Institutionally Mediated Recognition

A Vicious Circle?

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It is largely agreed that institutions only exist if they are accepted or recognized by those who participate in them. However, according to the Hegelian theories of recognition, any practical form of recognition is always mediated by institutions. Thus, it seems that the collective acceptance of institutions is always already mediated by institutions. This chapter aims to solve the apparent contradiction by, firstly, specifying how recognition is precisely mediated through social roles and institutions. It is clear that institutions come in different shapes, sizes, and forms. They are all normative systems, but it is equally clear that all-pervasive institutions like language and money are not the same kind of entities like more rigidly structured state institutions or corporations. Though all institutions might require collective acknowledgement and recognition to exist, it is not as clear that all institutions are about our practical forms of recognition or that all forms of practical recognition are completely restricted to stay within certain institutional borders. Secondly, as the institutions are also dependent on our collective recognition of them, the forms that recognitive attitudes take towards institutions need to be specified. In the literature, vertical recognition of institutions has been distinguished from horizontal recognition between individual agents, but it is

unclear how exactly these attitudes differ from each other. This chapter shows how the Hegelian theories of recognition face a potentially severe problem of circularity between institutions and recognitive attitudes. It is argued that we need to distinguish different senses of recognition and different kinds of relevant institutions to sidestep the problem. This also clarifies the role of recognition in formation of institutions and the extent of institutional determination of recognition practices.

It is largely agreed that institutions only exist if they are accepted or recognized by those who participate in them. However, according to many contemporary neo-Hegelian theories of recognition, any practical form of recognition is always mediated by institutions. Thus, it seems that the collective acceptance of institutions is always already mediated by institutions.

This chapter highlights the apparent circularity by, first, examining how the role of institutions and institutional recognition appear in contemporary recognition-theoretical discussions (Section 12.1). I argue that the potentially circular formulations are present in various contemporary accounts – the theories of Axel Honneth, Heikki Ikäheimo, and Cillian McBride being the example cases. Recognition theorists seem to tacitly accept the so-called collective acceptance model of institutions and, at the same time, they frame recognition-relationships as something that is affected and directed by social roles and institutions. The second main part of the chapter (Section 12.2) moves from the exemplary cases into a more analytical approach to the potential circularity between recognition institutions and forms of recognition. The first task is the clarification of the concept of 'institution.'

Institutions come in different shapes, sizes, and forms. They are all normative systems but it is equally clear that all-pervasive institutions like language and money are not the same kind of entities as more rigidly structured state institutions or corporations. By separating different kinds of institutions from each other, it is possible to glean a clearer picture of what is at stake with recognition institutions. While all institutions might require collective acknowledgement and recognition to exist, it is not as clear that all institutions are about our practical forms of recognition – that is, 'institutions of recognition' – or that all forms of practical recognition are restricted so completely as to stay within certain institutional borders.

In Section 12.3, I direct the same analytical approach towards recognition. As institutions are dependent on our collective 'recognition' of them, the forms of recognitive attitudes that can be taken towards institutions need to be specified. The distinctions made here are readily available in the literature: it is helpful to separate Hegelian interpersonal recognition from other related attitudes like identification and acknowledgement. Similarly, it is commonplace to distinguish vertical recognition of institutions from horizontal recognition between individual agents.

Section 12.4 combines the analytical insights to argue that the 'common acceptance' model of the constitution of institutions does not require other attitudes towards institutions than identification and acknowledgement and thus avoids the circularity of 'recognition.' However, vertical recognition in the Hegelian sense might be an impossibility, as it would require that recognition institutions ought to be

personifiable entities. The chapter finishes (Section 12.5) with a reconsideration of the nature of circularity between recognition and institutions.

Overall, this chapter aims to show how the Hegelian theories of recognition potentially face a severe problem of circularity concerning institutions and recognitive attitudes. The gist of this chapter is that distinguishing between different senses of recognition and different kinds of relevant institutions helps to sidestep the problem. Furthermore, these distinctions are helpful in clarifying the role of recognition in the formation of institutions and the extent of institutional determination of recognition practices.

12.1.   Institutions and Recognition – Outlining the Problem

Right from the beginning of our lives, we are immersed in the institutional world and its practices. An average Western European person is born in a hospital, which can be taken as a centre of institutionalized care. Over the course of her life, she attends a range of educational institutions from kindergarten to elementary school and onwards to potential higher education. She might have a family of her own – one of the central institutions of modern societies that is commonly taken to be central for the reproduction of the society. Most likely she votes in various democratic institutions and uses money, which is an institutionalized form of exchange. Our average person might also take part in the practices of an

institutionalized religion. Even in death, she is likely to be farewelled according to the institutional funeral practices of her culture. In short, institutions are always there, structuring our lives.

