

Hegelian Desire: tracing the self from understanding to recognition

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0. Introduction

Desire has played an important role in philosophical thinking from Plato onwards. It was rejuvenated with Nietzsche and Freud and it unquestionably took a place of capital importance in 20th century French philosophy (mainly after Kojève); but its importance is still expanding on a certainly more universal scale. Our focus in this essay is the Hegelian concept of desire, even though this concept does not play a significant role in his system.¹ We have restricted ourselves to explicating a small yet important part of the dense Hegelian text of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Desire appears in the very beginning of the chapter on self-consciousness. This chapter has one section ("The truth of self-certainty") divided into two subsections: "A. Independence and dependence of self-consciousness: Lordship and Bondage" and "B. Freedom of self-consciousness: Stoicism, Scepticism, and the Unhappy Consciousness." However, there are twelve paragraphs preceding subsection (A). They are highly complex and abstract and most readers (and commentators) do not take them into serious account and move directly to the renowned dialectic of master and slave (or lord and bondsman).² It is in these (mostly neglected) paragraphs that Hegelian desire emerges.

Our study cannot begin with the concept of desire. The dialectical movements that lead up to it are essential to what it means. In the first part of our essay we have reconstructed the experience of consciousness as it develops into self-consciousness. We have focused on the concept of desire in the second part and, in conclusion, have offered some recapitulating remarks.

1. Immediate knowledge: from consciousness to self-consciousness

¹At least not in any obvious way. Nonetheless, Kozi offers an illuminating study in which *Begierde* is connected the notions of *Trieb*, *Streben* and *Bedürfnis*; this constellation of concepts sheds light on Hegel's understanding of philosophy itself. See Kunio Kozi, *Das Bedürfnis der Philosophie. Ein Überblick über die Entwicklung des Begriffskomplexes „Bedürfnis“, „Trieb“, „Streben“ und „Begierde“ bei Hegel (Hegel-Studien Beiheft 30)*, Bouvier, Bonn 1988.

²It is this renowned dialectic that has attracted so much attention, even from Hegel's time, to the chapter on self-consciousness, as even a cursory look on the secondary literature can clearly show. More recently, an emerging interest in the notion of recognition (*Anerkennung*) has brought renewed attention to this chapter and has extended its relevance beyond the argument of the *Phenomenology*; see (among others) Axel Honneth, *Kampf um Anerkennung. Zur moralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M. 1992.

I am not what I am. (Othello, I, i. 65)

The *Phenomenology* traces the experiences of shapes of natural consciousness. For Hegel, 'natural consciousness' includes all standpoints –philosophical and non-philosophical– that do not share his conception of philosophy and he claims to show how abstract logical forms of natural consciousness lead themselves necessarily and immanently to what he calls 'absolute knowing.' This is the point where being is no longer taken to stand over against thought and consciousness as such is sublated into speculative thinking.³ This journey starts with the simplest and most naive shape of natural consciousness, sensuous certainty (*sinnliche Gewißheit*), which distinguishes itself from the object it knows and takes what is immediately present to it to be true as immediate presence, as sheer being: this-here-now. Sensuous certainty claims to apprehend its object in its singularity and specificity, but in fact only knows 'This,' an empty universal. Everything it wishes to know is simply 'This' – mere instances of certainty devoid of truth. In its experience, sensuous certainty learns that its object is not utterly immediate, but includes mediation: it is a simple togetherness of a plurality, a simple complex, a universal. This proves to be "a Thing with many properties" and the shape of consciousness that takes it up as true is perception (*Wahrnehmung*).⁴

The truth for perception is the universal, although this is a sensuous universal, because it has arisen out of sensuous certainty. The object of perceiving consciousness is still the immediate This of the senses, but taken as "not-This" (*Phen* 68, §113). What does this mean? We could make it clearer by saying that perception takes the object to be This-as-not-just-This: the Thing with many properties (*das Ding von vielen Eigenschaften*). But can this conception of the object hold? The experience of perception brings to the fore the contradiction of the object. It is simple and yet a complex; it is both immediate and mediated; it is This and not-This. Consciousness presupposes the self-identity of the Thing and can only deal with the contradictions it experiences in perceiving it by separating the different aspects of it, its oneness or unity (one thing) and its multiplicity or diversity (many properties). The Thing is one in so far as it is not many and it is many in so far as it is not one. This distinction cannot be maintained, since the object of perception is necessarily both.⁵ The experience of perception shows finally that the object's being-for-self (its self-identity) is its being-for-another (its multiplicity) and vice versa. The sensuous universal is unavoidably a contradiction, this is its truth.

