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Does contemporary recognition theory rest on a mistake?

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journals.sagepub.com/home/psc**Paul Giladi** 

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Abstract

My aim in this paper is to argue, *contra* Axel Honneth, that ‘the summons’ (*Aufforderung*), the central pillar of Fichte’s transcendentalist account of recognition, is best made sense of not as an ‘invitation’, but rather as a second-personal demand, whose illocutionary content draws attention to the demandingness of responsibilities towards vulnerable agents. Because of this, the summons has good explanatory force in terms of disclosing the phenomenological dynamics of psychosocially and politically significant reactive attitudes. Under my reading, then, Fichte’s position, *contra* Honneth’s ‘negative’ treatment of it, is anything but an empty formalism that ‘fails to refer to subjects of flesh and blood’.

Keywords

demandingness, Fichte, Honneth, recognition, vulnerability

I

In his most recent book, [Honneth \(2021a, 2021b\)](#) has provided a short but informative intellectual history of the concept of ‘recognition’.¹ While Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Adam Smith and G.W.F. Hegel take principal stage as the leading *dramatis personae* of, what is in effect, a *Bildungsroman* of recognition, Honneth devotes sustained attention to J.G. Fichte, someone who is typically portrayed as a comparatively minor figure in the Western philosophic canon.

Granted that it may be hyperbolic to use Adrian Moore’s expression – ‘[I]ike the central node in a figure “X”, this point can be seen as a singularity that draws together the various strands above it and issues in those below’² – as a way of conveying the significance of the

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1796/97 publication of Fichte's *Foundations of Natural Right*, this book nonetheless contains one of the most interesting and powerful concepts in modern philosophy: the 'summons' (*Aufforderung*), loosely defined at this stage of my paper as 'the call to limit one's freedom through the recognition of another free agent'.³

The summons is essential to not just, as Allen Wood rightly contends, 'an entirely new concept of mind, finding a way out of the Cartesian conception that we all find so unsatisfactory and yet also so difficult not to relapse into (at least on our bad days)',⁴ but also to the inauguration of, what Jürgen Habermas later termed, the 'Intersubjectivist Turn' and the related generational transition in Frankfurt School Critical Theory from neo-Marxism and psychoanalysis to American pragmatism and speech act theory. Indeed, the Intersubjectivist Turn is perhaps best reflected by Fichte's 'slogan' statement in the *Wissenschaftslehre* that '[n]o You, no I; no I, no You'.⁵

I agree with Wood that Fichte's position has investments in the business of removing the inner spectator model of subjectivity in favour of an intersubjectively constituted and mediated socialised intentionality. However, as I will go on to argue, Fichte's innovation lies in his *sui generis* transformation of the Kantian 'Primacy of Practical Reason' doctrine, where communicative rationality takes precedence over nomothetic rationality due to the former's second-personal orientation towards *responsibility* and *vulnerability*.⁶ However, before seeing how exactly this works, it would be advisable to first briefly detail a basic feature of the summons, situating it in relation to Wood's and Honneth's respective shared takes on the meaning of Fichte's touchstone concept.

II(a)

In §§1–4 of the *Foundations*, Fichte offers a transcendental argument that self-conscious agency requires standing in a 'relation of right' (*Rechtsverhältnis*)⁷ with the Other mediated by a summons. §§1–4, in effect, provide an account concerned with determinability *in terms of intersubjectively forged subjectivity*.⁸ To start unpacking this, it would be helpful to focus on the passage in which Fichte introduces his reader to the summons:

The subject's free activity is posited as constrained. But this object is supposed to be the subject's free efficacy ... Both are completely unified if we think of the subject's being-determined as *its being-determined to be self-determining*, i.e. as a summons (*Aufforderung*) to the subject, calling upon it to resolve to exercise its efficacy. (Fichte 2000, 31)

Fichte is not so much preoccupied with remaining in the constellation of Kant's own variety of transcendental idealism and further expounding Kant's discovery about the logical interdependency of self-consciousness and consciousness. This is because Fichte's specific variety of transcendental idealism, as Wood observes, 'seeks to grasp the subjective conditions of objectivity and also the objective conditions of subjectivity'.⁹ To this end, Fichte is principally preoccupied with a radical transformation of *that* transcendental discovery by Kant for the purpose of deducing the ways in which subject *qua* Self and object *qua* the Other stand in a *moral* relationship with each other. Put another

way, the question of how subject and object are determinable here is not wrapped up in the kind of normativity emblematic of the logical functions of theoretical judgement, but rather in the kind of normativity emblematic of practical judgements concerning the relation of right: *what I owe you, what you owe me, and what we owe to each other.*

According to Wood,¹⁰ the meaning of 'Aufforderung' ranges from 'requesting/pleading/begging' (*bitten*) to 'demanding/requiring' (*verlangen*). While some might find such a semantic range confusing, not least because the contrastive intensities of begging and demanding are so striking (as will be made evident in the next thematic section of the paper), I think the range of meanings has an important *prima facie* advantage, insofar as it provides one with an uncontroversial but nonetheless insightful starting point: *the act of summoning and the act of being summoned – regardless of their illocutionary implicatures – are communicative acts.*¹¹ Wood himself is not explicit about where precisely on the spectrum the communicative meaning is best located, since he thinks an *Aufforderung* captures in equal measure the respective speech act content of *asking* that an action is performed, of *inviting* that an action is performed, and of *demanding* that an action is performed. However, he ostensibly leans more towards construing the summons as an invitation. As he writes,

Fichte's use here seems rather closer to the former end of the spectrum than to the latter. For he specifically emphasises that an *Aufforderung* (as he means it) leaves us free either to do or not do as we are summoned (or invited) to do.¹²

For, under Wood's reading of Fichte, the act of being summoned *qua* invited carries with it only a sense of (non-coercively) restricting the summoned agent, since 'what is crucial merely to the concept of the *summons* is that it *constrains* action, yet only in such a way that the being to which it is addressed may still nevertheless choose either to act according to it or not act according to it'.¹³ Such a notion of address and concomitant constraint, for Wood, seems best evocative of invitation practices, insofar as the issuing of an RSVP carries with it no freedom-denying force while also providing the invitee with a *basic* reason to take up the invitation.

By way of an example, the sense of a summoning constraint in receiving a wedding invitation is not the sense of those deontic phenomenal properties obliging one to attend the festivities. Rather, it is the activity of being thrust into the space of reasons itself as a way of determining one's eventual response to the invitation. To use Gabriel Gottlieb's expression here, such activity is linked to the development of 'elementary recognition',¹⁴ namely, the ability to be responsive to reasons and communicate appropriately in response to the summons. Cultivating this second nature sees one attain the status of a bearer of normativity in a linguistic community. Bearing normativity in such a scenario is synonymous with *practical discursive agency*, namely, having commitments and entitlements that one displays in the space of reasons when communicating with other agents. In this way, receiving an invitation 'constrains by summoning us to determine ourselves [to accept or decline the invitation]',¹⁵ to the extent that one's eventual response to the invitation is free and accountable – regardless of acceptance or declination of the invitation – *only if one finds oneself having been summoned to act.*¹⁶

While Wood, as previously claimed, is not explicit about where precisely on the semantic spectrum the meaning of *Aufforderung* is best located – despite going to argue that ‘invitation’ is where the truth lies in all likelihood¹⁷ – Honneth pulls no such punches, writing that

