

Self-conscious Exchange : On Markell on Hegel

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Résumé

This article treats two trajectories of self-consciousness found in Hegel's master/slave dialectic, on which a debate about recognition theory turns. The first is recovered in a discussion of Patchen Markell's text, Bound by Recognition. This first meaning sees the self-conscious evolution in the master/slave parable as a confrontation with one's own finitude and the insatiable pursuit of sovereignty. Recognition, as read through this dialectic, is but another failure to acknowledge the limits of one's mastery over his or her identity. In response to this reading of the dialectic I recover another that sees development of self-consciousness as the "return from otherness." This reading privileges the co-authorship of identity construction in which the participants in the dialectic necessarily partake. On this interpretation, recognition does not rest at the level of frustrating and self-deceptive mastery over oneself, but must take stock of the imbrications that the encounter of the two self-consciousnesses gives rise to. Finally, I consider my presentation against Markell's to determine where lie the points of convergence and disagreement.

In his book *Bound by Recognition*, Patchen Markell uses a compelling strategy to state his case : take major theorists of recognition or multiculturalism and make his theory emerge out of the contradictions he finds in theirs. Arguably, the most persuasive instance of this strategy is his treatment of Hegel. Not because it is necessarily the most convincing, but because it is on the most important thinker of

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recognition, who is also debatably the lynchpin that connects either directly or indirectly the other theorists that Markell uses to his own ends. Success of his appropriation of Hegel will thus prove to be of great importance to Markell's theory. Conversely, its failure will prove to be a serious, though not necessarily fatal, blow. While the length of this paper does not permit a more thoroughgoing engagement with Markell's text to deliver potentially that fatal blow, part of the focus here will be his treatment of Hegel. The task more generally for this paper is to recover and reconcile two meanings of the term recognition that hang on self-consciousness in Hegel, but of which Markell only gives us one. This first meaning is the pursuit of sovereignty that derives from Hegel's self-consciousness as desire. The second meaning that I will recover here is recognition based on a structure of exchange where self-consciousness "is essentially the return from otherness."¹ After exposing each of these meanings in turn, Markell's thesis will be reconsidered in light of the reintroduced understanding of recognition. In anticipation of the conclusion that will be reached, it may be said that no refutation of his theory will be made. Rather, the contribution of this second reading of recognition will only go so far as to reorient Markell's focus from acknowledgment of one's own finitude to acknowledging the co-imbrications self-consciousnesses bear in their exchanges with one another, thereby allowing us to consider at once our appreciation of and dissatisfaction with his impressive reconstruction of the master-slave dialectic.

1 Recognition from self-consciousness as desire

Markell divides up recognition in Hegel's oeuvre into two voices. The first is Hegel's diagnostic voice, which is limited mostly to the *Phenomenology* and treats the conditions that give rise to the failure of recognition. His second voice is, according to Markell, reconciliatory, which responds to the problems that inhere in mere intersub-

¹ HEGEL, G.W.F., *Phenomenology of Spirit*, A.V. Miller trans., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 105.

jectivity by extrapolating along self-consciousness' journey toward Spirit and the state later on in the *Philosophy of Right*. We will set this second voice aside and concentrate only on Markell's reading of the master-slave dialectic, though we do so not simply for reasons of brevity. The diagnostic voice of Hegel that is developed in the 4th chapter of *Bound by Recognition* is later used to undercut the reconciliatory voice that is hashed out in the 5th chapter. The repercussions of focusing our attention on the former are thus likely to be of greater scope and import, ultimately rendering our critique that much more efficient.

What animates both Hegel's story and Markell's interpretation of it is the desire of self-consciousness to establish and reconfirm its independence. It is this instinctive thrust of self-consciousness on which Markell hangs to see recognition as an insatiable pursuit. Independence proves to be a frustrating quest, as desire outlasts any satisfaction that can be derived from interaction with material objects. Their consumption gives way to desire from anew, and thus what is needed is another object that can "effect. . .negation within itself,"² viz., another self-consciousness. This second self-consciousness bears the ability to submit or become dependent on its own, as well as the ability to sustain itself as the object of the other's desire. The first self-consciousness is held off from exerting itself to negate the other. But alas neither one is actually first or second ; they both seek the confirmation of their independence from one another. As a result, this desire can only be satisfied for either one if they engage in the battle to see the other's "negation within itself" come to fruition.