Indeed, institutions are an essential part of our social life: they direct, structure, and constitute it, and our lives and identities are shaped by the institutions we participate in. However, there is another angle to the issue, according to which the very existence of the institutions depends largely on our will to identify ourselves with and within them. Realizing this double-dependency between institutions and individual agents is nothing new. The classic structure-agency problem[1] highlights precisely this: which comes first, structures or individual agency? The structure-agency issue has pressed various theorists at least since the early stages of sociology, and there is no commonly accepted solution to it. Indeed, my aim here is much more modest than to attempt an ultimate satisfactory answer to the grand problem of the intertwinement of individuals and institutions. Instead, my focus is limited to a particular brand of critical social theory – namely, the contemporary neo-Hegelian recognition theories, which provide an interesting and hopefully fruitful approach to the classic problem. These theories deal with themes that are at the core of structure-agency issues but – at least so I argue here – their conceptualizations of these problems (and solutions to them) are unsatisfactory. At the outset, the Hegelian concept of recognition seems like a potential candidate for analyzing the relations of individuals within institutions, as well as the relations between individuals and the

institutions themselves. After all, recognition as a term is commonly taken to denote

the mutually constitutive relationships between different actors. In the following,

three example cases (1.1–1.3) of how recognition and institutions are conceptualized

within contemporary recognition theory are presented. These examples aim to

highlight the shortfalls and lacunae in the analysis of the precise role of institutions

in recognition and institutional recognition.

12.1.1.   Example 1.1: Axel Honneth's Theory of Recognition

Honneth's materialistic rehabilitation of the Hegelian idea of recognition is the best-

known of the contemporary recognition theories. Honneth (1995) separates three

historically developed forms of mutual recognition, which can be traced and

identified partly because of their distinguishable effects on relations-to-self. Each of

the three forms of recognition – love, respect, and esteem – has a different positive

effect on our selves, and each of them is targeted towards a different aspect of our

personhood. The need for recognition can be described as historically conditioned

but also anthropologically grounded. However – and more interestingly for the

purposes of this chapter – each of the forms of recognition is also represented in the

institutions of a society (Honneth 2003a, 138). In Joel Anderson's (2013, 18) terms,

they are dependent on a cultural ecosystem that can be understood as an

institutional world.[2]

Following Hegel, Honneth (1995, ch. 5; see also Honneth 2014, 123–129) identifies family, markets, and the democratic public sphere (or law) as central institutions for modernity, and in these institutions, different aspects of recognition are taken as guiding principles. In a nutshell, the key thrust of his critical theory is that various institutions are based on promises of recognition, and when these promises go unfulfilled, the feelings of misrecognition and non-recognition that follow will guide social agents in their struggles for recognition (or for a better society).

However, as we are interested in the role of institutions in recognition, this overview of Honneth's critical social theory as yet gives only one side of the picture. Recognition institutions are not only institutionalized forms of recognition, but they also guide the agents in their social interaction. To quote Honneth in length:

The historical shape that these media take on in a specific social formation are what I term "recognition orders". This does not mean that each institution merely reflects the content of intersubjective recognition; rather, subjects draw upon institutionalized norms in the course of recognition, because it is only in light of these institutions that they grant each other a normative status. These "recognition orders" consist of institutionalised normative structures that have grown up around the main tasks of social reproduction, while making the latter dependent upon the mutual fulfillment of obligations and roles. By taking on the appropriate roles, subjects grant each other a normative status that obligates them to respect their partners in interaction. Although this means that institutions exercise a certain kind

of power over subjects, it would be wrong to ascribe to them a purely "constitutive" role in the formation of processes of recognition.

(Honneth 2011, 403)

In this passage, the double-sided constitutive relation between individuals and institutions becomes explicit. Institutions are in a partly constitutive relation to the individuals, but they also exhibit the intersubjective forms of recognition themselves. Though they are not purely constitutive, they do seem highly necessary: "Neither self-respect nor self-esteem can be maintained without the supportive experience of practising shared values in the group" (Honneth 2012, 214).

Jean-Philippe Deranty highlights the previous interpretation in his reading of Honneth's recognition theory. According to Deranty, the institutions of the state and economy are not mere embodiments of certain rational principles (like collective decision-making or market rationality), but they also depend on communicative or recognitive processes.[3] Thus, institutions are best described as systems of recognition:

Ultimately, all social institutions can be described as specific forms of interaction, as practices whose specificity, for example of being legal, economic or political forms of action, are best characterised in terms of the attitudes that human subjects take towards other human subjects in them.

(Deranty 2009, 221)

Although in this reading of Honneth's account institutions are in a double-relation – constituted and constituting – to individuals, Honneth does not accept the idea that institutions or social groups are similar to individual agents in recognition. There are no collective macro-subjects (Honneth 1991, 275; see also Petherbridge 2013, 196–197). Instead, Honneth's account of the institutional world can be described as 'expressivist' (Deranty 2009, 232). That is, institutions express forms of recognition, and in some sense 'incarnate' different types of normative interactions and attitudes that social agents take towards each other in their everyday practices. In this sense, individuals are primary in relation to the institutions, which require at least their tacit consent (see, e.g., Honneth 2003b, 250).