[t]he concept of the ‘summons’ employed by Fichte in order to characterise this first appearance of the other should in no way be understood as a demand or command Fichte intended this summons instead as an invitation of another subject to do something that we can either do or not do.¹⁸

There is something interesting about the language and tone in the first sentence from the quoted passage, especially when one contrasts the language and tone with that of Wood: when Wood constructed the tripartite semantic framing of *Aufforderung*, there was no obvious sense there that something truly substantive was really at stake. In other words, for Wood, the tripartite semantic framing of the summons did not give reason to think that were one committed to viewing the summons as a plea, for example, then something radically problematic would invariably follow as a binding entailment of such commitments. For that matter, Wood does not try to warn his reader of possible dangers in treating the summons as a *demand* (or a *command*). However, Honneth appears determined to do so.¹⁹ And with a marked degree of conviction, which is evinced by the extent to which he seems vexed by any contention that the summons is anything other than ‘a generic communicative act’.²⁰ The summons is something as normatively banal as an RSVP. This naturally prompts asking two reasonable questions: (i) what explains Honneth’s more explicit targeting of the view that the summons is best thought of as a demand? (ii) why does Honneth not also critique understanding the summons as a plea?

My initial sketch of an answer here involves contending that Honneth’s aversion to construing the summons in any way that is not normatively insubstantial is either (1) based in a (mistaken) philosophical distaste for thinking of normativity in terms of being subjected to moral demands, or (2) rooted in a neo-Hegelian counter-offensive to something in very recent Fichte scholarship that has been correctly identified by Michelle Kosch, namely, that ‘most prominent interpreters [of Fichte] understand summoning as the conveyance of a message to the effect that the summoned *ought* to act in some way’.²¹

Regarding (1), the more charitable of the two *explanans*, one can sympathise with Honneth to an extent, insofar as quotidian natural language practices suggest that discourse about demands are not conducive to the socio-political value of freedom and the exercise of autonomous choice when deliberating and acting. For, being subjected to a demand, *prima facie*, involves, or at least has overt inflections of, being coerced. Since coercion is anathematic towards freedom, it would therefore seem that making sense of normativity in terms of demands is counter-productive for not only the realisation of freedom, but the very modelling of freedom as a principal value of a political community. However, as I will go on to argue later, demand-discourse does not serve to violate intersubjectively constituted freedom. On the contrary, it is precisely what makes such freedom possible. If there is any position ‘threatened’ or delegitimised by insisting that demands are central to social development and cohesion, it would be the Ayn

Rand-inspired types of libertarianism and social atomism pathologically obsessed with the idea that the very notion of a 'constraint' is unspeakably barbarous and monstrous.

With regard to (2), an important development in the literature on Fichte, which may well be partly inspired by Stephen Darwall's second-personal ethics, is the way in which summoning is increasingly made sense of in strong normative ways – that is, as fundamentally rooted in not only a formal, transcendental constitution of moral-political agency, but also in those processes involved in justifying *respect* (and thereby enabling sophisticated explanations of morally and politically salient reactive attitudes).²² As Michael Nance writes,

I can expect the other to recognise me if and only if I recognise her; I must always expect the other to recognise me; therefore, I must always recognise her. In other words, as a condition of the possibility of my own agency, I must always recognise other persons as free agents entitled to a sphere of free activity.²³

If *respect*, *dignity* and *autonomy* are now the centre point of moral discussion, especially from a third-generation Frankfurt School perspective, then this gives one ample reason to suppose that the battlefield of controversy is not just pitched on summons *qua bitten* and summons *qua verlangen*, but also on Fichte's recognition model as a *compelling rival* to Hegel's recognition model in some ways. If Fichte's recognition model is increasingly viewed as compelling rival to Hegel's recognition model in some ways, then Honneth's own Hegel-inspired way of elaborating disrespect *qua* the respective violations of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem is subject to legitimate critical scrutiny from Fichte(ans). If Honneth's influential position is subject to legitimate critical scrutiny from Fichte(ans), then this starts disrupting the long-standing controlling image of Fichte as merely a stepping-stone to Hegel – the still-dominant view that, in recognition theoretic terms, Fichte's formalist model is inchoately emblematic of *Geistigkeit*. Indeed, Honneth himself clearly espouses the view that Hegel's concrete intersubjectivism completes what Fichte had merely glimpsed but failed to flesh out:

Hegel's step beyond Fichte consists in a radical de-transcendentalising of his predecessor's depiction of the process of mutual recognition. He takes the insights he gleaned from Fichte's account of 'natural right' and adapts them to a new methodological framework, one that allows him to fill out the merely abstract schema of mutual recognition with concrete illustrative material.²⁴

When set against the backdrop-framing of Fichte's position as an abstract transcendentalism, the function of insisting that summons *qua* invitation is the most appropriate way of making sense of the communicative act serves to relegate Fichte to the epistemic margins and reproduces the controlling image of Hegel as the principal 19th-century Germanic hero of third-generation Critical Theory. To disrupt the canonical reception to the point of undermining it may well involve charging contemporary recognition theory with resting on a key mistake. While I think it would be egregious to critique Honneth's fairly dim view of Fichte in a Spivakian way, so much so that one accuses Honneth of

silencing Fichte and ideologically rendering Fichte subaltern through culturally hegemonic forces, there is, at minimum, justifiable concern about the epistemic practices of both the analytic and continental history of philosophy canons.

In the next section of this paper, I argue, *contra* Honneth, that the summons is best thought of as a demand – specifically, a second-personal demand,²⁵ whose illocutionary content itself draws attention to a second-personal ethical standpoint concerning vulnerability.

II(b)

To legitimately claim that summons is best thought of a second-personal demand, I first need to provide some compelling reasons to think that construal of the summons as an invitation is deeply problematic and that the construal of the summons as a plea is deeply problematic. In effect, then, the basic structure of my argument is a disjunctive syllogism: if the summons is (best understood as) either an invitation or a plea or a demand, and there are good reasons to rule out thinking of the summons as an invitation, and there are good reasons to rule out thinking of the summons as a plea, then the summons is (best made sense of as) a demand. I would like to start with critiquing thinking of the summons as an invitation.

i. Critiquing the summons as an invitation

What is philosophically objectionable to the construal of the summons as an invitation? To put this another way, what is conceptually distasteful about making sense of the summons as an RSVP? Though Wood and Honneth respectively point to how Fichte is clear that upon receiving the illocutionary content of the summons, the ‘I’ *qua* acting agent can just comply or not comply with the speech act²⁶ (bracketing whether non-compliance is illustrative of moral failure) – much in the same way that one is free to simply accept or decline an RSVP – their reliance on Fichte’s claim here does not sit well with the ways in which, for Fichte, the exercise of the summons is a *strong normative constraint* on the ‘I’. For, even though Fichte clearly states that one can choose not to act appropriately once the illocutionary and perlocutionary content of the summons receive uptake – much in the same way that when hearing ‘Get off my foot!’, one can choose to not lift one’s foot – appealing to *this* claim to logically ground construing the summons as an invitation to consider the Other’s respectability is not all that plausible.

