: does it refer particularistically to qualitative distinctness in terms of relevant features *or* singularistically to

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[21] Note that "recognizer", like possibly "person", is a concept which needs to be supplied with some further concept to answer the question what is the "primary kind" of that agent (human being, group, state), and which provides the existence- persistence- and identity-conditions of that agent. (See Baker: *Persons and Bodies*.)

irreplacable individuals. It also corresponds to three classes of self-relations: the relation to oneself as a free and equal person among others, as a certain kind of person, and as this singular individual person. Yet, I do not think this threefold division is the most interesting level of abstraction in all cases. Most importantly, I think there is a plurality of values and norms relevant to social justice and modern good life, and any three basic values or three basic norms do not encompass the whole spectre. The three classes are indeed classes with more than one member.

For example, the particularistic principles, which focus on certain *kinds* of persons, may include not only the *meritarian* principle, but also the principle of *need* or the principle of *free exchange*.[22] Michael Walzer has convincingly shown that the last two are valid principles in *some* spheres of justice: the resources that health care has at its disposal should be distributed according to need, whereas the things that are for sale ought to be governed by and large by the principle of free exchange.[23] Walzer's point is that there is a plurality of spheres of justice, each governend by the relevant distribution-principle. Further, the specification of the meritarian principle can lead to specification of rival principles, which may be valid in different contexts.

Further, there are different scopes of universalistic principles, depending on whether we talk about all persons, all human persons, all autonomous human persons, all legal subjects or all citizens. At each level we can say that everyone ought to be treated fundamentally as equals.[24] But not all persons have all the rights that autonomous persons have, and whatever legal rights there are in any system of law, they concern only those who are legal subjects of that system instead of some other.[25]

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[22] But it may also be that these principles are mixed cases. Honneth takes his third form of recognition (love or care) and recognition as a needy being, to go together. It seems to me that needs figure in all forms of recognition, for example, we can look after someone's needs simply because that person is a person (universalistic concern in saving an unknown person from drowning), or as a reward for more or less great contributions (a well-known poor poet getting money for food), or as expressions of special concern (looking after the needs of a child). There is a universalistic element in that everyone ought to have the right to own things. There is no *meritarian* element because it is a different thing to deserve something and to own it. For the latter, it suffices that one has gained what one owns in free exchange. There is no injustice if there are two equally deserving persons in other respects, who own different things. If only one of them, say, made a deal, then only that person has entitlement to the goods he gained with the deal.

[23] As long as VAT-taxation or some such mechanism takes care of the state's share.

[24] I am less sure whether we can legitimately say this about all recognizers - is there a respect in which human persons and states ought to be treated as equals?

[25] Further, it seems that the normative relevance of group-memberships may be based on special attachments ("this is my defining community, hence I have special responsibilities or sympathies towards it"), or on its evaluative features (say, a group of Nobel-prize winners).

Even though it may be illuminating in some contexts to focus on three types of recognition, there seem to be more valid principles relevant to social justice. Honneth seems to hold there are importantly three principles.[26] On the other hand, Honneth seems to allow that in the context of any particular society, there may well be a plurality of values, but there are context-transcending valid principles, which serve as a basis of a context-transcending formal theory of modern good life. I think there is greater plurality of such context-transcending values and principles as well.[27] Therefore the three classes of principles of recognition are bound to contain more valid principles than one each.[28] In this paper I cannot develop a theory of social justice any further, I wish merely to make the point that there may well be an irreducible plurality of valid principles.

What is good life, especially autonomous good life, and what kind of preconditions does it have?

Teleological theories of good societies start from assumptions concerning good life. I would agree with this starting-point as long as we bear in mind that social justice is not merely a matter of maximizing the sum of good life with any means possible, but there are moral obligations and rules of fair distribution, which limit the acceptable ways of pursuing good life.[29] I think both Axel Honneth and Charles Taylor do in fact accept such deontological side-constraints although these may remain implicit in their theories.

