

HOW TO DEAL WITH RECOGNITION?

Theoretical and Practical Analyses

Recognition has been a key notion in the modern and contemporary philosophical debate under many different aspects. From classic modern philosophers, such as Rousseau, Smith, or Hegel, to more contemporary scholars, such as Honneth or Forst, the issue of recognition has been investigated with regard to the constitution of one's identity in relation to others, with a specific attention to the social and moral implications of such a process. In this framework, not just the successful forms of recognition, but also all forms of non-recognition, turn out to be philosophically interesting in order to investigate the constitution of the identity of a subject. Obviously, the subject whose identity is (at least partially) constituted by means of recognition can be not just the individual human being, but also a community, a social class, or a culture, so that the issue of recognition acquires several possibilities of application also in the political theory debate.

In this sense, recognition does not involve just the issue of the relation among subjects but more generally the issue of social practices and that of concrete life processes that are embedded in concrete practices of everyday life. If we conceive of *forms of life* as those structures that pre-exist individuals and that shape and bind the possibilities of one's action, the attitude of recognition becomes a fundamental aspect in order to devise inclusive and welcoming forms of life. In this framework, there is also room for forms of recognition that are in place not just between humans but also between human beings and non-human ones (non-human living beings or artificial beings).

The aim of this special issue of *Itinerari* is promoting the philosophical investigation into the notion of recognition from different points of view, from the theoretical-historical perspective to the cognitive one, from the ethical point of view to the political one.

The papers collected in this volume lead – through original and largely unexplored paths and in the light of the most recent reflection on issues related to social injustice, intolerance, environmental and gender issues – to the need to redefine and rethink the concept of recognition, making it

interact with that of form of life. These essays thus make it possible, on the one hand, to reconstruct the most recent philosophical ways in which the notion of recognition is used, and, on the other hand, to understand how such a notion can be applied in the field of ethical and political relations, in short, in the practical field.

The volume is divided into three sections.

The first section, *(Re)Thinking Recognition*, collects historical-theoretical analyses of the notion of “recognition” and “life” (Anzalone, Cicerchia, Higgins, Laitinen, Testa). In this section, the papers by Higgins, Laitinen and Testa highlight crucial theoretical aspects of recognition by inquiring recognition as “an existentials of being human” (Higgins), by investigating the ambivalent nature of recognition (Laitinen), and by focusing on the dimension of “natural recognition, understood as a primary level of cognitive interaction” (Testa). The papers by Anzalone and Cicerchia combine historical and theoretical perspectives by focusing on Adam Smith’s notion of recognition and its relation to mimesis and fiction (Anzalone) and on a materialist critique to Axel Honneth’s theory of recognition (Cicerchia).

The second section, *Mind and Recognition*, includes contributions interested in the issue from neuroscientific, psychological and phenomenological perspectives (Donise, Forlè, Songhorian, Staiti). The articles of this section investigate, on the one hand, recognition in relation to one of its grounding capacities, i.e. empathy (Donise, Songhorian); on the other hand, they investigate some phenomenological aspects of recognition both of oneself as an embodied person (Forlè) and of others in the specific case of tolerance (Staiti).

Finally, the third section, *Acting Recognition*, contains ethical-political analyses (Achella, Donatelli, Højme, Koskinen, Manchisi, Mordacci, Pierosara, Povinelli, Qian Qian). The articles of this section question the moral roots of recognition, both in a positive and in a critical key. In the latter direction, several authors have highlighted unresolved issues by seeking new perspectives on intersubjective recognition, in relation to non-human living beings or to artificial beings.

The challenges to recognition are examined in different ways. Piergiorgio Donatelli presents an overall understanding of the relation between life and ethics in the light of recognition; the relation of humans to other living beings and the environment, interpreted as a relation of recognition, is studied by Roberto Mordacci and Armando Manchisi, offering an expansion of, respectively, the principle of respect and the idea of a good life; Silvia Pierosara interprets recognition as a moral principle, fostering the

human capacity to criticize and change; Stefania Achella offers an analysis of Hegel's interpretation of *Antigone* in order to explore the women's claim to recognition in contemporary society; Elizabeth A. Povinelli examines a case of unequal distribution of power in the fight for recognition; analogously Ng Qian Qian questions the relation between recognition and reconciliation in a case of an oppressive social context. Forms of protest, such as blues music (Heikki Koskinen) or riots (Philip Højme) are inquired as legitimate practices aiming at recognition in conditions of oppression.

On the whole, the three sections try to offer an updated and articulated overview of the current debate on recognition. The concept is alive and well, and is more and more used in new directions and along original lines of development, keeping a strong hold to the more elaborated theories proposed in the modern age, especially from Kant and Hegel to Honneth.

We would like to thank all the authors for having participated and offered a wide-ranging overview of this topic, and we hope that this special issue will contribute to building further debate on a subject that never ceases to question human beings in their relations to other human and non-human beings.

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