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## Masters, Servants and Mediation

The recent move to a non-metaphysical reading of Hegel by way of a *pragmatic* interpretation of 'Spirit', is in danger of being derailed by an associated marginalising of the place of *mediation* in Hegel's thinking.

The move highlights the place of Recognition in Hegel's thinking, and so dates from Kojève's brilliant use of the Master-Servant passage in the *Phenomenology*, and the master-servant relationship remains the centrepiece of 'transactionalist' interpretations of Hegel to this day. As a result, the notion of Recognition, which has become more and more central to critical interpretations of Hegel, tends to be rendered as a *bipolar* relation between individualised subjects along the lines of the social psychology of American Pragmatism, notably the Symbolic Interactionism of George Herbert Mead. Such an interpretation of Hegel loses as much as it gains.

The master-servant dialectic was intended by Hegel precisely as an exposition of how an interaction between two subjects may develop if there is no means of mediating the interaction present to the subjects. A closer examination of the master-servant dialectic may help to bring to light how Hegel deals with 'intersubjectivity' - a term, incidentally, that Hegel never used, master of neologisms that he was.

### The Master-Servant Dialectic

Hegel invented the epic of the primordial master and servant as a direct counter to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's idea of the *social contract* between innately equal partners, and other eighteenth century notions of the 'noble savage' which saw inequality as a construct of the formation of society from a previously atomistic but egalitarian 'state of nature'. This literature drew on a concept of the 'first man' and Hegel's rendering of his view on this topic through the vehicle of a Robinson Crusoe tale has to be seen as a *literary device*. Philosophically, Hegel stood firmly in the 'communitarian' tradition of Aristotle, and there is no way that Hegel can be thought to have embraced some idea of an historical 'state of nature' in which individuals or small family groups lived in mutual isolation from one another like polar bears or wedge-tailed eagles.

Nevertheless, the point from which the master-servant narrative begins is indeed one of mutually indifferent subjects, lacking any means of mediating interactions between them.

What Hegel had in mind by 'subject' in this relation is open to interpretation; certainly he has in mind self-governing, self-contained systems of activity. 'Subject' is ultimately a logical category, and it receives its exhaustive analysis by Hegel only in the *Science of Logic*. But even if taken as a logical category, the only real, empirical basis for the notion of subject is a *form of life*, a *Gestalt*, and the thinking that belongs to it - a 'formation of consciousness'. A form of life can be instantiated in some social formation or people at a certain stage of its history, abstracting from relations a people has with other peoples, and with a considerably greater degree of abstraction, a modern individual together with their family and family property.

Hegel's assumption that human history began with peoples who lived without any common culture uniting them with other peoples was called into question for him, late in his career, with the discovery of the common ancestry of Germanic and Indian languages.

Nevertheless, we can accept that the idea of self-contained social formations living in mutual isolation or indifference with respect to one another and lacking any common culture - language, law, religion, etc. - as a hypothetical abstraction, a 'thought experiment' if you will, whose historical reality would predate *homo sapiens* were it to exist at all. While not at any point in history or the development of subjects of any kind an *absolute* truth, such a condition of mutual indifference is commonly a relative truth, and as such needs to be examined. The master-servant dialectic is the device Hegel used to do this: to examine the dynamics of interactions which take place when subjects interact with one another in the absence of external means of mediation.

This dynamic is important for Hegel not because he had an interest in the prehistory of human society, but because he had an interest in the development of modernity, particularly in his native Germany. Hegel understood modernity as a unitary social formation which encompasses a multiplicity of forms of life. In Hegel's vision of modern society, individuality flourished and no particular system of belief or way of life was mandated for all; rather diversity and free self-determination formed the medium of social integration within a strong political state. Like Rousseau and Hobbes and writers who speculated about the 'first man', as well as the German Idealists like Kant and Fichte, Hegel's central concern was ethical life in a modern, post-traditional society. Hegel is of paramount importance today because he differed from the other outstanding early theorists of modernity in that he was *not a liberal*; on the contrary, he was concerned above all with the social fragmentation that accompanied the demise of traditional society and with the problem of maintaining social cohesion simultaneously with individuality. The idea that humans were equal insofar as they stood outside the institutions of society, or that people were innately war-like and had to be held down by an oppressive state, both these ideas which counterposed freedom to the state were anathema to Hegel. The master-servant narrative is an integral part of his argument against these positions.