However, this social ontology of institutions and recognition can be shown to be problematic. Firstly, as Deranty (2009, 332) argues, Honneth does not give a sufficiently detailed definition of institutions and their role in the socialization process of individuals. Although Honneth explicitly mentions the institutional mediation of recognition attitudes, this seems to be partly incompatible with the expressivist account of the institutional world. Emmanuelle Renault nails down this point by stating that

[i]nstitutions not only express the relations of recognition, but also produce or constitute them. The mistake in the expressive conception of social recognition is to consider only the problem of the normative expectations directed towards institutions, and to fail to emphasise sufficiently that it is always within the

framework of an institutional predetermination that subjectivities address demands of recognition to institutions.

(Renault, L'Expérience de l'Injustice, 200, quoted in Deranty 2009, 349)

Although Honneth shuns the option himself (see Deranty 2009, 232), a potential solution to ontological vagueness of the constitutive relationships and their directions can be found by introducing the concept of vertical recognition – namely, a type of recognition between the institutional (or collective) and individual levels. However, this solution is not satisfactory if we do not explicate the dynamics any further than mentioning the possibility of vertical recognition. What needs to be explained is how the institutions themselves are constituted through vertical recognition, which supposedly is not exactly like recognition proper because institutions are not supposed to be macro-subjects that would be suitable objects of intersubjective recognition. These themes come under consideration in the next example (1.2), which focuses on accounts that explicate the role and meaning of vertical recognition.

12.1.2.   Example 1.2: Vertical Recognition

The concept of 'vertical recognition' is used to distinguish the relationships of the individual social agents who are on the same 'horizontal level' from those recognitive attitudes and relationships between institutions (or authorities upholding them) and individuals. Here the institution can be a singular authority (a

tyrant), a ruling class, or the community itself (Ikäheimo 2013, 17). Vertical recognition can be directed from below to above, 'upwards' (as, for example, in cases of accepting the legitimacy of certain institutional rules and practices) or from above to below, 'downwards' (as, for example, in cases of institutions giving certain roles, rights, and permission to individuals). As Ikäheimo's following passage shows, vertical recognition is closely connected to the horizontal forms of recognition:

Recognizing the state is acknowledging or accepting its laws and institutions as valid or legitimate, and this means recognizing* fellow citizens as bearers of the rights or other deontic powers that the laws attribute to them (or that they have due to the state's "recognition" of them). Thus, in explicitly talking about horizontal recognition* between citizens as bearers of rights and duties one is implicitly also talking about vertical recognition between citizens and the state.

(Ikäheimo 2014, 82)[4]

There are two relevant aspects to vertical recognition. First, vertical recognition is implied in the horizontal (institutionally mediated) recognition between individuals, as this always makes a reference to institutionalized practices of recognition. This is close to Honneth's expressivism in which institutions emerge from the interactions of individuals.[5] Second, vertical recognition is taken as a legitimizing factor in the constitution of institutions. Without that kind of upwards-directed recognition,

institutions and their rules – for example, the state and its laws – would not be accepted as valid. This, in turn, seems to go partly beyond Honneth's expressivism, as he was opposed to the idea of taking explicit recognition attitudes towards institutions, although he did agree with the necessity of collective (tacit) acceptance.

However, it is partly unclear what sense of 'recognition' is at play in vertical recognition. For example, in his analysis, Patrice Canivez, on the one hand, makes it clear that vertical recognition is asymmetrical, and it "does not concern two distinct, self-sufficient entities" (Canivez 2011, 855). On the other hand, he states that the Spirit (as the counterpart of vertical recognition) is a subject in the very literal sense and that any self-centred singular subjectivity is in fact impossible (Canivez 2011, 863). The 'seeing oneself in the other' logic that permeates horizontal recognition is very much present in the horizontal form as well: "In conformity with the formula of recognition, [citizens] recognize the state as recognizing them, and the state recognizes them as recognizing it" (Canivez 2011, 875). Here the state functions as an individual who can be in recognitive relations to its own citizens, its internal institutions (or in Hegel's terms, corporations) that can have particular views of the general interests of the society, and other states that are similarly individual subjects.

According to what has been presented, the sense in which vertical recognition is used becomes close to horizontal recognition. The exception being, of course, that the subject (and/or object) of recognition is an order of social and political institutions through which the horizontal intersubjective relations are mediated.

