

On the relation of recognition and *Bildung* in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*

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Abstract – While Hegel's conceptions of recognition and *Bildung* continue to attract scholars' attention, the linkage between the two is often ignored. Yet these two conceptions are intimately linked in Hegel's system and thus cannot be properly understood if discussed separately without taking into consideration their close relationship and interconnection. This paper attempts to fulfill this gap by reconstructing the complex interrelation between the two conceptions in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. It shows that Hegel uses both recognition and *Bildung* to develop his concept of the self as the self-cultivating agency capable of achieving self-knowledge only through and within the universal whole. In this sense, the movement of recognition is part of the complex process of *Bildung* and is its indispensable element. Deriving its significance from its contribution to the formation (*Bildung*) of the self as active subjectivity, recognition points to the fact that subjectivity is mediated through relations with other people. Recognizing the importance of these relations involves acknowledging individuals' mutual interdependence grounded in intersubjective interactions, only within which the process of *Bildung* becomes possible.



1. Introduction

Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* continues to spark philosophical discussion, not only among scholars of Hegel but also among those interested in a variety of other areas of philosophy, such as ontology, philosophical anthropology, philosophy of psychology, action theory, as well as ethical, political, and social theory. There is certainly no shortage of interpretations and assessments of this work, and the conceptions of recognition (*Anerkennung*) and *Bildung* in the *Phenomenology* occupy a privileged place in these interpretations and debates.

Influential Hegel scholars, such as Robert Pippin, Terry Pinkard, Robert Brandom, John McDowell, Axel Honneth, Robert Williams, Heikki Ikäheimo, Lud-

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wig Siep, and Michael Quante, working both in the Continental and Analytic traditions, made the *Phenomenology* and its treatment of recognition a focus of numerous studies (see Brandon 2007; 2019; Honneth 2008; Ikäheimo and Laitinen 2011; McDowell 2006; Pinkard 2010; Pippin 2000; 2005; 2010; Quante 2010; Siep 2014; Westphal 2018, especially Ch. 12, 13; Williams 2000). While their main focus has been largely on the master-servant (bondsmen-lord) dialectic, where the idea of recognition is first formulated in Hegel's text, they have also offered insights into other relevant topics discussed there. Similarly, the interest in Hegel's notion of *Bildung* and its interpretation in the *Phenomenology* has become an important component of recent and contemporary Hegel studies, with such prominent scholars as Richard Rorty, Allen Wood, Catherine Malabou, Michael Forster, Alfredo Ferrarin, and Klaus Vieweg contributing greatly to this discussion.

The immense amount of scholarly interest in and publications on these topics leave no doubt that the themes of recognition and *Bildung* in the *Phenomenology* are now well-established and mature research topics in Hegel scholarship. At the same time, this scholarly enthusiasm points to the yet-unsettled nature of the discourse surrounding the issues of recognition and *Bildung* in this work. The ongoing discussions are not purely semantic ones caused by varying definitions of the terms by different authors. Of genuine interest are the conceptual meanings that Hegel associates with each of these notions and the question of the place he assigns to them in his systematic construction. Despite being largely productive, I believe these debates tend to miss the fact that these two conceptions are intimately linked in Hegel's system and thus cannot be properly understood if discussed separately without taking into consideration their close relationship and interconnection.

This paper attempts to fulfill this gap by reconstructing the complex interrelation between the conceptions of recognition and *Bildung* as presented in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. I see the roots of this interrelation in the idea of self (*das Selbst*), which Hegel associates with self-knowledge. This is the epistemic challenge that recognition addresses; the implicit aim of recognition is the achievement of self-knowledge. In this sense, recognition's primary significance in the text lies in its contribution to the *constitution* of the self: on Hegel's account, the self is – at least in part – constituted through the recognition of others. Yet the social self is the product of social self-activity of the individual within the social and cultural world, and the process of the formative self-development of a conscious individual through this individual's interactions with others Hegel calls *Bildung*. This “movement of individuality cultivating itself” (*PhG GW 9:268*; trans. modified) is the self-determined and self-driven process of “formation” or “cultivation” of the individual self toward (universal) humanity.

The core of this development is in intersubjective interactions extending beyond simple subject-subject relations and including customs, practices, norms, and institutions, only within which the individuals acquire their universal characteristics and achieve their completeness as part of a social community (“the *I* that is *we*” *PhG GW* 9:108.39). Hegel’s social and communal model of *Bildung* demonstrates that the epistemic justification needed for knowledge cannot depend simply on the single individual subject. Each epistemic principle requires collective (universal) justification. The same is true for the epistemic challenge of self-knowledge. While the autonomy and the epistemic conditions of the individual subject are necessary for self-knowledge, only universal (collective) autonomy can fully achieve its justification. My complete self-knowledge cannot be a result of a self-relation that is established through a relation to an object taken to be separate from it (the structure of recognition). It requires justification in and through interrelations among individuals in forms of interaction and institutions, which is the basic feature of the movement of the *Bildung*. In this sense, the movement of recognition is part of the complex process of *Bildung* and its indispensable element. Deriving its significance from its contribution to the formation, or *Bildung*, of *the self as active subjectivity*, recognition points to the fact that subjectivity is mediated through relations with other people. Recognizing the importance of these relations involves acknowledging individuals’ mutual interdependence grounded in intersubjective interactions, only within which the process of *Bildung* becomes possible.

In this paper, I will (1) focus on Hegel’s account of recognition, first discussing how it is laid down in Chapter IV on “Self-Consciousness.” After examining some basic features of Hegel’s discussion of a struggle for recognition, I will then show that while the famous account of “Self-Consciousness” is essential for understanding Hegel’s approach to recognition, it has to be supplemented with the discussion of recognition in Chapter VI on “Spirit.” For Hegel’s concern in Chapter IV is mainly the question of the *condition* – being recognized – for the achievement of self-consciousness, and not the productive *activity* of recognizing in all its conceptual complexity, i.e. the full power of the intricate process of the “movement of recognition” becomes manifested only on the plane of the social world. I will then demonstrate (2) that what guides the “movement of recognition” in the text is the idea of self, which Hegel understands not as a simple self-identity as a givenness, but rather as a self-identifying activity of relating that could be reached as a result of a variety of intersubjective interactions. The self-determined process of formation (*Bildung*) of this active subjectivity Hegel describes in Chapter VI on “Spirit,” which depicts intersubjective life and interactions, including knowledge. After discussing (3) Hegel’s illuminating account of *Bildung* already presented in Chapter VI, I will conclude by (4) summarizing the fundamental relation between the two conceptions – of recognition and *Bildung* – in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*.

