

Hegel's Naturalism?

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ABSTRACT: The recent tendency to detect naturalism in Hegel's epistemology is more than just a phenomenon within contemporary Anglophone scholarship, insofar as it mirrors a questionable state of the art at the intersection between philosophy of science and philosophy of mind. According to the naturalist reading, Hegel maintains that the natural world is the only presupposition for satisfying the needs of self-consciousness. Such reading considers the essence of self-consciousness as naturally embodied in its essence, while downplaying the intersubjective dimension of reciprocal recognition needed for self-consciousness. Self-consciousness, as the thinking subject or the mind, is then lead to allegedly unavoidable delimitation of any knowledge-claims. On this reading, the natural is an insurmountable obstacle to the mind. Hegel, on his side, evidently offers an ongoing multifaceted dialogue with divergent streams of naturalism. Yet, the question arises: in which sense can we appropriately speak of Hegel's naturalism? This paper presents the recent naturalistic approaches to Hegel, along with deliberations on Hegel's possible response to them, namely his concept of the transsubjective thinking mind, the *Geist*.

KEYWORDS: Hegel, naturalism, epistemology, mind, Quine.

1. Introduction: Hegel's 'naturalistic turn'

There is an observable tendency in the last few decades to refer to Hegel "as a great naturalist"¹ and to certain parts of his philosophy as consistent with various kinds of naturalism.² It was argued that Hegel's "apparent indulgence in metaphysics" is actually "a

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¹ DEVRIES, W.A. **Hegel's Theory of Mental Activity. An Introduction to Theoretical Spirit.** Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1988, p. xii.

² The works to be mentioned in the following are: BEISER, F.C. **German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781-1801.** Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2002; BEISER, F.C. Introduction: Hegel and the Problem of Metaphysics. In: Beiser, F.C. (Ed.). **The Cambridge Companion to Hegel.** New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 1-24; DEVRIES, W.A. **Hegel's Theory of Mental Activity. An Introduction to Theoretical Spirit.** Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1988; PAPAOGLOU, A. Hegel and Naturalism. In: **Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain.** Nov. 2012, pp. 21-37; PINKARD, T. **Hegel's Naturalism. Mind, Nature, and the Final Ends of Life.** New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012; PIPPIN, R. **Hegel's Practical Philosophy. Rational Agency as Ethical Life.** Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008; REDDING, P. **Analytic Philosophy and the Return of the Hegelian Thought.** Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007; WESTPHAL, K. **Hegel's Epistemology: A Philosophical Introduction to the Phenomenology of Spirit.** Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett, 2003; TESTA, I. Hegel's Naturalism or Soul and Body in the *Encyclopaedia*. In: Stern, D.S. (Ed.). **Essays on Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit.** New York, NY: SUNY Press, 2013.



form of scientific naturalism”³ and that his “absolute idealism” involves “a much greater degree of naturalism” than Kant’s idealism.⁴ Hegel’s philosophy of spirit, in particular his psychology, was presented as “deeply naturalist.”⁵ Even where ‘hard’ naturalism in Hegel has been rejected, there are assertions that his epistemology contains “naturalist elements”⁶ or a “naturalistic dimension”⁷ and that Hegel advocates a form of “Aristotelian naturalism.”⁸ The naturalistic turn in Hegel’s reception corresponds to the general intensification of naturalism in contemporary philosophy, giving thus rise to the question of Hegel’s relation to naturalism: can we appropriately speak of Hegel’s naturalism? In this debate, everything depends on what is meant by ‘naturalism.’

2. *Hegel as a naturalist: a lover of nature and a natural historian*

If a naturalist is a scholar who extensively deals with the study of nature, then, in some respect, Hegel can be considered as a naturalist. Hegel’s study of nature began in his early drafts to *Philosophy of Nature* in the *Jenaer Systementwürfe* (1803–6) and went on with several conceptual issues concerning natural laws and natural powers developed in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). His study culminated in the dedication of not less than one-third of the *Encyclopaedia* (1830) to *Philosophy of Nature*. The term ‘naturalist’ can refer more specifically to ‘natural historian,’ a person who studies ‘natural history,’ the observational study of plants and animals. As Hegel’s biographer notes:

In 1802 and 1803, Hegel began to assemble clippings concerning natural science from various journals and newspapers, and he returned intensively to one of his earlier interests as a schoolboy in Stuttgart, the study of physics and mathematics.⁹

This old love had borne fruit: in 1804, the same year Hegel was elected to the Westphalia Society for Natural Research, he had become an assessor of the Jena Mineralogical Society, and due to that appointment, he was issued a pass for a trip to Göttingen and the Harz

³ BEISER. Introduction, p. 8.

⁴ BEISER. *German Idealism, 1781-1801*, pp. 3, 355.

⁵ WESTPHAL. *Hegel’s Epistemology*, p. 55.

⁶ WESTPHAL. *Hegel’s Epistemology*, p. 52..

⁷ REDDING. *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of the Hegelian Thought*, p. 234.

