Freedom and Alienation

Ross Poole

1

According to Hegel

*For freedom it is necessary that we should feel
no presence of something else which is not
ourselves.*[1]

Taken at face value, this makes little sense. For
what are we to make of the idea of 'feeling no
presence of something else which is not ourselves'?
Hegel seems to be saying that freedom is only
realised when we cease to conceive of ourselves as
beings distinct from our environment, i.e. when the
self/other distinction is overcome. But this dis-
tinction asserts itself whenever we act, i.e. when-
ever we attempt to initiate some change in our
environment. My experience of acting involves my
separating myself off from that part of my environ-
ment on which I am acting. Hence, on a literal
reading, Hegel's dictum can only have application
to beings who do not act, and the concept of free-
dom is irrelevant to such beings.

I will argue, however, that Hegel's dictum em-
bodies an important truth about freedom. What he
is claiming is that it is a necessary condition of
my being free that I live in a certain sort of
community – of a sort yet to be explained – with
the world I inhabit. For Hegel, this world in-
cludes both my physical and my social environment,
and the community which is necessary for freedom
involves my having the right sort of understanding
of the physical world, as well as my living in the
right sort of social relationships with my fellow
humans. In this paper I will only be concerned with
the second part of this, i.e. with the social and
personal aspects of Hegel's account of freedom.[2]

This account of freedom and the concept of alien-
ation are related as opposite and exhaustive areas
on the one continuum. If freedom involves a cer-
tain sort of community in my personal and social
existence, alienation is the state in which this
community is broken and my existence involves a
rupture between me and the other inhabitants of my
personal and social environment. Thus, this
account of freedom and the concept of alienation
will stand or fall together. I am free just to the
extent that I am not alienated; I am alienated just
to the extent that I am not free.

At an abstract level, the relationship between
the two concepts is clear enough, but this does
little to advance our understanding of either.
What is at least required is (a) some understanding
of the type of community between me and my environ-
ment which is necessary for freedom and the ab-
sence of which constitutes alienation, and (b) an
account of how the existence of this community is
related to what we, and not Hegel, would understand
as freedom.

2

I will begin with the second question.

What do we normally understand as freedom?
The following formulation is a common attempt to
capture at least one of the important senses of
this concept:

*I am free to the extent that I am not constrained
from doing what I want.*[3]

But this account is inadequate even to what we
ordinarily understand as freedom. For it allows
that my freedom in a given situation might be in-
creased either by

(a) removing certain constraints to the satis-
   faction of my wants,

or

(b) bringing it about that I no longer want to do
   those things for which there are constraints.

Now if we allow that at least some ways of achiev-
ing (b) (e.g. post-hypnotic suggestion, drugs, undue
influence of one person over another, etc) are free-
dom diminishing and not freedom increasing factors,
it follows that the above account is unsatisfactory.
Freedom may be diminished either by interfering with
the external conditions of action or by interfering
with the internal conditions in which wants are
formed and decisions are made. The above account
does not cover the second type of factor.

The inadequacy of this account shows that our
concept of freedom embodies, not just the idea of
unconstrained action, but also some idea of the
independent formation of wants. That is to say, it
embodies an idea of autonomy as a necessary pre-
condition of free action.[4]

But this is not the only dimension in which the
notion of autonomy is involved with that of free-
dom. For the concept of freedom has its most im-
portant application to the field of interpersonal
activity, i.e. activity which involves more than
one person. And here, it is not just the autonomy
of the agent which is involved, it is also the
autonomy of those others affected by the activity.
So let us examine, for a moment, the field of
interpersonal activity.

3

Most of us, most of the time, have a fairly con-
stant contact and interaction with others. In this
contact and interaction other people may sometimes
appear as impediments to our actions, sometimes as
facilitating them.

At this level of description, our contact with
others differs in complexity, but not in kind, from
our contact with parts of our physical environment.
For a given physical object may be a barrier to
one line of activity, but the *sine qua non* of

1 *The Logic of Hegel* (The Lesser Logic), trans.
   W.A. Wallace (Oxford UP, 1959) p49

2 This is not, however, a paper directed towards
   Hegelian exegesis. My primary intention is to
   develop a certain conception of freedom. While
   I believe this conception to be Hegelian in
   spirit, I will not offer more than an occasion-
   al citation in support of this.