For, the non-coercive²⁷ force of the Other’s presence and speech as a summoner does not simply spur the ‘I’ into determining reasons for themselves and therefore attain the social status of a competent language-user with ‘the capacity to formulate and will an end of action’.²⁸ It also predominantly consists in the educative development (*Erziehung*) of one’s *political* agency²⁹ as a subject sensitive to the rational-affective modalities of respect, to the extent that one is not born human, but *becomes* human³⁰ through the intersubjective relation between first-person and second-person. I take what I have claimed here as similar in spirit and letter to what Paul Franks writes about how the summons constitutes a specific type of normatively integrated communicative space, a

domain of relations between the first person and the second person, between myself as an agent capable of being addressed and addressing others in the second person, and other agents capable of being addressed and of addressing me. Another, so characterised, is more than a mere obstacle or factual limitation confronting my agency; he or she is also a *normative* limitation on my agency.³¹

The salient question here concerns the kind of '*normative* limitation' the summoning address³² is on the agency of the 'I'. For Darwall at least, the '*normative* limitation' is the status of the Other as issuing a set of reasons 'grounded in (*de jure*) authority relations that an addresser takes to hold between him and his addressee'.³³ I agree that second-personal reasons are involved in Fichte's position. However, I disagree with Darwall's construal of what exactly constitutes the normative structure of the second-personal standpoint. I will elaborate this point in the next section. For now, though, I would like to detail what I take to constitute the '*normative* limitation' on the agency of the 'I'.

In very recent years there has been a wave of sustained Anglo-American interest in the *Foundations*. As welcome as this has been especially in the context of starting to analyse Fichte's contractualism in relation to the likes of Darwall, John Rawls, Philip Pettit et al., I cannot help but think there is something unexplored in the current Anglo-American discourse: how the strong normative constraint on the 'I' evocative of the summons as the kind of act that it involves realising the inherent asymmetricality of *privilege*. The strong normative constraint, therefore, is not just *the basic ontological* presence of the Other as a transcendental condition for the self-consciousness of the 'I', but also the way in which the *moral-political* presence and speech of the Other non-coercively compels the 'I' to reflect on its self-consciousness by examining unearned privilege and illegitimate entitlements on the part of the 'I'. This is a central component of the 'I's moral development in a socialisation schema.

To constitute an intersubjective condition of freedom, the judgements about the Other cannot involve the dominating impetus of determinable judgements, because the logical structure of *those* judgements subsumes the Other under the technical interest of the 'I'. Instead, the judgements about the Other can serve as felicity conditions for freedom, insofar as the form and content of such judgements must involve the interpersonal inclinations of practical judgements.³⁴ I take Fichte to make this type of claim in this passage from his *Early Philosophical Writings*:

The social drive aims at *interaction*, *reciprocal* influence, *mutual* give and take, mutual passivity and activity. It does not aim at mere causality, at the sort of mere activity to which the other person would have to be related merely passively. It strives to discover free, rational beings outside ourselves and to enter into community with them. It does not strive for *subordination* characteristic of the physical world, but rather for *coordination*. (Fichte 1988, 158)

One way in which the summons seems to be a strong type of communicative activity is that the summons provides the summoned with compelling reason to not simply respect the Other, but to also ground respecting the Other through requiring a foreswearing of any

privileged status on the part of the 'I'. Foreswearing any privilege status – cissexual, heterosexual, class, racial, gender, able-bodied – is the salient type of '*normative* limitation' on the agency of the 'I', as this type of '*normative* limitation' on the agency of the 'I' is a necessary condition for intersubjectively constituted freedom, which itself is emblematic of the relation of right. This point not only goes some way to show that the summons as an invitation would be normatively insipid to the point of normatively impotent, since invitations do not involve strong normative constraints, but it may also provide compelling reasons to doubt the cogency of construing the summons as a plea. It is to this issue I now turn.

ii. Critiquing the summons as a plea

Thus far, I have argued against the suaveness of modelling the summons as an RSVP for the consideration of the Other's respectability on the grounds that an invitation fails to adequately make sense of the broader normative constraint on the 'I' caused by the Other. However, this is not enough to establish the summons as a second-personal demand, as one rival disjunct remains: the summons as a plea. The summons as a plea has an important advantage over the summons as an invitation, namely, it appears more in tune with the basic notion of a strong normative constraint than Honneth's reading of Fichte's touchstone concept.

For example, when *Oliver Twist* says 'Please, sir, I want some more', he is not *inviting* Mr. Limbkins to consider his inherent dignity, so much so that Oliver's speech act content aims to stimulate Mr. Limbkins to self-reflectively find and endorse reasons to comply (accept the invitation) or not comply (decline the invitation) with Oliver's meek request.³⁵ Indeed, for that matter, it would be difficult to plausibly contend that Oliver is inviting Mr. Limbkins to a dance between Kantian agents in the realm of ends. Oliver, given his socio-economic subjection and vulnerability as both orphan and child, is begging Mr. Limbkins to see his vulnerability and to consequently take pity on him. The speech content of his plea is a strong normative constraint on Mr. Limbkins's agency, because it serves to 'check' his subjectivity against Oliver's subjectivity. Indeed, the following by Robert Williams complements this point about the addressee as a 'check' here:

I am forbidden from reducing the other to or regarding her as a mere object The other, by virtue of her presence in the world, prior to all my responses to or actions towards her, compels not only my recognition of her, but appeals to me to limit and restrain my own free activity.³⁶

However, whatever advantage viewing the summons as a plea may be said to have over viewing the summons as an invitation *vis-à-vis* making sense of the '*normative* limitation' placed on the 'I' comes at an unacceptable price: the summons as a plea does not serve to non-coercively oblige the summoned to forego any claims to privilege. Because of this, the summons as a plea is radically unevocative of *the normative logic underpinning individual and social struggles for recognition*. In other words, thinking that the case of *Oliver Twist* captures the affect and logic of recognition struggles borne out of distress at

endemic misrecognition or nonrecognition is erroneous. However, the error in the question here is not reducible to the error in thinking of the summons as an invitation.

The very idea of begging Mr. Limbkins for the kind of recognition required to maintain Oliver's bodily integrity – the orphan boy needs more food to maintain his physical (and mental) practical relation-to-self – presupposes not merely a trace of privilege in a normatively integrated social sphere, but in fact a normatively integrated social sphere structured, reproduced and vitiated *by* privilege. The plea in this case sees a subjected agent grovelling at the feet of a privileged agent who occupies a social position of considerably enhanced comparative symbolic and material power – namely, as someone controlling the economy of a normative resource (recognition).

In such a context, the struggle for recognition is invariably the difficult process of successfully convincing the privileged agent to accord recognition to the downtrodden agent, where such according of the normative resource empowers the downtrodden agent. To put this another way, construing the summons as a plea frames the struggle for recognition in terms of an unprivileged agent desperately seeking validation from a privileged agent. In this way, the struggle is the battle to be taken seriously by those in power who also exert authority over the necessary normative resource's distribution and allocation. The struggle ends when the privileged agent is moved by the pitiable plea and consequently doles out recognition to the unprivileged agent. In Fichtean terms, one's energy and interest throughout the struggle here are centred on the privileged 'I', rather than on the unprivileged Other, insofar as it is up to the privileged 'I' to legitimate the unprivileged Other.