Markell intervenes in this story to expose a crucial step in the development toward the asymmetrical relationship of master and slave. For since neither one holds these identities before they undertake their struggle for recognition, there must be something that produces and maintains their identities that follow from this battle, which turn out to fall well short of their original expectations. This something to which Markell draws our attention is the unpredictability of human

² *Ibid.*, p. 109.

action in the condition of plurality, by this point in the text a familiar refrain in his dirge of recognition pursuits. This works on two levels in the master-slave exchange. First, the *other's* resistance to submit and effect his own negation disappoints the would-be slave's hope of seeing his independence confirmed relatively unproblematically. While we do not know to what extent, nor in what way, a successful exchange of recognition would occur, Markell's appropriation of the pursuit that each self-consciousness undertakes is scattered throughout with failures on both parts to acknowledge their own inability to obtain masterful control of their own identities, that is, an acknowledgement of their finitude – and this we may read into their decision to fight to the death as the first and most crucial failure. Thus, as the would-be slave's pursuit persists alongside his failure to acknowledge his own finitude, his insatiable mastery of his identity is further exposed and complicated by the other's resistance to such demands, *i.e.*, through the condition of plurality.

The second level works in circular tandem with the first. The unanticipated actions of the other's self-consciousness provokes a reaction from the first self-consciousness and vice-versa, to the point where one is exposed as the stronger or the weaker, the harder-headed gambler with its own mortality or the fear stricken coward who gives himself to the other for self-preservation. In this light, it is the unknown product of one's *own* actions interacting in the condition of plurality that reveals new identities that hadn't previously existed. Slave and master result from this turbulent exchange, and Markell's skilful reinterpretation of it now gives us causal indicators as to why and how this asymmetrical conclusion comes to be. Yet the engine behind this movement toward subordination, desire, continues to push forward. The slave is evidently frustrated in his pursuit ; nor does the master achieve what she was looking for, receiving the obedient esteem of a mere slave. What's more, the supposed outcome of master and slave reflecting either pre-given or newly established independence and dependence turns out to run in the opposite direction. The slave manages to fabricate some kind of sovereign image of himself through his labour, whereas the master becomes inextric-

cably linked to this subordinate creature to nurture and uphold the deceptive belief of her own dominion. How then does this relationship persist in the face of this surprising reversal and indefatigable desire?

Markell's attention to this puzzling arrangement surprisingly and uncritically follows Hegel's lead on the matter. Uncritically, as the object of desire becomes displaced in both subjects and the more violent pursuit of recognition becomes suspended or at least distilled through a reversion to material satisfaction. Identities stabilize in the actions of production and consumption. The master's search for independence becomes, inadvertently, partially satisfied by a return to her relation to the material world. The slave's labour permits her to gain satisfaction from objects without having to work to produce them, thereby conferring a watered down but sufficient reflection of the master's self-image as sovereign. On the other side of the coin, the slave retreats from his quest for the master's recognition, and instead takes solace in his interaction with the material objects that he works over. His life becomes essentially one of labour, though a gratifying one for the very reason that he is released from the unfulfilling desire for the master's esteem and back into the material world that he is able to transform and work over. Between the two of them, their social roles inhabit the spaces that desire bifurcates in its constantly renewed interaction with material objects, production and consumption - the former giving rise to and immediately succeeding the latter.

Surprisingly, as here Markell faces a confused view of action and identity to which he does not respond directly. Contingency of action and plurality that gave rise to the asymmetrical relationship seems to fall from the picture, and what was originally the site of unforeseen reversals in identity becomes the source of investment into the social roles that resulted from the initial struggle. Is Markell having it both ways? How does he navigate through this polyvalence of action and plurality as disruption and insulation of social identities? Let us treat the master and slave in turn to see how the endurance of their relationship coincides with Markell's original thesis about

unpredictability.

