

HEGEL'S THEORY OF RECOGNITION AND THE POSSIBILITY OF UNITY IN CIVIL SOCIETY

[Hegel'in Tanınma Teorisi ve Sivil Toplumda Birliğin İmkânı]¹

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the possibility of unity within civil society by appealing to Hegel's thoughts mainly focusing on the *Philosophy of Right*. It will be argued that Hegel's theory of the corporation and recognition provide the ground for this unity. According to Hegel, civil society cannot be characterized as a social unit which is dominated by relations that are merely built on self-interests. He argues that the unity can be developed among the members of civil society on the ground of the recognition provided in the corporation. The corporation develops unity by combining particular interests of the individuals and common ends of the corporation through the activity performed. It does that by providing mutual recognition. The mutual recognition provided within the corporation constitutes the basis of the unity created in civil society.

In this article, it is concluded that Hegel's theory of mutual recognition might be helpful in showing that unity can be developed within society, but his theory of the corporation is not adaptable today.

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Thus, the analysis of Hegel's conception of society and the theory of recognition reveals the need for a new kind of community in philosophy and politics.

Keywords: Unity, civil society, recognition, corporations.

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Hegel'in *Philosophy of Right* eserinden hareketle sivil toplumda birliğin olanağını araştırmaktır. Hegel'in meslek örgütleri teorisinin ve tanınma ile ilgili düşüncelerinin bu birliğin temelini oluşturduğu söylenecektir. Hegel'e göre sivil toplum, sadece çıkar ilişkileri tarafından belirlenmiş bir yapı olarak düşünülemez. Hegel'e göre, meslek örgütlenmelerinde sağlanan karşılıklı tanınma sayesinde sivil toplumda birlik sağlanabilir. Meslek örgütleri çerçevesinde gerçekleştirilen çalışma sayesinde bireysel çıkarlar ve ortak amaçların birleşmesiyle ve bu sırada sağlanan karşılıklı tanınma sayesinde bir birlik hissi ortaya çıkar.

Bu makalede, Hegel'in karşılıklı tanınma düşüncesinin, toplumda birliğin olanaklı olduğunun gösterilebileceği fakat meslek örgütlenmelerin, bugün, bu görevi yerine getiremeyeceği sonucuna varılmaktadır. Ayrıca Hegel'in toplum kavrayışı ve karşılıklı tanınma düşüncesinin analizinin, felsefede ve siyasette yeni bir topluluk anlayışına ihtiyaç olduğunu gösterdiği öne sürülecektir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Birlik, sivil toplum, tanınma, meslek örgütleri.

1. Introduction

In the literature, civil society is characterized in opposition to community. The distinction between “community” and “civil society” is made as an attempt to classify different kinds of social relations among people.² In the contemporary literature, community is mostly grasped as a social unit which involves the kind of relations that are built on care and trust. As opposed to that the relations in civil society are characterized by selfishness and mistrust. It is seen as a realm in which individuals pursue only their private interests. (see Sayers, 1995; Tönnies, 2001) The members of civil society see others merely as a means to realize their private ends. They establish a relation and maintain it as long as it continues to serve their interests. In relation to that, there is no genuine bond which goes beyond selfish interests of the individuals in civil society. It is also widely held that in civil society relations are built on mistrust. (see Tönnies, 2001) Nobody trusts the other because people are motivated solely by selfish desires. From these characterizations, it follows that there cannot be genuine unity among the members of civil society.³

The aim of this study is to discuss the possibility of developing unity within civil society on the ground of Hegel’s thoughts. With this aim, I will emphasize on Hegel’s conception of civil society in relation to his theory of the corporation and recognition. Thus, I will especially focus on the system of ethical life which constitutes the third part of the *Philosophy of Right* and I will also make reference to *Phenomenology of Spirit*. And I will discuss whether Hegel’s conception of civil society, his idea of corporation and the theory of mutual recognition can provide an account for the possibility of unity in civil society today.

2. The System of Ethical Life in the *Philosophy of Right*

The third part of the *Philosophy of Right* is entitled “ethical life”. In this section, Hegel introduces the concept of *Sittlichkeit* which is commonly translated as the ethical life. ‘Sitte’ means customs of a society or a group of people. The word ‘*Sittlichkeit*’ implies that the social dimension cannot

² The origin of the distinction between “community” and “civil society” appears in the influential work of Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society*.

³ Within this work, unity is conceived as working together for common ends without considering it as a means to realize private ends.

be separated from ethics. Taylor argues that “the doctrine of *Sittlichkeit* is that morality reaches its completion in a community.” (Taylor, 1979, p. 84). When one consciously feels himself as belonging to a community and one does not view community in merely instrumental terms, this belonging represents ‘absolute ethical life’ (absolute *Sittlichkeit*) for Hegel. (Avineri, 1972, p. 84)

Hegel distinguishes ethics from morality in a sense that what is lacking in morality is completed in ethics through social dimension. For Hegel, “Ethics was not a matter of autonomy but heteronomy of being influenced by other people. Nor was it primarily a matter of rational principle but part of a life of shared values, feelings, and customs, what Hegel calls ‘*Sittlichkeit*’ (from ‘*Sitte*’ meaning ‘customs’.)” (Solomon, 1988) Hegel argues that ethical life is not the product of autonomous individuals as posited by Kant, but it is grounded on sociality. Hegel’s system of ethical life can be conceived as an objection to Kant’s morality. According to Kant, principles of morality are constructed solely by reason independently of any kind of experience. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, he argues that “for reason to give law it is required that reason need presuppose only itself, because the rule is objectively and universally valid only when it holds without any contingent subjective conditions which differentiate one rational being from another.” (1993, p. 19) So, reason must be the only source for morality. In addition to that, in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, he clearly states that “there is no genuine supreme principle of morality which does not have to rest on pure reason independent of all experience.” (2002, p. 25) In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel criticizes Kant’s system of morality and he regards it as empty formalism:

However essential it may be to emphasize the pure and unconditional self-determination of the will as the root of duty - for knowledge [*Erkenntnis*] of the will first gained a firm foundation and point of departure in the philosophy of Kant, through the thought of its infinite autonomy – to cling on to a merely moral point of view without making the transition to the concept of ethics reduces this gain to an empty formalism, and moral science to an empty rhetoric of duty for duty's sake. (Hegel, 1996, p. 135.)