3 For the time being I use the term 'want' to
   stand in place of a disjunction of conative
   words, e.g. 'want' (used strictly), 'choose',
   'decide', 'desire' etc. I will make distinc-
   tions amongst these as and when necessary.
   The above account of freedom is more or less
   Berlin's characterization of 'negative liberty'.
   See 'Two Concepts of Liberty', reprinted in
   Berlin's *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford UP,
   1969). Berlin discusses the problem created
   for this account by the possibility of manipul-
   ating a person's wants, in his introduction to
   this volume. He decides that freedom consists
   in the absence of obstacles 'not merely to my
   actual, but to my potential choices'. (p.x.).
   It is not clear how this helps. The range of
   my potential choices is just what might have
   been subject to manipulation.

4 For different and fuller arguments for the view
   that freedom presupposes autonomy, see S.I.
   Benn and W.L. Weinstein, 'Being Free to Act, and
   Being a Free Man', *Mind* 80 (1971) pp194-211.
   However the concept of autonomy sketched by
   Benn and Weinstein (that of 'the free man as
   chooser') is somewhat narrower than that which
   will be developed in this paper.

another. A wall, for example, will be in my way if I want to reach the other side; it may be a pre-requisite of my activity, if I want to paint a mural. Whether I conceive of that wall as an impediment or not, will depend on what I conceive my wants, or my potential wants, to be.

My relations with other people are, or ought to be, somewhat more complex than my relations with my physical environment, and the ways in which other people may impede or facilitate my actions are correspondingly more various. Clearly, you may hinder or assist my activities by means other than your mere physical presence.

Now it is clear that the vast bulk of our individual activities are such as to require, in some way or other, preceding, or ancillary, or corresponding activity by others. Most of the things that most of us want to do most of the time, we can only do insofar as we live in society and have more or less close relations with other members of that society. (This is part of what is meant by the claim that humans are social animals.)

But it may be that I do not see other people in this way. I may see others primarily as obstacles to my plans; and perhaps in so seeing others I am right, in that most of those with whom I am in contact do constitute obstacles to the satisfaction of my wants. Their activity is such as to thwart and render futile my own activity.

· But it may also be the case that I do not see others as obstacles to the satisfaction of my wants, but merely as means towards that end. Their exist-ence is, for me, constituted by their having a certain role in the working out of my purposes; and what they are for me may be, in certain cir-cumstances, what they are in themselves, so that my conception of these others approximates to the truth about them. In this situation the other person has ceased to be seen as, and perhaps has ceased to be, an independent centre of action.

This second attitude easily slides over into the first, and vice-versa. For if the person whom I conceive of as a means, an instrument, does act independently of me, he shows himself to be a re-calcitrant instrument and as such an impediment to my activity. And if the other's independent acti-vity constitutes a hindrance to mine, this is over-come if that activity ceases to be independent of mind. Indeed, so closely are the two attitudes linked that it is better to think of them as a successful man's and an unsuccessful man's version of the same attitude. What is characteristic of it is that the independent activity of the other appears to me as an infringement of my activity, to be overcome by reducing or denying the other's independence. Thus I become free to the extent that I render others unfree.

But there is a range of activities which cannot embody this attitude. These are activities which are social, in the sense that they involve two or more people, and are intersubjective in the speci-al sense that the participants must recognize the autonomy of the others involved.[5] If any of these activities correspond to my wants, then I can only satisfy these wants if I recognize others as inde-pendent contributors to that activity, i.e. as autonomous, at least insofar as that activity is concerned. To take a relatively trivial example: I cannot conduct a rational discussion with some-one in order better to establish the truth about some subject, unless I recognize him as bringing ideas and judgments which are not mine to bear on the issue. Rational discussion is, in the sense I require, intersubjective. (Which is not to say that people do not involve themselves in activities under the guise of rational discussion, where the autonomy of the other is violated or not recognized.

Such activity is not rational discussion.)