In the above picture, it appears as though the master simply settles for the satisfaction of material desires over the contradictory desire for recognition from another self-consciousness, which must be at once subordinate to confirm the other's independence and yet sufficiently self-negating to confer *valuable* esteem onto the master. As hermitic self-consciousness led by desire to the next level of ultimately unfulfilling recognition of another, the previous, unsuccessful attempts to establish independence forced a change of strategy. Their unanticipated disappointment guides self-consciousness toward the realization of a contradiction in this desire, seen in the outcome of the exchange with another self-consciousness, and which Markell does well to expose as a failure of acknowledging this impossibility. Now where the dissatisfaction with material objects drove self-consciousness toward the contradiction of recognition, the contradiction of recognition seems to have driven this same self-consciousness back to, what we would assume to be the still dissatisfactory, realm of material objects. Hegel's story on its own may stand as the unfolding of Spirit, but Markell's injected theory of causality into this story seems to provide no coherent explanation why self-consciousness finally opts for materialism.

The implicit reading that rescues Markell's reading from this oddity is that we are not talking about the same self-consciousness. The return to materialism is not so neat and direct, as this second encounter works through a mediated space of social hierarchy, one that the master is unlikely to cede to the slave for any immediate reasons. On his account, "precisely because it has spatial. . . extension, [it] can be structured in ways that accommodate contradictions, organizing opposed forces in ways that permit them to exist together."³ Thus, while the master does not receive what she expected as the victor of the battle for recognition, she inadvertently stumbles across a picture that reflects, if only partially, her anticipated self-understanding

³ MARKELL, Patchen, *Bound by Recognition*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2003, p. 110.

as superior to her adversary. The only further development to this story that is left in the offing is Spirit. It becomes even clearer now why Hegel's story proceeds along this development, as the master is unlikely to relinquish such a favourable position only to retrograde to a more equal standing against the other self-consciousness, which would surely do much to diminish her, however false, independence. But this does not explain the slave's actions to sustain, or at least refrain from revolting against, his subordinate position.

Here, like the master, the slave does not simply settle for the lot he has been dealt. Rather, just as Hegel's diagnostic skill tracks the movement and sublimations of self-consciousness (and beyond), Markell's theory shows its greatest allegiance to its Hegelian forerunner by keeping pace with the ever-unfolding movements of the dialectic. True, the slave remains a slave. But rebellion is unlikely to be entertained, lest he square off once again with his own mortality. Instead, the slave unexpectedly finds respite in the various philosophical orientations that Hegel discusses under the labels of stoicism, scepticism and the unhappy consciousness. Markell's insight on this development is the surprising consequences of action that drives one state of affairs to emerge out of another. Because the slave has not reached any satisfactory approximation of what he was originally after, he aims elsewhere and finds that, in his work and the objects he transforms, he gains the self-reflection that escaped him in the first battle for recognition. What allows him to endure this fate of enslavement are the fleeting moments of escape from it in the philosophical orientations that posit him not as a shackled labourer, but as free, *i.e.*, sovereign.

Thus both master and slave are redirected from their original dissatisfaction with the outcome of their battle to more stable (though unforeseen) trajectories that invest in the maintenance of their asymmetrical relationship. From the persistence of this asymmetry, Markell infuses a tragic reading of recognition into the master-slave exchange, a reading that he borrows from Aristotle. As Markell recounts, "tragedy is . . . *about* the priority of action to the conceptions of character or identity in which we attempt to ground it, but which

can never quite succeed in insulating us from the riskiness and unpredictability of life among others.”⁴ It is tempting to respond to this reading by thinking of action and identity as parts of a circular continuum, each feeding into and confirming or adjusting one another. However, were this truly circular, nothing would introduce change, and the continuum would be little more than a monotonous confirmation, one which surely belies any basic notion of human development. Why Markell finds Aristotle’s analysis of tragedy instructive here is because it grants action the ability to introduce that change that is undeniably part of human agency as bearing an identity. Moreover, this priority of action is further acknowledged by Hegel, as Markell points out, here citing from the *Phenomenology*, “action is itself this splitting in two, this explicit self-affirmation and the establishing over against itself of an alien external reality.”⁵