Interpreting Hegel's master-servant narrative, and the arcane exposition which accompanies it, is made a little less intractable by the fact that it appears in different versions in different works. It first makes its appearance in the 1802/3 *System of Ethical Life* where it is dealt in two distinct passages, it is notable by its absence in the *Philosophy of Spirit* of 1805/6, before he uses it in the *Phenomenology* in 1806/7, and then it appears in successive versions of the *Encyclopaedia* as part of the *Subjective Spirit* (Hegel's psychology) from 1817 to 1831. Let us look at how Hegel uses the master-servant dialectic in each of these works.

### **The System of Ethical Life (1802/3)**

The condition out of which the master-servant relation first emerges in the *System of Ethical Life* is "natural ethical life." The structure of the *System of Ethical Life* is the alternate subsumption of the Concept under Intuition and conversely, subsumption of Intuition under the Concept - a process of intellectual or socio-historical development in which ideas are internalised through sensuous-practical activity, while experience and desire is objectified in the production of material culture. Thus natural ethical life operates through two levels: Practice and Ideality. Natural ethical life is not atomised; what it lacks is a *State*.

Hegel says Practice is the supersession of *need by labour*, in *enjoyment*. The subject

simply takes possession of the object of desire without any conception of property or right. *Intuition* develops through the use of plants and the use of animals, together creating the conditions for intelligence; “eating and drinking are its paradigm,” and the *Concept* develops through the making and use of *tools* to *speech* and language and the *raising of children*. At this level, human beings are already living *with others* and have a shared material culture. Mutual recognition, he says, resides entirely within the *inner life* of individuals, engaged in common labour, sharing common needs; each are alike and independent, in the sense that each individual carries the entirety of their cultural achievements within themselves.

The second level of Ideality develops on the basis of division of labour and the creation of a surplus which is available to meet the needs of others and for exchange. So:

“The subject is not simply determined as a possessor, but is taken up into the form of universality; he is a single individual with a bearing on others and universality negative as a possessor recognised as such by others.”

Thus *Recognition* arises here in the raising of immediate possession to the form of universality, i.e., as *property* and legal right, as part of a social division of labour and the exchange of products.

On this basis, the highest level of Natural Ethical Life begins with *money, trade* and *surplus*. The kind of social life one could have in mind here would be the ancient Greek *polis* in their Golden Age. It is here, prior to the formation of the state, but subsequent to the introduction of *money*, that “Lordship and Bondage” first appears in Hegel’s exposition.

“At this level a living individual confronts a living individual, but their power of life is unequal. Thus one is might or power over the other. One is indifference, while the other is fixed in difference. ... This relation in which the indifferent and free has power over the different is the relation of *lordship and bondage*.

“This relation is immediately and absolutely established along with the inequality of the power of life. At this point there is no question of any right or any necessary equality. Equality is nothing but an abstraction ... it is the inequality of life which is established, and therefore the relation of lordship and bondage.”

This theme is picked up again in the third section of the *System of Ethical Life*. After ‘Natural Ethical Life’, Hegel has devoted the second section to ‘transgression’, how natural ethical life is disrupted and threatens to fall into havoc. The third section therefore is about the formation of a succession of forms of government and state, in which the particularity of natural ethical life is raised to universality. This section is incomplete, but begins with the “First system of Government: the System of Needs.” Hegel returns to the master-servant narrative with which he had completed the first section, and we will quote his observations at length:

“This necessary inequality divides itself again within the business class into many particular types of business, and it divides these into estates of different wealth and enjoyment. But owing to its quantitative character, which is a matter of degree and is incapable of any definition except in degree, this inequality produces a relation of *master and servant*. The

individual who is tremendously wealthy becomes a might; he cancels the form of thoroughgoing physical dependence, the form of dependence on a universal, not on a particular.

“Next, great wealth, which is similarly bound up with the deepest poverty (for in the separation between rich and poor labour on both sides is universal and objective), produces on the one side in ideal universality, on the other side in real universality, mechanically.

“This purely quantitative element, the inorganic aspect of labour, which is parcelled out even in its concept, is the unmitigated extreme of barbarism.

“The original character of the business class, namely, its being capable of an organic absolute intuition and respect for something divine, even though posited outside it, disappears, and the bestiality of contempt for all higher things enters.

“The mass of wealth, the pure universal, the absence of wisdom, is the heart of the matter. The absolute bond of the people, namely ethical principle, has vanished, and the people is dissolved.