Concerning the notion of good life, Honneth (1992) has stressed that certain kinds of positive self-relations are necessary for good life and self-realization, and that recognition is in turn necessary for good life in contributing to these

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So it may not always be clear whether in showing special recognition to a certain group we do this because it is this group, or because it is this kind of group.

[26] He has also considered the possibility that the demands of cultural minorities present a fourth form of recognition (see Honneth 2003, 2004).

[27] Thus I am critical of Nancy Fraser's (2003) normative monism focusing on the admittedly important principle of "participatory parity". I agree with Honneth that Fraser's proposal fails to avoid evaluative commitments. Without evaluative pre-understandings one cannot tell which kinds of parity matter, or to which direction one should improve things. This makes Fraser's proposal vulnerable to so called "leveling down" -objection. If some people are blind and some possess sight, full parity does not prevail. (Or if it does, change the example to some impairment of parity). So should we make everyone blind in the name of parity?

[28] See Laitinen 2003 for a defence of value pluralism.

[29] Doing constantly the morally right thing is one ingredient of good life, but one can do the right thing in any circumstances, and yet some circumstances are better for flourishing than some others: thus some morally right lives are better in terms of flourishing than some other morally right lives. It does not follow, but it may be true, that some morally less good lives are better in terms of flourishing than some morally more ideal lives.

positive self-relations. These self-relations are first of all basic *self-confidence*, which provides the minimum courage to say "no" that autonomy requires. Emotional relationships of loving acceptance and care tend to promote such self-confidence. Secondly, there is *self-respect,* the view of oneself as equal person among others, capable of acting responsibly, autonomously and rationally. Being respected by others as an autonomous person promotes one's self-respect. Thirdly, there is *self-esteem,* positive relationship to one's particular capacities and achievements, which social esteem in turn tends to promote.

Nancy Fraser has posed a good question to Honneth, namely whether intact identity consisting of such positive self-relations, and the corresponding relations of recognition, are *constituents* (ingredients) of good life, or *preconditions* (prerequisites) of good life. She points out that Honneth has used them in both roles (2003, 235-6, fn 15). I think that Honneth is right that recognition is both a constituent and a precondition of good life, but it may be that its role as a precondition is the more important one for critical social theory. Why? Because the task of the society is to provide the preconditions of good life, and it is up to the individual what to make of them.

Our views of the role of recognition among the prerequisites of good life depend of course on what we think good life is, and under modern conditions, what we think autonomous good life is. Honneth, too, has in mind precisely autonomous good life.

It is quite clear that what good life consists in is a matter of dispute. I take the best view to be a *pluralist* one claiming first of all that different cultures provide a plurality of models of life which are mutually incompatible, but which may each be good versions of human flourishing. Further, there is a plurality of equally good models of life within the cultures or societies. They contain many different roles through which one can realize one's capacities.

I take it that the best theories of good life try to capture both *objective and subjective* elements. There are some objective needs and objective standards of worthwhileness, but in addition the subjective feel of life is crucial. Both are necessary for human flourishing, and both objective and subjective elements are capable of making life less than good. For example, lack of any meaningful activities to participate in, or lack of any subjective feelings of happiness or satisfaction can be unbearable and make life not worth living.

Drawing from Martha Nussbaum, Christine Korsgaard and Joseph Raz whose theories are in details quite different, something like the following core conception of human well-being can be found. *Good life consists of subjectively*

satisfactory and more or less successful engagement in humanly worthwhile activities. In other words, good life is active life in actualizing humanly worthwhile capacities, engaging in humanly worthwhile activities, and in humanly worthwhile relationships, in a sufficiently successful way, and in a non-alienated, sufficiently authentic way, that is "wholeheartedly" or in a subjectively satisfactory manner, feeling sufficiently happy.