The upshot of Markell’s analysis is an attempt to mitigate the dangers of ignoring the conditions of finitude and plurality. His intervention, despite its cautioning tones, is not directed at dismantling the logic of recognition politics, but toward shedding light on the backdrop of motivations and anticipations that lends itself to deception and disappointment. Taken to its extreme, the unrelenting pursuit of recognition can lead to tragic fates of conflict and social disintegration. And, as he shows in the chapter subsequent to the one treated here, even in its more emancipatory histories, the politics of recognition can prove to be a site of suspicion, policing, and subversion, not to mention disruptive to decentred communities caught between the betrayal of integration and the stubbornness of self-imposed segregation. All of this suggests to Markell that the focus must be returned to the initial condition that foils our best efforts at recognition, if we are to come even close to avoiding these tragic pitfalls. Without working out a comprehensive response to these dangers, or what a politics of acknowledgment would really entail, he wishes to highlight the conclusion that results from his expansive and skilful treatment of

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁵ *Id.*

recognition theorists, and which he just as skilfully locates in Hegel, that thus far we have failed to acknowledge ourselves as creatures of finitude held to the mercy of human plurality. In the next section, I wish to highlight something that Markell himself has failed to acknowledge, which might force us to look past the self and consider the other in this story.

2 Recognition from self-consciousness as return from otherness

Whereas Markell's reading of Hegel's parable of recognition places its focus on the impropriety of action – the excess of our agency that tears us in unexpected directions and consequences –, my focus here will be on the other side of this coin, as I do not think that Markell has appreciated fully the ways in which one's identity escapes their sovereign control. Markell's thesis is ultimately a claim of this very sort ; that recognition becomes a futile pursuit because every instantiation of identity amenable to these claims is at once susceptible to a surprising reversal, which may very well be the product of a recognition claim to begin with. But Markell's text treats action as the cause of this impropriety – the possibility of something or someone else reacting differently from our expectations. If we dig deeper, we see that there may be a more fundamental structure that is at the root of this impropriety : that we are never fully the authors of our own identity or action ; that both are in fact always caught up with our interlocutors in such a way that the return from otherness is a trip that brings the other back with it ; otherwise, what does that journey accomplish ?

Thus another way to cast the difference between Markell's thesis and my own is that his is fundamentally about the limits of, and limiting, the *self*, whose fundamental condition of finitude denies it the possibility of mastering the result of its actions. The pursuit of recognition fails to take account of this condition, and is thus unable to respond to the unexpected and often unfortunate consequences

that frustrate the best efforts at creating a stable condition of equal respect and just recognition. The thesis that I advance here is about the *other* in the story of recognition. It focuses on the journey of self-consciousness, not as the progression and regression through history in its various shapes – as Markell’s account of the priority of action keeps pace with –, but as the condition of intersubjectivity that effects co-authorship of one’s, however sublimated, identity. As a result, the conclusions of each argument will differ as well in their focus. In the final section, I will compare and contrast these two theses to entertain whatever possibilities may lie for synthesizing their strengths.

Hegel sets up this intersubjective return from otherness in the paragraphs just before the lordship and bondage section. Self-consciousness, by this point, has begun to reflect on itself through the mediation of objects. But the fleeting satisfaction of desire from consumption forces it to seek a more stable confirmation of its independence. As we saw with Markell, an object is needed that “effects this negation within itself.” Thus a second self-consciousness is introduced to satisfy this desire. While the conclusion of the master-slave story leaves self-consciousness only partially satisfied and frustrated with its lot (on both sides), this intersubjective exchange, Hegel makes clear, is nevertheless essential to its development : “*Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness.*”⁶

But before we get these two self-consciousnesses, it must be asked, what is it that either *achieves* by embarking on this exchange. Surely Hegel does not mean “achieve” in the sense that they “complete” or “extinguish” their desire ; this we know persists well beyond their exchange with one another. A more plausible reading would suggest that they achieve their shape as self-consciousness, which in turn permits such satisfaction – though as the conclusion of this story makes clear, this is far from given. This reading gains further confirmation two paragraphs later where, as a prelude to the arrival at Spirit, Hegel claims that, “[a] self-consciousness exists *for a*

⁶HEGEL, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

*self-consciousness.*⁷ Another way to put this is how I contrasted my reading with Markell's at the beginning of this paper : the intersubjective condition of *achieved* self-consciousness gives a determinate structure to recognition.