12.1.3.   Example 1.3: Cillian McBride's Normatively Guided Recognition

The previous examples (1.1 & 1.2) focused on characterizing Honneth's theory of recognition and critical responses that were at least partly inspired by it. The purpose of this third example is to show that similar ideas about the role of institutions are also present in other competing conceptualizations of recognition. Here the focus is on McBride's theory of recognition, which emphasises the normative aspect of recognition and the sociality of norms. He sees that the "yardsticks we apply to ourselves and to others […] are essentially social yardsticks embedded in social attitudes and institutions" (McBride 2013, 83). We need the guidance of the normative realm to be self-determining and autonomous. "One must be guided by those social norms which one can recognize as authoritative" (McBride 2013, 141).

On the one hand, actions are recognizable insofar as they can be interpreted within a relevant normative framework. McBride identifies this norm-abiding structure of recognition as a structure that is present in all the different forms of recognition:

This sense of "recognition" seem to be more general than "recognition as respect" or "recognition as esteem", but [this is] a clue to the pervasiveness of normativity and of its link to recognition, recognition that a particular thought, claim, or act has a particular normative shape.

(McBride 2013, 148)

On the other hand, recognition does not merely conform to a normative order but also constitutes it. Any normative claims rely on recognition for their authority (McBride 2013, 152). However, it is left partly unclear what is recognized when a normative claim is 'recognized.' The possibilities are that what is at stake is some sort of general acknowledgement of a broader normative framework, or perhaps recognition of an individual agent's act that has normative import and meaning within a normative setting. The latter interpretation sees – in parallel to the expressive view – recognition of norms as a side-product of individual interactions. Recognizing the normative framework is precisely the same as recognizing individual acts guided by those norms.

McBride's account presents also a further paradoxical element of the nature of agency in recognition-relationships: recognition-sensitivity and norm-guidedness are necessary to us as social agents, but at the same time, we are partly independent of recognition. This is to say, we are not wholly determined by normative frameworks or the institutional setting but can also take a critical stance towards them. There is no fully detailed rulebook of recognition, and the norms that are recognized are not external to social action or anything that exists 'beyond' social practices.

12.1.4.   Taking Stock

What seems to be hinted at in all of the previous accounts is something close to the 'common acceptance' model of institutions. Common acceptance theories in social ontology assert that it is precisely through the shared acceptance of institutions like money that the institutions stay afloat and alive. The acceptance does not have to be conscious, but it is nevertheless needed. Lack of trust in the institutions or the lack of following institutionalized practices leads to the disintegration and dysfunctionality of those institutions. This can be seen in cases like hyperinflation: when no one believes that money is worth anything anymore, people revert back to the more direct trade of goods and services. Perhaps the most well-known formulation of the common acceptance model was made by John Searle. He illustrates the point with an example:

Consider for example a primitive tribe that initially builds a wall around its territory. The wall is an instance of a function imposed in virtue of sheer physics: the wall, we will suppose, is big enough to keep intruders out and the members of the tribe in. But suppose the wall gradually evolves from being a physical barrier to being a symbolic barrier. Imagine that the wall gradually decays so that the only thing left is a line of stones. But imagine that the inhabitants and their neighbors continue to recognize the line of stones as marking the boundary of the territory in such a way that it affects their behavior. For example, the inhabitants only cross the boundary under special conditions, and outsiders can only cross into the territory if it is acceptable to the inhabitants. The line of stones now has a function that is not performed in virtue of sheer physics but in virtue of collective intentionality. […] The line of stones performs the same function as a physical barrier but it does not do

so in virtue of its physical construction, but because it has been collectively assigned a new status, the status of a boundary marker.

(Searle 1995, 39–40)

While the example deals with a boundary, the gist of it is that all other institutions too rely on the collective intentionality (or acceptance or recognition) of those who participate in them. There is certainly more to be said about the mechanisms of instituting social facts, but the general principle of the necessity of collective acceptance is largely agreed and built upon in analytical social ontology (see e.g. Searle 1995; Tuomela 2013; for more recent developments see Epstein 2015). Searle's focus is very much on collective intentionality, but here we should add that the recognition or acceptance of institutions does not need to be conscious. Many social facts and institutions are upheld by practices and behaviours that are habitual and almost never become challenged or conscious – and if they do, it is only at the time of social transformation and change.

The upshot of the previous examples of the common ways in which institutions and recognition intertwine in contemporary recognition theories yields two commonly shared broad intuitions: (a) recognition is institutionally mediated and (b) institutions need some kind of – perhaps tacit or indirect – recognition to exist. However, if we accept both of these intuitions, we might end up with a chicken-egg problem, namely, recognition is defined by institutions but institutions are defined by recognition, and there seems to be no self-evident way of saying which comes

first or which one is more fundamental. In what follows, theoretical tools for analyzing this circularity will be offered. The aim is to develop a perspective that can avoid the viciousness of this apparent circularity of recognition and institutions.

12.2. Recognizable Institutions

To get to the core of the apparent circularity, there are two central themes we must look at. It is necessary to focus on the precise nature and mode of the recognition-relationships between individuals and institutions – as we shall do in the next section – but, similarly, it is important to narrow down precisely which institutions are in focus in the context of recognition. In other words, what is recognized when we recognize an institution or a framework of recognition? Or, in even broader terms, what exactly is a normative order or recognition institution?

