

# The Recognition Principle



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*A Philosophical Perspective  
between Psychology,  
Sociology and Politics*

By

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## INTRODUCTION

The issue of recognition is now widely and deeply instilled into the communicative and reflective fabric of public and political debate. This concept identifies a cornerstone of the new dynamic and problematic structures of contemporary social life, including the problems of recognition in a multicultural society, and the struggles for recognition of individuals and identitarian groups. It is also a fundamental term for different theoretical and empirical areas of research. Whether the term 'recognition' may seem of lesser importance in ethnology and anthropology, in fact it was Marcel Mauss' (1923-1924) previous research on *reciprocity* that established economic anthropology as a new field (Mauss, Polanyi [1944, 1957], Sahlins [1972]). Over time, this has not only facilitated the entry of the issue of recognition into the fields of anthropological and ethnological studies, but has also provided elements of great speculative importance to philosophy (as is evidenced by the widespread use of Marcel Hénaff's book on anthropology *Le prix de la vérité*<sup>1</sup> by Paul Ricœur in his *The Course of Recognition*<sup>2</sup> [2004]). Sahlins' theories played a particularly progressive role in the dialectic of recognition within anthropological research. Regarding the notion of reciprocity, Sahlins examines the variable of social distance by identifying three forms of reciprocity: *balanced reciprocity* (a form of reciprocity that expresses an intermediate degree of solidarity, from which the return of a gift is expected); *generalized reciprocity* (a maximum expression of solidarity, in which the value of traded goods is not actually taken into account); and *negative reciprocity* (an absolute lack of reciprocity). Although not explicitly understood in terms of 'recognition', 'reciprocity' nevertheless contains such concepts as *solidarity*, *interaction* and even *symbolic interaction*: a set of concepts (especially the latter two) that not only connect anthropology to sociology, but also join these two disciplines to philosophy once again.

A precursor to this discussion is found in the works of George H. Mead (1934), which provide fundamental (and recurring) connections for psychology, sociology and the philosophy of recognition. He influences not only Charles Taylor, the initiator of the contemporary philosophical debate on recognition, but also Axel Honneth, Ricœur, Simon Thompson and the majority of scholars of recognition. Mead's approach is founded

upon the idea that the mind and the self are social products, and that language (and by extension, discourse) is the area in which the mind and the self reach formation, expression and realisation. Here, on the one hand, we are driven by psychological and sociological research, and on the other hand by the philosophy of mind and language. These are the areas where the concept of recognition, although not widely used, has a significant importance within specific contexts (for example, in *mathematical linguistics* ‘recognition’ is used for studying grammatical models of linguistic theories, as well as the string sets generated by grammar models of natural languages). This study will examine the issue of recognition within its three main working areas: psychological (chapter 1), sociological (chapter 2) and political (chapter 3). It summarizes the concept’s most important and specific uses, in order to identify its ‘disciplinary characterisation’, its theoretical potential, and how it could be philosophically used and applied. Each chapter alternates between an initial analytical and disciplinary/sectorial section to a latter theoretical and speculative development/application. From one angle, this will allow us to directly test the theoretical and speculative importance of concepts produced from psychology, sociology and politics. From the other perspective it allows us, via several thematic and problematic ‘accesses’, to directly engage in the major philosophical theories of recognition. It attempts to elucidate [a] the interdisciplinary connections between each perspective (mainly those of Ricœur, Habermas, Honneth and Taylor); [b] the fundamental and characteristic theoretical aspects; [c] the connections and correspondences; and [d] the problematic issues that require clarification and resolution. This survey will not result in a final synthesis, but rather will reopen a problematic field that aims to focus, on the one hand, upon the major contemporary uses of the notion of recognition, and on the other hand, on all those elements central to a *general theory of recognition*; a theory that does not yet exist.

The philosophical paradox that a proliferation of different theoretical models of recognition has not yet produced a general philosophical theory has become increasingly evident. Ricœur already noted this in his book *The Course of Recognition*; the first work on recognition operating from a generalized perspective. In his *Preface* Ricœur writes:

My investigation arose from a sense of perplexity having to do with the semantic status of the very term *recognition* on the plane of philosophical discourse. It is a fact that no theory of recognition worthy of the name exists in the way that one or more theories of knowledge exist. This surprising lacuna stands in contrast to the kind of coherence that allows the word recognition to appear in a dictionary as a single lexical unit, despite

the multiple senses that this lexical unit embraces ... The contrast between the apparently haphazard scattering of occurrences of the word on the plane of philosophical discourse and the kind of rule-governed polysemy that results from the lexicographer's labour constitutes the situation that gave rise to the sense of perplexity I have mentioned<sup>3</sup>.

In fact, a general philosophical theory of recognition should subsume the most important communicative and scientific uses, both disciplinary and interdisciplinary. It must also consider and reflect the broad spectrum of the semantics of recognition; a rich spectrum, and extremely varied since ancient times. The Greek uses of the term ἀνα-γινώσκω reveal its successive semantic stratification (from the first Attican and post-Homeric use, to the Ionic use, and so on). Within the epic use (Homerus) it meant 'know well', or 'know certainly/deeply'. In the Attican and post-Homeric use it meant 'know again', 'recognize', or essentially 'recognise signs' (read). In Ionic usage it meant 'induce one to do something', 'persuade' and 'convince'. The semantic meanings of the Latin *recognoscere* are equally rich. Cicero's work contains numerous synonymical connections of the verb: *recongno* refers to *cognosco*, *agnosco*, *intelligo*, *video*, *considero*. There are three main semantic areas: [1] recognize as 'recall to memory' and 'remember' (*ad memoriam revoco*, *reminiscor* [Cic.]); [2] recognition as 'inspect' or 'examine' (*inspicere*, *videre*, *recensere* [Justinian]); [3] recognition as 'review' or 'correct' (*retractandi causa* [Cic., Plinius]). The current uses of the concept reveal an incredibly wide variety of semantic differentiations; these are so numerous as to suggest that 'recognition' today is a lexical unit that certainly contains a multiplicity within it (Ricœur), but is also interrelated with other (external) multiplicities. In fact, 'recognition' can be understood today as follows: identification, individuation; remembering; comprehension, understanding, perception, consciousness; acceptance, admission, take cognizance [of]; realisation; repentance, self-improvement, contrition; appreciation; award, honour, commemoration; reward (tangible sign of gratitude); preliminary examination, survey, acceptance; designation, assignment, naming; approval; expression of gratitude; (Phil.) practical recognition (an application of cognitive reflection); (Jur., Pol. and Diplom.) attestation, acknowledgement [in diplomatic negotiations]; (Chem., Biol.) identification of a compound with physico-chemical methods, the ability of one molecule to attach to another molecule; (Comp. science) automatic identification, and so on.