Hegel argues that rational principles of morality are not set by autonomous individuals and they cannot be constituted in isolation from society. It is also crucial to state that Hegel has a distinct understanding of rationality. While Kant conceives rationality in isolation from anything empirical, Hegel defines it belonging to a social world because social life is the product of a rational principle

called “the Spirit”. Therefore, the institutions in civil society and the mores and practices which are held in those institutions, through which individuals can fully identify themselves with the whole, are rational. Individuals being a part of that larger life have moral obligations based on established norms and uses. (1996, p. 83) Thus, Hegel’s notion of *Sittlichkeit* which stands for ethical life assumes the rationality of moral obligations one has in society. (1996, p. 83)

In his objection to Kant, Hegel transforms subjectivity into intersubjectivity by including social dimension into morality. Honeth states that “he chooses the concept of ‘*Sitte*’(‘mores’ or ‘customs’) quite intentionally, in order to be able to make clear that neither laws prescribed by the state nor the moral convictions of isolated subjects but only attitudes that are actually acted out intersubjectively can provide a sound basis for the exercise of that extended freedom.” (Honneth, 1995, p. 13) The ethical life as the realization of an abstract freedom cannot be isolated from the mores and customs of a society; rather it is grounded on them. In addition to that, the shared practices of a society and social institutions such as family, corporation and the state have an essential role in constituting the identity of an individual. “The individual subject is only who he (or she) is by virtue of society and tradition which brought him into being and which maintains and promotes his identity.” (Rose, 2007, p. 142) In other words, I am who I am by means of society in which I live. With this reason, Hegel analyzes the institutions of the ethical life and their function in the realization of freedom.

Hegel asserts that there are three constituents of ethical life; family, civil society and the state. Family constitutes the foundation of ethical life and the state culminates its full development. As to civil society, its function is to constitute the link between family and the state.

The Family

Hegel considers family as the foundation of ethical life. The unity in the family depends on the feeling of love. This is a natural unity since it is based on a feeling.⁴ The family has both a subjective and an objective aspect. Its subjective aspect is grounded on the particular interests of

⁴ It is also called immediate unity in which the members fully identify themselves with the family. In other words, when there is an immediate unity, the individual is resolved in community. Later, I will introduce the concept of mediated unity in which individuals identify themselves with society without losing their individual identity.

two people whereas its objective aspect lies within their free choices to become a single person. The subjective aspect represents the element of particularity while the objective aspect represents the element of universality in this union.

The individuals identify themselves with the family in the marriage. The union of two people in the family is seen as a self-limitation at first since they give up their individual personalities in order to constitute a single personality. (Hegel, 1996, p. 201) But according to Hegel, this union is in fact liberation because they attain their substantial self-consciousness within it:

The subjective origin of marriage may lie to a greater extent in the particular inclination of the two persons who enter this relationship, or in the foresight and initiative of parents, etc. But its objective origin is the free consent of the persons concerned, and in particular their consent to constitute a single personality and to give up their natural and individual personalities within this union. In this respect, their union is a self-limitation, but since they attain their substantial self-consciousness within it, it is in fact their liberation. (Hegel, 1996, p. 201)

The parties have their substantial self-consciousness within marriage because they see themselves as a part of a universal. The family is the root of the ethical life because the link to universality is first constructed here through the feeling of love. Hegel claims that “The ethical aspect of marriage consists in the consciousness of this union as a substantial end.” (1996, p. 202) The marriage symbolizes the unity of particularity and universality created through the feeling of love. This unity is dissolved in the civil society with the emergence of separation. And then we find similar kind of unity in the state. But the unity in the state cannot be based on a feeling. There, instead of love, we find law which is formal and has a rational content. (Hegel, 1996, p. 199)

Civil Society

The dissolution of the unity in the family brings out civil society. Civil society is determined by two principles which are particularity and universality. They correspond to two different aspects of civil society. The principle of particularity represents the differences. In the civil society, particular interests of the individuals are prior to the common ends of society. It is the element of particularity which characterizes civil society. Everyone focuses on his/her own needs and tries to attain his/her

private ends. But they also know that they cannot attain their ends alone, rather they need the help of the others. Therefore, they make temporary alliances with others as means to attain their private ends. The alliance ends when the parties realize their private goals. Later, even though it is temporary, this alliance brings out the element of universality in civil society.

The particular person as belonging to the first principle of civil society is in relation with other particular persons. This mutual relation constitutes the ground of the principle of universality. The possibility of the principle of universality is raised by the satisfaction gained in this mutual relation. Hegel expresses the origin of the principle of universality in civil society in the following paragraph:

In civil society, each individual is his own end, and all else means nothing to him. But he cannot accomplish the full extent of his ends without reference to others; these others are therefore means to the end of the particular [person]. But through its reference to others, the particular end takes on the form of universality, and gains satisfaction by simultaneously satisfying the welfare of others. (1996, p. 220)

Although they are conceived as two different elements there is a close relation between particularity and universality. “In furthering my end, I further the universal, and this in turn furthers my end.” (Hegel, 1996, p. 222) It means that in civil society, particularity and universality are mutually bound. Thus, particularity and universality together constitute civil society.