Here Raimo Tuomela's characterization of institutions is helpful. According to him, institutions are "public norm-practice systems" (Tuomela 2013, 218) that come in different forms. Tuomela himself has distinguished four different levels of institutions:

(a) institution as a norm-governed social practice;

(b) institution conferring a new conceptual (and social) status to some entity (e.g., person, object, or activity);

(c) institution conferring not only a new conceptual and social but also a new deontic status and status functions to go with it to the members of the collective in question;

(d) institution as an organization involving specific social positions and a task-right system.

(Tuomela 2007, 196–197)

Tuomela's characterization develops from the most general institutions (like language) to less general and more limited institutions (like corporations and organizations). Similarly, while all institutions have certain normative structures and rules, the development is from the least structured and the least purpose-directed institutions towards more structured or rigid institutions with more defined rules, roles, and purposes.

Included in the common acceptance view was the claim that all institutions require some sort of recognition to exist. All normative frameworks, however thin and informal, need some kind of (possibly tacit) acceptance from their participants. However, where do specific recognition institutions fit in this picture? Arguably, they fall within a narrow spectrum within Tuomela's characterization. On the one hand, recognition institutions seem to be more specific than language or any loose norm-governed social practice. Recognition theorists seem to be more interested in norm-governed practices that deal with the social statuses of persons and their standing in relation to each other. On the other hand, recognition institutions seem to be more general than organizations or corporations. These most structured institutions impose more rigid hierarchies and positions, while recognition theorists

in general seem to be mostly after certain broader social practices of status attribution and normative expectations that govern interpersonal relationships.

Thus, what is postulated here is that recognition institutions are, following Tuomela's characterizations, institutions that fit categories (b) and (c). Recognition institutions are normative frameworks that confer social statuses and 'deontic powers' – that is, a standing and possible powers to institute something in the social sphere.

If one takes a closer look, for example, at the spheres of ethical life that Honneth outlines in *Freedom's Right*, this characterization seems fitting. In that book, Honneth's aim is to make a normative reconstruction that aims to undercover the 'normative grammar' of certain broader social practices that can be called relational institutions or ethical spheres (Honneth 2014, 125–127). He identifies three such institutions – personal relationships (friendship, love, family), market economy (consumption, labour markets), and political public sphere (democracy, rule of law) –, all of which are characterized by specific patterns of mutual recognition (Honneth 2014, 127–128; see also Honneth's response in Willig 2012, 148). These institutions do not represent a tight structured corporate form, but they still confer statuses, role obligations, and expectations and open new possibilities for social action, freedom, and self-expression. The key difference with the (d)-type of institution is the organizational form. While recognition institutions denote broad culturally shared historical forms of normative expectations and related behaviour, institutions as

organizations are more strictly limited and spatially contained systems of norms that are arguably also guided by the broader spheres of ethical life. For example, different corporations might well have their own specific internal structures and even precise ethical codes, but they all function within the broader frame of the market economy.

The suggestion is then that we can (and should) make a distinction between what was earlier called 'recognition institutions' and other agential institutions that may play a part in recognition-relationships. The former refers to the institutional setting that directs recognition practices and, presumably, consists of the institutionalized practices of recognition. The latter refers to corporate-like collective agencies of the (d)-type that function as interactive partners in recognition, whereas the former 'recognition institutions' provide a framework for the recognition practices. It is debatable whether organizations and corporations really are agents capable of recognition (or if they are agents at all), but here the relevant point is the conceptual differentiation between collective agents and frameworks or systems of recognition.[6] The differentiation opens many interesting philosophical questions of how these two categories relate to each other, which cannot be discussed here. Furthermore, while the original circularity concerned recognition institutions as normative frameworks of recognition, the difference between agential institutions and institutions as normative frameworks remains highly relevant in the next sections where the recognitive attitudes that can be taken in relation to institutions are discussed.

12.3.   Recognitive Attitudes towards Institutions

Thus far, we have highlighted the potential circularity of recognition and institutions and focused more in detail on the other main element of this circularity – namely, what the institutions of recognition are. In this section, the aim is to focus on the 'recognition'-side of the matter. In more exact terms, what kind of attitudes and practices are at stake when we talk about the recognition of institutions? It is commonly thought that recognition comes in different modes or forms. If this is indeed the case, in what sense do we recognize institutions?