Beyond the variety, richness and complexity of its uses, the concept of recognition has certainly gained a central and indispensable theoretical momentum in psychology, sociology and politics. Therefore, a

philosophical theory of recognition must first be compared with these domains, as well as the theories of recognition they express. This book does not defend the claim that a general, philosophical theory of recognition can claim to constitute an interdisciplinary theoretical foundation. Rather, it emphasizes the idea that philosophy can generate a significant and advanced understanding of the uses and usefulness of recognition for psychology, sociology and politics. This is due to [a] its interdisciplinary and conceptual openness and [b] its variety of methods and approaches.

According to the author, the ideal philosophical approach for fulfilment and full appreciation of the issue of recognition must be both theoretical and practical. It must be a theoretical approach of an essential ethical nature, but must also be, as mentioned, an interdisciplinary approach, led by a flexible methodology that is not one-sided. Ricœur's approach seems to meet all of these requirements.

Ricœur himself methodologically defined his vast and varied philosophical work as follows: [a] a '*reflexive* philosophy' that remains [b] within the 'sphere of Husserlian *phenomenology*' as [c] its 'hermeneutical variation'<sup>4</sup>. However, this definition contains a few problematic elements. If, on the one hand, Ricœur has undeniably adhered to this/these tradition(s), then on the other hand, and in the following twenty years, some factors suggest that his philosophy shows the traits of a *critical hermeneutics*, rather than an 'interpretive description based on reflection'. These elements include [1] a gradually developed epistemological model (the aforementioned 'hermeneutic arc'); and [2] an interdisciplinary philosophical practice of active and emancipatory commitment. The idea of 'critical hermeneutics' refers to the philosophical project of the early Habermas (a sort of Frankfurt *Kritische Theorie* of evolution) as well as to the debate between Habermas and Gadamer in the seventies (that is, the critique of ideology vs. hermeneutics of tradition), in which Paul Ricœur makes a contribution entitled *Herméneutique et critique des idéologies* (1973), now available in *From Text to Action* (1986). In it, he uses the concept of *herméneutique critique* to characterize his mediation between Gadamer and Habermas' perspectives. It is both overly complicated and extraneous to our topic to completely justify his operation, or to generalize this specific pronunciation to Ricœur's entire work, or even propose it as a methodological key. However, the article of 1970 already contains several points that connect and explain this, including: [1] the close connection between critical hermeneutics and the epistemology of the hermeneutic arc (a concept built upon the hermeneutical phenomenology of *text*, *action* and *history*, and which provides critical hermeneutics with a transverse,

already interdisciplinary epistemological structure, located between explanation and understanding<sup>5</sup>); [2] the connection of critical hermeneutics to Freudian psychoanalysis, the interpretation of which not only generates the first source of problematisation for Ricœur's hermeneutical arc theory, characterizing and influencing the *parcours* from side to side, but above all also reveals a deep interdisciplinary configuration. In his *Intellectual Autobiography*<sup>6</sup> Ricœur unhesitatingly declares that he never ceased defending the idea that philosophy will perish if the sciences interrupt its millennial dialogue; be these the mathematics of natural sciences or human sciences. However, when using his theory of a hermeneutic arc both to examine endless production, and to define the very general character of his procedures, we can understand that his philosophy is both true and developed according to this *dialoguing* vocation/characterisation of philosophy. This can also be accomplished by developing a better-defined and more advanced model of interdisciplinary philosophy. Ricœur indicated on several occasion that he was more impressed by the thematic and speculative fragmentary nature of his research than by its coordinated, synthetic and systematic nature (he called it a type of 'controlled schizophrenia'). However, we can say it is *unitary* or, perhaps more aptly, unified/unifictional, (which even Ricœur demonstrates in *Oneself as Another* [*Soi-même comme un autre*, 1990]). On the whole (and as an interdisciplinary set), Ricœur's philosophy precisely expresses a critical hermeneutics as a methodology capable of operating with a certain degree of coherence, coordination and effectiveness/legitimacy. This functions between: [1] a body of knowledge (scientific and non-scientific knowledge, which today is increasingly diversified and specialized); between [2] models, theories and discursive fragmented registers, resistant to all synthesis, and requiring a highly flexible and transverse approach capable of governing tensions. The methodological characteristics of this critical hermeneutics are established by considering the general traits, factors and characters of Ricœur's work. These elements can therefore be summarized as follows: the ideal of research and dialogue within the community of philosophers (an ideal borrowed from Karl Jaspers' thought); the philosophical procedure whereby 'all the books are open simultaneously'<sup>7</sup>; interdisciplinary work; a focus upon the '*philosophical* argumentation' (Ricœurian philosophy claims full autonomy of disciplines and ideas); the hermeneutical-reflexive dynamism between philosophical and non-philosophical dimensions; the attempt to form a connection with analytic philosophy; philosophical engagement in lived reality and in relation to politics and society; the layout/placement of philosophy within the dialectic of theory/practice

(philosophy, like science, can locate itself on the horizon of *theoretical practices*); the philosophical process of articulation/differentiation in reflexive degrees, as well as in philosophical-methodological and thematic registers.

This book will apply this Ricœurian methodological approach to the issue of recognition: *i.e.*, the approach of a critical hermeneutics<sup>8</sup>.

A philosophy of recognition can undoubtedly lead to an entirely new level of awareness and problematisation, which may be useful on both theoretical and practical grounds. The review proposed here is neither a meta-scientific transaction nor a speculative abstraction, but rather an attempt to locate the vital core of the significance of the concept of recognition within the context of knowledge and contemporary reality. The final section of this text contains philosophical and theoretical general conclusions, as well as a pronouncement of practical and ethical implications regarding the importance of recognition as compared to social reality. This concerns the new context of the political, moral, and cultural conditions that we are facing today, and includes the following questions: What place does the discourse of recognition have today? What is the basis for this evidence? What are its practical implications? What are its psychological, sociological and political implications? Is it possible to establish recognition as a basis for individual emancipation (psychology), social progress (sociology) and strengthening of justice and democracy (politics)?

