RECOGNITION AND HOSPITALITY

RECONOCIMIENTO Y HOSPITALIDAD

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Abstract: An increasing interest for the theme of recognition and of intersubjective relationships has been registered in the last decades. In this frame a new interest for Hegel's theory of recognition has also been developed. This new interest focuses mostly only on the figure of struggle for recognition in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Nevertheless, Hegel's theory of recognition has a much wider structure: it is not limited to this conflictual moment, but also connects to the themes of forgiveness and of love. That's why it also offers the premise for a discussion of the theme of hospitality. The connection between recognition and hospitality has been emphasized by Paul Ricoeur in his last writings, dedicated to the theme of translation and to the different courses of recognition.

Key words: RECOGNITION; HOSPITALITY; FORGIVENESS; HEGEL; RICOEUR.

Resumen: En las últimas décadas ha habido un creciente interés en el tema del reconocimiento y de las relaciones intersubjetivas. En este contexto, también se ha desarrollado un nuevo enfoque en la teoría hegeliana del reconocimiento. Esta atención se centra principalmente en la figura de la lucha por el reconocimiento de la *Fenomenología del espíritu*. Sin embargo, la teoría hegeliana del reconocimiento tiene un diseño mucho más amplio: no se limita a este momento conflictivo, sino que también está relacionado con los temas del perdón y del amor. Por lo tanto, ofrece la premisa para una discusión sobre el tema de la hospitalidad. El vínculo entre reconocimiento y hospitalidad fue desarrollado por Ricoeur en sus últimos escritos, dedicados al tema de la traducción y los diferentes caminos del reconocimiento.

Palabras clave: RECONOCIMIENTO; HOSPITALIDAD; PERDÓN; HEGEL; RICOEUR.

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Recognition and Hospitality

The theme of recognition, and more generally the sphere of inter-subjective relationships, has been object of an increasing interest in the field of philosophical studies, both from the theoretical and the practical standpoint.

This phenomenon must not be seen just as a meaningful and yet particular occurrence regarding a limited research area. On the contrary, it must be understood as the symptom of a deep change affecting many important levels of our cultural landscape. Toward the end of the Seventies, after the decline of the collectivistic approach typical of Marxism, the rise of negative thought and then of nihilism contributed to create a cultural atmosphere dominated by two elements: on one side, positions prone to radical historicism and relativism; on the other side, strong forms of individualism. It seemed that the discharge of traditional metaphysics had to entail the rejection of any form of constructive desire, and that only a "dissolutive" attitude could lead thought at the end of twentieth Century. Even though this dissolutive attitude still aimed to work as a critical stance against society, its individualistic side leaned quite paradoxically toward the predominant lifestyles and ways of thought of the age of late capitalism. This last aspect has become even more evident in our time: in our global society many of the communitarian bonds and social supports people used to count on are disappearing, and therefore a new individualistic model of conduct is spreading; on the other side, the increasing importance of the economical sphere and the analogous diffusion of the ideology of laissez-faire lead to the validation of an anthropological model centered on an individual (*homo oeconomicus*) capable of acting according to a practical-rational behavioral scheme oriented uniquely to his own interest.

After all, this individualistic orientation is not a phenomenon regarding exclusively our time. The focus on individual dimension is, be it good or bad, a typical feature of Western society. Since from the dawn of Modern Age our society has seen an unprecedented growth of the role of the individual in the sphere of concrete reality. Starting from this experience, many schools of thought assigned to the individual sphere a central role in their interpretation of some dimensions of experience. So, has been for contractualism in politics, for liberalism in economics and for utilitarianism in the field of ethics. It is surely impossible to deny the importance and the influence of such individualistic orientation in the development of Modern Thought. And yet it must be at least observed that this orientation implies a risky move since from the beginning. Individualism has an analytical tendency to disassemble the global reality of human relationship in order to find a solid element under the manifold of appearance,

and to trace on this basis a rational and essential scheme of the structure of experience. And yet, by reducing human being to an individual atom, it avoids recognizing the relational dimension that constitutes it from the beginning.

It is well-known that in the context of modern social and political thought contractualism had many successes and offered – in particular with Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau – a fundamental contribution to the formation of modern culture and mentality. We must wait until Hegel in order to find an adequate and alternative model to this line of thought: I refer in particular to the reflection he developed in Jena on the topic of recognition. With that research Hegel – also evoking the teaching of Aristotle – substantially disproved the individualism of modern political philosophy and has shown the inherently relational character of every human experience.