Although particularity and universality have become separated in civil society, they are nevertheless bound up with and conditioned by each other. Although each appears to do precisely the opposite of the other and imagines that it can exist only by keeping the other at a distance, each nevertheless has the other as its condition. (Hegel, 1996, p. 221)

At first, particularity might be regarded as the sole principle which rules over civil society. But particularity gives rise to universality. If individuals would not try to realize their private ends the alliance could not come out. Furthermore, it is universality which allows for particularity since without the alliance with others no one can further his private ends and vice versa.

While explaining the particular and universal aspect of civil society, Hegel asserts that civil society has three moments within. The system of needs, the administration of justice; and the police and

the corporation. Those are the constituents of civil society. (1996, p. 226) Among them, the system of needs brings out differentiation and alienation. Based on utilitarian principles “society was justified not by what it was or expressed, but by what it achieved, the fulfilment of men's needs, desires and purposes. Society came to be seen as an instrument and its different modes and structures were to be studied scientifically for their effects on human happiness.” (Taylor, 1979, p. 112) This conception of society prevents men from identifying themselves with society, and thus creates alienation. Hegel argues that “civil society tears the individual [individuum] away from family ties, alienates the members of the family from one another, and recognizes them as self-sufficient persons.” (1996, p. 263) The system of needs signifies the negative aspect of civil society. But, Hegel argues that civil society as the system of needs is necessary for the self-actualization of the individual since everyone has the right to develop and express their individual differences. It is the right of particularity. (1996, p. 140)

Hegel firstly defines civil society as the system of needs. But it is not the only constituent. According to him, civil society is not entirely a negative state as we can understand from the discussion of particularity and universality. Civil society as the stage in which both particularity and universality are found is an intermediary between the family and the state. (Hegel, 1996, p. 220) This mediation between the family and the state can be provided through the corporation. The corporation serves as community in civil society by providing the element of universality. The members of a corporation feel themselves as a part of a whole. The unity which is lost by the dissolution of the family is recovered by the corporation. Therefore, civil society is necessary for the existence of the state. Anderson points out that the unity of particularity and universality is first actualized in civil society through the corporations. For this reason, civil society means for Hegel more than market relations or the system of needs. Although this unity is first actualized in the civil society, its perfect manifestation is seen in the state. The focus is the particularity in civil society. The state creates the awareness of this unity and its focus is universality rather than the particularity. (Anderson, 2009, p. 152)

In the stage of civil society there is a mutually binding relation between the citizens and civil society. The citizens have rights within society and in turn they have duties towards it. Hegel states that “civil society must protect its members and defend their rights, just as the individual [*der*

Einzelle] owes a duty to the rights of civil society.” (1996, p. 263) The rights of the individuals are protected by the administration of justice.

In the system of needs, people recognize themselves in their particularity. Apart from particularity through the administration of justice universality is entered into civil society. But this unity is a relative one which is realized by the corporation. The corporation realizes the relative unity of subjective particularity and the universality. “Through the cooperative nature of civil society, it is through estates that civil society relates to the state as a whole. In striving for a common aim rather than a purely individual one, man allows universality into the extreme particularity of society.” (Rose, 2007, p. 142-157) In the corporation individuals are united in their effort to realize common ends. Thus, they relate to the universal through which mediated unity is developed.

The Police and Corporation

In the civil society, police and corporation constitute the link to universal. The police is an institution which is responsible for the protection and security of the members of civil society and the particular interests of the individuals. The police maintains order by enforcing the laws which binds all of its members. Yet, it is an external order so long as it is provided by an external authority, namely the police. The police functions as an external order which has a role in the actualization of the universal inherent in civil society. (Hegel, 1996, p. 269) On the other hand, the corporation maintains the unity beyond that external order in civil society. Its real function is to unite people by setting common ends. The universal element, the unity, in civil society is nourished by the corporation through the cooperative efforts of individuals to a shared end. Civil society gives rise to the estate of trade and industry whose focus is the particular. The corporation as a characteristic of this intermediary estate provides the unity between the particular and universal. (Hegel, 1996, p. 270)

Hegel asserts that the corporation has the role of a second family. (1996, p. 271) It has the role “to protect its members against particular contingencies, and to educate others so as to make them eligible for membership” by the approval of public authority. (1996, p. 271) This is the formal characterization of the corporation. Its formal aspect is constituted by the legal approval of public authority. The corporation has special importance beyond its formal function because it makes

mutual recognition possible. Hegel argues that an individual gains recognition by being a member of a corporation. He is recognized as a member on the condition that he acts in conformity with the regulations adopted within a corporation. Since corporations are legally regulated institutions, it is initially a legal recognition which is gained by just being a member of a corporation. The legal recognition refers to having the honor of belonging to an estate. The lack of legal recognition causes the individual to search for recognition in the selfish aspects of his trade such as gaining more money or having more reputation. But it cannot provide him the mutual recognition, the satisfaction of being a part of a whole. Thus, the life of an individual becomes unstable. Hegel explains the significance of legal recognition in the following paragraph:

If the individual [*der Einzelne*] is not a member of a legally recognized [*berechtigten*] corporation (and it is only through legal recognition that a community becomes a corporation), he is without the honour of belonging to an estate, his isolation reduces him to the selfish aspect of his trade, and his livelihood and satisfaction lack stability. He will accordingly try to gain recognition through the external manifestations of success in his trade, and these are without limit [*unbegrenzt*], because it is impossible for him to live in a way appropriate to his estate if his estate does not exist; for a community can exist in civil society only if it is legally constituted and recognized. (1996, p. 272)

It is not only a legal recognition which the corporation provides. The member of a corporation works to promote the ends of the corporation which he belongs to. In time, the common ends of the corporation become more salient than his selfish interests. He is united with others in working for a common end. Thus, he is recognized by others and he recognizes himself as belonging to a whole which is the universal. (1996, p. 271)

In the civil society, the principles of particularity and universality are at work, in a close relation. Individuals have the right to pursue their particular welfare and this right is actualized within the union of particularity and abstract legal universality. (Hegel, 1996, p. 273.) The members of civil society concentrate on fulfilling their own private ends. But they cannot realize it on their own. In order to fulfill their private ends, they need to work with the others. The private ends are required to incorporate with the common ends. This brings out the idea of a universal activity because the individuals with private ends must work together. The universal activity is a necessity which at first lacks consciousness. The awareness of the universal activity can only be developed within the

corporation. The members of a corporation are aware of the universal activity in which they are engaged. They conceive it not only as a means to realize their private ends but as a common end to be realized.