“The government has to work as hard as possible against this inequality and the destruction of private and public life wrought by it. It can do this directly in an external way by making high gain more difficult, and if it sacrifices one part of this class to mechanical and factory labour and abandons it to barbarism, it must keep the whole people without question in the life possible for it. But this happens most necessarily, or rather immediately, through the inner constitution of the class.

“The relation of physical dependence is absolute particularisation and dependence on something abstract, an *ens rationis*. The constitution creates a living dependence and a relation of individuals, a different and an inwardly active connection which is not one of physical dependence.

“To say that this class is constituted inwardly means that within its restrictedness it is a living universal. What is its universal, its law and its right, is living at the same time in the individuals, realised in them through their will and their own activity.

“This organic existence of this class makes every single individual, so far as there is life in him, one with the others; but the class cannot subsist in absolute unity.

“Thus it makes some of the individuals dependent, but ethical on the score of their trust, respect, etc., and this ethical life cancels mere mass, quantity, and the elemental, and creates a living relation.

“The wealthy man is directly compelled to modify his relation of mastery, and even others’ distrust for it, by permitting a more general participation in it. The external inequality is diminished externally, just as the infinite does not give itself up to determinacy but exists as living activity, and thus the urge to amass wealth indefinitely is itself eradicated.”

What Hegel is talking about here is the arrival of money and trade in a close-knit traditional society, or alternatively a revolution which dissolves the previous constitution.

Remember that Hegel's central concern is the road to modernity. It is not necessary to speculate about ancient history to form a picture of the process that Hegel is describing here. On countless occasions in recent times, we have witnessed the impact of trade and money on traditional societies; this first step along the road to modernity is characterised by the rapid disintegration of traditional social bonds, norms of behaviour and beliefs, along with a rapid sorting of the people into classes marked by extremes of poverty and wealth - "the people is dissolved."

So the master-servant dialectic does not begin from an primordial 'state of nature', but on the contrary, from the residue of a close-knit traditional community which has been shattered by the arrival of commerce, launching individuals *into* a Hobbesian war of all against all. The quantitative nature of money leads to the division into extremes of wealth and poverty and the shattering of other social bonds. It is those released from day-to-day labour through their engagement in trade, travel, wealth or personal disposition who release themselves from the day-to-day grind of existence to accumulate money.

And it is not the case that in this version of Hegel's narrative of the master and servant, the relation is unmediated. The medium of interaction is money. But all other forms of mediation, the entire fabric of natural ethical life, has been shattered. But the upshot is not simply an atomised mass of economic agents, but rather a "system of needs," an economically regulated division of labour, which Hegel calls "the first system of government." That this formation is a step along the road to the formation of a modern state in which people's freedom is expressed as the state with which they identify, is prefigured in Hegel's observation that wealthy members of the "business class" must address the problems created by inequality of wealth "by permitting a more general participation in it," ultimately transcending the drive to amass personal wealth.

### **The Jena Lectures of 1805/6**

In the *Philosophy of Spirit* of 1805/6, also known as the Jena lectures or *Realphilosophie II*, the master-servant dialectic figures only in a very curtailed form involving a fight to the death in defence of one's property, without going on to the subjugation of one subject by another. There is quite an extended treatment of Recognition though, and the process of Recognition begins at the conclusion to the first part, "Spirit According to its Concept," with a much abbreviated form of the "struggle for recognition."

So long as people relate to things simply by possessing (i.e., taking hold of) them and immediately excluding others, then relations between people have the character of immediacy and particularity, not universality. Spirit subsists in universality, that is to say in legal right and property. Hegel casts the transition to his treatment of legal rights in a modern class society in "Actual Spirit" in terms of the injury incurred by people who continually find that their possession of things is not recognised, that they have to fight every time to maintain their existence against unthinking incursions. It is in the endeavour to overcome this havoc and transform mere possession into universally recognised property right that Spirit arises.

In property a person is Recognised. Hegel introduces Recognition in two distinct modes. Firstly, in terms of the transformation of subsistence labour into work within a social division of labour, contract, exchange of commodities, money and so on, and secondly, the transformation of possession into property, the rule of law which determines that a

person's rights are not just particular but universal. It is the transformation of the particular will into a universal will which underlies Recognition.

The essential point is that Recognition is not something that subsists in the relation between one person and another; if a person is recognised then their recognition is *universal*. Recognition is not achieved because one person has imposed their will upon another, but because the person is part of a community in which the legal right has been made universal.