Here a fruitful starting point is the analytical distinctions drawn by Ikäheimo and Laitinen (2007, 34–36). According to their differentiation, recognition is often used in three senses that are closely interrelated. Firstly, recognition can mean *identification* of anything. This means the literal *re*-cognizing of something, perceiving and understanding the particularities of an entity. Secondly, recognition can also mean *acknowledgement* of norms. In this second sense, it functions as an understanding and affirmation of rules and norms. Thirdly, there is the category that is most commonly understood as the core meaning of recognition in the recognition literature – that is, recognition as *recognition of persons*. This is what the sense of recognition is commonly taken to denote, and it is precisely the theme that most recognition theorists are interested in. For example, this is what Taylor (1994) is after in discussing recognition as a human need, or what Honneth describes in *The Struggle*

for Recognition, or what Ricoeur (2005) designates as the Hegelian notion of recognition, distinct from self-understanding or remembering.

Recognition of persons can also be divided into different forms. The most well-known three-part division is distinguishing the different attitudes of love, respect, and esteem from each other. This is a separation of the contents of the attitude. Emotional care, love, and friendship are distinguished from the universal recognition of rights and co-authorship of norms, and from the individuating attitudes that direct recognition towards features and achievements. Drawing the borders of separate attitudes is in itself important, but here this distinction is, however, set mostly aside.[7]

A further important distinction for our current purpose is the aforementioned differentiation between vertical and horizontal modes or directions of recognition (see Section 1.2). The general idea is that horizontal recognition describes attitudes, actions, and relationships between entities on the 'same level' so to speak. What the same level most commonly refers to is recognition between individual agents as persons. However, one could also include collective agents as partners in horizontal recognition. States might recognize states at the same level, or an individual and a corporation might recognize the rights of each other, and so forth. Vertical recognition, on the other hand, was used to refer to recognition between levels. Institutional recognition is often taken to be precisely of this vertical kind. Institutions grant social positions and rights and so forth 'from above.' Individuals,

in turn, may or may not recognize the validity of these institutional authorities. By definition, vertical recognition is between institutions and (individual) agents, while horizontal recognition, by definition, seems to be restricted to agential relationships and is most commonly taken to refer to relationships between individual agents.

Although there might be some limits to the appropriateness of recognition in relation to group agents (see Hirvonen 2017a), here I want to focus on recognition institutions in the sense that was described earlier: instead of being agents, they are normative frameworks or normative systems. Which of the meanings of 'recognition' described in this section, then, are applicable to recognition institutions?

First, it is clear that recognition institutions can be identified. It is precisely what Honneth is doing in his attempts to spell out the normative or recognitive core of institutions like family, civil society, and markets. We clearly have the intellectual capabilities to identify and distinguish various recognition institutions, although at times it seems to require actual social research, normative reconstruction, and historical understanding.

Second, recognition institutions can be acknowledged in the sense of normative acceptance. This is the constitutive attitude that is required for the institutions to exist in the sense highlighted in the common acceptance model. However, it should be noted that not everyone needs to acknowledge the normative core of an

institution for the institution to exist. It is quite possible to have external agents who do not acknowledge the normative core of an institution, as well as people who have been forced, coerced, tricked, or manipulated into behaving according to the normative frame of an institution.

In the case of recognition institutions, the acknowledgement can be taken to have two referents. First, acknowledgement might be directed towards the prevailing norm of recognition that is at play at any current institution. That is, we may accept that the normative core of family is based on love, that legal institutions are ultimately based on respect, or that markets value achievement and contributions to the (more or less) common good. The second sense of acknowledgement concerns the forms that the recognition institutions take in any particular point of history. That is, while recognition can be considered as a "vital human need" (Taylor 1994, 26) or seen as constituting "'quasi-transcendental interests' of the human race" (Honneth 2003a, 174), the practical forms that it takes are more often related to the particular recognition institutions of their time. The general story is that older forms of honour made way for the more particularized institutions where certain rights are given based on shared humanity and rational agency, and social status is decoupled from this recognition and attached to achievements. Further, even if the move to modernity specified and made clearer the distinction between different anthropologically grounded recognition needs, there are cross-cultural differences in the institutions of recognition and in the fashion that these needs are articulated.

This is seen in the different articulations of, for example, what is counted as the sphere of family in different cultures and legislations. The accounts range from nuclear family to extended families, from patrilinear families to matrilinear families, and so forth. Therefore, when we talk about the acknowledgement of recognition institutions, in this context, it could be taken to refer to the particular formulation of an institution that is based on the anthropologically grounded need – in itself plastic and malleable – that seems to characterize the human life-form.

Can recognition institutions be recognized in the Hegelian sense of recognition? Here it is important to remember that the Hegelian sense – the sense around which the contemporary debates are constructed – concerns recognition between self-consciousnesses or between persons. This creates an issue, as not all entities can be constituted as persons through recognition simply because not all entities have the suitable capacities for being in a recognition-relationship. In other words, we could state that recognition in the Hegelian sense has certain responsiveness conditions. That is, not anything and everything can be recognized in this sense of the terms. But who or what can be? The short answer (following Ikäheimo 2007, 233–234 and also Laitinen 2007) is that only those who (at least potentially) fulfil (psychological or capacity-related) conditions of personhood are suitable recipients of Hegelian recognition. This responsive nature of recognition thus poses a challenge to institutional recognition, as it is clear that we have reasons to be hesitant in stating that recognition institutions are persons or self-conscious subjects.