Viewed in this light, recognition carries a meaning different from Markell's, which is not a futile pursuit nor an exchange of equal respect for one another's pre-given identities, but the structure or shape of self-consciousness in its fullest extent as co-constituted, between itself and another self-consciousness. Here we can do away with any ascriptions of failed or successful recognition ; Hegel does not specify what that would entail (in this story), but he does make clear what it does not – neither the slave nor the master “succeeds.” A fully reflected image of the self-consciousness of independence is riddled with contradictions, as Markell highlights. But a reflected image period, whatever it may be, is a necessary development in the taking shape of self-consciousness through “the process of recognition.”⁸

As a process, recognition shifts the balance of the story from one self to two selves, who are also two others. Until the master-slave dialectic, self-consciousness is the anonymous protagonist of Hegel's story. As the dialectic opens, the second self-consciousness is introduced. But it is not specified which becomes the master and which becomes the slave. The protagonist becomes “duplicated” ; the anonymity of the second self-consciousness equals that of the first. While Hegel's story is written as if it is one self-consciousness' exchange with another, both in fact experience the same thing simultaneously. As a result, the story is just as much about the other as it is about the self because each bears both ascriptions at once.

The opening line of the dialectic immediately brings this redistributed focus on the other to light : “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.”⁹ Ignoring Markell's use of

⁷*Id.*

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁹*Id.*

the term for now, acknowledgment is the targeted end of each self-consciousness. But at this level it is merely a one-way street. Each seeks acknowledgment of their independence, though neither offers it. Faced with this challenge to their self-understandings, the struggle ensues. The failure here, contrary to Markell's reading, is that each side sees itself only as a self and not as an other. They are still *for-themselves* without being *for another*.

As much as Hegel insists on the unity that self-consciousness must effect in being for itself and being for another, he also shows with what ease these two elements come and remain apart. The result of the struggle is the bifurcation that is supposed to occur in one self-consciousness spread over two. The master exists for itself, the slave exists for the other. But just as Markell highlights how the pursuit of sovereignty, or self-consciousness as desire, persists in the exchange between these two self-consciousnesses, forcing them to a struggle for life and death, so too does the structure of recognition persist in the asymmetrical relationship between master and slave. In fact, it sustains it.

The struggle for life and death importantly results in a relationship of correlativity. It does not simply result in one being uninjured or the other hurt. Nor do they simply carry on after it is established who is the victor. Both parties must remain ; that is why the exchange is between self-consciousnesses, because of their staying power as satisfying the desire of proving one's independence. But each remains as what they are only insofar as the other is present. The master can only exist as such with a slave, and vice versa. Both are thus locked into the structure of recognition, even if neither has fully reconciled itself to the full shape of their own self-consciousness. The master experiences herself as such mediated through the slave as her subordinate that affirms her superiority, and likewise for the slave.

This mediated self-understanding finds telling support in Axel Honneth's reconstruction of Hegel through the work of G.H. Mead. In a chapter entitled "Mead's Naturalization of Hegel's Idea" in *The Struggle for Recognition*, Honneth connects the two scholars to one another with the necessary, though not sufficient, condition of inter-

subjectivity to the development of self-consciousness. Mead's analysis works through a division in self-consciousness between an "I" and a "me." The former is essentially the subject, whereas the latter is the object through which self-consciousness arises. Only when viewed as an object, whereby consciousness steps outside itself to look back on it as "me," does awareness of oneself as a thinking and acting being emerge. But in this process consciousness does not merely step out into an abyss in pure observation ; it must move into and inhabit the second-person position to then see itself *as an other in an other*, i.e., it must adopt *a* perspective to see itself as object. The return from otherness, back to an "I" that acts and reacts to consciousness' multiple journeys, brings with it new social data that is then refashioned into part of the nebular character of human identity and action. Here citing Mead,

Such a "me" is not then an early formation, which is then projected and ejected into the bodies of other people to give them the breadth of human life. It is rather an importation from the field of social objects into an amorphous, unorganized field of what we call inner experience. Through the organization of this object, the self, this material is itself organized and brought under the control of the individual in the form of so-called consciousness¹⁰.