Now it is clear that there is intersubjective activity, though its extent and perhaps its import-ance may be disputed. And it is also clear that to the extent that such activity corresponds to some of my wants, then these wants will be stultified if I do not recognize the independence of others in the activity. To conceive of others just as impediments to, or just as means for, the satis-faction of my wants, is to preclude the satisfac-tion of those wants which require the recognition of their independence.

This is the type of situation exemplified in Hegel's account of the dialectic of master and slave, and in Sartre's application of this to the relationship of lover and mistress.[6] In both cases, we have someone going into a relationship with incompatible aims, one of which is to be re-cognized and loved, the other to conquer and be served. But the recognition and love which is wanted is that which is freely given by an auto-nomous being, since only this will provide the necessary independent validation of one's own self-recognition and self-love. The love and recogni-tion which is gained is that of an instrument, an extension of the master/lover's will, and such love and recognition is not what was wanted. To the extent that love and recognition of this kind are important human wants, to the extent it is a necessary condition of the free exercise and satis-faction of these wants that we recognise some others as autonomous. Where we do not, and in particular where the very activity aimed at satis-fying these wants contains a component which is directed towards the reduction of the other to a non-autonomous status, then frustration and self-stultification are inevitable.

Where others are concevied of as impediments to my wants, my being free requires that I reduce others to an unfree status. Where the autonomy of the others is a component of my wants, i.e. where my wants can only be satisfied by intersubjective activity, then my being free involves the recogni-tion of the freedom of some others. Freedom for a being with wants of this sort can only be realised in a community of autonomous beings, each of whom recognized the autonomy of the other members.

But this community might extend only as far as my intersubjective activity. Why should I extend recognition outside the sphere of those actually involved in my intersubjective activity? Why should I not conceive of those outside that sphere merely as means for or impediments to the satisfaction of my other wants? That I recognize some as free is, it seems, compatible with my denying that all are free.

If I have this attitude I must divide society into two: those whom I do not recognize are excluded from the now privileged field of my intersubjective activity; but so too is my intersubjective activity now restricted. I have erected my own barriers to what I can do. Probably I will not think of them as barriers I have erected, but as barriers that nature has erected. Those others whom I do not recognize are not fit, or not able, or do not want, to take part in my intersubjective activity. And perhaps I may bring it about that they are not fit, or not able, or do not want to do so.

By holding that they are different to those whom I do not recognize, I deceive myself and perhaps them too. By excluding them, I impose restrictions on the ways in which I can satisfy those wants which I am aware of myself as having; I also prohibit myself from forming any wants which would require me to recognize those others. Thus, the state of division turns out to be incompatible with the unimpeded activity to satisfy those wants I have and the unimpeded development of new wants. To overcome this I must move from the thought that only some are free to the recognition that all are free.[7]

4

Autonomy, and mutual recognition of autonomy, is then a necessary condition for the unimpeded exercise of that activity designed to satisfy intersubjective wants. But what is autonomy? and what does the recognition of autonomy involve?

A person is autonomous when his actions, and the principles, beliefs, attitudes, and emotions, on which he acts are properly ascribable *to* him and not *through* him to one or other of the many external influences to which he is and has been subjected. For this condition to be satisfied there must exist some explanatory gap between the external factors (e.g. social pressures, environmental factors, influence of friends, etc) and the formation of the relevant principles, beliefs, attitudes and emotions, and the action consequent upon these. This gap must be filled by the person himself bringing his own prior set of principles, beliefs, attitudes and emotions to bear on what is externally provided. Questions as to the extent of the explanatory gap and the nature of the intervention are difficult but not impossible to answer.

Clearly, here as elsewhere, there will be room for judgments of degree of autonomy. But that the person make *some* intervention in the process is necessary if the outcome of the process is properly ascribable to him.

This account of autonomy is regressive and intentionally so. For the person who intervenes in this process is not some featureless metaphysical self, endowed with a power of intervention and nothing else. It is the person himself with an already existing structure of principles, attitudes, and so on. The question must arise whether this person is autonomous, for if he is not, then his intervention in the process will hardly suffice for the autonomy of its outcome. So we must ask questions concerning the formation of a prior set of attitudes and principles, which will be answered in the same way, and so on for further questions and further answers.

For ever? No, just until the coming into being of the person concerned.