# CHAPTER I

## THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RECOGNITION BETWEEN COGNITION AND INTERRELATION

### 1. The question of recognition in Psychology

The question of recognition is particularly important and central to the field of cognitive psychology, but its theoretical and clinical uses in other schools of psychology and psychopathology are also large and varied. First, the concept is connected to memory research, which generally refers to the perception and identification of a given content or object whose cognitive-experiential track is already known to the person, or rather retained at the level of memory. The mechanism and the process of recognition are of equally fundamental importance in both the scientific study of memory and the assessment of a subject's cognitive skills and intellectual abilities. The so-called 'recognition tests' are often included in intelligence assessments. The notion of *object recognition* is notably one of the most important notions in this field of study, and specifically refers to the cognitive processes by which one identifies a particular object (e.g., 'this figure is a willow'), or category in its membership (e.g., 'this figure is a plant'). Other key terms directly or indirectly related to the question(s) of recognition in psychology are: *face recognition* (above all, in cognitive psychology); *word-recognition* (a question related to the psychopathological problem of hyperlexia; a reading disorder); *optical character recognition* (artificial intelligence); *recall* (often defined in connection/contrast with recognition); *perceptron* (pattern-recognition in artificial intelligence).

The importance of recognition has exponentially increased in cognitive psychology since the seventies. Amongst its many subject areas, the most notable is the field dedicated to applying information theory to explain perceptual phenomena. Of particular importance were the first computer simulations of both recognition processes and those of so-called *problem-solving*<sup>9</sup> (notable for initiating a new approach to research and study). Allen Newell, Cliff Shaw and Herbert A. Simon employ the term *black-box* to refer to the processes (not directly accessible, not fully intelligible)

that are understood to form a mental (cognitive) system<sup>10</sup>. This is a framework that receives and stores information, in order to define, identify, classify, and recognize it. It manages and revises this information, and reuses it in different ways according to its different occurrences (cognitive, evaluative, reflective, recollective, etc.). This referred to as *human information processing*; a thematic sphere of cognitive psychology within which the issue of recognition is studied and treated in relation to memory, perception, attention, thought and language. In this area, the question of *pattern recognition* generates widespread interest. The complex mechanism of recognition is active in the (rare) case of a perfect coincidence between what is perceived and what resides in remembered traces. Pattern recognition is defined as the identification of a pattern with one previously encountered, despite possible modifications. Thus, the mind can even recognize a certain degree of commonality and a sense of meaning between perceived objects that are physically different from each other, *i.e.* between extremely varied and variable stimuli. The dilemma lies in understanding what allows us to observe the same meaning behind groups of heterogeneous stimuli, and subsequently how we can have *information units*, *i.e.* the *invariants*, which operate through our perceptual and cognitive apparatuses. In fact, according to cognitive psychology the recognition process is linked first to the fundamental translation operation, or rather the *codification* of perceptual stimuli useful for all subsequent cognitive system operations.

Another equally large and significant *territory* of research (located transversely between the different schools) concerns self-psychology and psychopathology (primarily, psychoanalytic psychopathology). The concept of *primary integration* is widely used in psychoanalysis to denote an infant's initial recognition of himself. However, such notions as *self-recognition* span diverse theoretical and technical-practical *approaches*. When using the example in the book *The Self Across Psychology: Self-recognition, Self-awareness, and the Self-concept*, edited by J. G. Snodgrass and R. L. Thompson (1997)<sup>11</sup>, we can initially determine that recognition is connected to a highly sophisticated conception of the self. (For example, Kihlstrom and Klein<sup>12</sup> view this 'self' [1] as a concept, [2] as a story, [3] as an image, and [4] as an associative network), so that the problem of recognition simultaneously becomes an issue of conceptualisation; a question of memory and interpretation (hermeneutical question); a question of identification and of interrelational experience. It is divided between 'wide variety of sources: from conventional personality and social psychology, from conventional cognitive psychology, from cognitive neuropsychology, and from clinical psychology'<sup>13</sup>. Secondly, a

problematization of intersubjective recognition connects and illustrates the field of the philosophy of recognition. This is a plane in which, as we shall see in the next paragraph, the dialectical interrelation within the social structure is not only the personality but also same personal identity. This occurs in terms of the *Hegelian dialectic of recognition* as well as in its variations. The works of Ulric Neisser<sup>14</sup> indirectly call upon this, while the study by Jerome Bruner<sup>15</sup> refers to it more directly (at least with reference to the philosophy of Ricœur's narrative). Third, cognitive research regarding the mechanisms and processes of recognition is also significantly utilized in the field of clinical psychology, especially in relation to pathologies such as autism. For Robert W. Mitchell 'autistic children present a good test case for the two theories because they frequently pass the mark test and have been tested on measures of imitation (of various forms), recognition of being imitated, pretense [sic] (bodily and other), intentional deception, empathy, theory of mind, planning, perspective-taking, and theory of mind. In addition, the evidence for self-recognition in autistic children is almost exclusively in the form of passing the mark test, rather than in the form of self-exploration, playing with their image, or verbal self-labeling [sic] observed in other children and animals'<sup>16</sup>. Studying the phenomenon of autism provides clear evidence regarding the close connection between self-recognition and imitation, as well as between self-recognition and action. It produces a result that is significant beyond the theoretical field of clinical psychology. Fourth, even studies of 'mirror recognition' prove extremely significant. Karyl B. Swartz was responsible for the theme, and highlights that, amongst different impacts, 'mirror self-recognition does not imply self-concept, nor is it appropriate to treat it theoretically in the comparative domain as we treat self-recognition, self-concept, [or a] sense of self in humans. However, the phenomenon can legitimately be termed self-recognition [as] implies something about the animal's understanding of itself in its environment, and it is a phenomenon worthy of investigation. What evidence supports the interpretation that the presence of self-directed behavior [sic] can be legitimately termed self-recognition? First, the behavior is directed back to the self, *using the mirror as a guide*. Second, the demonstration of self-directed behavior requires some experience with the mirror image ... Third, the demonstration of spontaneous self-directed behaviors in great apes but not other animals is an important finding'<sup>17</sup>. This thematic line connects with face recognition; an important research topic particularly in terms of recognition of one's face<sup>18</sup>. Of particular interest is the observation that primates have a spectrum of significant cognitive abilities, but do not possess knowledge of their own face. It is

also important that man's extremely complex operations are involved and have an effect upon a wide sphere of psychic life. Recognizing one's own face is an integral and constitutive part of the process not only of self recognition but also of self *formation*. The investigations of neurophenomenology into cerebral life produce the idea (which tends to become invariant over time) of man's own identity, his own sense of self, and of his interesting autopoiesis. Neurophenomenology seeks a neurobiological connection between life, mental life, and the experience of existence. Only an interdisciplinary approach and vocabulary can develop and deepen the vocabularies and approaches shared by cognitive science and neuroscience, including psychology and psychoanalysis, phenomenology, and hermeneutics. This is again demonstrated by inadequacy of recent discoveries and theories regarding mirror neurons; subcortical re-entrant circuits; corollary discharge and feed forward control systems for explaining self-recognition; and self-formation. The vocabularies and explanatory systems of neurobiology and psychology do not sufficiently account the richness and depth of the *human phenomenon*.