2. Hegel's Idea of Recognition

The topic of recognition in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is perhaps one of the most established topics in contemporary Hegel scholarship. Yet despite different readings of the place and significance of the idea of recognition in Hegel's text, many commentators insist that the account of recognition in the 1807 *Phenomenology* is fragmentary and incomplete. Those who support this interpretation believe that Hegel completes his phenomenological account of recognition only in his mature writings, most notably his *Philosophy of Right* (1820) and the later versions of his *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1827 and 1830), where he expands his philosophy of objective spirit with its central account of *Sittlichkeit* (ethical life).

This position was first articulated by Ludwig Siep as early as 1979 (Siep 2014 [1979]), and further advanced – during the next three decades – by numerous Hegel commentators, including Robert Pippin, Michael Quante, Terry Pinkard, and others.² Even more recently, Robert Brandom's *A Spirit of Trust* (Brandom 2019), which broadens the discussion of recognition by going beyond only the Chapter on “Self-Consciousness” and underscoring the centrality of conscience to Hegel's account of recognition, still holds that recognition ultimately points to the need for a new form of ethical life, which Brandom calls “postmodern *Sittlichkeit*.” I am inclined to read this insight along the lines of the idea that the full achievement of recognition is possible only on the plane of the complex social interactions among individuals, while these interactions are governed by “morality,” i.e. by principles of ethical life that guarantee reciprocity and equality of the relations of recognition. I also link this achievement to the process of *Bildung*, through which the individual self becomes universal by developing and recognizing her own sociality (the concept that Hegel associates with his notion of spirit).³ This is the argument that I attempt to advance in this paper, and the present section should provide a groundwork for doing so. However, it seems that in his discussion, Brandom still follows the line of interpreters stemming from Siep, insisting on the incompleteness of the *Phenomenology's* account of recognition and pointing only to its role in the emergence of self-consciousness. This approach also loses sight of recognition's greater significance in the work, namely the formation of the self.

Before I turn to Hegel's idea of self and discuss what concept he associates with this idea, I shall briefly consider how Hegel introduces the process of recognition

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2. See, for example, Pippin 2008 (Pippin clearly states his position in note 4 on p. 184). See also Pinkard 2012. Michael Quante articulates this approach in a number of his publications. I would like to refer the readers to Quante 2010, especially p. 102.
 3. I discuss and explicate Hegel's account of spirit in Bykova 2009.

in the *Phenomenology*. As it is well known, the idea of recognition first appears in and becomes central to Chapter IV on “Self-Consciousness.”

At the stage of self-consciousness, consciousness is defined in a *negative* relation to its object: the “object” of self-consciousness is consciousness itself. This “negative relation” is described as one’s desire for the certainty of self, i.e., for one’s sense of individuality, and for self-knowledge. The difficulty arises from the fact that in pursuing desire, consciousness tends to destroy and eliminate its object, e.g., by consuming or utilizing it. This, however, would undermine the very idea and sense of self-certainty, which necessarily assumes independence. Thus, to be both self-conscious and self-certain in relation to an object requires an object that retains its independence through negation, and the only object that meets such a requirement is another self-consciousness. The desire that a self-consciousness has and needs to satisfy in order to obtain a sense of self-certainty of its own individuality (knowledge of its own selfness, i.e., self-knowledge) is a desire to be desired by an other, that is, a desire for *recognition*. And this is the meaning of Hegel’s often misunderstood passage:

Self-consciousness is *in* and *for-itself* while and as a result of its being in and for itself for an other; i.e., it is only as a recognized being. The concept of its unity and its doubling, of infinity realizing itself in self-consciousness, is that of a multi-sided and multi-meaning intertwining, such that, on the one hand, the moments within this intertwining must be strictly kept apart from each other, and on the other hand, they must also be taken and cognized at the same time as not distinguished, or they must be always taken and cognized in their opposed meanings. This twofold sense of what is distinguished lies in the essence of self-consciousness, which is to be infinitely or immediately the opposite of the determinateness in which it is posited. The elaboration of the concept of this spiritual unity in its doubling presents us with the movement of *recognizing*. (*PhG GW* 9:109.8-18)

Hegel introduces an idea of self-consciousness as *being-in-itself* and *being-for-itself*, which requires both otherness and a realization (an acknowledging) of this otherness. Hegel thinks of this acknowledgment among the two “*as mutually recognizing each other*” (*PhG GW* 9:110). The idea here is that a pure self-consciousness is dependent on more than existence (as the existence of two independent forms) but also on recognition (the interplay between these forms, i.e., their relationship). Hegel explains that self-consciousness has now come *out of itself* and encountered another self-consciousness. The significance of this movement is twofold: *first* “it has lost itself,” since it finds itself as an *other* essence, and *second*, “it has thereby sublated that other,” because it does not view the other as the essence, but, instead, “sees *itself* in the *other*” (*PhG GW* 9:109.18-23).

According to Hegel, recognition is not a sort of mechanical operation defined by a positive natural development but rather comes about through a dramatic struggle that arises from the encounter of self-consciousness. Hegel describes this life-and-death struggle in terms of the dynamic master-slave dialectic. Many contemporary commentators discuss this dialectic merely as an account of *Bildung* of self-consciousness taking it at its face value, which I believe leads to a misinterpretation of the real meaning and significance of recognition in the *Phenomenology*. On my reading, what Hegel discusses in terms of the dynamic master-slave relationship is not just *Bildung* of self-consciousness *per se*. This is rather *Bildung* of self, which undergoes the formative development toward its “in and for itself” existence and self-knowledge, achieved only by way of a self “being in and for itself for an other; i.e. ... only as a recognized” (*PhG GW* 9:109.9; trans. modified). The important lesson of the master-slave dialectic is that the realization of our capacities as individual subjects (as self-defined selves) in the world requires the mutual recognition of ourselves as members of a community. In this sense, the process of recognition becomes a necessary condition, i.e., condition of the possibility, of *Bildung*.