Hegel argues that in the ethical life men must be provided a universal activity. In the ancient times, it was provided by the state. But in the modern times, it is not always provided by the state but by the corporation. In the corporation, individuals are consciously engaged in a universal activity:

In our modern states, the citizens have only a limited share in the universal business of the state; but it is necessary to provide ethical man with a universal activity in addition to his private end. This universal [activity], which the modern state does not always offer him, can be found in the corporation. We saw earlier that, in providing for himself, the individual [*das Individuum*] in civil society is also acting for others. But this unconscious necessity is not enough; only in the corporation does it become a knowing and thinking [part of] ethical life. (1996, p. 273)

Corporations are the social institutions originated within the civil society. Social institutions have the role to realize freedom in the realm of particularity. In the family, individuals attain their rights directly, but in the civil society they attain it through social institutions. In these institutions, they discover self-consciousness by attaining an occupation and engaging universal activity. In gaining self-consciousness they recognize the universal aspect of their particular interests. (1996, p. 287)

It is important to notice that in Hegel's theory, occupation and activity is the key to construct the relation between the particular and the universal within civil society. Hegel introduces the notion of universal activity while he talks about the activity performed in the corporation. The universal activity refers to the work done for the common ends of the corporation. What makes it a universal activity is that the members of the corporation embrace the common ends of the corporation as their own and they work for it. Thus, they relate to the universal. Through the corporation individuals with private ends are united for the common ends.

Hegel's conception of civil society has its difference in the idea of the corporations. The corporation generates the ethical element in the civil society. Through this ethical element, civil society cannot be seen as merely a marketplace. The corporation is "a means of giving the isolated

trade an ethical status, and of admitting it to a circle in which it gains strength and honour.” (1996, p. 273) Without corporations, civil society would be a ruthless competitive marketplace in which everyone pursues his private ends without caring for the others, seeing them only as a means to realize his selfish interests.

As a result, through the corporation, civil society is conceived as a necessary stage for the realization of the higher community because the unity of particularity and universality is first actualized there. But as Anderson points out, in the corporations, the members lack the reflection on this unity. (Anderson, 2009, p. 152) Nevertheless, the corporation has a limited end which is completed by the full integration of the individual to the universal. “The sphere of civil society thus passes over into the state.” (Hegel, 1996, p. 273) The corporation has an intermediary role between the family and the state which ceases with the actualization of the state proper.

The State

Hegel describes the state as a larger community in which each member identifies himself with this whole. It must be stressed that Hegel has a peculiar conception of the state. His conception is best understood in opposition to the modern contract theories which characterize the state as a rational instrument to maintain order. Hegel argues that the civil society is often misconceived as the state. It is civil society, not the state, which is constructed by the approval of particular wills. Therefore, Hegel characterizes civil society as the external state and the state based on need. (1996, 221) “In this society everyone is an end to himself; all others are for him nothing. And yet without coming into relation with others he cannot realize his ends.” (Hegel, 1996, pp. 154-155) For the sake of realizing private ends, individuals come to an agreement with each other. But the origin of a state cannot be conceived as an agreement. Hegel claims that the state is not a mere aggregation of particular interests but a union among its members. If the state was constructed through an agreement of particular wills, it would be an optional matter. (1996, p. 276)

Hegel thinks that if we reduce the state to an institution which provides security and protection, its emergence becomes an optional matter as in the contract theories of the state. For Hegel, the emergence of the state is a necessity. The state is based on a necessity as the self-realization of the spirit which is the universal will. The universal will requires the individual will to realize itself. To

put it differently, the individual will has a role in the self-realization of the universal will by seeing the necessity in it and consciously identifying itself with the universal will.

Like the civil society, the state contains the elements of both particularity and universality but the focus is the latter. In the state proper, particularity is developed and yet brought back to universality. “Thus, the universal must be activated, but subjectivity on the other hand must be developed as a living whole. Only when both moments are present [*Bestelzen*] in full measure can the state be regarded as articulated and truly organized.” (1996, p. 283) For the state to be in balance, both moments must be present in proper measure.

In history “man starts off as an immediate being, sunk in his particular needs and drives, with only the haziest, most primitive sense of the universal.” (1996, p. 366) Then he becomes a member of a society which represents a larger life for Hegel. Taylor argues that man must be a part of a community since he can only achieve his ends by being a part of a public life of a community. The larger life refers to the culture – social norms and practices- of a society. “The life of a language and culture is one whose locus is larger than that of the individual. It happens in community. The individual possesses this culture, and hence his identity, by participating in this larger life.” (Taylor, 1979, p. 87). The identity of an individual is shaped by the culture of a society. The larger life in which man integrates into the universal through the institutions and practices represents the state. “Thus, the state which is fully rational will be one which expresses in its institutions and practices the most important ideas and norms which its citizens recognize, and by which they define their identity.” (Taylor, 1979, p. 94)

Hegel argues that in the ancient states the element of universality was present but particularity had not yet developed. (1996, p. 283) The subjective end was lost in the end of the state, namely in the universal end. There was no place for individual rights, especially the right to think differently from the state. (Beiser, 2005, p. 228) “For them, the ultimate factor was the will of the state.” (Hegel, 1996, p. 285) Beiser adds that ancient republics did not allow the citizens to seek their own interests. (2005, p. 228) This means that particularity has not been developed properly yet. Hegel gives the example of Plato’s republic in which subjective freedom is not recognized since the tasks of the individuals are assigned by the public authorities. (1996, p. 286) He argues that “subjective freedom, which must be respected, requires freedom of choice on the part of the individuals.”