In the much more variegated and fragmented landscape of contemporary thought, many different currents and orientations showed the limits of individualism and offered alternative solutions. In this frame we also find an increasing focus on intersubjective relations and in particular on the topic of recognition; in a narrower but still very meaningful context, we also see that in the last years a certain interest for the theme of hospitality has emerged. On one side, the study of intersubjective relationships connected directly to Husserl's legacy and to phenomenology and focused on the topic of alterity and of foreign hood. On the other side, the study of the relations between cultures and religions – a topic of fundamental relevance in our globalized world – has significantly increased.

The interest for the theme of hospitality is surely stimulated by the phenomenon of migrations and is deeply connected with the theme of intercultural relationships. Nevertheless it must be remarked that the research on hospitality is part of a new research orientation, whose aim is to radically criticize the neoliberalist and individualist model of *homo oeconomicus*, and therefore gives particular relevance to the topics of Gift and of Gratuitousness, to the logic of love and of forgiveness, and of course to the theme of hospitality.

It is natural that in the landscape of contemporary thought, so strongly marked by the interest for the theme of intersubjectivity and otherness, there is a new and strong interest for Hegel's theory of recognition. This interest has been growing since the Seventies in the context of Hegelian Scholarship, that previously had privileged the systematic aspects of Hegel's mature thought or the concrete topics of his early thought. This new orientation has somehow influenced also the image of Hegel in a wider cultural context, not limited to the specialists of Hegel's thought. And yet, both in this context and in the *Hegelforschung* the focus is almost exclusively on the theme of the struggle for life and death and on its outcome, that is the unequal relation between master and servant, as

it is famously described in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The structure of Hegel's reflection on recognition is nevertheless much wider, and only by considering it as a whole it is possible to grasp the contribution of Hegel's philosophy to the topics we are now discussing.

First of all, in the *Phenomenology* the theme of recognition is not limited to the struggle between self-consciousnesses, but only starts from it and then covers the entire work: it appears in the account of the "thing itself" and culminates in the figure of forgiveness between consciences. Moreover, before starting his masterpiece, Hegel sketched in his writings and lectures in Jena a first theory of recognition, that keeps its originality with respect to the one exposed in the *Phenomenology*, and that some scholars – like Habermas and Honneth – prefer to the latter precisely because it emphasizes the theme of intersubjective relationships. Lastly, the research on recognition connects with the reflection on the theme of love and its logic, a theme widely studied by Hegel in Frankfurt, in the time his original perspective actually took form.

Let's first of all consider what emerges in Hegel's early thought. Hegel's education takes place in a context dominated by two main cultural orientations: Enlightenment, in its German version – *Aufklärung* – and Protestant Christianity, in the form of Lutheranism. The first stage of his philosophical development is deeply marked by the encounter with Kant: from Kant Hegel takes the theme of freedom, of the autonomy of human being. Later Hegel expands his horizon and progressively comes to the idea of living in an age of crisis and of change: Industrial, French and Kant's philosophical revolution introduced big news and big promises, all linked to the validation of modern subject and of his freedom. And yet, each of these big transformations also had serious negative consequences: the loss of traditional communitarian bonds, the affirmation of individualism in society, of terror in politics, the dualism in the view of human being. To reflect on these divisions also means to ask whether they can be put back together, whether a reconciliation in reality is possible, and therefore if it is possible to find a principle for such a reconciliation in the domain of thought.

This principle of reconciliation is what Hegel discovers and develops during his stay in Frankfurt (1797-1800); he does so by following two paths, a philosophical and a religious one. The first path originates from his relationship with Hölderlin and from Hölderlin's critique to Fichte's principle of the "I", that keeps the opposition of subject and object and therefore requires an anterior principle, that precedes any division.

The second path has its roots in Hegel's original meditation about the experience of Early Christianity, with particular reference to the texts

by John and Paul. According to Paul love is the fulfillment of the law, since it realizes the law's original and true intention but at the same time suspends the formal and counter-productive character of its commandments. According to Hegel love is opposed to law's abstract universality and overcomes the objective view of modern man, that separates the subject from the object and from other subjects. Love does in fact grasp life in its organic articulation and in its own becoming, it recognizes the differences but overcomes any opposition[2]. It manifests in Jesus' behavior, in particular in his forgiving the sinner: if law is a universal that punishes the guilty but does not redeem him, love on the contrary makes him understand that with his crime he damaged that one life he himself was a part of, and therefore leads him to reconcile with it through forgiveness. Hegel thus finds in Love that principle that is able to reconcile divisions, a principle that is not just practical but also theoretical, since it grasps life's becoming, grasps life as an harmonious unity from which the individual separates in order to assert himself, and in which he reconciles himself finding a more complex unity that also takes into account the division that happened before. This alternation of scission and reconciliation is for Hegel a general law he calls *destiny*: in this idea we can recognize a first draft of his mature dialectical thought. It is also possible to talk of a "logic of love", that emerges through the study of the texts of Early Christianity. In Paul appears many times the verb *katargeîn*, that means "to deactivate", "to render inoperative", and is used to express the effect of love upon the law. As Giorgio Agamben has observed, this verb is translated by Luther with the word "*Aufheben*", a word that will have a huge relevance in Hegel's entire thought[3].