Honneth's treatment of Hegel and Mead not only supports the approach that I have been suggesting here, but takes it one level further. I insisted above on the point that Hegel gives us correlative identities at the end of the struggle for recognition, thus supporting the idea of co-authorship between self and other of those identities. Honneth's amalgamated theory suggests this correlativity exists beyond the logic of linguistically correlative identities, such as weaker/stronger or master/slave. The development of self-consciousness works on this logical level as the consciousness is forced to divide itself into subject and object, the two constitutive parts of self-conscious-

¹⁰HONNETH, Axel, *The Struggle For Recognition*, Joel Anderson, trans., Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 1995, p. 75.

ness. But in this division, as consciousness steps outside itself to inhabit another, that the other's perspective – whether it be a relative identity ascription, such as slave, or not, such as man – necessarily forms the exportation dock of the imported social objects that become imbricated with one's inner self.

The condition of intersubjective exchange in the development of self-consciousness is consequently not a negligible feature in the response to the politics of recognition, whatever its other misgivings. By the very of nature self-consciousness, Markell's claim that we acknowledge our own finitude first is not even given logical daylight, since we are never only ourselves. Moreover, and this is the accent that I wish to place on the foregoing, the other is never itself, but the ever bustling return destination from a brief inhabitation of our second-person perspectives. On a practical register, Markell's theory is suggestive in characterising poor or even destructive strategies for social interaction. However, to avoid any hasty suggestions, it is now best we turn to a more structured comparison to see where these interpretations collide, or coincide.

3 Recognition between otherness and desire

In each of the two preceding sections there are three types of arguments that can be flushed out here to achieve a more focused comparison. The first explains why the dialectic ensues to begin with. On Markell's and my own account, there is not much departure from Hegel's original storyline, only that we each place our focus on different aspects of it. Markell's, I believe, would be something of the following :

1. Self-consciousness' desire for independence outlasts material consumption.
2. The satisfaction of this desire can only be approximated by another self-consciousness.
3. Therefore this second self-consciousness is engaged.

My emphasis is on the structure or shape of self-consciousness as such (which then leads to the greater prominence given to the other) :

1. Self-consciousness is only fully realized through and with another.
2. Therefore another is engaged.

As is plain, there is no inconsistency between these two ways of seeing it, and it may even be argued that there is in fact no difference at all. The desire of self-consciousness is to realize its full shape as independent, and its full shape satisfies this desire in Spirit. While this may hold, the two positions are not perfectly symmetrical. The second premise in Markell's argument does not hold out for any lasting or real satisfaction of this desire. The other in this case is treated as an experiment in satisfaction. Markell later capitalizes on its failure to highlight it as a futile pursuit to continue to insist on this experiment. My first premise does not treat the other as mere possibility of "satisfaction," but as a necessary condition of full self-consciousness, whether it results in satisfaction or not. By leaving it as a possibility, Markell's initial argument will later allow him in his mild normativity to turn away from the other and focus his attention the self. In my case, there is no such option. Any response to unjust relationships of subordination will demand a confrontation with the other, and this claim can be made even before we determine what counts as an unjust relationship.

The second type of argument explains why and how this relationship persists. Markell's goes something like this :

1. Each self-consciousness emerges from the battle with a new identity, one slave, the other master.
2. Neither one satisfies the other's desire for independence.
3. Each is able to see their sovereign self-image mediated to them through the material world, in production for the slave, and in consumption for the master.

4. Therefore, their relationship is able to persist in its asymmetry through the self-consciousness' desire for independence deflected in materialism.

Recall from the first section that Markell further points out the contradiction that self-consciousness faces in seeking independence through its *dependence* on the other is given "room to move" over satisfaction in the material world. This dependence then becomes mediated through consumption and production, giving both the slave and the master distance from each other, and thus distance from their mutual dependence. Contrary to this reading, my argument sees this arrangement sustained through this very dependence :

1. Each self-consciousness emerges from the battle with a *correlative* identity, master-slave.
2. Each self-understanding as master or slave is protected and nurtured by the other's self-understanding, as correlatives in an asymmetrical relationship.
3. Therefore, the structure of mutual exchange allows for asymmetrical relationships to persist, as each side reinforces the other's self-image in projecting its own because they are relative terms.

