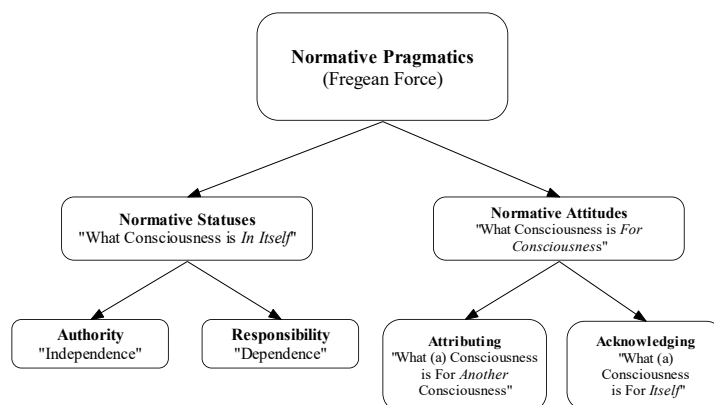


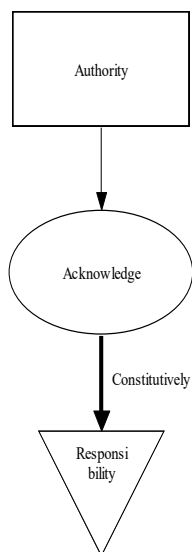
October 11, 2017

# Handout for *Self-Consciousness I*

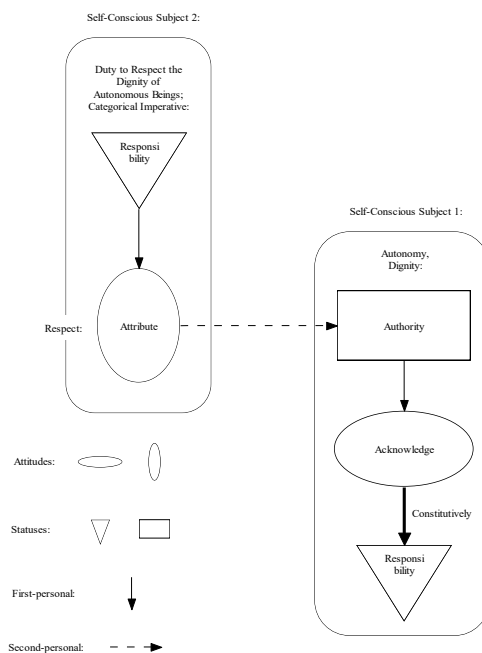


Elements of the model are in bold.  
Modeled Hegelian phrases are in quotes.

## Autonomy: The Basic Kantian Normative Status



## The Social Dimension of the Kantian Autonomy Model



## Recognition Passages (emphases added):

“A self-consciousness exists for a self-consciousness. Only so is it in fact self-consciousness; for only in this way does the unity of itself in its otherness become explicit for it. The 'I' which is the object of its Notion is in fact not 'object'; the object of Desire, however, is only independent, for it is the universal indestructible substance, the fluid self-identical essence. A self-consciousness, in being an object, is just as much 'I' as 'object'. With this, we already have before us **the Notion of Spirit**. What still lies ahead for consciousness is the experience of what Spirit is—this absolute substance which is the unity of the different independent self-consciousnesses which, in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence: '**I that is 'We' and 'We' that is 'I'.**' [PG §177].

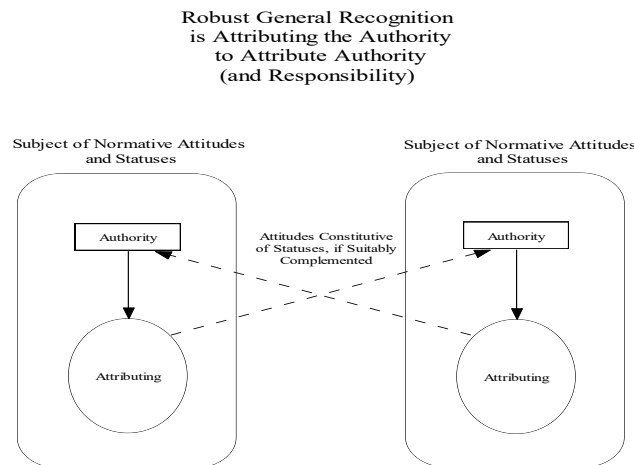
“Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged....The detailed exposition of the Notion of this spiritual unity in its duplication will present us with **the process of Recognition.**” [PG §178].