³ For an illuminating account of what 'absolute knowing' entails, see Stephen Houlgate, *An Introduction to Hegel: Freedom, Truth and History* (1991), Blackwell, Oxford 2005, pp. 63–66.

⁴ *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, with analysis of the text and foreword by J. N. Findlay, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1977, p. 67, §112. Further references to the *Phenomenology* will be given in the following form: *Phen* 67, §112.

⁵ Its properties (*Eigenschaften*) are its own (*eigene*), as Hegel also puts it.

What perception has learned is that the truth of its object cannot be perceived. It is the unconditioned⁶ universal, a universal that openly entails contradiction, a non-self-identical universal. In Hegelian terms, it is the Concept (*Begriff*), the unity and transition of its moments into one another, and the shape of consciousness to take it up as the truth is 'the understanding' (*Verstand*). This third shape of consciousness has come a long way from sensuous certainty. However, what remains in common with both perception and sensuous certainty in the understanding is the (assumption of the) object's independence – for all three shapes the true object is something other than consciousness. The object is the essential and consciousness, as inessential, remains passive in its relation to the truth that is independent of it. This is the last presupposition to be undermined before the chapter on "Consciousness" (that includes the sections on sensuous certainty, perception and the understanding) closes and we enter the chapter on "Self-Consciousness."

The understanding takes the unconditioned universal to be an object separate from itself and it attempts to apprehend it in a passive manner. The object is not part of the sensuous world or the world of perception, yet it is still considered to be 'out there.' The strictly intelligible (opposed to perceivable) Concept is the inner or beyond of appearance. The latter is a complex and indeterminately alternating "play of forces," a flux (*Wechsel*) that, nonetheless, contains a simple truth: this is the law of force. The indeterminate difference of appearance is taken as universal difference, which is what the law of force expresses as the simple element in appearance. For this element to be determinate, many laws are required and this multiplicity of laws necessarily gets united under the concept of law, the necessity of law. It is in the dialectic of this necessity of law that the understanding realizes that the laws it is 'apprehending' are really only its own descriptions of appearances: law is recognized as nothing other than the understanding's explanation (*Phen* 94, §154). The understanding in explaining generates a difference which is no real difference and takes it back: explanation is a movement that cancels itself out, if one comes to understand explaining as rendering same what is not-same (appearance into law) and not-same what is same (the concept of law into determinate laws). Because of this realization, the (stable) supersensible world of laws gets inverted in itself and is thus enriched and completed by the law of inversion,⁷ since this stable world is understood as the result of the understanding's doing – it is grasped not simply as stable, but as having become stable. This new take on the supersensible world causes the initial distinction between appearance and the inner or beyond to collapse.⁸ The objective world proves to have the structure of, what Hegel calls, infinity: of inner difference. The understanding knows that this structure is also its own (in

⁶ 'Unconditional' in German is *unbedingt*, and the sound of *Ding* ('thing') in it is unmistakable. It sounds almost like a negation of the thing.

⁷ "differences arise which are no differences [...] what is *selfsamerepels* itself from itself [...] what is *notselfsame* is *self-attractive* [...] *like* becomes *unlike* and *unlike* becomes *like*" (*Phen* 96, §156)

⁸ "But such antitheses of inner and outer, of appearance and the supersensible, as of two different kinds of actuality, we no longer find here;" "[These moments] are *implicit* and are *oppositesinthemselves*, i.e. each is the opposite of itself; each has its 'other' within it and they are only one unity." (*Phen* 98, §159; 100, §161)

explanation) and the move to self-consciousness is ad portas: "It is manifest that behind the so-called curtain, which is supposed to conceal the inner world, there is nothing to be seen unless we go behind it ourselves" (*Phen* 103, §165). Consciousness comes to an end in realizing that the world's structure is identical to its own, that in dealing with its object it was only dealing with itself.⁹ Self-consciousness starts where consciousness has ended up, taking itself as its object.