The existence of this regress should not surprise us. Whether I am autonomous now is not just a question of what I am like now, but also of the part I have played in getting to be like I am now. I am autonomous just to the extent that I have played a part (one must add: been allowed to play a part) in the development of my present conative, cognitive, and emotional structure. Where aspects of this, and as a result, patterns of my present behaviour, were fixed in some very early experiences (say, early socialisation) in which I had no power of participation or intervention, then to that extent I am not my own person, i.e. I am not autonomous. Under these circumstances I can work towards autonomy and, through a process of self-examination, perhaps discover the extent to which what I now am merely expresses what has been external to me. In order to do this, I must be able to distance myself from some aspect of myself, and treat it as if it were external. Only by thus identifying myself independently of that aspect which is under examination will I be able to assess it as answering or not answering to my present wants, beliefs, principles, and so on. That the I who undertakes such an examination is, pro tem, an unexamined I is inevitable, but it need not remain unexamined. That we must, to adapt Neurath's metaphor, reconstruct our personal boat while sailing on it, does not mean that there is some part which must remain for ever unreconstructed.

On this view, autonomy has to do with the primacy of the person over what is externally given. This should not be confused with the primacy of some aspect of the person over all others. While my ability rationally to assess available courses of action in the light of a rational assessment of various competing wants, emotions, and beliefs, is a useful, perhaps even an essential component of autonomy, it is certainly not the whole of it. For there is a question of whether these various wants and emotions are themselves autonomous, and this is not a question of whether they were preceded by some rational assessment or even whether they are now susceptible to alteration by rational scrutiny.[8]

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5 By 'recognize' I mean, here and elsewhere in this paper, something akin to 'recognize the existence of, respect, and value'.

6 See Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J.B. Baillie (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1966) pp229-40; and Sartre *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes (London, Methuen, 1969) pp364-72

7 Cp. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (NY, Dover, 1965), Introduction, p18. Here Hegel attributes the view that only one is free to the Oriental World, the view that some are free to the Ancient World, and the view that 'man as such' is free to the Germanic World.

8 For an example of the type of view criticised, see R.F. Dearden, 'Autonomy and Education' in R.F. Dearden, P.H. Hirst and R.S. Peters (eds) *Education and the Development of Reason* (London & Boston, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972) Dearden suggests that 'a person is 'autonomous' to the degree that what he thinks and does cannot be explained without reference to his own activity of mind', where the phrase 'activity of mind' is glossed as 'choices, deliberations, decisions, reflections, judgments, plannings, or reasonings' (p453), i.e. activities which 'are all essentially linked to the idea of reason' (p456). But my emotions and wants do not have to be preceded by acts of reasoning in order to be properly ascribed to me.

For example, whether my liking for a certain brand of beer over its competitors is autonomous is not to be settled by the presence or absence of a decision in the process of forming that preference, nor by whether I can now take thought and change that preference. Rather it is a question of whether my coming to like that beer was a development from or an imposition on some pre-existing preference structure. That this type of question will, in some cases, be a very difficult one to answer should not mislead us into trying to answer some other questions instead.

Nor should we overestimate the difficulty in making judgments of autonomy. For we are quite often able to make these judgments with a considerable degree of confidence. The situation is rather like our estimation of the extent to which an essay on some well trodden topic is the author's own work. We may hope for originality, but do not necessarily expect it. What we do look for, and often find, are signs of the writer's having mastered and imposed his own structure on the material presented. This might show itself in a certain flexibility of approach, a readiness to consider unfamiliar examples, and a confidence in judgments on areas where there is some unexpected overlap between this topic and some other. Where signs such as these are lacking, we are likely to decide that the material has imposed itself on the writer, rather than vice-versa, and judge the work accordingly.

Judgments of autonomy are somewhat analogous to this. Here too a certain rigidity of approach, a tension or dogmatism when presented with unfamiliar situations, and an unreadiness to trust one's own intellectual or emotional responses to something new, are all often signs of a lack of autonomy. Of course, even here there is a gap between the available evidence and the conclusion, but this is true of all interesting judgments. And sometimes at least, we can reduce that gap to vanishing point. This is when, in our own case, we become aware of something operating as a constraint upon our feelings and thoughts of which we had previously been unaware. It is when we are able to subject something to the light of feeling and thought to which our feeling and thought had hitherto been subject.