However, if one analyses the core claims of contemporary social movements, such as Trans Liberation, #MeToo, and Black Lives Matter (BLM), as seeking the bestowal of a specific psychologic-moral good serving as developmental capital distributed from a centralised domain of power at the behest and pleasure of one privileged group for the purpose of enfranchising and legitimating a non-privileged group seeking validation and access to such developmental capital, then one's analysis of those core claims is epistemically and politically illiterate. For, discourses about ending the endemic practices of identity enforcement, reversing the structural practice of treating victims and survivors of rape as criminal defendants themselves, and defunding the police are not communicatively oriented towards seeking the approval of the transphobic, sexist and racist status quo.

On the contrary, the communicative function of 'Trans Women Are Women; Trans Men Are Men', 'I Believe Them' and 'No Justice, No Peace!' is to challenge the status quo and redesign the symbolic and material architecture of existing social reality, which is saturated by intersecting privileges. Overcoming transphobia has no interest in seeking the approval of transphobes. Drawing attention to the normalisation of rape culture and sexual harassment has no interest in receiving acclaim from defenders of rape culture and people who feel sexually entitled. Anti-racism has no interest in validation from White spaces and White institutions.

What these recognition struggles involve is not marginalised agents seeking the gift of affective approval and encouragement by privileged agents, but the intense effort to overcome socio-epistemic power relations of privilege that maintain ideology through

deliberately silencing progressive voices and vilifying a concomitant set of institutional arrangements with real scope for transforming existing social spheres by dismantling privilege. Specifically, the struggle for recognition is the arduous road to overcoming, what Kristie Dotson has termed, 'contributory injustice'.³⁷

Crucial to Dotson's position is the correct observation that marginalised people often have no difficulty articulating their experiences, and a fortiori are not inclined to seek affective approval and encouragement from dominant and privileged social groups. Indeed, the systematic epistemic harm produced by privileged inquirers' wilfully ignorant use of the prejudicial features of interpretive capital in a way that violates the epistemic agency of a non-privileged individuals and social groups, includes instances where there are interpretive resources readily available for marginalised groups to sufficiently make sense of their marginalisation. *However, those particular interpretive resources have not been recognised as part of the overall shared hermeneutic resources of a given society.* This is due to dominant groups' negative attitudes towards the authors and producers of those particular interpretive resources.

It is, therefore, *not* the case that marginalised groups lack the hermeneutical resources to make sense of their own experiences, so much so that they plead for recognition from dominant groups to access such resources – but rather that dominant groups, for a plurality of reasons, are not inclined to deem *the sense-making resources of ideologically marginalised groups* as epistemically and politically significant. This lies at the normative centre of struggles for recognition by conveying the morally-politically salient Strawsonian reactive attitudes that play motivating roles in the logic of progressive social movements. By moving the discussion now to those morally-politically salient Strawsonian reactive attitudes, such as anger at endemic disrespect and alienation, one can start to see what is persuasive about construing the summons as a second-personal demand.

iii. The summons as a second-personal demand

If one is to correctly detail the logic of social movements, specifically *radical* social movements, Honneth recommends starting one's inquiry by focussing on the phenomenology of disrespect; specifically, the first-personal experiential content that a violation of personal integrity and dignity comprises. This is because, as he argues,

[f]eelings of having been disrespected ... form the core of moral experiences that are part of the structure of social interaction because human subjects encounter one another with expectations for recognition, expectations on which their psychological integrity turns. Feelings of having been unjustly treated can lead to collective actions to the extent to which they come to be experienced by an entire circle of subjects as typical for their social situation ... [T]he models of conflict that start from the collective feelings of having been unjustly treated are those that trace the emergence and course of social struggles back to moral experiences of social groups who face having ... recognition withheld from them ... [In this case] we are dealing with the analysis of a struggle over the intersubjective conditions for personal integrity.³⁸

Honneth's non-ideal method of immanent social analysis is cogent, because it goes a long way to explaining why disrespect and the affect of alienation provoke morally-politically salient reactive attitudes.³⁹ For, the experience of misrecognition and/or the experience of nonrecognition, as two distortions of normative recognition relations (namely, self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem), incite intense hurt, pain, resentment, and anger in those who are misrecognised and/or nonrecognised (and in those who stand in relations of solidarity with misrecognised and/or nonrecognised individuals and social groups).

For example, the BLM movement is itself borne out of distress at structural racism and its logical relation with state-sponsored and legally codified degradation of Black bodies, minds and lives. The wronged agents' impassioned resentment and anger is deployed for communicative effect as a way of confronting the wronging party by expressing legitimate outrage at the failure by the wronging party to accord affected individuals and/or affected social group the kinds of normative entitlements they are rightfully due but illegitimately denied.⁴⁰ The protests against police brutality and the long-standing ideological racialisation of Blackness as a threat to social order and stability detail how existing hegemonic vocabularies and institutions have failed to live up to binding moral principles. In this way, why talk of reactive attitudes is especially apt here is because the practice of reactive attitudinal ascription and the communicative content of reactive attitudinal speech acts detail the extent to which all 'thick' intersubjective relationships are saturated by responsibility and accountability.

The morally-politically salient reactive attitudes at the core of BLM are not the kind that stem from frustration at having an invitation declined. The morally-politically salient reactive attitudes at the core of BLM are also not the kind that result from sadness at not having a White supremacist legitimate an African-American. Instead, one might contend that the morally-politically salient reactive attitudes at the core of BLM emerge from righteous rage at institutional and individual agents' failures to comply with a moral demand, one which is a deontic standard for intersubjective care and protection. As R. Jay Wallace writes on the subject of demanding compliance here, '[i]t is to expect or demand compliance with those standards, where these expectations lead to attitudes of reactive blame in case they are disappointed, such as resentment and indignation'.⁴¹

Certainly, expressing distress at the failure to comply with 'the relational standard of interpersonal morality'⁴² is part of the protesters' discourse. However, I think there is an additional dimension to the discourse, one which is particularly resonant of the summons as a second-personal demand. When protesters chant 'Say Her Name!', the communicative function of the speech act hardly constitutes an invitation to consider the barbarity of sexist-racist violence.⁴³ It also hardly constitutes a plea that begs legal bodies and judicial institutions to hold her killers accountable and punish them accordingly.

On the contrary, the function of the discourse is to issue a summons, a demand that her killers come face to face with the monstrosity of their actions through an intersubjectively mediated 'self-limitation' (*Selbstbeschränkung*),⁴⁴ that they are deemed responsible for her death, and that they are thereby punished proportionately. On this point, it may be worth situating what I have argued about the pragmatics of 'Say Her Name!' in relation to the following analysis of second-personal Strawsonian discourse by Wallace:

What we expect or demand of other agents, in the first instance, is not their nominal compliance with the relational standards of interpersonal morality. It is, rather, their conscientious acknowledgment of those standards, as placing significant constraints on the exercise of their own agential capacities⁴⁵ The upshot is that interpersonal recognition is precisely what we are demanding of others when we assert our claims against them through standing in relations of accountability with them. Our expectations in regard to them are that they should acknowledge our standing as individuals whose interests matter and respect the claims that we hold against them. Departures from these expectations amount to recognitional failures, and they constitute the occasions for the reactions of blame to which participation in accountability relations renders people vulnerable Anger is mobilised about the oppressive status quo arrangements, and demands for change are addressed to those responsible for supporting and maintaining them, which are naturally interpreted as demands for recognition. What is asserted through these processes are expectations that the powerful should live up to egalitarian moral norms that properly govern their comportment.⁴⁶