“Now, this movement of self-consciousness in relation to **another** self-consciousness has in this way been represented as the action of **one** self-consciousness, but this action of the one has itself the double significance of being both its own action and the action of the other as well. For the other is equally independent and self-contained, and there is nothing in it of which it is not itself the origin...Thus the movement is simply **the double movement of the two self-consciousnesses**. Each sees the other do the same as it does; each does itself what it demands of the other, and therefore also does what it does only in so far as the other does the same. **Action by one side only would be useless because what is to happen can only be brought about by both.**” [182]

“They recognize themselves as mutually recognizing one another.” [184]

“We have now to see how **the process of this pure Notion of recognition, of the duplicating of self-consciousness in its oneness**, appears to self-consciousness. At first, it will exhibit the side of the inequality of the two, or the splitting-up of the middle term into the extremes which, as extremes, are opposed to one another, one being only recognized, the other only recognizing.” [185]

“But according to the Notion of recognition this [that a self-consciousness’ certainty of itself have truth] is possible **only when each is for the other what the other is for it**, only when each in its own self through its own action, and again through the action of the other, achieves this pure abstraction of being-for-self.” [PG §186].



Tripartite oretic model of consciousness:

“[T]he unity of self-consciousness with itself... must become essential to self-consciousness, i.e. **self-consciousness is Desire in general.**” [167]

The three elements of the model are:

- a) an *attitude* or desire, e.g. **hunger**,
- b) a responsive *activity*, e.g. **eating**, and
- c) a *significance*, e.g. **food**.

The three principal relations of elements in the model are:

- d) The attitude must *motivate* the activity, in the sense of *activating* a (more or less reliable, in a sense determined by the assessments in (f) below) disposition to respond differentially to objects.
- e) Responding to an object by engaging in the activity is taking or treating it in practice *as* having a significance defined by the attitude that motivates the activity. This is the *subjective* significance of the object.

- f) The desiring attitude *assesses* the object, implicitly attributing to it an *objective* significance, accordingly as responding to it by engaging in the activity the attitude motivates does or does not satisfy the desire. If it does not, if what the object was subjectively or *for* the animal does not coincide with what it was objectively, or *in* itself, that is, if the activity was not *successful* in satisfying the motivating desire, then an *error* has been committed. In that case the desire motivates *changing* the reliable differential responsive disposition to engage in the associated activity when activated by the desire and stimulated by a range of objects.

The historicity of essentially self-conscious creatures:

1. Definition: A creature is “essentially self-conscious” iff what it is *for* itself is an essential element of what it is *in* itself.
2. Essentially self-conscious creatures are capable of a distinctive kind of self-*transformation*: *making* themselves be different by *taking* themselves to be different.
3. Essentially self-conscious beings don’t have *natures*, they have *histories*.

Normativity itself has a history. The single biggest thing that ever happened in human history is the transformation from traditional to modern structures of normative statuses and attitudes. This is the change from one-sided practical appreciation of the *status-dependence of normative attitudes* to one-sided practical appreciation of the *attitude-dependence of normative statuses*. It is also the change from *subordination-obedience* models and structures of normativity to *autonomy* models and structures of normativity (in both Kant’s individual form and Hegel’s social-recognitive form). (Next time we’ll read Hegel’s allegorical account of why these are two aspects of one transformation, in terms of the “struggle-unto-death.”)

Rousseau: “Obedience to a law one has prescribed for oneself is freedom.” [*Social Contract* I.viii.]  
 Hegel: “The principle of freedom emerges in Rousseau...This furnishes the transition to the Kantian philosophy...” [*Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Volume III].

Kant turns Rousseau’s definition of freedom into a criterion of demarcation for a distinctive sense of normative bindingness. He appeals to the symmetric attitudes involved in obedience to self-imposed obligations to define what it is for a status to count as a *normative* status, using autonomy as a criterion of demarcation for the normative.