To recognize the autonomy of another is to allow him the right to form his own principles, beliefs, wants, and emotions, to make his own decisions, and to put these into practice. It is to refrain from exercising that type of influence which by-passes or closes the gap which is essential for autonomy. It is to provide what is necessary for him to make his own response to a situation, and not to load his perspective with false, incomplete, or otherwise misleading information. Finally, it is not to impede the courses of actions he undertakes. We deny the freedom of another when we arrogate to ourselves the responsibility for making his decisions, forming his wants and beliefs, and making his emotional responses. More subtly, we deny the freedom of another when we simply treat him as having his decision, wants, beliefs, and emotional responses determined by someone or something else. We deny our own autonomy when we allow any of this to happen to us.

5

It is rarely, if ever, easy to recognize and accept autonomy either in oneself or another. For me to recognize and accept my freedom means that I must bear the responsibility for my emotions, my beliefs, and my actions, and for whatever is consequent upon these. This may seem too great a burden. When challenged to justify and explain why I feel a certain way, or why I have done a certain

thing, the temptation is sometimes overwhelming to pass the load of responsibility on to someone or something else, to my superior, to the institution to which I belong, to my early environment, to the force of reason, or to the dictates of morality. In so doing I conceive of myself as merely the penultimate stage in a process which has its source in some power beyond me, and which has culminated in the particular emotion or action which I am disavowing.

To recognize the freedom of another involves slightly different fears. For if I allow someone the right to his own wants and his own actions to satisfy those wants, what guarantee have I that he will not use this freedom to act against me? If there is someone whose love and support I need, can I allow that person freedom, if it means that he may choose to withdraw that love or support? When I confront others in the competition for scarce resources, can I afford the risk that they will be able to monopolise these resources and exclude me from them? Better, we might think, to circumscribe their options: to bring it about that they will not want to act against me, or if they want to, they are not able to.

When, as is likely, these two attitudes coalesce, I will fail to recognize either my freedom or the freedom of others. In this situation, I will conceive of us all as non-autonomous subjects of some third party: of a person of whose benevolence I feel assured, or more likely of a variety of impersonal entities (the family, the church, the state, the university) to which I can ascribe the responsibility for my actions and which, in return, will protect me from the actions of others.

It is normally the case that recognition of my autonomy will go along with my recognition of the autonomy of others. For I lose my fear of my own freedom to think, act, and respond as I develop trust in my thinking, acting, and responding. This trust may to some extent be developed through my own individual interaction with what is external to me, but normally will also require independent validation in the experience of others. But if this validation is to be independent, it must be given by those whose autonomy I recognize. Self doubt is thus a characteristic accompaniment of situations in which the independent judgment of others is not recognized.

Further, where I treat others as lacking in autonomy, I do not conceive of them as independent sources of action. They become merely stages in processes begun by others. If I then treat myself

as a free agent I become responsible, not just for what I do, but for what I do through others. The burden of what we may be responsible for is enormous. Hence, where we deny the freedom of others, the pressure to deny our own becomes overwhelming.

But even if it is the case that acceptance of my own freedom is likely to involve my recognition of the freedom of others, it is still not clear how this recognition is likely to be achieved. Clearly, a component in this recognition will be trust; that just as recognition of my freedom involves trust in myself, recognition of the freedom of others will involve trust in them. Unless we happen to be saints or martyrs (normally paradigms of non-autonomy), we will not be able to recognize the freedom of others, unless we trust them not to use it against us.

It is not easy to formulate, let alone bring about, conditions for mutual trust. But two conditions which are important are the existence of a community of feeling and of a community of action. Normally they will require each other.

Community of feeling involves reciprocity of personal affection. If, for example, I love a person and am sure of that person's love for me, then I will know that my satisfaction is for that person a want, just as the satisfaction of that person is for me a want. We will know that our activities as individuals will not be directed against the other. But this requires certainty of love, and this is not easily obtained or given. And unless we have this certainty, we are likely to destroy the independence of the other in an attempt to ensure it.