Because nowadays *autonomous freedom* is such a crucial value, we can add the premise of autonomous freedom to that characterization, and ask what is *autonomous good life*? Like any good life, it consists of subjectively satisfactory and successful engagement in humanly worthwhile activities, which are furthermore *autonomously chosen* (Raz). Furthermore, as Philip Pettit has recently stressed, true autonomous freedom in the full sense may demand that fully autonomous life can only be lived under conditions in which other individuals and the political institutions recognize and *guarantee* one's right to make such autonomous choices.

If that is what autonomous good life consists in, then what kind of *preconditions* does it have? Quite readily, we have at our disposal various ideas of the different preconditions which are stressed differently by different theories. One way to approach this is to ask what is it that the so-called theories of *positive freedom* demand in addition to the *negative freedom from interference*? They claim that there are all kinds of preconditions for actually living an autonomous good life. There are obviously material preconditions as Marxists have stressed. There are psychological preconditions in terms of the psychic balance, and in terms of one's economy of desires and emotions and the cognitive capacities. Further, there are preconditions concerning one's opportunities in meaningful action. These consist in one's cultural environment, which ought to provide opportunities to set oneself meaningful goals or to engage in meaningful activities. In other words, there ought to exist a civilization or a way of life, which provides roles through which one can realize one's capacities. These are often stressed in Charles Taylor's work. In addition to these, there are preconditions that Honneth has stressed concerning one's "intersubjective environment" consisting of the attitudes of the others including respect, esteem and care. Finally, there are preconditions concerning the institutional settings, especially political institutions and the norms that govern the use of coercion by state, and which ought to guarantee one's autonomy. Thus we have at least five kinds of preconditions: material, psychological, cultural, intersubjective and institutional. Whether one accepts the positive theories of freedom as theories of freedom or not, these preconditions of good life or autonomous good life are hard to rebut. The real controversies are more likely to concern the best interpretations of them, or the role of state in supporting them.

To repeat, good autonomous life consists of subjectively rewarding and objectively successful engagement in objectively worthwhile activities and relationships, which are autonomously chosen, under institutions guaranteeing autonomy. And it has five types of preconditions: psychological, material, cultural, intersubjective and institutional.

Before taking a closer look at these preconditions, it is worth pointing out that they may well figure also as *constituents* of good life. Let us see if this is true of the intersubjective element, of such relations of recognition where the recognizers are individual persons.[30] We have seen that interpersonal recognition is something where there are two recognizers, who mutually take each other as persons, and possibly further as certain kind of persons, or as certain persons, and accept the normative implications of such takings. Examples of such recognition are respect, esteem and love as discussed by Honneth.

Arguably, engaging in human relations, which include respect, esteem and love, *are* among the objectively worthwhile human activities.[31] Thus, leading a good life partly *consists in* engaging in recognitive relations. Further, it may be that the statuses and rights granted in recognition may be partly what actual autonomy or actual freedom of an individual consists in. That is, one is not fully free if the state and the people around one do not guarantee that one can exercise one's autonomy. So both recognizing others and being recognized oneself can be constitutive aspects of autonomous good life.

Successful engagement in relationships of recognition is a constituent of good life, but it does not cover the whole of good life. Activities which are not recognitional, say ones which one does on one's own, may be equally worthwhile and constitutive of one's good life.

Interpersonal recognition and the subjective aspect of good life

What is the role and place of recognition among the *preconditions* of autonomous good life? First of all, quite simply, intersubjective recognition is directly *one* of the five kinds of preconditions of autonomous good life. Disrespect or hostile or denigrating attitudes of others directly mean that one's intersubjective environment does not promote good life.

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[30] Note that also the institutional element is partly one of "recognition".
[31] And so is political participation, which presupposes and implies all kinds of recognition.