Without a strong social-ontological argument for the personification of institutions, it seems then that we should perhaps not talk of recognition of institutions as such, but rather in terms of different object-related attitudes that do not necessarily have the same 'mutually constitutive and responsive' element in relation to self-consciousness as Hegelian recognition. In the next section, I attempt to illustrate how this might undermine the category of vertical (Hegelian) recognition altogether.

12.4.   Challenging Vertical Recognition

Up to this point, it seems that in most of the cases the 'institution-constituting attitudes' are not of the same kind as 'institutionally mediated recognition.' The former can be characterized as identification and acknowledgement, while the latter refers to interpersonal attitudes that are conducted in an institutional setting.[8]

However, here vertical recognition marks a special case. The literature dealing with vertical recognition commonly gives it two central features. First, vertical recognition is understood as constituting institutions (Canivez 2011). Second, vertical recognition is often characterized as a form of Hegelian recognition between persons (Ikäheimo 2014, 211) or between self-related entities (Canivez 2011, 879). That is, alongside identification and acknowledgement forms of 'recognition' that constitute the acceptance in the common acceptance model, vertical recognition denotes a form of Hegelian interpersonal or intersubjective recognition between individuals and

institutions. This, in turn, implies that vertical recognition – as defined earlier –

assumes some sort of personification or subjectification of institutions.

Collective personhood and collective agency are in no way foreign concepts to

contemporary social ontology, and, thus, one relevant question here is if there is a

believable way to understand institutions as persons or subjects in a relevant sense.

Somewhat unsurprisingly, an overview of the discussion points towards the

conclusion that the collective personhood literature rarely considers institutions of

kinds (b) and (c) as personifiable.[9] As mentioned before, personification has certain

suitability conditions, the least of which is agency or potential agency. Collective

agency, in turn, is often taken to require a high level of structuration and explicit

decision-making mechanisms that are not present in broader social institutions or

normative frameworks (see, for example, List and Pettit 2011). These features are

commonly attributed to the institutions of the (d) kind, which would include

corporations, panels, teams, and so forth – all narrower than broader normative

frameworks.

The narrower (d)-type institutions are in one sense institutions of recognition. They

can have their own recognition rules and standards – i.e. different workplaces have

different criteria for what counts as an achievement – but at the same time, they

make use of the same broader social norms of recognition. For example, in

Honneth's case, all workplaces are still under the more general principle of

achievement, even if the particular instantiations of this principle differ from one

corporation to another. This highlights the possibility that in some cases, 'collective agency' and 'normative framework' can in fact overlap.

However, even with the possibility of a 'co-instantiation' of a collective agent and a normative framework, the consensus seems to be that broader normative frameworks are not collective agents as such. Here it is safe to say that the burden of proof lies with those who claim that the personification of such frameworks is possible. Although, as a concession to the recognition theorists who use the concept of vertical recognition as if it were a type of Hegelian recognition between persons, it should be said that it is clear that almost no one explicitly claims that recognition institutions are persons, but it is merely – and most probably accidentally – implied in the discussions on vertical recognition.

Even in the case that there would be a strong argument for the possibility of personification, a further worry presents itself. The worry is that, if recognition institutions are subjects, does this warrant a new kind of vertical recognition-relationship in addition to collective acknowledgement of the institutional norms? In other words, why would there be vertical recognition between personifiable institutions and individual human persons instead of horizontal recognition between individual and collective agents? Using the term 'vertical' gives the picture that collective agents somehow exist over and above the individual agents, in a different 'level' of social reality. An alternative way of thinking – that rejects vertical recognition as Hegelian recognition – is to say that potential collective agents, as well

as individual agents, act on the same horizontal 'level,' all guided by broader institutional normative frameworks of recognition. Thus, recognition in the Hegelian sense of the term would be limited to one particular level, while it could be guided and mediated by a broader normative setting that, in turn, requires ongoing recognition practices, acknowledgement, identification, habituation, and so forth to exist.

12.5.   In Conclusion: How Vicious Is the Circle?

The previous section presented scepticism about the possibility of vertical Hegelian recognition. Indeed, if vertical recognition is meant to denote acceptance of normative frameworks, then it is difficult to see how and why this should be understood as a form of recognition between persons. Norms are formed and upheld through collective acceptance, but that is hardly Hegelian recognition towards the normative framework itself. If vertical recognition were literally taken to be recognition between persons, then there would be a need, first, to prove that recognition institutions are recognizable collective agents in the first place and, second, that recognition of collective agents goes beyond the horizontal and mutual relationships of recognition. If the first claim were to be the case, institutions of recognition ought to include features like accepted decision-making mechanisms of the group and commitment to the results that follow from it. Second, it is equally unclear why we should call potential group recognition 'vertical recognition,' as this

gives a picture that group agents would somehow exist 'over and above' individual agents. Perhaps claims could be made to state why a collective person is not a person in the same sense as individual human beings are and that would warrant different recognition-relationships. Or perhaps what vertical recognition really designates is merely a difference in positions of power in recognition-relationships. These considerations show that there are speculative opportunities to defend a notion of vertical Hegelian recognition, but the suggestion here is that vertical Hegelian recognition does not provide an answer as to the mode in which institutions of recognition are 'recognized.' Instead, the answer would lie in the modes of collective acceptance that would not be recognition in the Hegelian interpersonal sense.