I am sympathetic to what Wallace argues, especially on the subject of construing recognition as something demanded (rather than solicited or begged for by minority groups seeking legitimation). However, I am minded to not wholly endorse his position, at least not without a reasonable qualification. For, Wallace's analysis of the assertions comprising recognition demands seems to miss a trick: the illocutionary content of a recognition speech act does not so much centre the ways in which the powerful are falling short of the promised egalitarian model and the legitimate expectation that the dominant social group needs to improve its own practices, in order to, as Honneth might phrase it, actualise the normative surplus of a social order; rather, demands for recognition communicatively prioritise and illuminate⁴⁷ the distress of minority communities at the fundamental way the status quo is currently structured and reproduced, namely, through relations of (unearned and harmful) privilege that silence, degrade and display wanton cruelty.⁴⁸

In this way, then, the demand and the communicative power of the minority communities (and those who stand in solidarity with them) is only a 'threat' to an agent or institutional design orientated towards exploitation and dehumanisation. Indeed, recognising one's subjection to a demand in no way disempowers and violates the autonomy of any agent, even one disinterested in the preservation and enforcement of privilege. Fortunately, of course, libertarians do not have a monopoly on the concept of freedom.

The demand of the recognition struggle is to see radical system change – a progressive transformation in the moral grammar and concomitant institutional design of contemporary social life – rather than for the base of the status quo to be kept but its superstructure engage in ameliorative projects. In this way, what is asserted in a demand for recognition is *not* that the expectation that the powerful should do their utmost to include minorities as their equals. For, that would constitute a slippery slope to a plea and to perhaps even a form of interpellation. To put this in Habermasian ways, the demand for recognition reveals the *subjective world* of the addresser to their addressee and to fellow addressers, namely, the (correct) belief that a sedimented wrong is endemic in current lifeworld norms: the addresser, moreover, also discloses how the persisted presence of

that pathological norm means that the addressee must radically improve their practices towards them.

It would be reasonable for someone now to suggest that my reading of the summons shares much in common with Darwall's articulation of 'Fichte's point' *qua* the second-personal standpoint,⁴⁹ in that both positions construe second-personal reasons in strong normative ways. However, there is substantive critical distance between my reading of Fichte and the Darwallian second-personal standpoint in the context of Fichte's position.

For Darwall, who secularises divine command theory by replacing God⁵⁰ with the 'moral community [of] mutually accountable free and rational persons',⁵¹ second-personal reasons are 'invariably tied to a distinctively second-personal kind of *practical authority*: the authority to make or demand a claim'.⁵² Indeed, throughout his 2006 monograph, Darwall treats authority as exhaustive of the normative relationship between the summoner and the summoned, arguing that

Fichte's ideas support, indeed ... require, the stronger proposition that second-personal address invariably presupposes categorical requirements rooted in the dignity of persons (second-personal authority)⁵³

Darwall then proceeds to buttress his claims by insisting that '[t]he concepts of valid claim or demand, second-personal reason, and responsibility (accountability) all share the same irreducible idea of the authority to claim or demand'.⁵⁴ This is where Darwall's neo-Fichtean position and my construal of Fichte's summons differ in terms of what makes the summons normatively strong.

Darwall thinks that it is impossible to make sense of a demand and responsibility independently of a commitment to having the authority to demand and thereby legitimately hold an agent accountable. However, such a commitment appears problematic. For, if what really ethically matters is the presence of a demander, or the presence of a commander,⁵⁵ where their presence functions as a second-personal authority, then it seems Darwall's Kantian moral theory, instead of standing the Anscombian point on its head, reproduces the core formal failure of moral command theory – the Wrong Reasons Problem: the motivation for *S* to ϕ is not the natural goodness of ϕ itself, but doing ϕ because *S* has been commanded to ϕ by a divine or secular authority, one who provides *S* with, what H.L.A. Hart called, 'content-independent' reasons to ϕ . To avoid the Wrong Reasons Problem, then, normativity must not be logically exhausted by authority.

Were one to recognise that moral normativity *qua* second-personal relations principally involves dynamics of *responsibilities to* the Other, rather than the *authority of* the Other, then this insight provides one with not only a non-Darwallian second-personal articulation of second-personal reasons, but also a non-Darwallian way of articulating why the summons does not provide 'content-independent' reasons to act.⁵⁶ As Robert Stern thus contends, 'normativity is not to be fundamentally traced back to what is imposed on through the exercise of authority, but as arising out of the framework of relations that constitute the necessary conditions for life'.⁵⁷ What has summoning force, namely, what provides one with a distinctively moral reason to act, is nothing agent-neutral, but the responsibility of the summoned for the summoner's inherent dignity.

*Being affectively reminded*⁵⁸ of this responsibility is the illocutionary speech act content of the summons, where, in being summoned, the 'I' is struck and moved by how the Other's wellbeing is 'in [their] hands', as Knud Eiler Løgstrup phrases it.⁵⁹ This, however, does not logically preclude the 'I' from not complying with the summons, since the 'I' might refuse to adhere to the deontic call. Of course, were the 'I' to ignore the obligations encoded in the act of recognising the Other and thereby not behave in accordance with the relation of right, the 'I' would merit admonishment and other related Strawsonian reactive attitudes.⁶⁰

Regarding the specific normative constitution of the summons, it is important to elaborate why a 'demand', rather than a 'command', is the propositional composition of the summons. This is because while a demand and a command might be *prima facie* interchangeable, insofar as both speech acts exhibit categoricity, it would be a mistake to construe the deontic qualities of the summons as those of a command. Indeed, taking my cue here from Stern, Thomas Hobbes correctly observed that demands, unlike commands, are not content-independent:

Now *counsel* is a precept, in which the reason of my obeying is taken from the thing itself which is advised; but *command* is a precept, in which the cause of my obedience depends on the *will of the commander*. (Hobbes 1997: XIV.1)

The obligatoriness of the summons does not spring from the summoner's status as a commander exercising second-personal authority over the summoned, *contra* Darwall. It springs from how the summoner merits care as a vulnerable agent under the ethical demand. As Løgstrup notes, '[demands] arise from the fact that the *lives* of human beings are entangled with each other'.⁶¹ In this way, then, the second-personal currency of a demand is responsibility to the Other; the second-personal currency of a command is authority of the Other.

What we morally owe to each other is a constellation of responsibilities, not authority relations. Such a claim is not just evocative of our everyday moral phenomenology, but also avoids the Wrong Reasons Problem by replacing authority with responsibility. For, the wrong reason to comply with the summons is that the summoned must respect the summoner's authority as a commander. The right reason to comply with the summons is that one recognises the summoning force of the speech act in terms of making explicit the responsibilities of the summoned to the summoner as a vulnerable subject.

The illocutionary content of the speech act has normative force insofar as it affectively reminds the summoned about their responsibilities towards the summoner. The reasons on which the agent can determine themselves to act do not point to the summoner as an authority as such. The reasons for action point to the summoner as someone to whom the summoned owes care, as someone to whom the summoned is responsible. Responsibility for the summoner, not authority of the summoner grounds the reason to act in this context.⁶² Hence, the normative effect of this beautiful line from W.B. Yeats, 'I have spread my dreams under your feet; Tread softly because you tread on my dreams'.