In the drafts composed in Jena before the *Phenomenology* Hegel deals for the first time with the question concerning intersubjective relationships, and does so by using the notion of *Anerkennung*, that had been introduced by Fichte in the context of a transcendental examination of the conditions of right. Hegel, on the contrary, makes a much more concrete use of this notion, since he tries to present the formation of an ethical community as the succession of different stages in a struggle for recognition. The process goes through many different stages, and conflict rises every time with respect to determinate situations in which the request for recognition is rejected; that's how different stages of the development of recognition correspond to different kinds of rejection and of misrecognition.

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[2] Cf. Guanzini, Isabella, *Il giovane Hegel e Paolo. L'amore fra politica e messianismo*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 2013.

[3] Agamben, Giorgio, *Il tempo che resta. Un commento alla Lettera ai Romani"*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2000, pp. 94-102.

Considering the whole picture, Hegel deals with the question concerning intersubjective relationships by developing both the theme of love and of struggle: the first corresponds to the topic of unity between subjects, the second to the topic of distance. Through this path he manages to understand the process of recognition as a synthesis of love and struggle, of unity and distance, of self-renunciation and self-assertion, a process in which the other is firstly rejected and then ultimately recognized.

These reflections are fully developed in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Here Hegel shows that self-consciousness has the same structure of life, that is a process of unity and distinction, but at the same time goes beyond life to a superior level, that is the dimension of spirit. This is clear in the dialectics of appetite: in the animal it only addresses a natural object, like food, and comes back every time after it has been satisfied. It is different for human self-consciousness: for it this level is not enough, it needs something more, and precisely another self-consciousness answering to it, acting towards it and thus enacting a reciprocal spiritual tension. This reciprocal operating with another, a reciprocal operating we constantly stretch out to, is for Hegel recognition, and this is what we look for in every intersubjective relationship we find ourselves experiencing. Here the "struggle for life and death" is born, because each self-consciousness must prove, to itself and to the other, that its nature of self-consciousness matters to it more than life, more than its natural being. The first outcome of this struggle is an unequal relationship (that between master and servant), in which as a matter of fact recognition fails.

And yet the story of intersubjective relationships does not end here, but rather continues along the whole path of *Phenomenology*. The core passages are in the section on Reason and then at the end of the chapter on Spirit. In the first passage Hegel shows that the "thing itself", that is the spiritual and social reality we are located in, is the result of the "action of all and each"; it is the outcome of the intertwine of various intersubjective relationships between self-consciousnesses. The path of spirit, finally arrived at its last stage, comes to the struggle between the consciousness as beautiful soul, that retires from the world in order to enjoy its own purity, and the conscience that chooses action and inevitably makes its hands dirty by operating in the particular and concrete reality. In the beginning the first consciousness condemns the second because of this, but then also recognizes the limits of its own attitude, that remains in the domain of universality. When both consciences confess to each other their own guilt and exchange forgiveness, then the full reconciliation finally happens. At this point each of the two consciences, thanks to the forgiveness of the other, realizes the mediation between universality and singularity. Thanks to

this reciprocal forgiveness, ultimately an act of love, the theme of the struggle for recognition, that is present in the whole text starting from the conflict between self-consciousnesses, finally gets to its fulfillment: in this reconciliation it is still possible to recognize the lively and effective presence of the "logic of love" Hegel started to think about in Frankfurt[4].

Unlike Kant, in Hegel thought there is no explicit discussion of the theme of hospitality. And yet he brings us on the verge of this topic: the theory of recognition puts the premises for it, because it offers a radical alternative to any atomistic and individualistic view of human being, whereas the logic of love introduces a horizon in which the reflection about hospitality can finally take form.