Returning to the structure-agency issue between our practical attitudes and their institutional determination, one could still ask if there is any vicious circularity left. In the suggested model, it is not the case that institutionally mediated interpersonal recognition would in a strong sense constitute institutions. Rather, the institution-constituting attitudes would be of a different form, which could still be tied to recognition practices. Namely, in recognizing someone as X, one is also acknowledging or upkeeping the normative framework that makes recognition as X possible. Further, it is also possible to take identifying and acknowledging attitudes towards institutions that enable recognizing someone as X.

However, is the circularity of recognition and institutions just shifted to another set of attitudes and behaviours instead of the interpersonal Hegelian recognition? Part

of the aim of this chapter has been to stay within the limits of the Hegelian sense of recognition, and thus what is offered here can only offer a waypoint to the direction from which the solution to the potential broader circularity of various attitudes could be found. The circularity of institutions and agents could be considered as akin to circularity of language: language is defined by the usage of language, but the use already requires some linguistic framework to be understandable. In short, if one seeks a definite answer to a chicken-egg problem, finding it might be a fool's hope unless one is prepared to give a narrative of the evolution of interpersonal attitudes and language. Rather, the more interesting task for a critical social theorist of recognition is to explicate the exact constitutive relations and power relations within the constellation of agents and institutions in any particular historical period. This way the malpractices, domination, and power imbalances that are manifest in the practical institutional setting and everyday agency become more visible.

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[1] The same problem has also been framed in terms of the individualism-collectivism issue in analytical social ontology (see Pettit 1996, ch. 3 and Pettit and Schweikard 2006, 35–36).

[2] The anthropological-institutional nature of Honneth's recognition theory is summarized well in Anderson's commentary:

(1) Humans have an historically conditioned but anthropologically grounded need for relations of mutual recognition and the associated forms of social freedom. (2) These recognition relations are in turn dependent on something like a socio-cultural ecosystem – institutionalized social practices, or what Hegel terms objektiver Geist – owing especially to the fragility of these relations of mutual recognition and the human vulnerability involved.

(Anderson 2013, 18)

[3] "The institutions of the economy and the State are never just embodiments of purely objective, instrumentally rational considerations, they are framed within 'political-practical principles,' which themselves depend upon (distorted) communicative processes. The same can be said of economic and administrative institutions" (Deranty 2009, 97 on Honneth).

[4] Here recognition* (with asterisk) denotes 'institutionally mediated' recognition in comparison with Ikäheimo's other category, 'purely intersubjective' recognition.

The English translation is taken from an early manuscript of Ikäheimo's *Anerkennung* book (2014), which was ultimately published in German. For a largely similar formulation in English, see Ikäheimo 2013, 28.

[5] In fact, it is possible to give a reading of Ikäheimo's account in which nothing more than horizontal recognition is at play when institutions are recognized. Institutions are merely imagined and implied in making horizontal acts of recognition. This, however, makes institutions similarly epiphenomenal expressions of 'actual' practical relations as in Honneth's account, which was supposed to be supplemented by the very same idea of vertical recognition. Also, while this reading applies to the acceptance of institutions, it is unclear how 'downwards' recognition by the institutions (as, for example, when a state 'recognizes' its citizens) could be conceptualized as a side-product of horizontal recognition.

[6] At times, the difference between these two might become blurred. For example, nation states are often considered as collective agents in themselves, but at the same time, it is easy to consider them as consisting of broader normative or cultural frameworks that direct, incentivize, or prohibit certain social practices. Similarly, work environments and corporations can be thought of as institutions that also prescribe certain frameworks of esteem.

[7] See Hirvonen 2017a for an argument that discusses the issues of how separate forms of recognition can complicate 'collective recognition.'

[8] It is debatable whether all the interpersonal attitudes need this mediation. Ikäheimo (2013, 17) makes the distinction between purely intersubjective recognition and institutionally mediated recognition. Honneth (2003a, 138), on the other hand, states that all recognition is institutionally mediated.

[9] For an overview of the contemporary arguments for collective personhood, see Hirvonen 2017b. Most of the accounts are very exact on the conditions of agency (and personhood) and would not allow the Hegelian Spirit to be a subject.