It is very important here (and in every transition in the *Phenomenology*) to step back and take notice of exactly what consciousness has learned from its experience and what the phenomenologists have discovered in observing it. Hegel's concept of infinity is of capital importance not only for the rest of the *Phenomenology*, but for his whole philosophical system: true infinity is the structure of the Concept. Hegel notes that this structure of inner difference becomes explicit in explanation, yet it is crucial to stress that the full extent and significance of this logical structure is not taken up by the understanding or the immediately following shape of consciousness. The understanding realizes that in force and law differences are encountered which are no differences; it recognizes that a unity that returns to itself (: a self-sundering in independent moments that supersede themselves into their unity) is itself a moment of its (: the unity's) self-becoming. But it does not thematize explicitly the movement of this structure. It is only aware of "the content of the moments of the movement," of the self-repulsing selfsame and the self-attracting unlike as separate, as "predicates" (*Phen* 101–2, §§163–4). It equally fails to realize that it is itself the whole of this process of infinity that it observes in the world or, better, it does not recognize itself as a moment in the single process of infinity. It cannot comprehend that another such whole involves itself qua consciousness and its object – it only recognizes that this whole is identical in structure with what its own structure in explaining is. The shape of consciousness that takes up this (limited) insight and makes itself its own object, is the shape of self-consciousness that will unfold its experience in the following chapter. Had it, per impossibile, immediately taken up the (profound) insight of itself being in essential unity with the 'objective' infinity of the world, we would have observed a transition from consciousness to the much more sophisticated shape of 'Reason.' The *Phenomenology*, nonetheless, can only take its cue from the shapes of consciousness and consciousness is a slow learner: it can leave no stone unturned, it has to go down every possible cul-de-sac of immediacy.

2. Immediate self-consciousness: from desire to recognition

Like a bird on the wire, like a drunk in a midnight choir, I have tried in my way to be free. (Leonard Cohen)

⁹ A Hegelian critique of historical positivism draws stimulating parallels to the critique of consciousness (as sensuous certainty, perception and the understanding). Thanassas writes that historical positivism (for us: consciousness) "is naive, states that 'facts' can be grasped as such without mediating categories [...] the facts themselves, the so called raw data, remain imaginary constructions of a naive, positivistically fixated scientific stance." Panagiotis Thanassas, *Hegel's Hermeneutics of History, Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 91 (2009), 81–2. It is clear that raw data of historiography and independent objects of consciousness follow a similar dialectic for Hegel.

Hegel notes that with self-consciousness we have "entered the native realm of truth" (*Phen* 104, §167). In this homeland, truth for consciousness is not other than itself: "certainty is to itself its own object, and consciousness is to itself the truth." In keeping with the result of the dialectic of the understanding, we can say that the distinction that consciousness draws in knowing, is not a distinction for it, because the object of knowing is itself. Self-consciousness is not a static enjoyment of self, it is not mere being the self that it is. Self-consciousness is a movement, a relation. As a relation to self, however, it is a return to self and in this return "the 'I' is the content of the connection and the connecting itself" (*Phen* 104, §166).¹⁰

This does not mean that the objective world has vanished for self-consciousness. After all, a relation and return to self requires mediation and only otherness (*Anderssein*) can play this role, since a return to self through the exact same self is no return at all. Yet this otherness does not have essential being, i.e. its being is not independent but is only for consciousness. The objective world, what is 'out there,' has lost the self-subsistence it enjoyed in the first three shapes of consciousness. It now has being only as a moment, its being is a vanishing, it "is only appearance" (*Phen* 105, §167). But this appearance does not point anymore to its truth in an objective inner or beyond. Its truth is the proper inner of consciousness, the return to self and the resulting unity of self-consciousness. It is in this way that self-consciousness has a double object. Its proper object (its truth) is its own self, but its immediate object is the otherness of the world outside the self, the not-self. This tension, this "antithesis" as Hegel calls it, is the fundamental structure of self-consciousness – in its immediate emergence it takes the form of desire (*Begierde*) as self-consciousness is simply opposed to otherness, an otherness that is taken only as a negative, as something that is only to be negated (or superseded).