If what I have argued is legitimate, then the following caustic remarks about Fichte by Honneth can come under a good deal of critical scrutiny:

The price that Fichte had to pay for his interpretation of intersubjective communication is quite high Fichte could not so easily adapt his conception of communication to empirical reality He did later make numerous attempts to render such idealising determinations of recognition more plausible in terms of our actions in the lifeworld; for instance, he noted that mutual recognition is empirically exemplified by the educational process, because adults must inevitably address the still immature child as a “free being” in order to unleash the latter’s potential for self-determination Yet, even these attempts at empirical concretisation do little to refute the suspicion that Fichte’s model of recognition ultimately fails to refer to subjects of flesh and blood. His argumentation remains too much within the Kantian world of intelligible beings to have a lasting effect on how we understand the meaning of intersubjective relationships Although both Hegel and Fichte recognised the socially constitutive role of recognition, only Hegel managed to free it from the transcendental realm and insert it into the social reality of a “spirit” that has become objective in the shape of institutional forms, moral habits and the living humans who deal with both.⁶³

As I have argued, Fichte’s model is especially attuned to disclosing the phenomenological dynamics of psychosocially and politically significant reactive attitudes. Significantly, the summons as a second-personal demand and the relation between summoner and summoned as ‘horizontal’ all-the-way-through are opposed to power relations that construe recognition as a normative resource doled out by a set of recognisers (ideologically positioned as ‘recognitive subjects’) to a set of recognisees (ideologically positioned as ‘recognitive objects’). Indeed, thinking about the summons as a second-personal demand also alerts one to the danger of ‘vertical’ models of recognition, namely, that such models are blind to the logic of individual and social demands for recognition *qua* the reactive attitudes and epistemic standpoints of the strugglers themselves; and blind to the dangers of construing underprivileged agents seeking recognition in terms of requiring legitimation through receiving affective approval and encouragement from privileged agents. Fichte’s transcendental-genetic position, *contra* Honneth, is, therefore, anything but an empty formalism. To quote Ives Radrizzani here,

[t]he theory of the summons demonstrates that the human condition is essentially characterised by an involvement in history. As sure as I am conscious, I am plunged into a sphere of intersubjective relations and connected to the chain of history.⁶⁴

This point is overlooked by Honneth, who appears committed to reproducing the canonical treatment of Fichte in Western philosophy. As such, I find myself sympathetic to Sebastian Rödl’s critique of Honneth:

Honneth wants to find, and does not quite find, in Fichte an advance from the monological to the intersubjective. Honneth pairs monological with transcendental and intersubjective with empirical; he contrasts internal conditions discovered by transcendental reflection with external conditions residing in empirical affection. This opposition, which frames Honneth’s reading and the narrative in which it places Fichte, occludes Fichte’s innovation.⁶⁵

Thus far in my paper, I have argued that the summons is best made sense of as a second-personal demand, whose illocutionary content draws attention to the demandingness of responsibilities towards vulnerable agents. Because of this, the summons has good explanatory force in terms of disclosing the phenomenological dynamics of psychosocially and politically significant reactive attitudes. In the final part of my paper, I wish to turn the discussion towards a possible critique of my reading of Fichte.

III

There is reason to think that my idiosyncratic account of the summons as a second-personal demand, which provides the 'I' with strong normative constraints on their agentive activity, rests on misconstruing what it is that the summoned is being summoned to do *in the first place* – namely, '*to be self-determining*' *qua* *Selbstbeschränkung*. For, while Fichte articulates strong normative constraints that should be adopted by self-determining agents, those strong normative constraints can only be explained and justified *after* there has been a deduction of embodiedness and property ownership.⁶⁶ In this way, then, what interests Fichte in §§1–4 is only elementary intersubjectivity. Furthermore, given the logic and specific purpose of Fichte's deduction of intersubjectivity *via* the summons, there cannot be any discourse in §§1–4 about determinate and complex normative matters such as privilege and legitimacy. Discourse about determinate normative matters can only come later in Fichte's account through the *subsequent* deduction of the body, property, etc. Therefore, in wanting to counter Honneth's charge that Fichte's transcendental position 'fails to refer to subjects of flesh and blood', my idiosyncratic account of the summons has overplayed its hand by reading determinate normativity too soon in §§1–4.⁶⁷

In response, I would contend that to regard the summons as necessarily indeterminate, insofar as the summons *eo ipso* does not tell agents *which* normative principles demand realisation in the world, is mistaken.⁶⁸ For, while it is true that in §§1–4, detailed determinate normativity concerning, for example, bodily integrity and property ownership cannot be deduced simply from the notion of being self-determining in a relation of right, it does not follow from this transcendental insight into how one is intersubjectively constituted that the summons is necessarily indeterminate and purely formal. As Frederick Beiser observes, the deduction of intersubjectivity enables *S* to recognise that '[*S*] become [*s*] self-conscious only through having a sphere of rights and duties for [*their*] freedom'.⁶⁹ Such a sphere of rights and duties is designed to, so to speak, 'throw' agents into an interpersonal network of *basic* normative expectations and deontic constraints, one in which agents find themselves as being subject to a moral 'ought' in the first place:

[the relation of right necessarily involves] not that I merely refrain from acting contrary to the concept of C as a rational being, but rather that I actually act in conformity with it, that I actually enter into reciprocal interaction with C. (Fichte 2000: 42–3)

In this way, Fichte may be said to employ his transcendental deduction of intersubjectivity *via* the summons as a means of disclosing the core deontic feature of a 'moral agent's relation to a living moral community'.⁷⁰ Though being summoned and standing in a

relation of right with others *eo ipso* does not comprise *detailed* determinate normativity, being summoned and standing in a relation of right with others, equally, does not comprise necessarily indeterminate normativity. To repeat a claim I made earlier in the paper, the summons constitutes a specific type of normatively integrated communicative space, a

domain of relations between the first person and the second person, between myself as an agent capable of being addressed and addressing others in the second person, and other agents capable of being addressed and of addressing me. Another, so characterised, is more than a mere obstacle or factual limitation confronting my agency; he or she is also a *normative* limitation on my agency. (Emphasis added)

Indeed, one may even be justified in thinking that necessarily indeterminate normativity in and of itself *cannot* stand in the needed conceptual relationship with complex determinate normativity, as *some* degree of determinacy is minimally required in the summons *qua* relation of right to serve as a clue to the derivation and justification of more specific and content-rich determinate principles of right.