This last passage, the connection of the theme of recognition with that of hospitality, has been made by Paul Ricoeur in his last writings. It is well-known that his last work, published by the philosopher one year before his death, is entitled precisely *Parcours de la reconnaissance* [*Courses of Recognition*] and takes into account the double meaning of the French word "reconnaissance", that means both "recognition" and "gratitude"[5]. The focus on the themes of recognition and of intersubjectivity is present, at first only sketched and then more and more explicitly, throughout the whole work of the philosopher[6].

At the core of Ricoeur's thought there is the question concerning the identity of the subject, that after the crisis of Cartesian *Cogito* seems to be inherently decentered and shaken by the tension between the self and the other, between familiarity and foreign hood. Here starts the task of the hermeneutics of the self, a process that involves the analysis of the self's multiple relationships to otherness. By doing this, Ricoeur explicitly and repeatedly addresses the Hegelian theme of recognition, that he considers as a model. At the same time he clarifies his own distance from Hegel: for the latter otherness is an unavoidable dimension, but the ultimate *telos* of spirit is to bring it back to itself, at least with regard to the essential; in Ricoeur's work the task is similar, but is faced with the awareness that otherness has an ultimately irreducible character: this awareness constitutes the difference between Ricoeur's philosophy of finitude and Hegel's theory of absolute knowledge.

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[4] Cf. Falappa, Fabiola, *Il cuore della ragione. Dialettiche dell'amore e del perdono in Hegel*, Assisi, Cittadella, 2006.

[5] Ricoeur, Paul, *Parcours de la reconnaissance*, Paris, Stock, 2004, trad. it. *Percorsi del riconoscimento*, Milano. Cortina, 2005.

[6] On this see in particular Castiglioni, Chiara, *Tra estraneità e riconoscimento. Il sé e l'altro in Paul Ricoeur*, Milano-Udine, Mimesis, 2012.

In his work *The Course of Recognition* Ricoeur chooses to follow entirely Axel Honneth's reading of Hegel. In his book *The Struggle for Recognition* (published in 1992) Honneth discards the contribution of the *Phenomenology* and focuses on the Jena drafts. Through this choice he offers an account of Hegel's theory that, re-thinked in non-metaphysical terms, according to him can offer a valid contribution to contemporary debate. This idea that Hegel's thought is interesting only as long as it is not metaphysical comes to Honneth from his teacher Habermas and is in my opinion extremely questionable. Anyway, Ricoeur follows Honneth's reading, that presents the struggle for recognition as articulated in three steps: love, right and solidarity.

At this point Ricoeur adds his personal original contribution, a theory of the "states of peace" considered as "clear-ups", as temporary "truces" on the background of the everlasting struggle for recognition that goes through the entire human experience. This theory is articulated in a discussion of gift, of translation and of linguistic hospitality. With regard to the first topic Ricoeur develops a logic of gratuitousness that is opposed to that of equivalence, on which justice is based, and to that of the exchange, on which the market is based.

With regard to the theme of translation Ricoeur gets back to some topics he had discussed in some contributions in the Nineties[7]. The first step that must be made here is to renounce to the idea of a perfect translation; the idea of a unique universal language implies in fact that there is only one model of linguistic expression: that is the universality of identity, that makes all of us the same without our own singularity. On the other side one must also reject the opposite thesis, according to which translation is impossible: if it were so, there would not be any relationship between the experiences of different human groups.

The theory of translation must accept this gap between what is own and what is foreign, it must be known that every translation aims to equivalence without demanding perfect identity. Therefore, the activity of the translator, aside from requiring a certain amount of intellectual work, also implies an ethical aspect, that Ricoeur defines as "linguistic hospitality": one must «dwell in the other's home in order to bring him closer as an invited guest»[8]. From this standpoint the paradigm of translation becomes a model for other forms of hospitality that concern the relationship between different confessions, religions, cultures. According to Ricoeur

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[7] I refer to several texts, written between 1992 and 2000, which Domenico Jervolino collected and edited, accompanying them with a nice introduction: Ricoeur, Paul, *La traduzione. Una sfida etica*, tr. it. di I. Bertoletti e M. Gasbarrone, Brescia, Morcelliana, 2001.

[8] *Ibid*., p. 78.

human universality only exists in the plurality of its concrete expressions, and yet connects them allowing communication; it is possible in the form of hospital dialogue between different ones.

That's how Ricoeur connects the theme of recognition with the one of hospitality. In Hegel's thought this connection was difficult, since the spirit, aside from the differences due to natural contingency, aims to bring what is essential in the Other back to itself. If hospitality refers to an otherness of the host that cannot be eliminated, then hospitality invites us to think the theme of recognition in the context of a philosophy more aware of the finitude of human experience.