(1996, p. 286) Without the freedom of choice concerning one's activities, subjective freedom cannot be realized. As opposed to that, in the modern states, the view, volition and conscience of the individual is the focus. Individuals expect their inner life to be respected. (1996, p. 285) "The essence of the modern state is that the universal should be linked with the complete freedom of particularity." (1996, p. 283) The universal allows and develops the right to particularity in the modern state. Only in there we see the conscious unity of the private ends of the individuals and the end of the state. Williams argues that Hegel tries to combine the ancient and modern thinking in his theory of the state. (1997, p. 235) The element of universality represents the ancient thinking and the element of particularity which allows for differences represents modern thinking. In his theory of the state Hegel combines them both.

Taylor emphasizes the difference of Hegel's state from the ancient idea of the state. He asserts that in modernity "we have developed a consciousness of the individual which had no place in the ancient polis." (1979, p. 109) In the Greek polis there was an immediate bond between the state and its members. Individuality was lacking there and has been developed later in modernity. In this respect modernity characterizes the separation of the individual from the state. It is the negation of the immediate unity found in the first place. In modern civil societies, the consciousness of individuality is developed, but the bond between the individual and the state is lost. In the civil society, individuals cannot fully identify themselves with the state. The reconstruction of this bond between the individual and the state requires the negation of the separation in the civil society through corporations. Thus, the mediated unity between the individual and the state can be developed.

In the state, individual ends are integrated into the ends of the state. In the following paragraph, Taylor explains that the state as a larger community constitutes the ground for the identity of the individuals by removing the opposition of self-goal and other-goal.

The state or the community has a higher life; its parts are related as the parts of an organism. Thus, the individual is not serving an end separate from him; rather he is serving a larger goal which is the ground of his identity, for he only is the individual he is in this larger life. We have gone beyond the opposition of self-goal and other-goal. (Taylor, 1979, p. 86)

In the state, the self-goal of the individual is identified with the common goals of a society. When man fails to identify himself with the state he is left with subjective ends. He sees himself in isolation from society as an individual with selfish interests. It gives rise to individualism. Taylor distinguishes individualism from individuality. He says that “individualism comes... when men cease to identify with the community’s life, when they reflect, that is, turn back on themselves, and see themselves most importantly as individuals with individual goals.” (Taylor, 1979, 91) According to Taylor, to reach the perfect community, which is the state in which everyone feels themselves at home, men must overcome individualism.

3. The Theory of Recognition

In this part, it will be argued that recognition is the key concept to understand Hegel’s system of ethical life. Williams also argues that “recognition constitutes the general structure of Hegel’s ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*).” (2012, p. 35) Although he does not explicitly present a theory of recognition in the *Philosophy of Right*, with a closer look, the significance of this notion can be observed in the third part, the part on ethical life and also in his other works. The importance and the role of the notion of recognition in Hegel’s entire system is pointed out by many people. Rockmore argues that in modern political philosophy, social life is based on the idea of self-preservation, but for Hegel, it is the desire for recognition which brings out relationality. And the desire for recognition is the most basic human need. (1993, p. 104) Taylor states that “recognition is not a curtesy we owe people; it is a vital human need.” (1994, p. 26) Russon argues that mutual recognition is what gives rise to the sense of community in Hegel’s theory. He also states that “equal recognition – the situation of a cooperative enactment of a situation in which we each recognize ourselves and others as an integrated community of equals – is what Hegel calls ‘*Geist*’, ‘spirit’, ‘the ‘I’ that is we and the we that is ‘I’.” (Russon, in Houlgate, 2011, p. 58)

In this study, it is claimed that recognition has a role to create the sense of unity in the ethical life; family, civil society and the state. Thus, I will focus on the *Philosophy of Right* where he expresses the role of mutual recognition in civil society. But, to get a better grasp on the notion of recognition, first, I will analyze the concept as it appears in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in the section on lordship and bondage, commonly known as master and slave dialectic. There, he clearly elaborates on this notion while he explains the development of self-consciousness. While I analyze

the notion of mutual recognition, I will also make a reference to the concept of contradiction which Hegel explains in detail, in the *Science of Logic*.

Recognition shows up as the key concept both in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Philosophy of Right*. In the *PS*, the development of self-consciousness from consciousness and in the *PR*, the realization of freedom in relation to social institutions is analyzed in relation to the notion of recognition.

Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is often considered as the first of his mature works. (See Stern, 2002, pp. 4-8.) Stern argues that in his mature works, "Hegel takes it that we are responsible for creating the kind of intellectual and social environment that lead us to find the world intellectually and socially alien, as the World itself is and should be a 'home' to us." (Stern, 2002, p. 13) The reason of this alienation is that we conceptualize things one-sidedly or in oppositions, such as something is either particular or universal, free or determined, immediate or mediated. Hegel discusses it in relation to the concept of contradiction. In his mature works, Hegel tries to overcome these oppositions so that individuals feel themselves at home. Hegel characterizes the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as an introduction to his system because it lays out two things. First, the problems which are caused by thinking in oppositions. Second, the method of dialectical thinking which allows us to relate to the world in a proper way. Hegel states that overcoming the oppositions is possible through dialectical thinking in which it is recognized that the conceptions which are regarded as one-sided are indeed inseparable. (Houlgate, 1988, p. 14) And dialectical thinking brings out mutual recognition.