In addition, Katherine Nelson's *Finding One's Self in Time* provides another important development in the critical-theoretical field. This work is based on a study conducted in children's psychology, and evidences the centrality of the autobiographical self in the process of formation and maturation of the self, as well as in the process of self-recognition (also according to a scientific perspective that impacts those fields investigating memory, language, narrative, [inter-personal] relation and knowledge)<sup>19</sup>.

In terms of psychiatry, we can also note the recall of its acquisitions in the field of psychological research. This can be considered using the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (fourth edition, DSM-IV). A clear reference to the research and testing of the cognitive psychology of memory and object recognition exists under the heading '*dementia*' in which, amongst *diagnostic features*, it recommends testing the memory 'by asking the person to register, retain, recall, and recognize information. The ability to learn new information may be assessed by asking the individual to learn a list of words. The individual is requested to repeat the words (registration), to recall the information after a delay of several minutes (retention, recall), and to recognize the words from a multiple list (recognition)<sup>20</sup>. A similar reference applies to pathologies representing a 'mathematics disorder' and include 'a number of different skills may be impaired ... including "linguistic" skills (e.g., understanding or naming mathematical terms, operations, or concepts, and decoding written problems into mathematical symbols), "perceptual" skills (e.g., recognizing or reading numerical symbols or arithmetic signs, and

clustering objects into groups), “attention” skills (copying numbers or figures correctly, remembering to add in “carried” numbers, and observing operational signs), and “mathematical” skills (*e.g.*, following sequences of mathematical steps, counting objects, and learning multiplication tables)<sup>21</sup>. Within the context of psychopathology, recognition assumes a marked difference in meaning, and the patient’s reflexive response and awareness take on a certain diagnostic relevance and (general) significance. One example is provided by the so-called *specific phobia*, or the *social phobia (social anxiety disorder)*, in which ‘adolescents and adults... recognize that their fear is excessive or unreasonable’<sup>22</sup>. Other relevant examples include, *obsessions* or, even more specifically, the case of *obsessive-compulsive disorder* in adults who typically ‘have at some point recognized that the obsessions or compulsions are excessive or unreasonable’<sup>23</sup>, and ‘at those times ... he or she may desire or attempt to resist them. When attempting to resist a compulsion, the individual may have a sense of mounting anxiety or tension that is often relieved by yielding to the compulsion. In the course of the disorder, after repeated failure to resist the obsessions or compulsions, the individual may give in to them, no longer experience a desire to resist them, and may incorporate the compulsions into his or her daily routines’<sup>24</sup>. However, recourse to the concept of recognition is quite different in the context of the complex diagnosis of *pyromania*. In this case, the question of individual and social recognition seems to be more involved, given that anti-social behaviours can have distinct and not necessarily pathological sources and ‘reasons’. The paragraph entitled *Differential diagnosis* reads: ‘It is important to rule out other causes of fire setting before giving the diagnosis of Pyromania. Intentional fire setting may occur for *profit, sabotage, or revenge; to cancel a crime; to make a political statement (e.g., an act of terrorism or protest) or to attract attention or recognition (e.g., setting a fire in order to discover it and save the day)*’<sup>25</sup>. An analogy can be partially established, with *narcissistic personality disorder*, both in terms of the fact that the narcissistic personality ‘has a grandiose sense of self-importance’<sup>26</sup>, and does not recognize his or her own exaggerated achievements and talents. Both of these elements apply to the fact that subjects suffering from this pathology have a lack of empathy, and are ‘unwilling to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others’<sup>27</sup>.

The issue of recognition is particularly important in the clinical field of psychoanalysis, as well as to the aforementioned notion of ‘primary integration’. This is especially relevant, for the therapeutic process of the patient-analyst relationship. The dynamism of transference-countertransference can be understood as a social dialectic of recognition

(in the clinical context this is therapeutic conduct). Philosophically, Paul Ricœur offers this interpretation as we shall see. In a study on how psychoanalysis functions, he writes: ‘Not only does desire speak, it speaks to someone else, to the other person. This second starting point in analytic practice... does not lack theoretical implications. It reveals that from its beginning human desire is, to use Hegel’s expression the desire of another’s desire and finally for recognition’<sup>28</sup>. Using a different expressive formula, a similar idea is proposed by psychoanalysts themselves. Salomon Resnik, for example, discusses the experience of transference and countertransference, and explains that both the therapist and the patient bring their own identities into this process. The fundamental therapeutic factor is the possibility of mutual recognition in this rapport. Jessica Benjamin presents the same interpretation, and argues that intersubjectivity is the real field of intervention for psychoanalysis. The essence of this process can be defined as a *space of recognition*, wherein both analyst and patient must be aware of their own subjectivity and recognize the other’s subjectivity. The analyst’s subjectivity is also that of a fallible human being who perceives the patient as a person able to both know and speak with authority<sup>29</sup>.

This examination will now analyse the theme of recognition by comparing two important contemporary philosophies. It seeks to show how, on the one hand, certain perspectives of scientific psychology have productively impacted philosophical inquiry, and on the other hand, how the same philosophical research can enrich the vocabulary and conceptual theorisation of the theme of recognition. We will note the combination of psychology and philosophy in how the issue of recognition is considered. This combination’s maximum expression and appreciation exist in the field of philosophical anthropology and critical social theory, especially in terms of self-interpretation and intersubjectivity.

## **2. Two philosophical psychologies of recognition in comparison**

The theory of recognition was developed in the *Parcours de la reconnaissance* (2004), an essay penned by a ninety-year-old Paul Ricœur<sup>30</sup>. In addition to being explicitly connected to Honneth’s *Kampf um Anerkennung*<sup>31</sup>, it shares some features with the theoretical background of that work. These include: [1] a dialogical connection to the Hegelian dialectic of recognition; [2] a theorisation essentially developed in terms of the social psychology of recognition, and relying on a Hegelian

‘psychological’ core. (This can be summarized by the expression ‘struggle for recognition’ [in fact, *Kampf um Anerkennung*] or by the ‘dialectic of recognition’ [*Dialektik der Anerkennung*]); [3] a substantial agreement about the *normative* perspective [according to Hegel] of a social theory. These are not simply common references but rather, as this paragraph explains, comparable analysis, although aimed at different theoretical outcomes. Ricœur opposes Honneth’s ethics of conflict, which include a philosophy of recognition developed between struggle and gift, or in other words, between the struggle for recognition and what he calls ‘states of peace’ (*états de paix*).