Interpreted in terms of *Bildung* of the self, the dialectic of recognition runs through three important stages. In the first stage, a self as self-consciousness striving for its own self-certainty encounters and confronts another self-consciousness, but it does not yet consider what is opposed to it as an other. Another self-consciousness is perceived as merely “an inessential object, designated by the character of the negative” (*PhG GW* 9:111.1–2), i.e. not as another self, but simply as not being oneself. This lack of recognition of another self-conscious subject (the self) as independent, typical for this stage, prevents detachment from one’s own views, desires, and beliefs, and thus impedes the discovery of “who one is in itself.” To achieve one’s self-knowledge one needs to *differentiate* oneself from others which necessarily involves “proving” oneself, one’s desires, and one’s beliefs to an other being. This requires an admission of otherness, and this otherness should be established with certainty: the being *for itself* should be certain of being *other from itself*. The search for certainty signifies the second stage of dialectic. Hegel describes it as a “trial by death” between oneself and the other. Hegel writes, “The relation of both self-consciousnesses is thus determined in such a way that it is through a life and death struggle that each *proves its worth* to itself and that both *prove their worth* to each other. – They must engage in this struggle” (*PhS GW* 9:111). Why can there be no compromise here? The simple answer is that a compromise entails loss (viz., a permanent awareness that one is not altogether independent of the other), and this loss contradicts the notion of *being-for-itself*. For one really to assert oneself, one must be willing to “put one’s life on it.” The dialectical core of this move is alienation from one’s natural state of being oneself (“simple being-for-self”). The result of this “trial by death” (an abstract negation)

is their existence disintegrating “into extremes of opposed determinateness,” i.e., into two opposed shapes of consciousness (*PbG GW* 9:112.30–31; trans. modified). One, to which being-for-self is the essential feature, is the *master*; the other, to which being-for-another is the essential feature, is the *slave*. Thus, it is through the submission of the slave – who has to work on the object in order to carry out the will of the master – that otherness becomes established as a true certainty. Yet the dynamic of the relationship between master and slave suggests that the slave’s unfortunate lot is to be nothing more than a working thing. But, as Hegel describes (*PbG GW* 9: 114–116), the slave’s position is not as deplorable as it appears, for the slave may work in externality, thinghood. It may also observe the more perfect self-consciousness the master enjoys, while also realizing that there exists an even more absolute situation (as fear of nonexistence, which led the slave to “cower in trepidation”). Hegel quickly weakens this position, nevertheless, into “the servile consciousness,” the form described as “a skill which, while it has dominance over some things, has dominance over neither the universal power nor the entire objective essence” (*PbG GW* 9: 116). However, the point Hegel makes here should be clear. As with the life-and-death struggle, reaching a higher mode of consciousness requires breaking free from the particularity of life. This is possible because the slave working on objects that the master desires attains this consciousness of himself, thus “shaking to the core” his natural consciousness (*ibid.*). Hegel explains the significance of this movement in his *Philosophy of Spirit* when he brings to our attention the true character of the slave’s labor. For serving the master, the slave no longer works “in the exclusive interest of his own individuality, ... his desire is expanded into being not only the desire of this particular individual but also the desire of another. Accordingly, [he] rises above the selfish individuality of his natural will” (*Enc.* §435A).

Accepting the desire of another as one’s own is a necessary component of the movement of recognition, and it marks the beginning of the one’s (the servant’s, in Hegel’s example) ascent from the individual to the universal point of view which assumes a productive *reconciliation* between oneself and the other. The process of this reconciliation indicates the third stage of this dialectic, described by Hegel as the unity of the two different selves, who in this unity of their oppositions achieve complete freedom and self-sufficiency: “The *I* that is *we* and the *we* that is *I*” (*PbG GW* 9:108.39). This level of *reflective reconciliation* results from mutual recognition between two selves—though it is not attained until much later in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, namely in the concluding paragraphs of Chapter VI on “Spirit.”

In this sense, Chapter VI becomes essential for understanding Hegel’s account of recognition and its actual function in the text. Even a glimpse at the text of this chapter reveals that Hegel’s conception of spirit presented here does not really resemble his account of the same concept developed both in the Jena philosophy

of spirit and in the mature philosophy of right, or the *Encyclopedia* philosophy of objective spirit, which generally focus on ethical life or specific social and political institutions, respectively. As rightly stated by Siep, the concerns of social and moral philosophy are rather secondary in the *Phenomenology*, and they are “subordinated to epistemological and ontological questions” (Siep 2000, 81-82). Indeed, the argument Hegel lays down in Chapter VI is shaped as an inquiry into the self, striving for its self-knowledge and self-understanding; Hegel’s concern with the self addresses primary ontological questions regarding who we are, rather than questions of our moral agency. What is important to emphasize here and what often escapes scholars’ attention is that the way Hegel tackles the question of the self in the work makes it organically intertwined with, and intimately connected to, his theory of recognition. In fact, these two topics become inseparable, since recognition comes to be a necessary condition for acquiring one’s self-knowledge and self-understanding.

3. On Hegel’s Conception of the Self

In Chapter VI, Hegel points to three conceptions of the self that evolve in the course of the experience of “spirit”: (1) that of a legal person when the self emerges “in its right as *singular individuality*” (*PhG GW* 9: 251); (2) that of “absolute freedom” – the state when self-alienated spirit has completely “returned back into itself” (*PhG GW* 9: 266), indicating “consciousness grasping the *concept*” (*ibid.*); and (3) that of moral consciousness or “conscience.”⁴ Each of these conceptions belongs to a specific “realm” of spirit: the ethical world, the realm of culture (“the land of cultural formation”), and the realm of morality (“the land of moral consciousness”), respectively. Hegel argues that in each case the pertinent conception of the self represents the “truth” of the “totality” of that specific realm, and thus the complete unfolding of a relevant conception of the self is possible only through a complex dialectical process of experience that spirit accumulates by interacting with the different spheres of reality. Furthermore, Hegel discusses these conceptions of the self in terms of the movement of recognition by claiming that the notion of the self can be conceptualized only as “being recognized” and that the very existence of the self depends on it. Such an understanding already signals a close association between the conception of the self and recognition that Hegel postulates and consistently realizes in his Chapter on “Spirit.”

4. Only recently, scholars began paying attention to this “third self,” or the “*self of conscience*,” as Hegel calls it (*PhG GW* 9: 341). This passage has a great significance for making sense of the argument of the “Spirit” chapter as a whole. However, only a few commentators focus on this passage. See, for example Cobben 2009; Moyar 2011; and Siep 2014, 132. Interestingly, Timothy Brownlee stresses the significance of Hegel’s conception of conscience but considers it only on the material of Hegel’s later political philosophy (Brownlee 2011-12).