For Fichte, the ability to engage in discourse about privilege and legitimacy – complex, specific and content-rich concepts of *Recht* – presupposes a transcendental *de jure* normative backdrop against which the normative assessment of agents and societies can take place. The deduction of such a transcendental *de jure* normative backdrop is Fichte's concern in §§1–4, where, as Kosch correctly notes, he tries to argue that

to summon is to make a move in a kind of strategic interaction that is ubiquitous in human social life and paradigmatic of political interaction. On this interpretation, reflective self-consciousness is linked to politics in exactly the way Fichte proposes in the deduction.⁷¹

Crucially, without *some* degree of determinacy built into the summons *qua* relation of right, it is difficult to see, for Fichte, how 'elementary recognition' (ER) will logically relate to 'political recognition' (PR), where the latter, following Gottlieb, involves acknowledging others as right-bearing agents to whom one is answerable should normative failures take place upon not adhering to the summons: '[t]he summons ... correlates, first, with elementary recognition when upbringing is the goal of the engagement; and, second, with political recognition when respect for external freedom and rights are the end'.⁷²

For that matter, ER might be said to have much in common with Honneth's re-working of 'reification' (*Verdinglichung*) in terms of 'having lost sight of antecedent recognition [sympathetic engagement]'.⁷³ The loss of sight amounts to a *forgetting* of a primal, pre-discursive, affective, ontogenetic relation of recognitional care⁷⁴ and sympathetic engagement with the Other as a human being.⁷⁵ In cases of reification, then, as Honneth writes,

we are dealing either with a process in which cognitive goals have become completely detached from their original context, with the result that our cognitive stance has become rigid or overemphasised, or, in the second case, with a retroactive denial of recognition for the sake of preserving a prejudice or stereotype.⁷⁶

Focussing on the latter disjunct, the reified agent is no longer *automatically* viewed as an emotional and intentional subject.⁷⁷ The reified agent is instead perceived as a ‘merely observable [object] lacking all psychic impulse or emotion’.⁷⁸

If it is reasonable to view sympathetic engagement in terms of a background condition for the intelligibility of love, legal respect and value-solidarity, then ignoring the summons would amount to a rupture and potentially irretrievable loss of the capacity to evaluatively perceive the summoner as an intentional subject (ER) – let alone as a vulnerable subject (PR).

Franks has gone to great lengths to reveal how much Kabbalism is embodied in Fichte’s second-personal ethics. However, this is not exhaustive of Fichte’s ‘Jewification’. For, what is ironically Jewish about Fichte’s position, especially when set in the context of non-Darwallian second-personal reasons, moral demands, the relation of right, and what we owe to each other is *tikkun olam* – the repair of the world.

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Notes

1. Though Honneth is the principal pioneer of contemporary recognition theory, [Taylor \(1994\)](#) and [Rancière \(1998\)](#) have also produced important contributions to the philosophy of recognition. However, for the purpose of this essay, I will only focus on Honneth.
2. [Moore 2012](#), 107.
3. Michael Nance regards the summons as ‘the minimal form of recognition necessary for any form of self-conscious free agency’ ([Nance 2016](#), 206). Cf. [Nance 2015](#), 623.
4. [Wood 2006](#), 68.
5. [Fichte 1983](#), 172–3.
6. See [Dryden \(2013\)](#) for an engaging discussion of Fichte and vulnerability.
7. Viz. [Fichte 2000](#), 10.
8. For recent treatments of Fichte’s transcendental argument in the *Foundations*, see [Beiser \(2002\)](#), [Bernstein \(2010\)](#), [Wood \(2016a, 2016b\)](#), [Nance \(2015\)](#), [McNulty \(2016\)](#), and [Kosch \(2021\)](#). Michelle Kosch has provided an especially lucid reconstruction of Fichte’s transcendental argument: 1. ‘I am conscious of myself. 2. I am conscious of myself only if I am conscious of myself as freely acting. 3. I am conscious of myself as freely acting only if I have been summoned. 4. If I have been summoned, then I am aware of standing (or having stood) in a relation of right with one or more rational beings distinct from myself. C) Therefore, I am aware of standing (or having stood) in a relation of right with one or more rational beings distinct from myself’. ([Kosch 2021](#), 243).
9. [Wood 2016a](#), 81–2.
10. Viz. [Wood 2016a](#), 82.

11. Cf. [Franks 2016](#), 112.
12. [Wood 2006](#), 73.
13. [Wood 2016a](#), 83.
14. Viz. [Gottlieb 2016a](#), 119, 132.
15. [Wood 2016a](#), 83.
16. Cf. [Bernstein 2010](#), 53. Cf. [Williams 2008](#), 27.
17. Viz. [Wood 2016a](#), 82.
18. [Honneth 2021b](#), 115–6.
19. It is unclear if Honneth thinks a demand and a command are interchangeable.
20. [Honneth 2001](#), 76–7 – as referenced and translated by [Kosch \(2021\)](#).
21. [Kosch 2021](#), 222.
22. Honneth is alert to this, writing that ‘Fichte refers to the “summons” as an implicit expression of respect. In Fichte’s view, calling upon someone to act always also means showing respect for that person, for the act of summoning presupposes that we refrain from asserting our own, private freedom’ ([Honneth 2021b](#), 117).
23. [Nance 2015](#), 613. Cf. [Nance 2015](#), 612.
24. [Honneth 2021a](#), 586.
25. Nance also interprets the summons as expressing a demand upon the summoned. However, he does not appear to specify what kind of demand the summons is said to be. Viz. [Nance 2016](#), 206.
26. Viz. ‘Either I act in accordance with the summons, or I do not act in accordance with it. If I have understood this summons, I can, of course, still decide not to act [as the summons represents]’ (FNR: 33).
27. It is worth noting that while §§1–4 of the *Foundations* focuses on the free intersubjective recognition between agents that represents the relation of right, later sections of the *Foundations* seem to paint a radically contrastive picture, namely, that the function of the state is to institutionalise a coercive legal and judicial framework that forces egoistic agents to respect the autonomy of one another. See [Nance \(2016\)](#) for a detailed response to this apparent inconsistency in Fichte’s work.
28. [Gottlieb 2016b](#), 132.
29. Cf. [Kosch 2021](#), 225.
30. Viz. [Fichte 2000](#), 38. Cf. ‘I become a rational being – *actually*, not merely *potentially* – only by being *made* into one’ ([Fichte 2000](#), 69).
31. [Franks 2016](#), 100.
32. I use ‘address’ in the same way as Jeremy Wanderer does, namely, as comprising a very different kind of propositional attitude to ‘target’ (viz. [Wanderer 2010](#), 96–103, 114). For, addressing, unlike targeting and its deontic scorekeeping tones, involves a second-personal call to recognise one’s speech in such a way that establishes ‘an immediate and significant normative relation between an addresser and an addressee’ ([Gazit 2020](#), 456). If an address is ignored, then, such deformation of recognition may be said to violate the addresser’s fundamental dignity.
33. [Darwall 2006](#), 4.
34. Cf. [Darwall 2006](#), 22.
35. Cf. Honneth’s notion of understanding ‘the other’s utterance as an invitation to react autonomously’ ([Honneth 2021b](#), 120).