Before proceeding to examine these ‘psychologies’ of recognition, I must introduce Ricœur’s *The Course of Recognition*, because it contains a comparison of the two philosophers<sup>32</sup>, (which will be gradually developed here). We must inquire where the exchange with Honneth takes place. Similarly, why Ricœur seeks an active confrontation with the latter, and the meaning of this comparison in the context of *The Course of Recognition* must be examined.

This work is a combination of three different studies, collected in units after a final recapitulation, as well as the ‘phenomenology of the capable human being’ found in the central study, (which connects Ricœur’s entire philosophical conception of the human being to the principle unifying the theme of recognition). This work ‘was born of a wager, that it is possible to confer on the sequence of known philosophical occurrences of the word *recognition* the coherence of a rule-governed polysemy capable of serving as a rejoinder to that found on the lexical plane’<sup>33</sup>. According to Ricœur, philosophy lacks such criteria. Effectively, ‘it is a fact that non theory of recognition worthy of the name exists in the way that one or more theories of knowledge exist’<sup>34</sup>. Therefore, the methodology already used in works such *Temps et récit* and *Soi-même comme un autre* [a] puts forward a preliminary pre- or non- to the philosophical, and [b] develops this investigation, and proceeds by levels or by distinct (chained) stages. As such, Ricœur expands the initial lexicographic course on recognition into a greater examination of purely philosophical terms (referring to the philosophical tradition). Within this expanded version there are ‘three philosophical approaches that seem to have nothing in common’<sup>35</sup>. These include: [1] the approach expressed by Kant’s concept of *recognitio* (analysed in the first study); [2] the idea expressed by Bergson’s concept of *reconnaissance des souvenirs* (analysed in the second study, in connection with the aforementioned *phénoménologie de l’homme capable*); and [3] the Hegelian approach of *Anerkennung* (discussed in the third). The articulation of these three studies follows the transition from

the ‘Recognition as identification’ to ‘Recognizing oneself’, to ‘Mutual recognition’, respectively. In this last section, and according to another typical Ricœurian strategy of searching and provoking conflict (between ideas and theories) and complications (rather than simplifications), the theme of the struggle for recognition is placed in dialectical tension with other theories favourable to the conception of recognition via the gift. This comparison takes place following Jacques Taminiaux and Axel Honneth’s review of the Hegelian dialectic of recognition. Honneth’s *Kampf um Anerkennung* begins playing a role at this point in the discussion. However, in contrast to Taminiaux’s work, this concept does not perform a purely historiographical function. This is proven by what Ricœur writes in the opening of the section *Systematic Renewals of Hegel’s Argument*. The following passage summarizes the meaning of this comparison. Although it is actually a concluding paragraph, it nonetheless expresses the introduction extremely well.

Let me begin by acknowledging my debt to Axel Honneth. I have borrowed more from him than just from the title of part 2 of his book. I want to think of this section as a dialogue with him, where my contribution will run from some complementary to a few critical considerations, which will in turn open the way to an argument directed against the exclusive emphasis on the idea of a struggle, in favour of a search for more peaceful experiences of recognition<sup>36</sup>.

## 2.1. An empirical research on recognition

Honneth’s book aims to elaborate an *ethics of conflict*, as the subtitle indicates. This is an ethics connected to theoretical perspectives on social philosophy, as well as to the contemporary debate on identity and politics of recognition. He pursues his project as a preliminary topic (both historical-philosophical and empirical), although it occupies two-thirds of the final work. The first of the three sections contains ‘the systematic reconstruction of the Hegelian line of argumentation’ regarding the issue of recognition. This encompasses Hegel’s early writings, including *System der Sittlichkeit* (1802), and *Jenaer Realphilosophie* (1805-06), and considers the differences generated by the final formulation (in our understanding) of the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Honneth begins to illustrate the Hegelian interpretation of the three forms of recognition: love, rights, social esteem. Within the section dedicated to the social psychology of Mead, or rather to the renewal of Hegelianism through Mead, these investigations help to profile the ‘intersubjective conception of the person’ located at the base of this theory. In the first of these three

Hegelian moments, the discussion of recognition in terms of psychology originates from both Honneth and Ricœur.

If, on the one hand, Hegelian idealism provides the key to this reading, on the other hand its implementation occurs within the coordinates of Mead's empiricism (second section<sup>37</sup>). If Ricœur faces some difficulties in accepting these empirical renewals of a Hegelianism without idealism, in contrast he nonetheless remains somewhat bound to Hegel (at least in its third study), as the following passage indicates:

I see this pairing of Hegel and Mead as the model for an interweaving of speculative conceptualization and the test of experience. And I shall propose several variations on it<sup>38</sup>.

Therefore, for both Honneth and Ricœur the *empirical approach to love* constitutes a fundamental passage in their respective psychologies of recognition.

The dynamic of the Hegelian theme of love is connected to a psychology of recognition containing an empirical matrix. It must be initially noted that this psychology can be better integrated in a social theory if taken from Hegel's early writings, rather than from his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. This is because the dialectic of recognition is disconnected by the figures of the spirit; that is to say, within the coordinates of an interior dynamism<sup>39</sup>. Honneth thus places readers before the psychologistic assumption of Hegelian recognition by examining the interrelation of these works with Fichte's *The Foundations of Natural Law*. In its essence, this essay contains a discussion of the key to 'juridical recognition', to which the Hegelian *System of Ethical Life* contributes the evolution of personal identity. In Honneth's words:

Within the framework of an ethically established relationship of mutual recognition, subjects are always learning something more about their particular identity, and since, in each case, it is a new dimension of their selves that they see confirmed thereby, they must once again leave, by means of conflict, the stage of ethical life they have reached, in order to achieve the recognition of a more demanding form of their individuality. In this sense, the movement of recognition that forms the basis of an ethical relationship between subjects consists in a process of alternating stages of both reconciliation and conflict<sup>40</sup>.

As we can see, Honneth increases the hegemony of ethical discourse over the Hegelian innovation. This can be clearly tested in the following passage:

By thus using a theory of conflict to make Fichte's model of recognition more dynamic, Hegel gains not only the possibility of providing a first determination of the inner potential of human ethical life but also the opportunity to make its 'negative' course of development more concrete<sup>41</sup>.

However, this is not incompatible with his interpretation, in terms of the psychology of recognition, but rather provides it with an *ethical* characterisation:

the conflict that breaks out between subjects represents, from the outset, something ethical, insofar as it is directed towards the intersubjective recognition of dimensions of human individuality<sup>42</sup>.