### **The Phenomenology**

The *Phenomenology* deals with *Gestalts*, 'formations of consciousness', self-contained systems of thinking associated with definite forms of social life. These *Gestalts* harbour inherent internal contradictions or problems, and when consistently carried through eventually these problems prove to be resolvable only in a new *Gestalt* and an associated form of life. In this way, Hegel endeavours to trace the rationality inherent in the successive social formations leading up to the modern state.

The master-servant dialectic figures in the transition from 'Consciousness' to 'Self-Consciousness'. Consciousness refers to formations of consciousness characteristic of self-sufficient communities which have distinguished themselves from nature through a conscious labour process, but, according to Hegel, do not yet 'exist' because they cannot be conscious of themselves as a form of consciousness because they lack *Recognition*. Lacking recognition means that they have not established relationships of mutual recognition with *other* subjects.

The starting point for the master-servant dialectic then, as in the *System of Ethical Life*, is not a 'state of nature', but rather mutually indifferent *communities*. But in the *Phenomenology* Hegel talks not of the tending of plants and animals, the use of tools, language and so on, but rather, of *self-certainty*. A people who have created their own humanised environment regard the objects found in that humanised environment as *given objects*. Although the individuals of such a community are not mutually indifferent with respect to one another, on the contrary, it is the relation of the community to its outside which characterises the whole way of thinking and acting of individuals of the community.

A 'Self-Conscious' subject on the other hand, not only regards its objects as given, but recognises that the way they perceive these objects represents one point of view, their own, among other possible points of view. The same awareness of being a Self among others characterises the thinking of individuals within such a community. That is, through the objects of their consciousness they are conscious of themselves as a form of consciousness. This is a formation of consciousness available only to subjects which have established relationships of mutual recognition with other subjects like themselves. That is to say it is *recognitive consciousness* - a term introduced for the first time in the *Philosophy of Spirit* of 1805/6. The master-servant dialectic is a key moment in the transition from 'Consciousness' to 'Self-Consciousness'.

The point about self-sufficient communities, communities that produce everything they need and no surplus, is that in such a way of life they are necessarily indifferent to others; they produce nothing that anyone else needs and need nothing that anyone else produces. Consequently, they mutually indifferent in relation to other subjects; culturally just as

much as economically.

“For the other is likewise independent, shut up within itself, and there is nothing in it which is not there through itself. The first does not have the object before it only in the passive form characteristic primarily of the object of desire, but as an object existing independently for itself, over which therefore it has no power to do anything for its own behalf, if that object does not *per se* do what the first does to it.” (§ 182)

Hegel explores the dynamics of relationships between mutually indifferent subjects, likening their interaction to Kantian ethics. On the one hand, the subjects see each other as objects, as parts of nature much like wild animals but at the same time they see that the others are like themselves. Consequently, in treating the other like themselves, they both misrecognise the other which is in fact different and not like themselves, and undermine their own internal relationships and ethos which is essentially self-contained.

Insofar as the other produces something which is of value to the subject, the relationship is one of the play of force, rather than exchange or sharing: land and produce is simply taken irrespective of its being possessed by the other.

Now, how are these mutually indifferent self-governing communities to come into relation with one another, starting out along the road to modernity. Jean-Jacques Rousseau suggests that these independent subjects enter into contractual relations with one another as equal partners to exchange of commodities. In this scenario of course, inequality only begins to grow over time. Hegel rejects this suggestion. He also rejects Hobbes' suggestion that these mutually warring communities ('absolute individuals') will be brought together into a single state by means of an overarching power capable of mediating relations between the different subjects by dint of overwhelming force. Hegel rejects this too, because the supposed oppressive state would have no rational basis in any or all of the contending subjects.

In short, the only step away from mutually indifferent traditional communities towards the modern state is *colonisation*.

But Hegel has already shown that the efforts of the mutually indifferent subjects to impose their will on each other have failed. This dogmatic assertion of a subject's truth over that of the other may succeed by destroying the other or may fail because the other repels the subject's attack; either way there is no progress from 'self-certainty', i.e., closed communities of practice, towards a modern society and modern self-consciousness. In other words, conquest in itself would only explain the growth of a more powerful and larger traditional community, not any rational progress in the direction of modernity. So when Hegel narrates the master-servant epic, the point is to understand how conquest takes a step away from the self-contained community towards modernity. To achieve this Hegel cannot take the road of 'intersubjectivity' but on the contrary he must disclose the form of *mediation* which allows the confrontation between mutually alien subjects to generate new forms of association and new forms of consciousness. Given that there is no 'third party' to mediate the interaction between the two parties here, mediation is achieved by the splitting in two of each of the contending parties.