In the following six paragraphs Hegel unfolds some logical implications of the dialectic so far for the phenomenologists. Strictly speaking, the experience of self-consciousness commences in §174. Just as the understanding could not grasp its true role in the structure of infinity, the reverse is now the case with self-consciousness: being absorbed in itself, it fails to see in the object anything but an inessential quality; for self-consciousness there is no truth whatsoever other than itself. Just as in mere consciousness the knowing subject had to learn that the object is not all there is to truth, so now self-consciousness will have to learn through its own experience that "the object is independent". The logical 'digression' is not necessary to the experience of self-consciousness; it helps,

¹⁰ Pippin has recently offered an interesting reading of the self-consciousness chapter in light of Hegel's crucial claims that "self-consciousness is desire itself" and "self-consciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness." Even though he makes numerous valid points touching on our explication, his short study's scope extends far beyond our own in this essay: he deals not only with desire, but also with the dialectic of lord and bondsman and the (even broader, yet hugely important) issue of normativity between Kant and Hegel. Therefore, his highly recommended study could not be considered in detail for our reading. See Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel on Self-consciousness: Desire and Death in the Phenomenology of Spirit*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 2011.

nonetheless, the reader of the *Phenomenology* to understand the problems this experience will bring out.

The introduction at this point of the concept of life has puzzled many readers. Before we attempt to reconstruct the meaning of the paragraph, let us exclude some possible misreadings: when Hegel writes "the object has become Life," he does not mean that the objective world surrounding self-consciousness has suddenly come alive; when he later remarks that "the object of immediate desire is a living thing," he is not claiming that desire is only directed to living beings. The key, on our reading, to comprehend this paragraph is the penultimate sentence: "To the extent, then that consciousness is independent, so too is its object, but only implicitly" (*Phen* 106, §168). Hegel is here beginning to develop the logical structure of the mediating object of self-consciousness, of the not-self. This is necessary, as it was in the beginning of the section of the understanding, because self-consciousness does not immediately consider the not-self to be anything but a thing to be negated for its return to self; it disregards any details and qualities of the object. The development of the objective world in the sections of consciousness –from immediate being to sensuous and unconditioned universals– is not cancelled, but internalized as a moment within self-consciousness. The initial appearance of self-consciousness as desire, however, in its immediately dismissive (or even hostile) disposition towards the not-self, does not consider it fully as it is. Self-consciousness is situated in the midst of a perfectly everyday world, just as all preceding shapes were, too. We have seen, though, that each shape can deal with an object of a specific logical form and complexity. Perception can deal with things with properties, whereas sensuous certainty could not, but it cannot cope with a community of relations, such as is entailed in the understanding's unconditioned universal. What is crucial, however, is that according to Hegel's claim, self-consciousness is the first shape of consciousness that is able to comprehend life as life, that is able to deal with organic structures as such. But, it must also be noted, this doesn't mean that it does so right from the start. It will learn to consider them thus through its experience.¹¹ The object "has become Life" and is for desire "a living thing" means, therefore, that life could not be properly understood and comprehended before the structure of consciousness was that of a return to self, of self-consciousness.

In the following two paragraphs (§§169–70), Hegel redescribes this concept of life in the terms of infinity (see above p. 4) and the only thing we should note here is that Hegel stresses two things: (a) the enduring existence and subsistence both of the unity of infinity's moments and of its independent members, and (b) the determinate character of both in contrast to abstract being (as in sensuous certainty) and abstract universality (as in perception's self-identity of the thing). These are two points which immediate self-consciousness fails to consider.