Again here, there is no strong inconsistency between these two positions. Markell's highlights how desire forces the self-consciousness to continue looking beyond the second self-consciousness to gain satisfaction. Mine illustrates how the structure of recognition draws both self-consciousnesses toward one another as they see their relative identities reaffirmed, even if their desire forces them to look elsewhere for satisfaction. Yet there is an important distinction that results from my argument, and will be considered in our third set. That is, the relative identities that characterize this asymmetrical relationship are both supported by each participant. One self-consciousness invests in and supports her self-image as master by investing in and supporting the other's as slave, and vice versa. The question will immediately be raised, does this entail that the slave is responsible for

his condition? While I cannot embark on working out a comprehensive theory of how to overcome relationships of subordination, I only wish to highlight that my argument indicates in the direction of a collective response that ensures that all actors are involved. Markell's argument eschews this entry point to discussions of responsibility by focusing on the actions of each self-consciousness in isolation, as motivated by desire.

Finally, the third argument is the preliminary or mildly normative response that confronts these unfortunate possibilities of intersubjectivity. I say mild in that neither Markell's nor mine is aimed at the common type of response to the dialectic, which characterizes successful recognition, or the conditions to secure it. They are both preliminary in that they have in view only the *subjects* of response, Markell's being limited to the self, whereas mine includes the other. His first :

1. Self-consciousness is animated by a desire to assert its self-understanding as independent, which requires the affirmation of another self-consciousness.
2. This desire is denied full satisfaction because of the condition of finitude and human plurality.
3. Recognition from desire is thus futile, and often worse, violent if its pursuit is not conceded.
4. Therefore, one must first acknowledge their condition of finitude so as to guard against the dangers of pursuing violently recognition.

Markell's effort here can ultimately be recast as a way of reconciling desire with the ever frustrating condition of finitude and human plurality. The problem he identifies in the *Phenomenology* amounts to desire outstripping these conditions, driving the self-consciousnesses to far from ideal situations. My argument, on the other hand, refocuses the attention to the co-constitutive roles the two self-consciousnesses bear with respect to their asymmetrical relationship :

1. Self-consciousness can only develop in intersubjectivity.

2. Any harm - such as degradation, violence or discrimination – that occurs to a self-consciousness therefore occurs in this condition of intersubjectivity.
3. Therefore, any response to such harms must address this condition.

At this final stage in the analyses their differences appear more pronounced. The diagnoses are perhaps complimentary, but the problems that arise from them demand quite different responses. As noted earlier, logically my response cannot accommodate his, as any attempt to reflect on the self's condition of finitude necessarily implicates the other. However, I do not believe that Markell has in mind such a starkly cut off view of individuality. Nor do I wish to advance the opposite view of individuality dissolved into social relations. Rather, both responses more practically illustrate how we are limited in pursuing recognition. The most marked distinction between them, but neither of which practically excludes, is that mine opens the door to the additional consideration of how traces of misrecognition are co-authored, which in turn suggests an engaged solution taken up by all parties. Neither the misrecognizer nor the misrecognized is left with the responsibility to produce rectification. I do not have the space here to consider the problems that inhere in lopsided responses, where either the misrecognizer over-responds in patronizing tones of self-redemption, or the misrecognized violently reclaims its genuine nature that has been robbed by denigrators who absolve themselves of any responsibility. It only seems suggestive to me that these problems may in part result from a failure to account for the co-imbricated structure of self-consciousness in intersubjectivity, now leaving the self to shoulder the weight, now leaving this task to the other.

This paper sought to examine the completeness of Markell's politics of acknowledgement by contrasting his approach with the intersubjective conditions of self-consciousness. To refine our efforts, while making them more efficient, the analysis of Markell's text zoomed in on two levels : one, his discus-

sion of Hegel, the most crucial thinker among the various theorists of recognition he treats in his text ; two, Markell's reading of Hegel's diagnostic voice, which is later used to undermine the reconciliatory voice found in Hegel's *Spirit* and *The Philosophy of Right*. Yet, despite being able to locate and work through the Achilles of Markell's text, no refutation of his theory was made, nor fully sought. The effort here was to highlight the strengths of his treatment of Hegel alongside its missing elements, ultimately to render the picture more complete. Even though neither his approach nor mine, either by themselves or taken together, develops a full response to recognition politics, the foregoing allows us to imagine at least who are the *subjects* of this response, ignorance of which being the first and most crucial failure to recognize.

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