This association is further illustrated by how Hegel advances his argument about the self. The three conceptions of the self he identifies in the text are in progressive development, and the onward movement is measured based on the extent to which relations of fully reciprocal recognition have been achieved. While each of the three conceptions contributes in its own way to establishing these relations, the first two – those of the person and of the absolute freedom – are limited and do not produce conditions necessary for establishing relations of mutual recognition. Only the third conception of the self – “the self of conscience” – which is realizable only in the shared (social) world, is adequate to the achievement of reciprocity in relations of recognition.

Hegel explains that while the first conception of the self as a person is applicable to all participants in a social world and thus satisfies the (universality) criterion of *equality* that reciprocal recognition requires, personhood alone is insufficient to secure relations of achieved recognition. It is not enough to understand oneself as a mere singularity, an atomistic point,⁵ characterized exclusively by such generic features as being independent and the deeds I cherish – all of these do not only contribute to who I am but actually *distinguish* me from any other individual. This is what forms one’s “particularity,” the essential elements of my constitution that Hegel discusses in terms of “content.” The individual’s particularity must be included in the conception of the self for the individual to find “fulfillment” in it. Yet personhood fails to satisfy this “fulfillment” criterion. Being recognized solely as a person is negating, and it results in *alienation* (*Entfremdung*), which prevents the achievement of relations of mutual recognition and thus must be overcome.⁶

By contrast, the second conception of the self, absolute freedom, satisfies the *non-alienation* requirement.

In this self, the former initial immediate unity of singular individuality and universality come undone from each other. The universal, which remains equally a pure spiritual essence, a being recognized, or universal will and knowing, is the *object* and content of itself and its universal actuality. (*PhG GW* 9: 341)

This self acknowledges the authoritativeness of its own will and views itself not anymore as a mere singularity separate from others, but rather as a part of the universal whole which becomes its actuality. However, this self, Hegel warns, “does not have the form of free-standing existence apart from the self; within the

5. Hegel makes explicit that the most fundamental definition of the self is its understanding as an “atomic point” (*atome Punkt*) (*PhG GW* 9: 323). See also *PhG GW* 9: 263 where “a person” is introduced as an atomistic conception of the self, the self in its “point-like existence.”

6. On the role of Hegel’s concept of alienation in his theory of recognition in the *Phenomenology* see Brownlee 2015. For more details about Hegel’s account of alienation in the *Phenomenology*, see also, Moyar 2008.

self, it thus is not brought to fulfillment, and it reached no positive content, no world at all” (ibid.). To put it differently, absolute freedom makes it impossible for *anyone* to be a self, thus violating the equality requirement. The ultimate result of this conception of the self is the full *loss* of the self because absolute freedom erodes the very foundation that makes the self possible in the first place. These foundations are the social conditions necessary for intersubjective relations, only within which the self emerges as reciprocally recognized as such. Thus, despite escaping the problem of alienation looming over personhood, absolute freedom is partial and handicapped as well. It is utterly incapable of generating a shared social “world” necessary for reciprocity that is central to the achievement of relations of recognition as the path toward selfhood. Hegel contends that this result can be reached only with the third conception of the self, “conscience,” correlative with the normative discourse of morality. This is a distinct sort of selfhood that Hegel associates with the relation of mutual recognition. In short, the role of recognition in establishing appropriate self-relations, fundamental for the productive development of the self, is not limited simply to viewing others as essential to forming some important capacities of the self. It points to the need to acknowledge that the self is actually *constituted* through the participation in the shared practice of moral discourse.⁷

From the above discussion, it should be clear that the account of recognition in Hegel’s *Phenomenology* is essentially rooted in his account of the self. The idea that the self is fundamentally constituted through recognition is at the heart of Hegel’s phenomenological investigations. Given the centrality of the self to Hegel’s account of Spirit in the text,⁸ it would be a mistake to view Hegel’s account of recognition as being limited only to the Chapter on “Self-Consciousness.” Indeed, right from the outset of Chapter VI on “Spirit,” Hegel advances not only his view of the self but also – and perhaps to a greater degree his understanding of the movement of recognition – by attempting to explicate relations needed for the achievement of mutual recognition. Furthermore, by presenting the three conceptions of the self in their progressive development and discussing each conception in terms of relations of recognition – from partial and inadequate relations to those of fully reciprocal recognition – Hegel brings to completion his account of recognition in the *Phenomenology*. He shows that the key contribution

7. A similar idea about the significance of recognition is formulated by Axel Honneth in his *Kampf um Anerkennung* [*The Struggle for Recognition*] which is not focused on Hegel, but rather discusses social conflict. Honneth views recognition as the “moral grammar of social conflict.” For him, recognition derives its significance from its contribution to the achievement of appropriate self-relations. See Honneth 1992, especially 148-150.

8. Interestingly, only with the introduction of the concept of spirit, Hegel begins to use “the self” (*das Selbst*) as a substantive. In the earlier sections of the book, “self” was used very fragmentary: either as reflexive pronouns (*die Sache selbst*) or as an element of a compound term (*das Selbstbewußtsein*).

of recognition lies in the achievement of a distinctive sort of “selfhood,” whose formation occurs through moral practices in the shared social world.

Yet the process of this formation is what Hegel calls *Bildung*. This explains why the notion of *Bildung* plays such a prominent role in the *Phenomenology*. At the same time, it points to an important, I would say, organic, relation between *Bildung* and recognition in the text, a relation which receives very little attention in philosophical literature. In fact, the theory of the self that Hegel develops in the text is a theory of a process of the formation (*Bildung*) of the self through participation in intersubjective interactions, moral practices, and different forms of shared social life, where the unity of this process is provided by the principle of recognition. Successful recognition serves as a normative principle and a necessary condition of the very process of *Bildung*.