In paragraph §171 Hegel offers a detailed yet highly abstract description of how life unfolds as an infinite structure. Read with §§161-2, it becomes much

¹¹ That immediate self-consciousness fails to understand life properly, as a genus, and can only understand life as divided, only as individual ("nur das *geteilte* Leben, nur Individuum"), is a revealing point in Hoffmann's brief (but to the point) account of desire: Thomas S. Hoffmann, *Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel: Eine Propädeutik*, MarixVerlag, Wiesbaden 2004, pp. 261–2.

easier to follow. In nuce, life is transformed from a tranquil subsistence (of its non-self-subsisting moments, the living individuals) into a process, when the moments attempt to "disown" their continuity with the universal substance of life and separate from it in self-preservation. In this movement of the moments the unity of life is not lost: the moments by attempting self-unity at the expense of the universal unity, become themselves a tranquil subsistence of differences (moments) and dissolve. The dissolution of moments brings about a new forming of moments, since the dissolving moments flow back into universal life, hence causing its simplicity to supersede itself and split anew into members. This obscure description follows (i) the logical structure of the self-repulsion of what is selfsame and the attraction of what is unlike, and (ii) the unity involved in inner difference, both of which encountered earlier in infinity: before life can be considered as a genus (*Gattung*), one needs to understand its development from an abstract universal essence (in opposition to its determinate moments, its distinct differentiations as individuals) to a concrete universality or totality that has been mediated by the process of living individuals as they are constantly formed and dissolved. The important point Hegel makes in this difficult passage is that the unity of life is dissolved and preserved in a self-developing whole, whose structure is a movement of self-sublation.¹²

What is noted in the following paragraph is that the preserved unity of life is not the immediate unity from which it started, but a reflected one. The initial unity, as mere being, as in-itself, "points to something other than itself" (*Phen* 108-9, §172), to what this unity is for-itself. This is consciousness, because consciousness (as self-consciousness) knows that its structure is that of infinity, whereas life simply is this structure.¹³

In the next paragraph (§173), Hegel stresses once again that self-consciousness does not initially recognize itself fully. Its object is in the first instance the abstract 'I' and its relation to it will be simplifying and superficial. It will only come to be what the phenomenologists know it is as the object (and hence the relation to self) becomes more complex and rich in its experience.

The experience of consciousness is what we can now focus on. Self-consciousness as it immediately comes on the stage is *Begierde*.¹⁴ It is the

¹² Hegel's understanding of life (especially in his terms of logical structures) is difficult to grasp adequately and it is safe to say that the relevant *Phenomenology* sections and passages are far from being the most lucid on the topic. One needs to refer to the chapter on life in the *Science of Logic* for a (most probably) clearer and (definitely) more extended discussion of it. Yet desire is all but absent in that discussion, so we have chosen not to bring it into our treatment here. For a helpful reconstruction of the logical structure of life, see Michael Spieker, *WahresLebenDenken. Über Sein, Leben und Wahrheit in Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik (Hegel-Studien Beiheft 51)*, Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg 2009, pp. 342–71.

¹³ For a more detailed explication of this section on life, Gadamer is highly recommended: Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, trans. P. C. Smith, Yale University Press, New Haven 1976, pp. 58–9.

¹⁴ Butler's comment on *Begierde* is helpful: "The German word for desire, *Begierde*, suggests animal appetite rather than the anthropocentric sense conveyed by the French *le desir* and the English *desire*." Judith P. Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France*, Columbia University Press, New York 1987, p. 33. Redding makes an interesting connection to the Fichtean *Begehrung*. See Paul Redding, *The Independence and Dependence of*

immediate supersession of otherness present to it and is only certain of itself by immediately superseding it. Truth and certainty is to be found only in itself and the other, the not-self, since it has no truth and no certainty, has no essential being: it is appearance, vanishing; "nothingness" in relation to itself.¹⁵ This certainty of the truth of self and of the nothingness of the other can only be affirmed "in an objective manner" by the movement (action) of self-consciousness (*Phen* 109, §174). 'Objective manner' is the manner of objective, external reality and immediate being. Therefore the other, the object that appears to be independent, is negated in the most immediate way: it is destroyed as an independent object and satisfaction of desire, self-affirmation, is achieved.