Developing from or developing into community of feeling should be a community of enterprise. This arises with the mutual realisation that underlying our individual activity is some common intersubjective enterprise, and that it is this enterprise which expresses our more important wants. We will become aware that our individual activity has significance for us insofar as it is a part of this common enterprise in which the other's activity is equally a part. Where this situation does not obtain, for example, where the divergent activity has more significance for the participants than any alleged common enterprise, and in particular, where the divergent activity is directed against the autonomy of the other participants, then it is futile to expect the mutual recognition of autonomy. Others may be seen as independent sources of activity, but this independence will be at best an impediment to be removed and at worst a threat to be overcome. Of course, in this situation some of the participants in the activity may be persuaded that there is some underlying enterprise which does correspond to their wants - and that the divergence and competition is a mere appearance of some underlying community of endeavour. In this case, they may submit to the free enterprise of the others, and the loss of their own freedom which is consequent upon this.[9]

Community of feeling and community of activity are then two of the factors which facilitate the recognition of others and of ourselves as autonomous and free beings. There may be others, but this is not the place to investigate them. The main point is that it is through recognition of community that independence is achieved. It is not that we achieve community through the union of autonomous beings, each of whom gives up some of his autonomy in return for the benefits of union; rather we learn to recognize freedom, both in ourselves and in others, via the coming into existence and the recognition of community. It is only recognition of the *we* that an autonomy respecting *I-you* relationship is possible.

6

Personal relations are, however, also social relationships. Which is to say that the form in which they occur is not just a matter of the wishes of the individual participants. Whether community, either of feeling or of activity, can be achieved in a relationship will in almost all cases depend upon questions of overarching social structure, rather than the particular wants and purposes of the individuals concerned.

By 'social structure' I do not mean anything over and above the significant patterns of behaviour which display themselves in a given society. But many of these patterns emerge, not just as gross regularities which occur in the behaviour of the population at large, but also as aspects of general attitudes and expectations about behaviour. It is in this form that social structure imposes itself on the individual. Where there is a divergence between the desires of the individual and the wider pattern of expectations and attitudes, social structure appears as external constraint. Where there is no such divergence, the social determinant appears as subjective want.[10]

Now it is clear that many of the relations which we enter into are prestructured in the above way, and that we do not normally choose the form they will take, but unconsciously accept one or other of the forms which are socially available to us. Where these external forms have become part of our cognitive, conative, and emotional make up, we identify with the roles socially provided for us. Where these structures remain external, they will limit the avenues in which we are able to satisfy our wants. There will amost always be some interaction between the individual and his social persona. To some extent we all accept certain social norms as given. They define for us what is naturally possible or what is naturally proper, and thus set the limits within which we think and act.

9 The two types of condition for mutual recognition of autonomy correspond roughly to the first and third moments in Hegel's account of 'ethical life': the level of feeling, which Hegel identifies with the family, and the level of reason which Hegel identifies with the State. See *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965), Third Part

10 The above sketch derives from Durkheim (see for example, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, NY, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964, esp. Ch.1) and more immediately from Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman's *The Social Construction of Reality* (Penguin, 1971)
As presented here, the sketch is incomplete and oversimple in many respects. It overemphasises the stability and homogeneity of social structure; it does not differentiate between aspects of social structure which are basic and those which are derivative; between those which permeate the whole of our existence, and those which are only relevant to some part of it; nor between those which are supported by overwhelming sanctions and those supported by nothing more than mild social disapproval. More importantly (and these seem to me to be defects of the model rather than of my hasty presentation of it) it invites but suggests no obvious answers to questions concerning the origins of a particular social structure, the specific interests it serves and the conditions under which one social structure gives way to another. Despite its defects the above sketch raises the right questions for the theme of this paper.

But where certain wants which are socially denied make themselves felt, or where various social demands are incompatible, we are forced to become aware of ourselves as existing independently of the roles socially allotted to us. This awareness may be furtive and guilty, or it may be openly non-conformist; but in some form or other it is an essential moment in the path towards autonomy. It is the moment at which the individual becomes aware of himself as an individual with wants, beliefs and feelings, which need not be defined in terms of the particular social framework within which he has been operating. Only then is the individual able to assess that framework as answering or not answering to his own wants, beliefs, and feelings.