The following passage lessens any doubts regarding the correspondence between what the young Hegel defines as a 'natural ethical life' and this psychology of recognition, and furthermore provides evidence that Honneth's text offers a psychological interpretation (even during the examination of the *System of Ethical Life*):

Hegel initially describes the process by which the first social relations are established in terms of the release of subjects from their natural determinations. This growth of "individuality" occurs in two stages of mutual recognition, which differ from each other in the dimensions of personal identity that receive practical confirmation. In the relationship between "parents and children" ... subjects recognize each other reciprocally as living, emotionally needy beings. Here, the component of individual personality recognized by others is "practical feeling", that is, the dependence of individuals on vitally essential care and goods. The "labour" of raising children ... is directed towards the formation of the child's "inner negativity" and independence, so that, as a result, "the unification of feeling" must be "superseded". Hegel then follows this (now superseded) form of recognition with a second stage, still under the heading "natural ethical life", of contractually regulated relations of exchange among property owners<sup>43</sup>.

This passage allows us to proceed directly to the second section of Honneth's book, where he specifies that the theme of love occurs in the context of Hegelian psychology (*i.e.*, within the dialectic of the family, and between parents and children). The *full* recognition of personal identity comes exclusively and necessarily from social recognition; but it begins within the dynamic of the family. Loving primarily confirms the *natural* individuality of those participating. The theoretical difference between Honneth and Ricœur in this discussion resides between the first stage and the second. In fact, according to Honneth, the transition from the first to the second maintains the configuration of the fight, which adheres

to the Hegelian formula of the evolutionary power of the negative. Admittedly, in its mature form, social recognition is an intersubjective recognition of legal capacities (their own and others, in a peaceful and regulated state), but is not within social conflicts. These include ‘that shattered natural ethical life’, which can ‘prepare subjects to mutually recognize one another as persons who are dependent on each other and yet also completely individuated’<sup>44</sup>.

To return to our point, expanding the Hegelian theme of love, leads into the core of the second section of Honneth’s *Kampf um Anerkennung*, where the psychology of recognition undergoes an anticipated naturalistic metamorphosis. The decision to resort to Mead’s social psychology to renew Hegelianism should not be attributed to the coherence of a work established on the assumption that human subjects owe their identity to the experience of intersubjective recognition. Rather, it is connected to the fact that Mead’s writings ‘allow for a translation of Hegel’s theory of intersubjectivity into a postmetaphysical language, they can prepare the way for the project undertaken here’<sup>45</sup>. Honneth argues that Mead’s social psychology reproduces Hegel’s three forms of recognition in any way:

Although Mead has no appropriate replacement for the romantic concept of “love” to be found in Hegel’s writings, his theory of mutual recognition: the emotional concern familiar from relationships of love and friendship is distinguished from legal recognition and approval associated with solidarity as particular ways of granting recognition. Already in Hegel, these three patterns of reciprocity are mapped onto particular concepts of the person ... But not until Mead does the intuition implicit in this acquire the systematic cast of an empirical hypothesis, according to which, in the sequence of the three forms of recognition, the person’s relation-to-self gradually becomes increasingly positive<sup>46</sup>.

When beginning to consider the theme of love, Honneth proposes giving this concept the more neutral meaning of ‘strong emotional attachments among a small number of people’, based upon Hegel’s ideas. The concept is thus freed from the constraints of romance, and opened up to refer to the experience of friendship, and especially to the parent-child relationship. Furthermore, it is made more adaptable to Meadian theorisation, and to being articulated in the field of psychotherapy. Honneth quickly retraces the steps that led psychoanalysis to recognize the centrality of the interpersonal aspects for identity formation. Spanning the works of Freud to René Spitz, and John Bowlby to Daniel Stern, this discipline has progressively moved away from its initial psychopathological model. According to the latter, mental illnesses can be understood as intrapsychic conflicts (*i.e.*, conflicts between mental instances) rather than interpsychic

(i.e., interpersonal disturbances). The psychoanalytic object-relations theory represents the first concrete progress made in this conceptual direction. Honneth notes that this theory ‘can convincingly portray love as a particular form of recognition only owing to the specific way in which it makes the success of affectional bonds dependent on the capacity, acquired in early childhood, to strike a balance between symbiosis and self-assertion. The path to this central insight, in which the intuitions of the young Hegel are confirmed to a surprising degree, was prepared by the English psychoanalyst Donald W. Winnicott’<sup>47</sup>. Using Winnicott’s theory, Honneth expands the psychology of recognition to its most profound and original application in the mother-child relationship:

[he] conceived the child’s maturational process from the start as a task that can only be accomplished collectively, through the intersubjective interplay of ‘mother’ and child. Since both subjects are initially included in the state of symbiotic oneness in virtue of their active accomplishments, they must, as it were, learn from each other how to differentiate themselves as independent entities<sup>48</sup>.

This education begins within the family sphere, but then continues in the social sphere. It seems to completely concord with Hegel’s ideas, not only in terms of the analogy that can be established between the concept of ‘symbiosis’ and the harmonious state of ‘natural ethical life’, but also regarding the recognition of the centrality of *emotional recognition*<sup>49</sup>. Finally, this applies to the recognition that the evolutionary basis of personal identity is an irreducibly conflicting dialectic (which Winnicott recognises as already at work in the familial context).

However, recognition in love has several limitations, or stated more simply, it contains several differences when compared to recognition through rights (juridical recognition)<sup>50</sup>. The first is a limited reference; the second is a necessary and unavoidable reciprocity, which fully recognizes individualities, but only within the sphere of affections.

In speaking of recognition as a constitutive element of love, what is meant is an affirmation of independence that is guided – indeed, supported – by care. Every love relationship, whether between friends, lovers, or parent and child, ... presupposes liking and attraction, which are out of individuals’ control<sup>51</sup>.

Psychoanalysis has also highlighted the delicacy of the dialectic of affections<sup>52</sup>, and its potential to be problematic, which Honneth does not fail to notice.

## 2.2. A phenomenology of recognition

On the one hand, Ricœur's realisation of the renewal of the Hegelian theory of recognition incorporates the natural perspective of Honneth's proposal. However, on the other hand, this renewal nonetheless still remains in a philosophical (phenomenological) anthropology, which the author presents as *phénoménologie de l'homme capable*. When introducing his third studies, he writes:

Self-recognition ... found in the unfolding of the figures of the "I can," which together make up the portrait of the capable human being, its own space of meaning. But what is most important for our pursuit of the course of recognition is that identification ... not only has changed its referent in passing from something in general to the self but has been elevated to a logical status dominated by the idea of the exclusion between the same and the other, and to an existential status thanks to which the other is likely to affect the same<sup>53</sup>.