36. Williams 2008, 28. For further on Williams's position, see Williams (1992).
37. Viz. Dotson 2012, 31.
38. Honneth 1995, 163.
39. Cf. Khurana 2021, 558.
40. See Gooding-Williams (2006); Medina (2018a, 2018b); Crenshaw et al. (2016).
41. Wallace 2021, 637. I am not convinced that 'disappointed' is the most apt expression in this moral context.
42. Ibid., p. 638.
43. See Crenshaw et al. (2016).
44. See Darwall 2006, 257.
45. Wallace 2021, 638.
46. Ibid., p. 639.
47. One might object to my analysis of the speech acts characteristic of contemporary social movements in the following way: it is unclear how illocutionary force and content are related to the structure of Fichte's summons. Content-wise, these speech acts shed light on structures of oppression/power in the existing social order. But force-wise, these speech acts seem to be second-personal demands aimed at another individual, the hearer. And the latter would seem to be what Fichte is trying to capture. In response, I would contend that social movements – as organised collective intentionalities – can be treated as special kinds of 'persons'. In this way, illocutionary force and content go hand-in-hand when a critique of the existing social order is made: the illocutionary content concerns revealing the normative deficiency of current social structures, and the illocutionary force concerns demanding progressive changes and encouraging solidarity. Of course, much more would need be said about how individual activists' voices and the social ontology of their group hang together on this account.
48. On the point about silencing, degrading and cruelty, I would like to briefly draw attention to the following claim by Christine Korsgaard: '[i]t is impossible to hear words of a language you know as mere noise. In hearing your words as *words*, I acknowledge that you are someone' (Korsgaard 1996, 143). It is questionable to assert that familiarity with *S*'s language *eo ipso* means that *T* cannot construe *S*'s speech as just sonic content and thereby degrade *S*. For, focussing on ubiquitous conservative attitudes towards BLM representatives' speech as an example here, the status quo often understands exactly what BLM demands – a progressive transformation of existing intersectional environments – but the status quo often produces epistemologies of ignorance for the purpose of delegitimising BLM's demands by evaluatively perceiving the BLM representatives' speech as noise. However, in response, Korsgaard's claim is justified to have such strong modal content in the following qualified sense: it is possible to hear BLM representatives' words as noise (and not as words) *only in those very rare cases when there is an absence of 'antecedent recognition'* (viz. Honneth 2008, 52).
49. Viz. Darwall 2006, 21.
50. Viz. Darwall 2006, 109; 115n45.
51. Darwall 2006, 115.
52. Ibid., p. 11.
53. Ibid., p. 253.
54. Ibid., p. 269. Cf. Darwall 2006, 274.

55. As I will shortly go on to argue, a command and a demand are not interchangeable normative declaratives.
56. What I have written here also contrasts with [Pinkard 2021](#), 598–99.
57. [Stem 2018](#), 14.
58. I do not construe ‘reminder’ in terms of a mere *aide-memoire*. Rather, I think of affectively reminding in terms of actively disrupting the summoned’s subjectivity by provoking them into self-limitation. The force of the summons is a radical ‘check’ on privilege through its communicative function. In terms of the development of conscience, this may well have to do with the kind of elementary recognition that the summons comprises.
59. [Løgstrup 2020](#), 16. Cf. [Løgstrup 2020](#), 17, 18, 21, 24–5, 39–40, 42, 47, 91–2, 96, 99, 118, 122, 124, 128. I recognise that I am perhaps jumping the gun here. For, to coherently square Løgstrup’s moral realist slant with Fichte’s intersubjectivism requires making explicit some intermediate steps. Indeed, it might be less controversial to talk of the *objectivity* of the moral demand for Fichte. Otherwise, the origin of this authorisation-independent fact about moral responsibility might seem mysterious – for example, what grounds that some normative entitlements are rightfully due and prone to another Wrong Reasons Problem, if it is not grounded in the summons that brings together two free rational beings as such? I see no *a priori* reason to think that Fichte would not broadly buy into Robert Brandom’s idea that norms are social achievements. For, after all, normativity emerges from rational sites of intersubjectivity: as soon as one summons someone else, this creates the environment for the development and institutionalisation of normativity. Indeed, on Fichte’s position, the idea of a normative entitlement does not come from God as such – in the way it does for Kierkegaard and does in a sense for Løgstrup. So, the ‘grounding’ point may well require some kind of highly qualified naturalist claim. Of course, though, this is not to say that Fichte’s position and Brandom’s position are reducible to each other: Fichte’s model still operates under the assumption of transcendental constraints for practical reason. As a result, unlike Brandom’s account of constituting normative statuses *via* normative attitudes, Fichte’s model is not susceptible to the threat of ‘conventionalism’ or relativism. Simply put, I think Fichte would claim that normativity emerges from reason itself but it thereby necessarily manifests itself socially, because the free ‘I’ only exists in the plural.
60. There is reason to think that the objectivity of the demand seems to have competing sources in my account: the first source is the summoner’s inherent dignity; the other is their vulnerability. Both dignity and vulnerability are, of course, related, but the former seems to accrue to any rational being *insofar* as it is a member of the kingdom of ends, whereas the latter accrues only to finite rational beings *insofar* as they are embodied and have empirical interests/inclinations. However, by way of reply to this point, I think of ‘dignity’ more capaciously to the point where vulnerability – understood in terms of openness, subject to socialisation and its pressures, and fragility – and dignity are logically bound up. This would ‘soften’ the idea of the different senses in the accruals. This is not to regard the different senses in the accruals as a pseudo-issue, but rather that there are two sides of the same coin and serve as a different order of explanation.
61. [Løgstrup 2020](#), 204. Cf. [Løgstrup 2020](#), 106.
62. It is interesting to note that Darwall’s only substantive discussion of vulnerability in his 2006 monograph, does not make any reference to Fichte. See [Darwall 2006](#), 142.
63. [Honneth 2021b](#), 122–3; 176.

64. [Radrizzani 2016](#): 230.
65. [Rödl 2021](#): 631.
66. Viz. ‘the right to the continued existence of the absolute freedom and inviolability of the body (i.e. there should be absolutely nothing that exercises an immediate effect on the body)’ ([Fichte 2000](#): 108).
67. Another way of putting the objection here might be that it seems that I am claiming that the way in which Fichte’s transcendental position is connected to the more determinate account of right with respect to more contentful normative expectations and more contentful deontic constraints involves deriving the transcendental account of normativity from the especially determinate shapes under which normative relations make their appearance within experience.
68. [Wood 2016b](#): 169. As I hope is clear, I am not claiming that the way in which Fichte’s transcendental position is connected to the more determinate account of right with respect to more contentful normative expectations and more contentful deontic constraints involves deriving the transcendental account of normativity from the especially determinate shapes under which normative relations make their appearance within experience. Indeed, as I understand Fichte, more contentful intersubjective normative expectations and more contentful intersubjective deontic constraints in experience *formally depend* on the recognition – at the *transcendental* level – of how the summons as a second-person demand *qua* responsibility to vulnerability serves as a ‘check’ on agency. Hence, why I have written on p. 21 that the summons *qua* the role it plays in constituting a general but nonetheless contentful relation of right serves as a clue to the derivation and justification of more specific and content-rich determinate principles of right.
69. [Beiser 2002](#): 345.
70. [Wood 2016b](#): 169.
71. [Kosch 2021](#): 225.
72. [Gottlieb 2016a](#): 119.
73. [Honneth 2008](#): 74. Antecedent recognition – by virtue of its status as primordial recognition is developmentally and conceptually prior to self-confidence (love), self-respect (legal relations) and self-esteem (solidarity), the three complex normative forms of intersubjective recognition first accounted in [Honneth \(1995\)](#).
74. In Martin Heidegger’s technical sense of *Sorge*.
75. Reification goes beyond conceptual amnesia and into much darker terrain, as a reifier has not acted or spoken *as if* the reified used to be human but now is subhuman; the reifier has acted or spoken in a way that demonstrates they intentionally look past and deny the reified’s humanity from the very outset. In this way, reification is a first-order pathology, because *no antecedent recognition is accorded to the target*.
76. [Honneth 2008](#): 60. Cf. [Honneth 2008](#): 79.
77. Viz. [Honneth 2008](#): 34.
78. [Honneth 2008](#): 58. Such a rare and especially corrosive type of evaluative perception is a first-order pathology of invisibilisation *qua* antecedent recognition.

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