Firstly, each subject must split into a dependent and an independent moment in order that one subject takes on the role of dependent and the other independent in a *single system of activity*. A conqueror which has not been able to consciously organise its own activity

cannot use a servant-subject; conversely, a subject which has not learnt to give and take direction in its own activity can be no-one's servant. In summary, unless both subjects have a sufficiently developed system of labour, a relationship of dependence and independence cannot be established by conquest; the conqueror may take over the other's land, but a master-servant relationship cannot be established.

Secondly, the subjects must split in two by means of the separation of needs (or desire) and labour (means of satisfaction). This opens the way for each to mediate the needs-enjoyment relation of the other. The servant, by its labour mediates between the needs of the master and its satisfaction; the master, by its needs, mediates between the labour of the servant and the satisfaction of its needs. If there is nothing the servant can do for the master, or if the master is unable to provide for the needs of the servant, then no master-servant relationship can be established.

“The master brings himself into relation to both these moments, to a thing as such, the object of desire, and to the consciousness whose essential character is thinghood. And since the master, is (a) *qua* notion of self-consciousness, an immediate relation of self-existence, but (b) is now moreover at the same time mediation, or a being-for-self which is for itself only through an other - he stands in relation (a) immediately to both, (b) mediately to each through the other.” (§ 190)

Provided the master exercises total domination, and according to Hegel, inspires absolute fear in the servant, then the servant finds itself not simply meeting this or that need because the master demands it (as the peasant meets demands from the government's tax collector), but rather takes as its object the *entirety* of the master's system of needs. At the same time, the servant's needs become those generated by its own labour within the master's system of labour.

The upshot of this then is the incorporation of the master and servants into a system of needs, which in *The System of Ethical Life*, Hegel described as “the first form of government.” As Hegel demonstrates in the subsequent paragraphs of the *Phenomenology*, the actuality of the master fades from being the living essence and power within the system of activity to a more or less symbolic role. On the other hand, the servant goes through a series of transformations in consciousness in which it ceases to be dependent beings, but finds the products of its own labour as the objectivity of the social formation of which it is a part. The servant therefore undergoes an ‘emancipation by labour’ and it is the servant's consciousness which develops in the direction of modern consciousness.

The role of recognition in this dialectic makes a lot of sense when the exposition of Recognition in the 1805/6 *Philosophy of Spirit* is taken into account. Although recognition of the servant's independence is denied in the beginning of the master-servant dialectic, the servant achieves recognition by way of legal rights within a society of producers and the recognition given to them by way of the value placed upon their products. Modern society, that is to say, fully developed self-consciousness, cannot develop other than in an open system of relations between free and independent subjects. Hegel expresses this dynamic in terms of the need for recognition from peers as opposed to the deficient recognition the master receives from dependent subjects whose activity is in fact a reflection of the master's own needs.



The point is that the outcome of the master-servant dialectic is the incorporation of both in a system of needs, and that this can only be achieved by way of mediated relationships, and finally that mediation is achieved, and self-consciousness constructed by way of the separation of needs and their means of satisfaction.

Renderings of the master-servant dialectic which cast the relationship in terms of intersubjectivity, that is to say, bipolar relationships between unitary subjects, completely fail to grasp the essence of this dynamic and its significance for Hegel.

### **The Subjective Spirit**

From 1817 at the latest, the master-servant dialectic was located in the *Encyclopaedia* in Part III, *The Philosophy of Spirit*, and in the first section of that, in “Subjective Spirit,” which Hegel sometimes referred to as his “Psychology.”

To understand the place of the master-servant dialectic within the *Philosophy of Spirit*, we must first understand the complex relation between Objective Spirit and Subjective Spirit. This is not a relation between societal relations and individual or psychic relations; both Objective Spirit and Subjective spirit equally imply forms of practical activity and thought forms.

Objective Spirit, or “Mind Objective” as it is sometimes called, is also known as the *Philosophy of Right*, which represents the unfolding of the abstract concept of right. Rights imply both the Family and the State, but in particular also, the historically increasing distance which opens up between the family and the state, occupied by Civil Society. Abstract Right exists in embryo in the family inasmuch as Property adheres to the family rather than individuals (in Hegel’s view) and is properly Right, as opposed to immediate and particular power, only insofar as it is Universal, that is, is validated by a rational State. Right, which entails family property, contract, justice, a social division of labour, political rights, and so on, realises itself only with the break-up of the traditional community in which both productive and communicative spheres of life are determined by kinship relations; that is, in the distancing of politics and labour which are initially subsumed under a natural division of roles according to the rules of kinship.