At this point in my discussion, it should be clear that the account of recognition in the *Phenomenology* and that of *Bildung* are grounded in the idea of the self, which gives both concepts their unique significance within the text. In the paragraphs above, I have mainly focused on Hegel’s argument for the movement of recognition showing that relations of reciprocal recognition have a *constitutive* significance for the self and that the achievement of the reciprocity is a necessary condition for the emergence of the self (i.e. the question of selfhood). The relevant issue that I have not yet addressed is the development of the self’s agency, or the question of the sociality of the self. It might be true that Hegel makes his most important claims about sociality in his practical philosophy.⁹ Although Hegel is not actually engaged in practical philosophy in the *Phenomenology* – at least not in the form as it was later shaped in his philosophy of objective spirit and philosophy of right – and does not intend to develop a theory of social agency, in this text, he seeks to provide an account of the self which would address a very specific basic question, the question of the achievement of self-knowledge. While the question itself is formulated as an epistemological inquiry (an inquiry of knowledge), it has an ontological significance. For, as Hegel shows, the self can acquire knowledge of itself only through being recognized by others. Thus, what Hegel advances here is a specific ontology of the self, an ontology which is necessarily social in its nature. In this sense, a concern with the agency of the self is already present here, even though the development of the account of this agency is not a central task of the *Phenomenology*. At the same time, Hegel’s conception of *Bildung*, so prominently present in the text, suggests that his interest in the self is not limited to only a question about the basic character of the self, which he addresses in terms of recognition. As I will show below, for Hegel, *Bildung* is associated with the cultural and social life of the self, and thus the kinds of concerns that Hegel

9. For a detailed discussion of basic sociality claims in Hegel’s practical philosophy see Pippin 2008. I also discussed the question of sociality in my: Bykova 2019.

discusses by reference to *Bildung* are questions relevant to the moral agency of the self within the shared social world. The central question that guides Hegel's investigation into the self in the context of *Bildung* is not just the emergence of the self as such, but rather a process of *becoming the self* that can exist only *socially*. In the following sections, I discuss Hegel's idea of *becoming* a self – both in relation to his immediate predecessors and in terms of his overall project in the *Phenomenology* – and show why and how *Bildung* comes to be instrumental for explicating this dynamic, dialectical process.

4. Becoming the Self

Hegel's Jena period (1801-1806) coincides with the beginning of his philosophical career, but it was also a time of searching for his own ideas and shaping his own position.¹⁰ Already in the *Differenzschrift* (1801),¹¹ where he still vigorously defended his then-close friend Schelling's philosophy over Fichte's, Hegel criticized the conception of a self-positing I that Fichte introduced as the first principle of his philosophical system known as the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Hegel believed that Fichte's first principle, conceptualized as the self-identity of consciousness with itself (I = I), was flawed, and not only because it required to start from a purely subjective aspect of experience, but because it wrongly positioned the I both as something originally given and as pure and true, which was therefore not prompted to undertake any changes and development. This disagreement with Fichte's conceptualization of the I motivated Hegel's exploration into the idea of self, leading to his own conception of self, which was shaped in direct response to Fichte's account of the self-positing I and fully emerged in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Unsatisfied with the conceptions of the self developed by his predecessors (including not only Fichte but also Descartes with his notion of ego as a fixed certainty, as well as Kant with his puzzling account of an impersonal transcendental subject) who interpreted the self as something which is originally complete and principally unalterable, Hegel views the self as formed through its own activity. Thus, instead of discussing the self in terms of its natural characteristics and generic features (as a natural "I"),¹² he attempts to grasp it in its actual dynamics, as constantly evolving and becoming, and not merely postulated or even "posited." Furthermore, the true Hegelian self acquires its definition through its own manifestations in the world.¹³ This significant shift away from Fichte's conception of the self signaled a move toward an essentially new (for both German idealism as

10. For more details about Hegel's Jena period see Bykova 2020a, especially 10-13.

11. The full title of this book is *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's Systems of Philosophy*. Hegel published it during his first year in Jena.

well as modern philosophy in general) approach to the self not present in the previous tradition.

Hegel begins conceiving of the self not just as a process of “reaching out” into the real world and actual experience; such a tendency is already clearly recognizable in Fichte. The novelty is that in Hegel the self is the *result of the intricate interaction* with the world. In the *Phenomenology*, he states that point by saying that

only this *self-restoring* sameness, the reflective turn into itself in its otherness. – The true is not an *original* unity as such, or, not an *immediate* unity as such. It is the coming-to-be of itself, the circle that presupposes its end as its goal and has its end for its beginning, and which is actual only through this accomplishment and its end. (*PhG GW* 9: 18.24-26)

This passage points to three key innovations of Hegel’s account of the self, which underscore a radical break with tradition when taken together. First, by claiming that the self is a *result* and not an “absolute beginning,” as Descartes, Fichte, and others conceived it, Hegel declares that the self is the *product* of its own entire development. The unity of this development is constituted by the continuous and never-ending self-determining formation or cultivation of the self, the process of “its own coming-to-be.” This is the process that Hegel describes as the “path of *Bildung*,” which I will discuss in more detail in the next section of this paper. Here, my aim is to highlight that *Bildung* has two equally important dimensions: cognitive and social. From the social perspective, which is widely recognized, this is a historical process that the individual subject undergoes within the social reality and history of its culture through participation in the shared social world by engaging with other conscious individuals (other selves), customs, norms, and rules that govern our social life, as well as by participating in a variety of social institutions. However, many commentators fail to recognize that *Bildung* is equally an epistemic process, or, in Hegel’s terminology, “the path of the natural consciousness ... towards true knowing” (*PhG GW* 9: 55.35-36), both of itself and of external reality. Through this process, natural (still immediate) consciousness gradually develops into the “absolute knowing” of self-consciousness, which

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12. For Hegel, the “I” is a singular form of existence of the self, and a natural “I” is the basic characteristic of each individual, which he associates with such features as being capable of thought and standing alone (i.e. independent or, in Hegel’s terminology, “self-standing”), both of which belong to the individual by nature. As it follows from his discussion of the conception of the self as a person, these “generic features” are only partial and not adequate to describe the self since they focus exclusively on individual’s singularity leaving out of sight its particularity and universality. See *PhG GW* 9: 341; also *GW* 9: 261-262.
 13. Hegel calls this self “the completed universal,” which knows itself as the *actual* self. See *PhG GW* 9: 362.

encompasses the entire content of the experience previously made by consciousness. The second idea that Hegel elucidates in the passage quoted above is that what the self is, what constitutes its true content and comprises its *whole* development taken in its entirety and undivided unity. Contrary to Schelling, who views wholeness as a simple totality of facts, Hegel understands the whole as a process of the entire development. In the *Phenomenology's* Preface, he explains that the mere result does not represent the “*actual whole*”; the whole is “the result together with the way the result comes to be” (*PhG GW9*: 10. 35-36). Applied to the self, this is that to whom the content “returns” as a result of its enrichment and development. To put it differently, for Hegel, the self is the process and the product of its own becoming. This brings us to the third idea presented, albeit implicitly, in the passage under discussion. Since the self is not something given or posited, it must continuously form and create itself by mediating its self-otherness within itself, which is possible only in and through its interaction with the world, both natural and social. Thus, the world itself comes to be the medium of one's becoming, and as such is an essential part of one's self; it is not just the source, but the basis and necessary condition of one's self-awareness and self-knowledge.