Or is it? Let us look more closely to what has happened. The other present to self-consciousness is no more. But self-consciousness, as we saw, is a movement; it cannot be at rest. Its satisfaction is not found in any instance, but in the process of returning to self. In destroying the other it has deprived itself of the necessary mediation for this return. This forces self-consciousness to "produce the object again," i.e. to look for another not-self that will mediate its movement, its own intrinsic being. In this experience, in the satisfaction of immediately negating desire that proves to be self-defeating, desiring self-consciousness learns that the "essence of desire" (what is essentially important for it) is "something other than self-consciousness" (is not only self-consciousness) – in other words, desiring self-consciousness is dependent on the not-self (*Phen* 109, §175). Let us note that what makes this mode of achieving self-certainty unsatisfactory is not the impossibility of negating everything in the world, the infinite project of negating all that is not-self.¹⁶ Though there is some merit in noting this, the real problem of desiring consciousness is a logical impossibility, not a practical one: Desire that simply and completely negates the other is self-undermining whenever it is carried out successfully.

What does consciousness learn from this experience? The need for the other to continue to be is now granted. But self-consciousness needs a way to effect the return to self, needs the other to be negated in a different way, a way that can allow it to retain its independent being while being at the same time superseded: "it can achieve satisfaction only when the object itself effects the negation within itself." Hegel remarks that determinateness is a form of negation, but it is indifferently related to the being of others. Desire is also a form of negation, but, as became clear, it is present "in an other." Only self-consciousness meets the criteria of being that is independent while effecting negation within it, so the object of self-consciousness can only be "another self-consciousness"

Self-Consciousness: The Dialectic of Lord and Bondsman in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, in F. C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and nineteenth-century philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 97–8.

¹⁵ The emphasis on the self is aptly described by Heidegger as a passion: "The to-itself [*Zu-sich*] which belongs to the being-in-itself of the self –the return into itself as truth– is grasped as desire, as the passion of the self for itself." Martin Heidegger, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. P. Emad and K. Maly, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1988, p. 138.

¹⁶ Cf. Butler (1987), p. 39: "The proliferation of objects of desire affirm for self-consciousness the persistent realm of alterity. [...] The conclusion drawn by self-consciousness that the world of objects is not consumable in its entirety has an unexpected inverse conclusion: desire requires this endless proliferation of alterity [...]"

(*Phen* 109-10, §175). This is a very important move, because in this way the following things are achieved: (a) self-consciousness has found an object that can mediate its return to self. This object is not destroyed in being superseded; (b) this 'object' is still considered as not-self. It is not this self-consciousness, but another one. With these two points in mind, we can agree with Hegel's famous thesis: "A self-consciousness exists for a self-consciousness" (*Phen* 110, §177). Recognition is now the mode of comportment of self-consciousness. Yet one should keep in mind that this much more sophisticated mode of comportment (which will unfold as the famous fight to the death, the relation of mastership and servitude, and complex shapes of self-consciousness in the form of skepticism, stoicism and the unhappy consciousness), could not have simply 'dropped out of the sky'. Its naive or brutal background as desire is necessary and it is, as phenomenologically exhibited by Hegel, much more meaningful and coherent than it may have looked at first. Desire explains and justifies recognition, it does not merely fill the 'narrative gap' between understanding and recognition.

3. Concluding remarks

Once the object present to self-consciousness is taken as more than a mere negative, immediate desire is superseded and the dialectic of recognition between master and slave can begin.¹⁷ Does this mean that desire as such is over and done with in Hegel's treatment of self-consciousness? Our answer is negative. For one reason, nothing is completely forgotten or utterly negated in the *Phenomenology*. Another reason, stronger than the first, would be that desire has emerged as the fundamental structure of self-consciousness. To use a Freudian term, desire as the 'drive' to return to self is self-consciousness. In realizing the futility of the simple negation of the not-self, self-consciousness ceases to be immediate desire – it becomes, so to speak, desire for recognition.¹⁸ This recognition can only come from outside itself, from an other which is not radically other: a not-self which is also a (different) self-consciousness. One can discern a movement parallel to the one experienced from sensuous certainty to perception. The object of immediate certainty was the absolute singular, was sheer immediate being, 'This.' When apprehension of this proved impossible, consciousness learned that its object is more than just that, that it is mediated, it is a universal. In immediate desire the other is an object that equally has a merely negative role.¹⁹ It is 'This (Other)' that

¹⁷ For a detailed commentary (focusing on recognition) and a revised translation of the first seven paragraphs of this famous section, see Robert R. Williams, *Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other*, State University of New York Press, Albany 1992, pp. 141–68. Williams aptly expounds the development of the asymmetrical relation of recognition between master and slave.