We see why this is so when we consider the relevance recognition has to the *subjective* aspect of good life.[32] The subjective experiences of misrecognition or *insults* affect one's flourishing directly: the bad feelings, unhappiness, misery or anger caused by insults and misrecognition affect one's flourishing over and above affecting one's self-respect, self-esteem and self-confidence. One may have very strong and stable self-relations but still experiences of misrecognition can make one very unhappy. Such experiences of misrecognition may further alienate one from one's community or from the institutions that one lives in, thus affecting one's sense of good life, and thus good life itself. Human flourishing is not independent from the subjective views, so such bad experiences, if continuous and significant enough, suffice to make life less than good.

I think this is a very powerful aspect of an argument against social injustice, social inequality and social exclusion. It is not only the other objective preconditions of good life that principles of justice, or equality, or inclusion try to guarantee. *Experiences* of misrecognition *as such* make life worse than it otherwise would be. It is not only injuries, but also insults that count.

Intersubjective, psychological and institutional preconditions: Honneth

The recognitional attitudes of others are directly one of the preconditions of good life, through shaping one's experiences. This is important but not the whole story. One of Axel Honneth's central points has been to point out systematical linkage between the *psychological* self-relations, *intersubjective* attitudes of interpersonal recognition, and *institutional* settings such as family, labour market and the state. So Honneth has shown the structural interconnection between three types of preconditions of good life, namely psychological, intersubjective and political.[33] One can try to improve them in one package, because they affect one another.

First of all, intersubjective attitudes of recognition affect self-relations. The positive self-relations which are a condition of successful autonomous pursuit

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[32] There is a possible "gap" between subjective experience and misrecognition, but *experiences of misrecognition* may be directly constitutive of the subjective element of good life.

[33] Compare to Christopher Zurn's characterization in "Recognition, Redistribution, and Democracy: Dilemmas of Honneth's Critical Social Theory" (forthcoming in *European Journal of Philosophy*): "Honneth ... develops his critical theory through an account of the structural interconnection between a) the three levels of individual identity development, b) the three forms of intersubjective recognition required for each level, and c) the forms of social organization needed as preconditions for the healthy, undistorted self-realization of that society's members." In preparing this paper, Zurn's manuscript was of great help.

of a good life may be impossible to acquire without recognition. These self-relations include self-respect, self-esteem and self-confidence. Sufficient self-confidence, and sufficient self-esteem and sufficient self-respect are needed by autonomous life. Thus these healthy self-relations can be called psychological *preconditions* of good life, and they are a different thing than the subjective experiences. I mentioned above that subjective experiences affect one's quality of life over and above the effects on the self-relations, but correspondingly these self-relations affect one's capabilities over and above their effect on the subjective feel of life. They form so to speak an objective, real, psychological condition of good life. The prevailing relations of interpersonal recognition also make some political institutions more stable and more legitimate than others, in the sense of the feelings of solidarity that are necessary for functioning democracy *etc.*

Secondly, self-relations affect one's relations to others, and the prevailing self-relations make some political institutions more legitimate and stable than others. Finally, institutional settings sanction, promote and prevent certain types of self-relations and intersubjective attitudes. The political institutions also recognize and are recognized, so recognition takes place not only at the level of intersubjective preconditions of good life, but also at the level of political-institutional preconditions of good life.

So the Honnethian triangle of psychological, intersubjective and institutional considerations forms a quite tight package. It is important to analytically distinguish them, but it is also important to map the systematic interconnections. There is no guarantee that the respect or esteem on behalf of others translates into self-respect or self-esteem. The psychological dynamics are manifold, and dependent on the person's own attitudes, there is no direct one-to-one determination.

To recap, intersubjective relations of recognition are *directly* one of the five preconditions, and *indirectly* affect at least the other two, namely psychological resources and political settings. These are the three kinds of preconditions that Honneth is most directly interested in.