The effect of naturalistic 'contamination' is evident and significant. Ricœur, welcoming the input of Honneth via Winnicott, facilitates the entry of psychoanalysis in to his own analysis. However, it is precisely at this point, interwoven with an expansion of Simone Weil's theory, that Ricœur introduces phenomenology through an old formula that, retaining its Hegelian influence, leads the psychoanalytic lesson to a new ground. This process is not easy to grasp but is nonetheless undoubtedly present. It can be initially observed when comparing the following passage of the *Parcours de la reconnaissance* with an excerpt taken from the Ricœurian essay *Image et langage en Psychanalyse* (1978):

- a. Simone Weil extends to forms of friendship the potentially conflictual configuration that erotic love implants in the depths of the unconscious and its drives. (Did Hegel not already at the beginning of the nineteenth century give the name *Trieb* to this power more primitive than desire, in that it is the desire of the desire of the other?)<sup>54</sup>.
- b. Not only does desire speak, it speaks to someone else, to the other person. This second starting point in analytic practice ... does not lack theoretical implications. It reveals that from its beginning human desire is, to use Hegel's expression the desire of another's desire and finally for recognition<sup>55</sup>.

In Ricœur's work the idea of the dialectic of recognition is connected to the psychoanalytic doctrine, including all of the relevant problematic aspects of Freudianism. The latter's mental model does not make or

operate on behalf of the *other* (in contradiction to what psychoanalysis *does* in its clinic). Honneth recalls and mentions this difficulty, which Ricœur has studied since the seventies in his psychoanalytic research; which exercised a strong influence upon his narrative hermeneutics, as well as in his philosophy of human beings. This deep influence can also be found in *The Course of Recognition*, and in fact characterizes the phenomenology of recognition in that book. This phenomenology emerges in connection with psychoanalysis via a second comparison found in the essay *Le Self selon la psychanalyse et selon la philosophie phénoménologique* (1986). This work begins with a discussion of the ‘analytic’ of Heinz Kohut’s psychoanalytical theory<sup>56</sup>, in order to remedy the lack of Freudian metapsychology. This brings the results of Kohut’s examination of *self-psychology* to a philosophy of otherness or, in other words, to a philosophy of intersubjectivity. Psychoanalysis is placed in ‘dialectical’ relation with three main models, in which modern and contemporary philosophy articulate subjectivity and intersubjectivity. These include: ‘the Hegelian model of the master and slave, as we find in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*’; ‘the model proposed by Emmanuel Lévinas in his *Totality and Infinity*’; and between these two, ‘the notion that Husserl elaborated in his fifth *Cartesian Meditation* of an analogical grasping of the other, as another ego, an alter ego, similar to me in that he too says “I” just as I do’<sup>57</sup>. As compared to Hegel’s theory, the *Parcours* takes advantage of Honneth’s work to enrich Ricœur’s own analysis via the writings of the young Hegel. It is equally true that this does not constitute a denial but, on the contrary, a further reason for connecting the dialectical to psychoanalysis (via Winnicott, as determined above). In terms of Lévinas and Husserl’s concerns, the *Parcours* contain a series of analyses substantially identical to those contained in the essay on Kohut. These are found in the opening chapter of the study on ‘mutual recognition’<sup>58</sup>, and constitute proof of the phenomenological *incline* of the Ricœur’s psychology of recognition.

### **3. The constitutive dynamic of the struggle; the emancipative horizon of the gift**

Many intertwined elements are at work in Honneth and Ricœur’s approaches, and extend beyond their differences. In some way, each can be framed within the scope of social anthropology: [a] to observe the anthropological element in the two philosophies of recognition, and [b] for the centrality that assumes the psychological and sociological theme of interrelation in such anthropologies. Both scholars reveal the centrality

and function of the *dialectical process* at all stages and in all modes of recognition. However, if Honneth emphasizes the character of *constitutive dynamic of the struggle* more firmly, Ricœur highlights the *emancipatory strength of the gift behind the dialectics of recognition*. In fact, in the recent development of his philosophy of human beings (those made around the *Parcours de la reconnaissance*), evidence emerges that both aspects, *i. e.*, the constitutive dynamic of the struggle and identity as a process of emancipation, are present and operate on an equal status. The anthropological conception revealing the centrality of the dialectic between Hegelianism and Freudianism can be usefully expanded. This is, because it allows one to observe the level at which the psychology of recognition began to define and form a new conception of human being in the field of philosophy. *The Course of Recognition* is a book composed of three studies, which found reasons to support unification in the philosophy of man, as thematised in the second chapter of the second study. This was *A Phenomenology of the Capable Human Being*<sup>59</sup>, and it again assumes the ‘hermeneutic phenomenology of the self’ of *Soi-même comme un autre*. In this way, the term ‘parcours’ indicates and signifies not only the route or routes of a ‘research’<sup>60</sup>, an ‘investigation’<sup>61</sup>, or a theoretical ‘inquiry’<sup>62</sup>, but also the emancipatory subject’s way within the *dialectic of recognition*. This is marked by the progression of the theme of *identity*, of *otherness*, and of the *dialectic recognition/misrecognition*<sup>63</sup>. On the one hand, the book traces the thematic sequence of recognition-identification, self-recognition, mutual recognition, and recognition-gratitude along a dynamic regulated by the gradual transition from abstract to concrete, and from the theoretical to the practical. However, on the other hand (and from another perspective), the book can be read as a research manual seeking to determine and assume the meaning of self-recognition in the word; in the action; in the memory; promise; responsibility; and through its signs; its actions; its failings; in his superiority or inferiority; etc. This logical progression continues until recognition is offered appeasement via gratitude. Clearly, the latter perspective identifies in fundamental term of the *parcours* within these practical interests. This therefore leads to the opening of the second study:

The road to recognition is long, for the “acting and suffering” human being, that leads to the recognition that he or she is in truth a person “capable” of different accomplishments. What is more, this self-recognition requires, at each step, the help of others, in the absence of that mutual, fully reciprocal recognition that will make each of those involved a ‘recognized being’<sup>64</sup>.