¹⁸ Cf. Kojève: "Human desire must be directed toward another Desire [...] human history is the history of desired Desires." Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, assembled by R. Queneau, ed. A. Bloom, trans. J. H. Nichols, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1980, pp. 5–6. It is this point, among others, that Kojève misses or misunderstands. As soon as 'selfhood' is recognized, primitive or naive desire cannot carry on as it had.

¹⁹ The hazard in taking the object as simply negative is well spotted by Lauer: "The danger is that in recognizing that "the return out of otherness" is necessary if knowledge is to be truly

needs to be superseded immediately so that self-affirmation can take place. By learning that the other's independent being is essential to its own self-affirmation and that only another self-consciousness is adequate for self-certainty, self-consciousness has learned that 'self' is a universal. It is both itself, as its primary but necessarily mediated object, and the other self that mediates its movement. Moreover, just as perception could only separate the different aspects (moments) of the universal and keep them apart, so will consciousness attempt to separate the two selves in the struggle for recognition: one will be the master and the other its slave. The adequate object of consciousness proved to be the structure of infinity and self-consciousness will only reach its own adequate relation to its objects (its own self and the mediator) when its relating to them expresses this structure: when self-consciousness is in unity with consciousness. Truth, it comes to learn, is not only in itself, but in otherness, too. Realizing this does not mean that self-consciousness ceases to desire, ceases to need to return to self. It only signifies that its means for this end change as its horizon of understanding itself has been enriched and expanded.

The experience of self-consciousness is the experience of freedom. Consciousness, in its transition to reason, is a self-movement returning to self, equally as desire and as truly free. We must keep in mind that freedom is necessarily bound with desire and it is only actualized when desire is respectful of its other, but when at the same time it is also respected. Even the most primitive or naive form of desire is a moment of freedom, but of freedom that has not come properly into its own – to desire (without recognition) is to be free in a way, i.e. in a way that is self-undermining, therefore not truly free.²⁰ The saint who sacrifices all desire might be an exemplar of virtue, but is no paragon of freedom. Desire (or self-consciousness) takes many forms, like Platonic *eros*. Rather than a purifying ascent,²¹ in Hegel's *Phenomenology* it is an educational journey through which the self is enriched and 'concretized' in societal life. Hegel stresses that in the concept of recognition, we come across the concept of Spirit: "'I' that is 'We' and 'We' that is 'I'" (*Phen* 110, §177). Individual freedom is only possible as being free with others that are also free.

Iago speaks more truly than he thinks, when he declares he is not what he is. In appearing to be something other than what he is, he certainly loses his (previous) self. But, moreover, in being enslaved to his revenge on the Moor, this

knowledge, the move is made so rapidly (immediately) that it is no move at all." Quentin Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Fordham University Press, New York 1996, p. 93.

²⁰ It is necessary to remind oneself what success at being truly free may mean at this point. Clearly it is not the case that the immediately following shapes of consciousness succeed at exhibiting freedom in absolute terms, since Stoicism, Scepticism and the Unhappy Consciousness are ultimately shapes of consciousness that are sublated and overcome. Yet each shape expresses the truth (and/or freedom) of the previous shape's claim to truth (and/or freedom), even though the phenomenological development of each new shape brings out new claims and new limitations. Qualified as such, the claim that recognition is the truth of desire (or that recognition exhibits desire's true freedom) cannot be taken to mean that there aren't issues of freedom to be faced by recognition in its own development.

²¹ "hotandê tis apotôndedia to orthôspaideraisteinepaniônekeino to kalonarchêtaikathoran, schedon an tihaptoitotoutelous (when a man ascends from these particulars by loving youths in the proper way and begins to descry that beauty, he is almost able to lay hold of the goal)" (*Symposium* 211b); translation revised.

deceiving mastermind is not what he is (or desires to be) as a human being. Even in his success, Iago is not a successful instance of self-consciousness; he is not free.

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