Cultural and material preconditions: Taylor and Fraser

Charles Taylor in turn has stressed the cultural or civilizational preconditions of good life.[34] These are the preconditions concerning the so called "cultural" environment consisting in opportunities to engage in meaningful activities or

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[34] See eg. Taylor 1985, 1989. I discuss this in Laitinen 2003.

in other words the existence of a civilization or a way of life which provides roles through which one can realize one's capacities. I think this claim captures something important: there are indeed civilizational preconditions, cultural horizons, which cannot be reduced to relations of interpersonal recognition, they cover whole frameworks of belief and evaluation. For example, in *Ethics of Authenticity,* Taylor distinguishes between the dialogical or intersubjective prerequisites of good, authentic life, and the horizons of significance that good life presupposes.

And although identification with some values is sometimes called "recognition" of such values, it is importantly different from interpersonal recognition as I pointed out in section one.[35] It follows that *cultural struggles* concerning definitions of values are not directly struggles for recognition: values are not the kind of entities that can be recognized, given the strict definition. Value disagreements are not *directly* struggles for interpersonal recognition: two persons A and B may debate about, say, the value of art, the value of courage or the value of wilderness, without paying any attention to the relevance of this to their self-esteem. Yet value debates may have two kinds of indirect implications to interpersonal recognition: when the value of art or courage is under dispute, artists or courageous people may have at stake their self-esteem as instantiating the values in question. But also, when the value of wilderness is disputed, although wilderness is not a potential recognizee, the debating parties may have at stake their self-esteem as *valuers,* as having particular value-orientations. The issue can be at the core of someone's value-orientation and identity, and therefore one's social esteem can be indirectly dependent on the cultural acknowledgement of the value in question.

Now we can add that the Honnethian Triangle of psychological, intersubjective and institutional dependencies is actually infiltrated with cultural meanings through and through. And furthermore, we can talk about the connections between culture and psyche, for example in terms of mastery of cultural vocabularies, but also in terms of self-interpretations, and between culture and political institutions, in the sense that institutions embody certain values.

Finally, we can turn to the material preconditions of a good life. Nancy Fraser and Brian Barry among others have made the accusation that the theorists of multiculturalism and recognition tend to overlook material interests, or at least divert attention away from the material preconditions of good life. If

[35] Clearly the relationship between a value and a person is not that of mutual recognition, it is something like commitment or orientation or identification with or "acknowledgment".

valid, this criticism is quite strong, as everyone surely agrees that good life has material preconditions.

Now paradoxically, Fraser makes her critical point against Honneth in terms of cultural valuations of identity *versus* material goods. In my view it is rather Charles Taylor who focuses on the cultural preconditions on good life, whereas Honneth's theory remains quite implicit in this respect. Fraser takes Honneth to talk about cultural valuation, but it seems to me that Honneth talks about the triangle of psychological-intersubjective-institutional preconditions of good life (and Honneth 2003 replies to Fraser that his view is not merely "cultural"). It is Charles Taylor's theories that are the place to look at to get the sense in which cultural or civilizational horizons are irreducible as preconditions of good life. Indeed, Fraser talks about "culture" mostly in the sense directly relevant for recognition and misrecognition, i.e. as stereotypes and cultural codifications of some people and their features as higher or lower. Such codifications are indeed ingredients of cultural horizons, but entire cultural horizons are much wider consisting of belief-systems and frameworks of evaluations in a broader sense.

If we conceive of recognition not as cultural valuations as such, but as different kinds of relations to persons that other persons and institutions may have, what is the relationship of interpersonal recognition to the material preconditions of good life? I will suppose now that recognition paradigmatically consists of acts and attitudes (see above), and shall examine how redistribution is related to such cases of recognition.

There are at least four different possible cases: First, to some extent at least, the material preconditions can be fulfilled by nature and people's own action, and no *redistributive* action on behalf of the state and others is needed. To that extent the material preconditions of good life can be in place without any redistributive and recognitional action on behalf of others.