This account of the interaction between the individual and society is a highly abstract one, and the way in which an individual lacks autonomy through his identification with a social role is similarly abstract. It holds in virtue of the general theses that a social role, that is, a specific pattern of expectations and attitudes about how an individual should act in a given situation, delineates a framework which structures a person's choices and thus his behaviour. To the extent that it asserts itself as given on the individual, what he does is an expression of that structure; rather than it being the case of his conceiving that structure as delineating one of the range of activities which are open to him.

Nevertheless, it is not the abstract notion of role identification which is most destructive of autonomy; rather, it is the particular types of role provided by particular societies. Wherever there is social structure, that is wherever there is society, there will be loss of autonomy consequent upon this being taken as given. But this should not be allowed to obscure what is much more important: the way in which the particular social structures constitutive of particular types of society militate against what is required for inter-subjective community.[11] For there is a range of cases where the social relationship as defined by overarching social structure is incompatible with satisfaction of the intersubjective wants which find expression within the relationship. Consider, for example, the social relationships of man to woman and of teacher to student. These relationships are the avenues within which some of our most fundamental wants find expression and satisfaction. We avoid entering such relationships only at the cost of the distortion of frustration of these wants. Yet, as they are at present socially defined, to enter into these relationships is also to experience the distortion or frustration of those wants.

All of us, for example, want to be given love and emotional support by our long term sexual partners. So it might seem apt, though perhaps unfair, that in our society the role of one sexual partner is defined as that of providing love and support. But to the extent that her existence is defined by this social role, the woman is unable to carry out the function associated with it. For to give love and support one must have an independent existence and this is just what the social role denies. (To expect to be given love and support from a dependent being is like expecting support from one's shadow). So even the wants of the dominant partner remain unsatisfied within the relationship. To say nothing of the wants of the woman.

The teacher/student relationship is one which is directed towards the ·development of knowledge and the ability to acquire knowledge. The concept of knowledge (as opposed to that of belief) is one which presupposes autonomy of judgment. Yet the content of this relationship is typically pre-structured by syllabus and discipline boundaries and in all the most important questions concerning progress towards the goal of the relationship, the student has to submit his judgment to that of the other. The educational process is one which systematically violates the intellectual autonomy of the student; and this violation is one which the student is encouraged to accept as a necessary and inevitable part of the process.[12]

Both these relationships involve dominance and submission. The role of one participant (the man, the teacher) is defined in terms of independent activity; the role of the others is that of support to (the woman) or recipient of (the student) that activity. Where the dominant participant stands in need of recognition by other independent beings, this must take place outside that relationship; where the other participant desires independent activity, this must either be directed against the dominant participant or again take place outside that relationship.

The personal relations which are embodied in these social relationships require intersubjective community. To the extent that we identify with the roles socially provided for us, we make impossible the achievement of that community. If we refuse to accept these roles we run up against social and institutional constraints, as well as against misunderstandings by those who confuse the personal with the social relationship. And even with the best will in the world, it is difficult to reject the role in toto. We find ourselves rejecting one aspect while assuming another. We expect the other person both to submit and be independent; or we want both the comfort of an authority and recognition as an equal. But this schizophrenia is already inherent in the contradiction between the social relationship and the individual wants which find expression in it. Ultimately, it can only be overcome when the social attitudes and expectations which define the social relationship are transformed.

How is this to be achieved? This is a question which cannot be answered without much more discussion of social structure than I have provided or can provide here. We must know, for example, to what extent these relationships fit in with or are required by some larger social context, and to what extent they are susceptible of independent change. We must find out what function the relationships serve, and what type of situation gives rise to and sustains them. Only when informed by this and other information can discussion of social change be worth while. My purpose is not to provide a substitute for this discussion. This brief excursion into the relationship between the individual and society was intended to indicate where the problems lay, rather than to indicate solutions to them.

One component of meaningful action towards social change should, however, be mentioned. This is the realisation that certain patterns of social life, hitherto taken as natural or inevitable concomitants of social existence, are susceptible of change; it is the realisation that certain patterns of feeling and thinking do not define the limits of our choosing and acting, but are themselves matters of choice, to be accepted or rejected according to wants and standards which transcend them. This is the moment at which a person defines himself independently of some aspect of his social existence. It is our sometime ability to achieve such moments of realisation and redefinition that is perhaps the most significant expression of our capacity for freedom.[13]

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7.