The self-relation of the self is no longer viewed by Hegel as something that exists immediately, prior to participation in an intersubjective realm of language and action, but as something that emerges from this experience. In his view, self-identity and self-relation are not originally given or imposed upon human individuals by any external force. That is always a result of those individuals' active interaction and mediation in and with the world. Hegel will later explain this idea in the *Encyclopedia* in the following way:

[The] world confronting the [human, i.e. individual] soul is not something external to it. On the contrary, the totality of relations in which the individual human soul finds itself, constitutes its actual livingness and subjectivity and accordingly has grown together with it just as firmly as, to use a simile, the leaves grow with the tree; the leaves, though distinct from the tree, belong to it so essentially that the tree dies if it is repeatedly stripped of them. (*Enc.* § 402A)

This passage clearly demonstrates the major advancement of Hegel's approach to the self and subjectivity over Fichte. Like the Cartesian, the Fichtean self is originally identical to itself through the pure and immediate act of thinking (intellectual positing) that takes place before and independently of any relation to the “not-I.” The world (the “not-I”) that lies outside the self becomes just the occasion and the useful medium for the self's activity, but never the necessity or condition of its self-knowledge and self-recognition. In Fichte's system, the self is never practically engaged with the world, and the actual world is never absorbed and organically integrated in the self. And, although Fichte wants to show con-

sciousness as a unified universe, the domains of the I and not-I remain separate entities and their alleged synthesis runs into a mere compromise and coexistence, rather than into an internal organic unity.

Hegel abandons the understanding of the self as simple self-identity, emphasizing that it could be represented as only “essentially a *result*” (*PhG GW*9: 19.13-14), as *coming-to-be* (the entire process of *becoming*) what it is – or in Hegel’s terminology, “*coming-to-be* what it ... is *in itself*” (*PhG GW*9: 429.26). In other words, it must be grasped as *self-identifying*,¹⁴ i.e., the self-generated activity of becoming. For Hegel, this does not merely coincide with but *is* the process by which the self acquires self-knowledge. Furthermore, he portrays the world as a real medium of the process of the becoming of the self, instrumental to achieving self-knowledge. The relation between the world and the self is not external anymore; the totality of world relations that constitute the self comes to be an essential element of its consciousness.

According to Hegel, the process of self-becoming should be understood as an actualization (*Verwirklichung*) of the self’s still unknown potentiality, and it aims at two opposite directions: outward as well as inward. Directed outwardly, the self manifests itself in the world. Self-development occurs by experiencing the world objectively during externalization (*Entäußerung*). Through this experience, the self develops familiarity (*bekanntwerden*) with itself. This is not yet knowledge proper (*Erkenntnis*) but such experience is crucial for achieving it. With increasing knowledge of its own manifestation, the self also learns its “innermost working,” the logic of the self, thus going inward (*Insichgehen*). Despite being opposite, both – inward and outward – processes are complementary and there is an organic connection between the two. Hegel’s recapturing of the phenomenological journey reconstructs the dynamics of this connection and the interrelation of both developments. The complex process of these developments is the “movement of the self” (*PhG GW*9: 431.15-16) toward its “coming-to-be” (becoming) what it is in itself. This movement is the self-relation that is understood not just as the logical and ontological self-identity but as self-knowing.¹⁵ By expanding into the world, the self also intensifies its inwardness. Since the self is never “at rest” and its activity never ceases, it is constantly engaged in making itself and becoming what it is. What is portrayed here is a real process of self-formation of the self which it “accomplishes as *actual history*” (*PhG GW*9: 430.6). This self’s engagement in the process of becoming itself, “the actual livingness” of the self, is what Hegel discusses in terms of *Bildung*.

14. Allegra de Laurentiis talks about *self-identifying* character of the self as its most fundamental structure. See De Laurentiis 2009, 253-257, especially 256.

15. For a fascinating discussion about the logic behind this “movement of the self” see De Laurentiis 2009, 258-263.

5. The concept of *Bildung*

The idea that the concept of *Bildung* occupies a central place in Hegel's philosophy is widely recognized. However, there is no agreement about the exact meaning in which Hegel uses the term and the role he assigns to it. One popular interpretation of *Bildung* reads it along the lines of education. On this reading, *Bildung* is conceived as a process of developing individual human's potentials and capacities through schooling (see Wood 1998; Uljens 2002; Munzel 2003). Another position that is often presented in scholarly literature is to treat *Bildung* as synonymous with culture understood as the result of human activity (see, for example, Levi 1984; Markus 2011; Brownlee 2015). Interpreted in this way, *Bildung* acquires some social-historical characteristics but remains predominantly understood in its universalistic (worldly) aspect alone without the important connection to the individual subject. While both of these connotations are important for grasping the meaning in which Hegel uses the term, they fail to capture the full complexity of it.

My goal in this paper is not to provide a detailed discussion of Hegel's concept of *Bildung*, a task I undertook elsewhere (Bykova 2020b). Thus, I limit myself just to saying that, for Hegel, the term refers to the *formative* self-development of individual and universal spiritual entities: human individuals and humanity at large construed as world spirit. This self-cultivation occurs through the self-generated and self-directed activity of a spiritual being itself and is simultaneously the activity of self-discovering (i.e. self-knowing) and of self-realizing (i.e. self-manifesting). Hegel portrays *Bildung* as an on-going dialectical (contradiction-ridden) process, a series of achievements that contribute to the individual's self-creation. Yet this process of self-formation is not a purely individual undertaking. It takes place in the shared social world (the world of spirit) by participation in various interactions with other individuals and social institutions, and as such is a *social* enterprise. Only through this dialectical dynamic does the spiritual being come to self-realization, which is manifest in freedom from dependence upon nature and eventually from everything that is given as pre-determined. It is this complex process of the *formation* of the universal subjects of thought, will, and action historically and socially developed within the cultural forms of the manifest (world) spirit that Hegel describes as the "path of *Bildung*." This is an understanding Hegel insists upon time and time again, assigning *Bildung* the most prominent role in his philosophy of objective spirit and discussing it as an essential feature of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*). In the 1820 *Philosophy of Right*, for example, he advances a concept of *Bildung* to explain the social nature of the human individual and the existing interconnection between this individual and civil society (*PhR* §182-232).