“Subjective Spirit” on the other hand, can be conceived as ‘habitus’ (in the meaning given to this term by Pierre Bourdieu, for example), the habits of life, tastes, dispositions, meanings and valuations, by which a group of people regulate their lives together, abstracted from the natural division of labour associated with kinship, and legal right manifested in the life of a rational state. Subjective Spirit is therefore ‘prior’ to right, and it is the dialectic of subjective spirit which brings Right into existence.

But this relationship is not merely or even chiefly historical. Right has reality only insofar as it is realised within the subjective spirit. A law has to be obeyed, property rights have to be respected, heads of state must express their people’s aspirations, and it is these dispositions and basic modes of grasping and creating reality that are dealt with in the Subjective Spirit.

In the last revision of the *Encyclopaedia*, the master-servant dialectic occupies a place similar to the place it occupied in the *Phenomenology*. The middle part of Subjective Spirit is called “Phenomenology,” and the master-servant narrative is in a section called “Self-Consciousness Recognitive,” dealing with the development of *self*-consciousness, following the section on Consciousness and before the Section on Reason. The

Subjective Spirit is concluded with a third section entitled “Psychology,” which is the dialectic of Practice and Theory from which the concept of Right is produced.

In all versions of the *Encyclopaedia*, the master-servant dialectic is reproduced in this position, though in much abbreviated form, without the succeeding sections on Stoicism, Unhappy consciousness, etc. The import of the master-servant dialectic does not essentially change from its form in the *Phenomenology*, although it occupies a smaller place overall. Hegel does not seek to deduce the relationships of Civil Society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) out of the master-servant relation as he seemed concerned to in the earlier versions. The point is to explain the transition from Consciousness as Such, as yet not engaged with the wider world, still at the cognitive stage of “Self-Certainty” to *class* consciousness, to a consciousness constructed out of interactions with other consciousnesses, which knows itself as one view of the world among many.

The form of the dialectic in the *Phenomenology* is its most developed and must remain the canonical version, with the assistance of the early versions which give us hints about how to interpret it. But the main features remain, in particular, the essential role of mediation and the way it is achieved between two subjects lacking any external means of mediating their interaction.

For example, in the 1817 version of the *Encyclopaedia*, the master-servant narrative is included the following:

“**356.** This relation is in the first place and according to its identity a shared feature of the need, the desire, and the concern for satisfaction. In place of the crude destruction of the immediate object there follows the acquisition, preservation, and formation of it, as of the intermediary by which the two extremes of dependence and independence are welded together.”

For here again the process of Recognition presupposes the splitting of each subject into the moments of needs and their satisfaction, and each mediates the other’s supersession of their needs.

There are numerous passages which justify the Symbolic Interactionist reading of master-servant dialectic, for example:

“**353.** The process is a struggle. For I can not know of myself in the other as myself insofar as the other is an immediate other existence for me. I consequently concentrate on the suspension of this immediacy. But this immediacy is at the same time the existence of self-consciousness, in which as in its sign and instrument self-consciousness has its own feeling of self and its being for others, and has the general means of entering into relation with them. In the same way I can not be recognised as immediate, except insofar as the ‘I’ suspends the immediacy in myself and thereby brings my freedom into existence.”

There is of course also plenty of material for those who reads the master-servant dialectic in terms of an innate hubris, such as Francis Fukuyama. Kojève’s reading in terms of relations of colonial domination certainly has a substantial basis.

But it is vitally important to read this very unusual passage, not in the spirit of Hobbes or Rousseau or even Fichte, but in the spirit of Hegel, and for Hegel, even the first contact between alien subjects, if it is to lead anywhere at all, is a *mediated* relation. The

advocates of 'intersubjectivity' are in danger of missing the point. The 'Struggle for Recognition' is the struggle to construct means of mediation and being-recognised means being part of a universal, a system of legal rights. This relation is essentially and fundamentally a mediated relation and to reduce it to a relation of 'intersubjectivity' is to miss the point entirely. The process of Recognition *begins* with contact between two mutually indifferent subjects, but the point is that this process proceeds only because and insofar as the subjects construct between them a form of mediation. It is actually this mediating element which constitutes the essence of spirit. If the two contending subjects fail to construct between them a universal system of needs and their satisfaction; if they fail to erect a system of legal rights and regulations to mediate their interchange; if the upshot of their battle is purely and simply conquest, then the result is no different from the battle which ends in the death of one of the subjects.