Hegel argues that recognition is the necessary condition for gaining self-consciousness in a way that its deriving force is the desire for recognition. (Wood, 1990, p. 85) "'Self-consciousness' here refers not to the awareness of oneself as a self-identical subject of experience but instead to what could be called a *self-conception*." (Neuhouser, in Westphal, 2009, p. 38) According to Taylor, recognition is the fundamental element in the development of one's identity. He says that "our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *misrecognition* of others." (Taylor, 1994, p. 25) Identity as a self-consciousness is not an immediate relation, rather it is mediated through other consciousness, which means that my identity depends on others. In the

proper self-conception, one conceives himself overcoming the oppositions. Hegel explains the process of gaining self-consciousness by elaborating on the relation between master and slave:

They exist as two opposed shapes of consciousness; one is the independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself, the other is the dependent consciousness whose essential nature is simply to live or to be for another. The former is lord, the other is bondsman. (Hegel, 1977, p. 115)

In this paragraph, Hegel distinguishes two types of consciousness: being for itself and being for another, which he calls “independent consciousness” and “dependent consciousness”. Initially, the former is called mastery and the latter is called slavery. The construction of master and slave relation presupposes a struggle for recognition which then turns out into a life and death struggle. To end this struggle, out of fear, one gives up the request for recognition and becomes a slave. In this relation, master gets recognition without recognizing the other, namely, the slave. And the slave gives up his own desire, remains unrecognized and works for the realization of master’s desires. He recognizes the other as the master and he recognizes himself as the master’s slave. (Kojève, 1980, p. 8) Thus, slave becomes the recognizing part and the master is the one which is recognized. But this recognition is one-sided and unequal. (Hegel, 1977, p. 116) In this case, master has an immediate relation to himself, without relating to anything external. He develops an independent self-consciousness. It is what Hegel characterizes as “I am I.” But he argues that, “self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness.” (Hegel, 1977, p. 10) So, the independent self-consciousness of the master and the recognition he gains from the slave is not complete. In this condition, master does not have real freedom because one has freedom if he liberates others instead of dominating. The success of the master is an illusion and he is not in the condition as he initially desires. (Wood, 1990, p. 88)

Hegel argues that as opposed to initial picture, it is the slave who will develop a true independent consciousness. (Hegel, 1977, p. 117) It is through his work for the master, “the bondsman becomes conscious of what he truly is.” (Hegel, 1977, p. 118) “In his work the slave labours for someone else’s satisfaction, and so learns respect for the independent existence of the objects around him.” (Stern, 2002, p. 85) And he arrives at a level of self-consciousness which cannot be acquired by the master.

Hegel explains the process of attaining a fully developed self-consciousness in the following paragraph:

Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it has come *out of itself*. This has a twofold significance: first, it has lost *itself* for it finds itself as an *other* being; secondly, in doing so it has superseded the other, for it does not see the other as an essential being, but in the other sees its own self. (Hegel, 1977, p. 111)

The first step in the master and slave relation is that slave gives up his independent existence and becomes dependent on master. And by doing so, he loses himself for the other. But then, in the other, he finds his true self and gains a fully developed self-consciousness. What is first seen as a loss turns out to be a gain. The slave gains himself, by losing himself. Hegel states that “although, as consciousness, it does indeed come *out of itself*, yet, though out of itself, it is at the same time kept back within itself, *is for itself*, and the self outside it, is for *it*.” (Hegel, 1977, p. 112) The slave turns back to itself, by stepping out of itself. These expressions seem to involve a contradiction. But as I have stated, Hegel develops an alternative to the traditional one-sided thinking and it becomes apparent while he explains the master and slave relation. For him, through these contradictions, one can step into a fully developed level of consciousness. By starting with the other, actively removing it and turning back to itself, consciousness moves into self-consciousness. (Houlgate, 2013, p. 83) Hegel explains self-consciousness in the following paragraph. In this level of consciousness;

Each is for the other the middle term, through which each mediates itself with itself and unites with itself; and each is for itself, and for the other, an immediate being on its own account, which at the same time is such only through this mediation. They *recognize* themselves as *mutually recognizing* one another. (Hegel, 1977, p. 112)

Hegel argues that an individual relates to himself through the mediation of the other, he recognizes himself as mutually recognizing one another. Thus, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the desire for recognition is determined as the driving force and mutual recognition is determined as the condition for fully developed self-consciousness.

As I have stated mutual recognition is introduced as the condition for self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. But in the *Philosophy of Right*, it functions as the uniting element in civil society. There, Hegel analyzes the realization of the Spirit or the development of absolute freedom by investigating social institutions with reference to the notion of recognition.

As I have mentioned, the family is the beginning and the ground of ethical life. It has the role to make the transition from natural life to ethical life. Accordingly, recognition is first seen in the family. Family relations are characterized by love and love is the origin of recognition in the family. A member of a family is recognized as he or she is just being a member of that family through love. Love removes the distinction between being-for-self and being-for-other. At first, being-for-self and being-for-other seem to be mutually exclusive, it seems to have contradiction. It is thought that individuals cannot have independent existence and mutual bond at the same time. But for Hegel, it is possible through the feeling of love. When it comes to love, this independent separate existence is not sufficient. (Williams, 1997) Through love the self-sufficient independence is negated and the independence which involves both being-for-other and being-for-self is developed. This is the first step in the realization of freedom. “Thus, love overcomes the mutual exclusion between selves by removing the opposition between being-for-other and being-for-self.” (Williams, 1997, p. 217) At first sight it seems the loss of the independence, but actually it brings genuine independence.

Hegel explains the realization of freedom in the family in relation to the moments of recognition, in section 158. He argues that there are two moments of recognition in the family. “The first moment of recognition is the loss of the self before the other.” (Williams, 1997, p. 215) It is the negation of the self as an independent personhood. “In love, I negate my independence.” (Williams, 1997, p. 219) “The second moment is that I find myself in another person, that I gain recognition in this person, who in turn gains recognition in me.” (Hegel, 1996, p. 199) Namely, I gain myself in another person by losing myself in the first place. It is both a loss and gain at the same time. Therefore, love involves a contradiction. Hegel argues that it is the most immense contradiction. (1996, p. 199) But love both produces and resolves this contradiction. It produces a contradiction because it involves both independence of the self and its dependence on the other. But it also resolves this contradiction because one recognizes his true self through this contradiction.