The theme of recognition has not assumed significance previously, as Paul Ricœur's philosophy of human beings makes explicit. And yet, it is possible to trace problems in his work that are related to the topic of recognition. This trend began in his 1955 *Histoire et vérité*, in essays such as *Le 'socius' et le prochain*, amongst others. However, it is especially observable in the 'conflict of interpretations', which was discovered during the sixties. At that time the question of recognition emerged in Ricœur's philosophical-anthropological discourse through the aforementioned and notoriously paradigmatic dialectic of Hegelianism and Freudianism. From this comparison between phenomenology and psychoanalysis, Ricœur drew the idea of *subjectivity as a hermeneutic-dialectic process*, stretched between the binary of *arché* and *telos*; the unconscious and spirit; necessity and freedom; destiny and history. He attempted to achieve a synthesis between Hegelianism and Freudianism by translating the *psychic dynamism* in terms of the *dialectic of figures*. In this way, the relationship between *Id* and *Ego* (Ricœur quoted the famous Freudian adage *Wo es war, soll ich werden*) became a dialectic between lordship and bondage. This point also precisely illustrates the dialectic of recognition, as expressed in *Le conflit des interprétations*<sup>65</sup>. However this is already accomplished in *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Freud*, in the third chapter of the 'Dialectic', entitled *Dialectique: archéologie et téléologie*. These pages are worth returning to, and one must immediately note that the concept established between Freudianism and Hegelianism is a homology<sup>66</sup>, and brings out the teleological element inherent to Freud's psychoanalysis.

I will try to express one of these homologous relations by discovering in Freudianism a certain dialectic of archeology and teleology that is clearly evident in Hegel. The same connection is in Freud, but in a reverse order and proportion. Whereas Hegel links an explicit teleology of mind or spirit to an implicit archeology of life and desire, Freud links a thematized archeology of the unconscious to an unthematized teleology of the process of becoming conscious<sup>67</sup>.

The *Phenomenology of Spirit* outlines an explicit teleology of consciousness that emerges in the background of desire and life without radically transcending them. What is surpassed in terms of spirit and truth remains unsurpassed in terms of reality. Hegel and Freud find commonality via the concept of desire. In Hegel, 'desire is revealed as *human* desire only when it is desire for the desire of another consciousness'<sup>68</sup>. Ricœur explains that 'Desire is desire only if life manifests itself as another desire; and this certainty in turn has its truth in the double process of reflection, the reduplication of self-consciousness. This reduplication is the condition for

the emergence of self-consciousness in the midst of life'<sup>69</sup>. Therefore, Hegel's desire is closely related to recognition. *The phenomenology of desire is fulfilled in the dialectic of recognition*. Readers are familiar with the famous *Phenomenology*, where this dialectic is expressed between lord and servant. According to Ricœur, the process occurring in clinical psychoanalysis is substantially similar. A sort of dialectic lordship/bondage is established between analyst and patient, and turns the analytical process into the therapy of recognition. As Alexandre Kojève explains, 'The analytic situation is directly intersubjective. The analytic situation does not bear merely a vague resemblance to the Hegelian dialectic of reduplicated consciousness; between that dialectic and the process of consciousness that develops in the analytic relation there is a remarkable structural homology. The entire analytic relation can be reinterpreted as a dialectic of consciousness, rising from life to self-consciousness, from the satisfaction of desire to the recognition of the other consciousness. As the decisive episode of the transference teaches us, insight or the process of becoming conscious not only entails another consciousness, the analyst's, but contains a phase of struggle reminiscent of the struggle for recognition. The process is an unequal relation in which the patient, like the slave or bondsman of the Hegelian dialectic, sees the other consciousness by turns as the essential and as the unessential; the patient likewise has his truth at first in the other, before becoming the master through a work comparable to the work of the slave, the work of the analysis. One of the signs that the analysis is ended is precisely the attainment of the equality of the two consciousnesses, when the truth in the analyst has become the truth of the sick consciousness. Then the patient is no longer alienated, no longer another: he has become a self, he has become himself. Furthermore, what occurs in the therapeutic relationship, which is a type of struggle between two consciousnesses, should lead us to something even more important: the transference – in the course of which the patient repeats, in the artificial situation of analysis, important and meaningful episodes of his affective life – assures us that the therapeutic relation acts as a mirror image in reviving a whole series of situations all of which were already intersubjective. A desire or wish, in the Freudian sense, is never a mere vital impulse, for it is from the very beginning set within an intersubjective situation. Hence we can say that all the dramas psychoanalysis discovers are located on the path that leads from "satisfaction" to "recognition"<sup>70</sup>. This analysis by Kojève engages with the issue of recognition, and focuses upon the element of *desire* within this interpretation of the *struggle for recognition* expressed in the lord-slave dialectic.

Research conducted on Ricœurian texts allows us to locate the second stage of the intellectual progression of recognition within studies on psychoanalysis conducted during seventies and eighties. The aforementioned article *Image and Language in Psychoanalysis* contains the very important and significant following step:

The analytic situation offers desire what Freud, in one of his technical texts, calls “a playground in which it [the patient’s compulsion to repeat] is allowed to expand in almost complete freedom”. Now why does the analytic situation have this virtue of reorienting repetition toward remembrance? Because it offers desire an imaginary face-to-face relation in the process of transference. Not only does desire speak, it speaks to someone else, to the other person. This second starting point in analytic practice ... does not lack theoretical implications. It reveals that from its beginning human desire is, to use Hegel’s expression the desire of another’s desire and finally for recognition<sup>71</sup>.

In the clinical context, the psychoanalytic operation intervenes therapeutically in the dialectical process of the recognition, redefinition and reformulation of the history of life, as well as of the psychological responses to the progress and achievements reached within this dialectic. As explained above, the fundamental matrix of this possibility of interpretation is found in Kojève, whose philosophical position on the issue of recognition is very particular. Even the meaning of the entire human experience is interpreted as the desire or search to be recognized. In his introductory study of the *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit* he writes: ‘to desire the Desire of another is in the final analysis to desire that the value that I am or that I “represent” be the value desired by the other: I want him to “recognize” my value as his value. I want him to “recognize” me as an autonomous value. In other words, all human, anthropogenetic Desire – the Desire that generates Self-Consciousness, the human reality – is, finally, a function of the desire for “recognition”. And the risk of life by which the human reality “comes to light” is a risk for the sake of such a Desire. Therefore, to speak of the “origin” of Self-Consciousness is necessarily to speak of a fight to the death for ‘recognition’.

... Indeed, the human being is formed only in terms of a Desire directed toward another Desire, that is – finally – in terms of a desire for recognition<sup>72</sup>.

The 1990 essay *Oneself as Another* contains a new and important step for the concept of recognition. This involves the concept of identity being expressed as a hermeneutical-narrative process, and as a dialectic of recognition both vertically: of the self relative to the otherness in itself,