Kant and Rousseau achieved symmetry within a conception that is recognizably a version of the legislating/obeying model by adopting a *reflexivity* strategy: identifying the commanding with the commanded. Hegel does so by adopting a *symmetry* strategy: understanding the key social normative relation to be one where both subjects standing in that social recognitive relation play both roles. Both metaphysical models can be seen as versions of the idea that normative attitudes of command and obedience between individuals standing in subordination relations can institute statuses of obligation that are genuinely *normative* statuses only if they are intelligible as having the structure of *self-government*. The autonomy model applies that idea by requiring that the instituting attitudes be reflexive. The recognition model applies that idea by requiring that the instituting attitudes be symmetric. According to this new essentially *social* conception of normative self-hood, the self-constituting, self-conscious subject of both normative attitudes and the normative statuses they institute is what Hegel calls “the ‘I’ that is ‘we’, the ‘we’ that is ‘I’.” [*PhG* 177].

According to the recognitive model of the institution of normative statuses by normative attitudes, the *authority* to recognize (which is, *inter alia*, attributed by the attitude of recognition) and the *responsibility* to recognize are two sides of one coin. Attributing recognitive authority implies acknowledging recognitive responsibility.

To be a self in the full normative sense is to have not only actual normative attitudes, but also actual normative statuses: not only to *take* oneself or others to have authority or be responsible, but actually to *have* authority or *be* responsible. To achieve such a status, a normative subject must participate in a general recognitive dyad: must actually be recognized by someone that subject actually recognizes. For only suitably socially complemented attitudes institute actual statuses

In the mutual recognition model, authority and responsibility are co-ordinate and complementary. It is entirely up to me whom I recognize: to whom I attribute the authority to institute normative statuses by their attitudes, when those attitudes are suitably complemented by those to whom they attribute them. In doing so, though, I make myself responsible to those I do recognize. For while it is up to me in that same sense (I have the authority) to acknowledge commitments (responsibilities) on my own part, it is not in the same sense up to me whether I succeed in *making* myself responsible by so *taking* myself to be responsible. My acknowledgement of a commitment, my claim of authority, yield actual statuses of responsibility and authority only if those statuses are also attributed to me by those I have granted the authority to do so, by recognizing them. Nothing but attitudes are necessary (or sufficient) to institute genuine normative statuses. But on the Hegelian recognitive model such normative statuses are understood as essentially *social* statuses. It is *our* attitudes—my attitudes *and* the attitudes of those I recognize and who recognize me, a recognitive community—that institute normative statuses. My attitudes play an essential role in determining what authority and responsibility I have, but I cannot make myself authoritative or responsible all on my own.

The retrospective, rational-reconstructive *historical* phase of the process of experience, Hegel's "Erinnerung", explains how, on the semantic side, objective conceptual contents (referents, noumena) articulated as laws, facts, and objects with properties both are to be understood in terms of and serve as standards for assessments of the correctness of the process of manipulating subjective conceptual contents (senses) by applying rules, propositions, and singular terms and predicates in adopting doxastic attitudes. The *social* character of the recognitive process that institutes both normative subjects and their communities explains, on the pragmatic side, both how normative statuses (noumena, what self-conscious subjects are in themselves) are instituted by (and in that strong sense dependent upon) normative attitudes (phenomena, what self-conscious subjects are for themselves) and how those statuses have authority over those attitudes in serving as standards for assessment of their correctness. This is the dimension of status-dependence of normative attitudes, the responsibility of those attitudes to (Hegel's "dependence on") statuses that balances the attitude-dependence of normative statuses.

The retrospective rational reconstruction of a tradition of concept-applications is the process that "gives contingency the form of necessity." Viewed *prospectively*, the particularity and contingency of individual attitudes shows up: the sense in which they are explicable in terms of other attitudes without reference to governing normative statuses. Viewed *retrospectively*, the necessity codified in norms as statuses shows up: the sense in which individual attitudes are normatively governed by universals implicit in the tradition, to which they answer for their correctness. Seeing these dual perspectives as two sides of one coin, as indissolubly linked aspects of one rational process by which conceptual content is determined, is what allows Hegel to do justice both to the attitude-dependence of normative statuses and to the status-dependence of normative attitudes. The structure of authority and responsibility it embodies exhibits the structure of reciprocal recognition.