In this paper I have argued that freedom for a being with intersubjective wants requires existence in a community with other intersubjective beings, each of whom recognizes the autonomy of the others. This would not be an existence in which the self/other distinction would be overcome; on the contrary, only in such a community would the distinction between self and others be properly recognized. Nevertheless, the basis of such a community would not be - that myth of liberal political theory - a collection of autonomous selves; rather it would be a collective in which autonomy of the self was recognized. In other words, the *we* not the *I* would be fundamental.

There is one clear and one more extended sense in which the members of such a community would 'feel no presence of something else which was not themselves'. The clear sense is that the existence of others who were not conceived of as at least potential members of that community, i.e. whose autonomy was not recognized, would constitute a barrier to the free development and expression of intersub-

jective wants. Hence the members of the community are free only to the extent that the community is conceived of as implicitly universal; i.e. that they are only confronted with others who are identified and identify themselves as potential members of that community.

The more extended sense is this: each member of the community will recongize himself as an autonomous agent. He will also recognize others as other autonomous agents. In a quite literal sense, he will be aware of these others as other 'selves'. That which constitutes his uniqueness - his independent power to form wants, judgments, and emotions and to act upon these - is also present in and constitutes the uniqueness of the other. The other is thus a second self (which is not to be confused with an 'alter ego'). Hence, in confrontation with the other, the person is not confronted with some alien existence, but with some one whom he recognizes as being essentially what he is himself.

The extent to which such a community will correspond to our conception of freedom will be the extent to which we hold our important wants to be intersubjective. This is a matter I have done no more than touch on. It is clear that we do have intersubjective wants, so that some aspect of community will be necessary for the free expression of these. But we also have wants which manifest themselves in the reduction of others to an unfree

status, and if we see these as important then our conception of freedom for all (if we have such a conception) will be that of a 'free for all', i.e. of an arena where interpersonal activity will take the form of interpersonal struggle, mediated by more or less transient alliances, and where the worst excesses are subject to internal or external constraints of various sorts (like the market of classical or neo-classical political economy). We will perhaps hope that some community will exist in the calmer moments of this interpersonal conflict.

There is no simple way of choosing between the various alternative conceptions of our wants which suggest themselves. While many of the important wants we experience are intersubjective, or presuppose the existence of intersubjective relations, it is clear that we also experience wants whose satisfaction requires the reduction of others to a non-autonomous status. Ultimately, if we are to comprehend the conflicting, mutually inconsistent wants which display themselves in our decisions and our behaviour, we need to go beyond what is given in our experience and produce an account which explains that experience.

That we sometimes become aware of the extent to which social structure comes to be felt as internal want renders it certain that much of what we now want is an expression of a larger social context, something which might or might not correspond to what we would want if able to choose. But what would such autonomous wants be? To this question there can be no definitive answer. To be sure, historical, sociological, and anthropological evidence - when property interpreted - will provide some of the information necessary for us to go beyond that account of human wants provided for us by the society in which we live. But the only way in which we can discover what our human and personal wants are is through the movement towards autonomy: through the personal experience of self-examination, through the experience of action directed towards changing those social relationships which militate against the autonomy of the participants, and through the interaction of these two processes.

Only in the attempt to become free will we come to understand what freedom consists in.[14]

11 Failure to draw this distinction leads some to provide an account of Marx's concepts of 'alienation', 'reification', etc which ignores the historically specific and critical nature of these concepts. See, e.g. Peter Berger and Stanley Pullberg: 'Reification and the Sociological Critique of Consciousness', *History and Theory* 4 (1965) pp196-211.

12 See Paulo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Penguin, 1972), particularly ch.2. Freire's concept of 'dialogical' activity is much the same as my 'intersubjective' activity.

13 The idea that this capacity constitutes us as free and historical beings is one of the most important aspects of the Hegelian legacy to the Marxist and the existentialist traditions. For a brief discussion of such moments of redefinition from a historical and sociological perspective, see Berger and Pullberg, *op. cit.* pp209-10

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