When it comes to the role that *Bildung* plays in the *Phenomenology*, many commentators tend to claim that it functions here only as a tool to represent the

process of the formation of consciousness or self-consciousness.¹⁶ In advancing their argument, they explain the concept of *Bildung* in Hegel's text by referencing its Introduction and Chapter IV, with a special emphasis on the section "Self-Sufficiently and Non-Self-Sufficiently of Self-Consciousness; Mastery and Servitude" (*PhG GW* 9: 109-116), the famous master and servant dynamics discussed above. On this reading, experience gained through productive work becomes the determining element of *Bildung* of consciousness, as well as of the *Bildung* process in general. This, in my opinion, is a very narrow understanding of *Bildung* and its place in the *Phenomenology*. As I alluded to this earlier, for Hegel, the project of *Bildung* is not limited to the formation of consciousness or self-consciousness, but rather concerns the self, and is conceptualized as a project of its self-cultivation. This refers to a long and laborious process of the self's becoming what it is in itself, and it cannot be completed merely through production. As we saw earlier, this process requires the self to be recognized by the other. Yet this recognition cannot occur as a result of a self's mere discovery of an other as something that is opposed to itself. As I showed in the first section of this paper, simply negating (in the sense of nullifying) the other as something that is different from myself is not adequate for a productive recognition capable of having a formative significance for the self. In this process, the instrumental role belongs to alienation and overcoming this alienation, the discussion of which actually shapes the content of Chapter VI on "Spirit."

It is in this portion of the text that Hegel presents the most elaborate discussion of *Bildung* in the *Phenomenology*, where not merely working on the object but rather alienating, tearing apart the self, and eventually overcoming the results of this struggle by rising to actual freedom,¹⁷ are presented as constitutive for *Bildung*.

In order to explicate my point, let us revisit Hegel's discussion of master-slave dialectic in Chapter IV. Here Hegel offers his account of the work as it is carried out by the slave. Since the slave is forced to work for the master, the consciousness of the slave is rooted in fear. Acting out of fear, the slave works on the object desiring it to disappear, which Hegel describes as a "pure negating of the object." From this perspective, work is also a kind of negation, namely as "desire *held in*

16. The most prominent authors who argue for this position are Jürgen Habermas (1968, see especially 8, 13) and Ludwig Siep (2014). According to Ludwig Siep, in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel develops the theory of consciousness, which he presents as "a theory of a process of the formation [*Bildung*] of consciousness in forms of interaction and institutions" (Siep 2014, 71).

17. Hegel distinguishes between merely "abstract freedom" and the actual one. The actual freedom is one that is engaged with the concrete world of experience. In his mature account of freedom that we find in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel explains that one can be actually free insofar as one participates in a shared form of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*). This is what some commentators call "social freedom" (see Neuhauser 2000, Honneth 2011). While freedom is not a primary concern of the early Jena *Phenomenology*, there should be no doubt that the question about the conditions for the realization of freedom already occupies an important place in this work.

check, it is vanishing *staved off*.” The crucial upshot of this is that through working on the object, the slave “discovers” himself, being able to come “to an intuition of self-sufficient being *as its own self*” (*PhG GW9*: 115). Based on this insight, commentators then equate the work on the object (production as such) with the process of *Bildung*. It is assumed that one forms oneself while producing an object according to one’s own idea. By shaping this object, one externalizes (objectifies) oneself by putting one’s idea into this object and eventually becoming able to recognize oneself in the resulting object. On this view, awareness and knowledge of oneself can be achieved through the process of working on the object, and therefore *Bildung* would be the direct result of production. I find this interpretation problematic.

Hegel does not use the term “*Bildung*” when he discusses the dynamic relationship between the master and the slave. Instead, when he writes about the slave working on the object, he employs the verb “*bilden*,” and neither of these two words are utilized when he talks about the evolution of consciousness. While Hegel certainly assigns a great significance to the process of working on the object and admits its productive role in generating one’s self-awareness and some degree of familiarity with oneself, this does not mean that self-consciousness (or the self) thereby attains *Bildung*.

One can get an idea about how insufficient it is to rely exclusively on Chapter IV for understanding the real place of *Bildung* in the *Phenomenology* by just glancing at the work’s table of contents. Not only does Hegel include “*Bildung*” in titles of some sections of Chapter VI on “Spirit,” but he also indicates here the close connection between the concept of *Bildung* and the concept of alienation. The title of section VI.B., “Spirit Alienated from Itself: *Bildung*” actually points to an intimate relationship between these two elements. Furthermore, section VI.B.1 on “The World of Self-Alienated Spirit” contains a subsection VI.B.I.a. titled “*Bildung* and its Realm of Actuality,” which is one of the longest in the entire book. This demonstrates not simply the importance of Chapter VI for understanding Hegel’s account of *Bildung* in the *Phenomenology* but also the crucial significance of alienation for its content. Since the main focus of Chapter VI is the idea of the self, *Bildung* is a process that describes the movement of the self, its rising to self-knowing and self-realizing. This process occurs through conflicts, contradictions, and divisions, through self-alienating (negating) and overcoming this alienation, through confrontation with the other and the struggle of being recognized by this estranged other.

It is worth mentioning, however, that *Bildung* is employed in the *Phenomenology* not merely to delineate the process of the self’s development from the natural, “uneducated” standpoint to the “educated” (*gebildete*) position of modern science, but also to conceptualize the on-going process of world history. However, the focus here is still on one single historical epoch, the epoch of emerging modernity

that is depicted as “*the realm of Bildung*,” which Hegel describes “as a harsh actuality” (*PhG GW* 9: 240; trans. modified). This connotation of *Bildung* often escapes the commentators’ attention because it is discussed by Hegel in terms of universal spirit, specifically as “substance given itself its self-consciousness, or, its coming-to-be and its reflective turn into itself” (*PhG GW* 9: 25.13). This understanding of *Bildung* obviously presupposes the development of the culture of modern society, where individual selves can relate both to themselves and to others, where they – being aware of contradictions that arise in interactions with their environment and others – are able to recognize others not merely as opposites but as co-participants in the shared social world. With *Bildung*, the self breaks with what is merely given, its singularity, and through negation sublates itself to universality. This is the true meaning of the process of self-cultivation which is necessarily animated by recognition of oneself through the other.

At least three moments here are directly relevant to our discussion. The first is Hegel’s insistence that the achievement of the “cultivated (*gebildete*) self” requires both otherness and the recognition of this otherness. In this way, Hegel stresses the importance of *otherness* for *Bildung*. The second essential idea is Hegel’s emphasis on the instrumental role of (*dialectical*) *negation* in the process of *Bildung*. The third is the significance that Hegel attributes to (mutual) recognition for achieving the *Bildung*-ideal. Due to the length limits of this paper, I will only briefly comment on each of these moments.