Genuine independence is developed when the contradiction is resolved by the mutual recognition of the lovers. Williams calls it “substantive independence”. He states that it also enlarges the selfhood of the lovers. Strengthening the selfhood requires removing self-sufficient subjectivity through love and mutual recognition rooted in that love:

Substantive independence is intersubjective and achieved through reciprocal recognition. Here being in relation to the other does not cancel my genuine independence and freedom; rather independence and freedom are realized together in union with the other. (Williams, 1997, p. 217)

The self-sufficient independence is the abstract freedom and it becomes more concrete through mutual recognition in the family. Although union with another in the family brings more satisfying freedom comparing to self-sufficient independence, it still is not freedom in the fully concrete sense.

There are further stages in the realization of freedom and in the development of recognition as well. Civil society is the stage that comes after the family as the dissolution of the ethical element. It is the dissolution of the unity in the family. The unity in the family is replaced by the reflective separation and difference in the civil society. (Williams, 1997) The immediate unity between the individual and family leaves its place to isolation and atomized individuals. It is the principle of particularity which works in the civil society. The principle of particularity gives rise to subjective freedom. For Hegel, the subjective freedom and the principle of particularity is a modern development, so is civil society. Subjective freedom is what was lacking in the ancient thinking, in this sense, it is a development of modernity but it is not sufficient because it lacks conscious connection to universal.

Hegel calls civil society “the external state”. It is the state based on need. The end of the external state is to serve for the private self-interests of the individuals. The connection of individual to the universal – if there is any- is mediated by the private interests. (Williams, 1997)

In civil society, as an external state, recognition has a formal character. It means that individuals are not recognized as they are, but through the things that are externally appraised. Williams calls it

“external recognition”. In civil society, people recognize each other, not as whole human beings, but only in their abstract formal capacities as owners of property, or as abstract laborers necessary for the mutual satisfaction of needs. (Williams, 1997, p. 144) An individual is not recognized because of who he is, as he is recognized in the family, rather recognition is gained through the abstract formal capacities he has. It follows that if one loses those formal capacities, then the recognition which he gains disappears.

One should pay attention to the point that external recognition is not the only type of recognition found in civil society. While Hegel talks about civil society he clears up that it cannot be seen merely as a market economy in which everything is reduced to exchange and the satisfaction of mutual interests. Corporations transcend formal relations developed in the external state and offer the possibility of a unity among the members of civil society. There, in the corporation, lies the possibility of a kind of recognition different from the external one.

Williams argues that in the civil society there are two types of recognition which correspond to two aspects of civil society: external recognition and mutual recognition. (1997) External recognition develops a formal unity among the members of a society whereas mutual recognition develops an internal unity. External recognition is grounded on the atomistic aspect of civil society in which others are recognized as a means to realize self-interests of the individuals. On the other hand, mutual recognition is possible through the corporations. Corporations are self-regulating voluntary organizations. They are like guilds which care for their members. The members of a corporation have recognition and honor only by being a member of that corporation such as in the family. Williams says that “recognition in the determinate mode of honor is the medium wherein the individual is raised to universality.” (1997, p. 261) Honor gained by being a member of a corporation is the manifestation of the recognition in the corporation. The members of a corporation recognize themselves and they are recognized by others both as individuals and as belonging to a whole – which is the corporation.

Through mutual recognition in the corporation, the self-sufficient particularity is enlarged to universality. The members of a corporation pursue both their private ends and the ends of the corporation since what is private becomes compatible with the universal. Particular ends and universal-social ends are united through the activities performed in the corporations and individuals head towards the universal. “Hegel believes that the corporations can restrain and transform the

ethos of self-seeking particularity into the pursuit of universal-social-ethical ends.” (Williams, 1997, p. 225) Corporations constitute the ethical aspect of the civil society and they are the mediating institutions between the family and the state which is a higher community.

We have seen that both particularity and universality, we may also say unity, are inherent in the civil society, but Hegel notes that this unity is not complete since it lacks the consciousness of the individual. According to him, the complete unity is found in the state with the development of awareness of that unity. This is the last stage in the realization of freedom. The state is the last stage in the development of recognition as well. In the state, the members who are conscious of their relation to the universal are mutually recognized both as particular individuals and belonging to a whole.

To sum up, in Hegel’s system of ethical life, mutual recognition is developed first in the family, then in the corporation and finally in the state. And mutual recognition which is provided by the universal activity performed in the corporation creates unity in civil society.

4. Reevaluating Hegel’s Conception of Civil Society and the Theory of the Corporation

The common tendency among the literature is to see civil society as dissolution of communal relations. It is discussed by new communitarians such as Walzer, Sandel and Taylor. For them, the problem is that we are not aware of our communal relations anymore and liberalism has the blame for that. (See Kymlica, 2002, p. 209) This perspective disregards the positive elements which are rooted in civil society while focusing on its negative aspects. Hegel’s conception of civil society in the *Philosophy of Right* captures its positive aspect by introducing the element of particularity as a necessary movement for the emergence of unity. The element of particularity is the source of differentiation and separation. The self-oriented individual of civil society has its origin in the element of particularity. But particularity is also conceived as the source of autonomy and the birth of independence of the self. (see Sayers, 1995, pp. 2-4) Similarly, Hegel does not see particularity as something to be overcome. Rather for him, it is a necessary condition for the actualization of morality and freedom. According to Hegel, a perfect unity can be established only through the mediation of particularity, namely through separation.