Second, take a case where other persons or the state respect the basic rights of an individual, including the right to minimum welfare, and as an expression of that respect redistribute material goods always when the rights of the individual demand such redistribution. In this case redistributive acts and recognitive acts are one and the same thing. One and the same action is both redistribution *and* recognition, when the right attitudes are in place.

But thirdly, it seems that redistribution can take place in ways, which do not count as recognition. There are two kinds of cases: behaviour in which the agent acts *as if* he or she really respects, esteems or loves the one receiving the material goods, but in fact the motives of the agent are purely egoistic. Or, if

the distribution is done by an economic system which literally has no motives at all. In these cases there may be redistribution of material goods *without* recognition (if recognition is action with the correct attitudes). And in many cases, what the recipient really wants are just the material goods, and the recipient need not care whether these acts are genuine cases of recognition. In these cases, redistribution without recognition is conceptually possible and sufficient for the recipients.[36] Yet, this is based on a normative demand: the recipient may think he or she is entitled to these material goods, say, because of the norm that everyone's basic needs ought to be met. The recipient surely thinks that everyone ought to acknowledge that norm, but he or she may think that what makes the real difference is that others act *in accordance with* that valid norm, whether or not they are motivated by the validity of that norm. If the others act for egoistic motivations in accordance with that norm, and supply the goods that the recipient is entitled to, the recipient may be fully satisfied. This is so, if the recipient demands merely that others act in accordance with valid norms of redistribution. These are cases of redistribution without genuine recognition.[37]

Fourthly, there may be patterns of redistribution which are stigmatizing *etc*, and these are cases in which both recognition and misrecognition are present: genuine recognition of the person takes place, but it takes place in such a disrespectful way, that it constitutes misrecognition.

So the relationship between the material preconditions of good life and recognition are manifold: sometimes material preconditions are to some extent in place without redistribution. And when redistribution takes place, it may be a case of recognition, or partial misrecognition, or not a case of recognition at all.

Assuming the view of recognition, which takes both action and attitudes into account, lead to a divided judgement between Fraser and Honneth in their debate about recognition and redistribution. Honneth seems to be right in that redistribution and recognition may be fulfilled by one and the same act. Yet Fraser seems to be right in that these are still two analytically distinct perspectives on the same action. Furthermore, the fact that recognition and redistribution may come apart not only analytically but also in some real

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[36] Note that the *gratitude* of the recipient may be smaller or non-existent in cases where redistribution is not based on real recognition, but redistribution in accordance to valid norms but for ultimately egoistic motives. Heikki Ikäheimo has made this point in an article in Finnish.

[37] Further, even if the agent *acknowledges* the norm, it is not the same as that he or she directly recognizes the recipient. But as acknowledgement or norms and interpersonal recognition are intertwined, the case is one of indirect recognition. See above.

cases, supports the view that individual cases of recognition and redistribution need not always be one and the same thing.[38]

Conclusion

In this article I tried first to analyze what recognition is. And what is emerging in the second section of this article is a somewhat complex and hopefully rich picture of interpersonal and institutional recognition as a precondition of autonomous good life.

Positive recognition enables good life, whereas misrecognition and insults can make life worse. The statuses guaranteed by the state directly constitute my autonomy. Further, engaging in relations of recognition is a constituent of good life, and enriches life on its own.

But interpersonal and institutional forms of recognition also affect the psychological preconditions of good life, and are in a complex relationship with the cultural and material preconditions. Through affecting these other objective preconditions of good life, insufficient recognition may lead indirectly to injuries. Thus, recognition is a precondition and a constituent of life on both the subjective and objective aspects, misrecognition can cause both injuries and insults, and they both can make one's life worse.

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[38] But here I analyzed only individual cases, and not the macrolevel idea that the normative order of modern capitalist societies (including ideas of social equality or economic justice) is a recognition order, and that any economic systems are always "embedded" in such a normative order. The general thrust of this article has been to point out that the normative order can be approached at least from five different perspectives, by focussing on different prerequisites of good life.

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