The idea that *Bildung* is associated with a sense of otherness is a uniquely Hegelian idea. Distinguishing oneself from one’s natural and social environment, as well as becoming aware of and taking into consideration the existence of others, are the events that allow oneself to rise above one’s singularity and particularity to universality. What makes the *other* so valuable to *Bildung* is the emphasis on a difference that contests the sameness. Perceived as alien, the *other* challenges naturally acquired habits and beliefs, everything that the natural self takes for granted. The otherness is a constructive element that provides a significant opportunity for the individual to “open” his horizons and receive exposure to other points of view, beliefs, cultures, and traditions.

Hegel introduces otherness as a fundamental *ontological* principle. The self cannot be “what it is in itself,” as long as it is not externalized and reified in the actual world. Hegel calls this process “alienation,” and it includes not only objectification (manifesting oneself, one’s own desires and thoughts in varying objects, events, etc.), but also an active encounter with other selves. Every self comes to be defined through another self, which reveals and enhances the particularity of both selves involved in this encounter and gives rise to universality. By opening up an expansive field of interactions with the world and the other selves, the otherness thus provides the conditions necessary for the realization of the self, for its becoming true individuality, a free subject acting on its own volition.¹⁸

However, what is often lost in discussions about the notion of otherness in the *Phenomenology* is that this concept is shaped by the “negative” semantics of Hegel’s idea of alienation. It is worth recalling that in this context, Hegel defines the realm of actuality of *Bildung* as “the world of self-alienated spirit.” This brings us to the question of the role of alienation (negation) in Hegel’s account of *Bildung*. In fact, in Hegel’s *dialectical* system, the other is treated not merely as different but rather as *contradictory*. The dialectical core of the relation of contradiction is *negation* (*Negativität*). Hegel describes negation, which is introduced by otherness, as a “vehicle,” or driving force for *Bildung*. The process of one’s formation (or cultivation) necessarily involves the transformative process of rising above the particularity of one’s social (and broader historical-cultural) context, which occurs through negation. The negation in question is not a complete annihilation, or “nullification,” which Hegel would reject as an abstract negative. This is rather a *dialectical* (determinate) *double negation* (the negation of negation),¹⁹ which results in a reflective reconciliation: the fact that the other does not share one’s habitual (natural) beliefs and views encourages one’s reflective thinking toward the adoption of a more reflective, universal point of view. Hegel sometimes describes *Bildung* as a form of “pure negativity” in that it negates any particular standpoint, not from another standpoint but rather in virtue of its detachment from any particular standpoint at all (*PhG GW*9:18; see also *Enc.* 3 §378A).

This may be understood in the way that *Bildung* and its detached point of view require a kind of “self-recognition in otherness,” an important element of reciprocity that grounds our (human) co-existence in the social and cultural world. Hegel points here to a very important feature of the *Bildung* process: as individual participants in the shared social world, we share certain concerns, which becomes possible only within a shared social realm that provides the framework necessary for an individual’s cultivation. This already emphasizes the close connection between *Bildung* and achieved recognition. For the shared realm to exist and be productive, the relation of the mutual recognition of individual human subjects must be established.

As discussed above, for Hegel, recognition is the long and complex process of the self’s development from a natural and still atomistic (singular) self into a social self (acting in the shared social world), the process which is possible only through the self’s encounter and recognition of the other. What is recognized here is one’s dependence upon the other, which is not one-sided but a mutual process. The

18. Pippin clearly shows that “true individuality” is possible as a result of productive (mutual) recognition. He states: “A *true individual* is a *free* subject and recognition relations function in a complex way as conditions for that possibility” (Pippin 2000, 156).

19. Hegel distinguishes between determinate and abstract negation (*Enc.* §147; see also *Enc.* §91 *GW* 20:130). An abstract negation is simply a “cancelation” of what is negated, the absence of particularity. A determinate negation preserves (retains) parts of what is negated while rising above it. Thus, only determinate negation is truly productive, and as such can serve as a “vehicle” of *Bildung*.

two necessarily “recognize themselves as *mutually recognizing each other*” (*PhG GW* 9: 110.29). This mutual interdependence is the reality of the shared social world and an essential condition of the development of selfhood (here in the sense of its socialization).²⁰ One’s self-awareness and self-knowledge are possible only through mutual recognition by other individuals; this is required to develop, construct, adopt, adapt, assess and justify our social and communal essence.

Mutual interdependence not only enables the individual subject to break out of a sort of impulsive (natural) and unreflective selfishness (atomistic singularity) and to begin comporting oneself to objective social norms and traditions, but it also allows for communication, cooperation, and social organization, which mark the beginning of human historical development. Both individual self-consciousness and human social and cultural development are dependent upon this ongoing process of intersubjective recognition. Furthermore, as I have shown elsewhere (Bykova 2020b, 439–444) the self as the “individual singularity” becomes a social self only by integrating itself into a social system. This process is essential to both the development of individual selves and civilizations. Without a community to integrate into, the individual would never achieve its selfhood (to become a true self) but would remain merely an incoherent series of (unreflected) habitual impulses and appetites; without the integrating individual, there would be no society. This process of social and cultural integration is captured in Hegel by the social aspect of *Bildung* which he advances in the *Philosophy of Right*. Interpreted as an intra-personal, intersubjective activity that marks a transition to the socio-cultural (universal) dimension of individual life, this *Bildung* is not imposed externally. It is a self-generated activity of the self (as a concrete individual) in practical search (i.e., the process of formation) of its selfhood which is conceptualized as its self-realization as a conscious and free being (see *PhG GW*9: 194).

Hegel makes it clear that *Bildung* is a concrete universal process in which we human beings necessarily participate and through which we become aware of ourselves and our natural and social environment. Yet, this process can take place only if an individual is not alone but interacts with other individuals, collectively pursuing their own goals. The self hence can acquire its subjectivity (its sense of self-certainty and true individuality) only in and through its own activity, activity that does not merely occur in the world, but that is mediated through interactions with other people who mutually recognize one another as co-inhabitants and co-participants in a shared social world. This makes Hegel’s concepts of *Bildung* and recognition not simply closely connected but necessarily complementary. The self’s formation (*Bildung*) cannot be accomplished without achieving a produc-

20. On Hegel’s account of human sociality and its role in the development of selfhood see Honneth 2008; Bykova 2019.

tive mutual recognition. The latter becomes a necessary condition for the former and is instrumental to its attainment.

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