Hegel does not regard civil society as the dissolution of community in general. But he talks about the dissolution of a specific kind of community which existed in ancient times. The ancient community was grounded on immediate unity. The development of civil society can be regarded as the loss of immediate unity but not of community. For Hegel, the state and the corporation are alternative forms of community which involve mediated unity. For this reason, civil society cannot be conceived as dissolution; on the contrary it is an improvement towards genuine unity.

Although Hegel criticizes modern atomist individualism which is grounded on the formal aspect of civil society, he does not praise an immediate unity between members and community; therefore, he presents an alternative to the main stream communitarian perspective. Williams also asserts that “Hegel presents an alternative to the abstract atomic individualism of modern liberalism and to abstract collectivism, whether of classical political philosophy (Plato) or of modern communitarianism.” (Williams, 1997, p. 231) His conception of civil society can provide us an alternative to both communitarian and liberal perspectives on the possibility of unity in civil society.

As it was stated, Hegel’s account of civil society can be thought as an alternative to mainstream communitarian thinking but still, his theory of the corporation is open to criticism in some respects. Business organizations of today are the closest thing to Hegel’s corporations. It might be argued that Hegel’s corporations are different than today’s business corporations. “Hegel’s moral corporations existed before modern corporations took shape.” (Klikauer, 2016, p. 17) But despite their difference, Hegel’s moral corporations and business corporations of today have some similarities. First, both are voluntary organizations. In this respect, they are different than the family or neighborhood. Secondly, they are organized to set principles for the activities performed within a profession.

Hegel characterizes the corporation as a legally recognized institution which represents a form of business practice and provides for the common ends of an estate. According to Hegel, individuals who are members of a corporation are legally and mutually recognized. They work for the common ends of the corporation and develop a unity going out of their private interests. He argues that in the corporation, through the economic activity, individuals relate to universal. The theory of corporation implies that “in the economy we must work for others in order to meet our own needs

and this gives us an immediate motivation to socialize our behavior, conform to universal standards.” (Ross, 2008, p. 51) It is through the norms and rules set by the corporation and followed by its members that an ethical aspect - the rights and duties – is brought into economy. Otherwise civil society would be a ruthless competitive marketplace. Through the corporation, working for the private interests turns into working for the common ends.

Hegel assumes that economic alliance brings out unity among people. But the problem is that the link from economic/formal union to unity seems to be weakly constructed in the account of the corporation. Namely how to move from particular to universal is not clear. Hegel explains the link between particular and universal in relation to the theory of recognition and the concept of universal activity. Each member who is motivated for realizing his private interests knows that he should work for the common interests of the corporation. Thus, they engage in a universal activity. When the members who are particular individuals are engaged in a universal activity, mutual recognition is created in the corporation. But since the common activity performed in the corporation is focused on the goals and interests of a group of people who have the same profession, it cannot be seen as a universal activity. Even Hegel admits that the link to universal is limited in civil society, but it will be completed in the state. The reason Hegel sees the common activity in the corporation beyond a temporary alliance is that in his account, the corporation is a business organization which has ethical concerns, regarding the operation of an industry, independently of the aim of economic profitability. Today, in the free market economy, we do not see corporations as was described by Hegel. The business organizations which are closer to the corporation are economically based organizations. They represent the common interests of a group of people participating in an industry. But these common interests are limited to economic sphere and the main focus is to increase profitability. The norms and rules are set to achieve this goal not to provide the ethical. Therefore, his theory of the corporation seems to be invalidated today.

Despite its problems, Hegel’s account of the corporation is important with respect to showing that the element of universality can be found in civil society. Accordingly, unity which allows for individual differences can be created in civil society, through mutual recognition. In “Dialogue of Solidarities”, Bell calls attention to a relevant point. Analyzing Tönnies’ distinction, he states that in civil society (*Gesellschaft*) actors feel a solidarity of interests whereas in community (*Gemeinschaft*) they feel solidarity of sentiments. He argues that for collective action, Hegel says

for unity, one of these solidarities cannot be enough. Both are needed together to produce a higher kind of solidarity. (Bell, 1998, p. 182) His idea seems to be influenced by Hegel's conception of civil society which involves both the elements of universality and particularity. Bell calls this higher solidarity "solidarity of solidarities", which can be developed through the dialogue of solidarities in all scales from smallest to the largest ones. (Bell, 1998, p. 182) Like Hegel's, his solution is to suggest a new kind of community which combines both ancient and modern elements. But different from Hegel, his theory allows for a wide range of communities that develop solidarity in civil society.

Hegel is commonly regarded as defending communitarianism since he praises the sense of belonging to community. But it cannot be argued considering Hegel's thoughts in its totality. Although Hegel refers to ancient communities while developing his theory of the state, he also upholds some liberal values. (Beiser, 2005, p. 225) According to Beiser, Hegel's significance lies in his attempt to combine communitarianism with liberalism in his theory of the state. (2005, p. 225) He combines the element of universality that is found in communitarianism and the element of particularity that is found in liberalism and thus he brings out a unique conception of community and civil society. Westphal calls it "moderate collectivism" and he argues that Hegel overcomes the dichotomy between individualism and collectivism. (2003, p. 107) He states that "where others see only an exclusive dichotomy, Hegel identifies a biconditional relation." (2003, p. 107) In the moderate collectivism of Hegel, social context conditions but it does not determine the identity of the individual.

Consequently, this study on the possibility of unity in civil society led us to the idea that the unity which is said to be lost by the emergence of civil society is an ancient conception of unity. Based on Hegel's thoughts, unity can be conceived in a way which combines ancient and modern conceptions. It is called mediated unity. Hegel grounds this unity on the corporation. Although we have exhibited some problems of Hegel's theory of the corporation it is still very important with respect to pointing out the need for a new kind of community which provides mediated unity in civil society. And this need lies at the heart of philosophy and politics today.

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