⁸ PINKARD. *Hegel’s Naturalism*, p. 19.

⁹ PINKARD, T. *Hegel. A Biography*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 186.

mountains for geological study.¹⁰ Hegel even identified himself in the title page of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* from 1807 as “Dr. and Professor of Philosophy in Jena, Member of the Ducal Mineralogical Society, Assessor to the Society and Member of other learned Societies.” In this respect, Hegel was a dedicated lover of nature.

Yet, perhaps since Hegel performed natural studies for only a few years, the authors involved in the naturalism debate do not consider Hegel as a naturalist because of his love of nature or his inquiry into natural history, but because of having certain naturalist views in his philosophy of science. Studying nature, irrespective of the method, is not a sufficient condition for subscribing to naturalism, and so a consideration of the versions of naturalism that can be ascribed to Hegel is necessary for our inquiry. Let us begin with naturalism in general and the versions of naturalism to which Hegel evidently is *not* inclined.

3. *Hegel refutes classical naturalism*

Classical ontological naturalism is the belief that all is nature, which means that the whole reality, the universe or cosmos, is exhausted by what nature is and thus subjected to nature's laws. This monist pan-naturalism, also called metaphysical or philosophical naturalism, is in its broadest sense as old as the moment Thales of Miletus formulated his principle of *hydor*, holding that everything consists out of a moist natural substance. Spinoza's *deus sive natura* helped developing such pantheistic naturalism that divides every being into *natura naturans* or *natura naturata*. The French materialists around Baron d'Holbach have modified this view in a so-called enlightened manner that is still alive and popular in the works of Daniel Dennett and Paul Churchland under the title ‘eliminative materialism.’

Now, perhaps since the term ‘naturalism’ does not appear in Hegel's titles and does not seem to be a main topic in his writings, Hegel's own explicit reaction against classical naturalism seems to have sunk into oblivion, to the extent that it seems that “Hegel never explicitly talks about naturalism.”¹¹ It was forgotten that Hegel uses this term several times and even expands on it, always in a pejorative context and while clearly taking a stance against it. The first time is in a review in his *Critical Journal of Philosophy* (1802), where he

¹⁰ Cf. VERENE, D.P. Hegel's Nature. In: Houlgate, S. (Ed.). **Hegel and the Philosophy of Nature**. New York, NY: SUNY Press, 1998, p. 209.

¹¹ PAPAOGLOU. Hegel and Naturalism, p. 74.

issues a withering assessment on Schulze's philosophical system, summing it up as nothing more than a "mere naturalism [...] with artificially inlaid formulas."¹² In his empiricism critique in the *Encyclopaedia's Logic* Hegel supplies a still-pertinent determination of naturalism, arguing that the "consistent system of empiricism is materialism, or naturalism. – Kant's philosophy sets the principle of thinking and of freedom in strict opposition to this empiricism."¹³ Hegel defines classical naturalism more precisely in his interpretation of Vanini's naturalism in the *Lectures on History of Philosophy* as the belief "that it is Nature that is the Deity, that all things have a mechanical genesis."¹⁴ Vanini "explained the whole universum in its connection by efficient causes alone, not by final causes."¹⁵ Hegel's definition of Spinozistic naturalism may seem today to the reader to be irrelevant for the naturalism debate because one does not associate naturalism with pantheism, but this definition does expose one of the old roots of the still-existing logical problem in the very concept of naturalism: its totality-claim. To underline his objection to naturalism, Hegel derides the "superficial" and "dull" works of French materialists and naturalists, such as D'Holbach's *The System of Nature*.¹⁶ It is difficult not to hear the anti-naturalistic critique and the mockery.

In contrast to these clear reservations, there is only one place where Hegel seems to praise naturalism, claiming that it has overcome the "positive element in religion."¹⁷ By "religion" Hegel means any dogmatic doctrine which is based on absolute faith, not on the "negative" element of thinking. Herewith, Hegel recognizes the value of historical naturalism as a possible cognitive stance within the wide system of philosophical attempts. However, immediately after his positive words, Hegel sharply denounces the same naturalism for its three mistakes: misidentifying the absolute as something present, denying natural and spiritual purposiveness, hence freedom, and only reaching to insufficient dead abstractions of "a nature

¹² The original text: "bloßer Naturalismus, mit ... Formeln künstlich eingefaßt." HEGEL, G.W.F. **Werke in 20 Bänden**. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970, vol. 2, p. 279.

¹³ HEGEL, G.W.F. **The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part 1 of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze**. Trans. with Introduction and Notes: Geraets, T.F.; Suchting, W.A.; Harris, H.S. Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett publishing, 1991, p. 107, §60.

¹⁴ HEGEL, G.W.F. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy: Volume 3, Medieval and Modern Philosophy**. Trans. Haldane, E.S.; Simson, F.H. (Eds.). Lincoln, Nebraska: Bison Books/Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1995, p. 139.

¹⁵ HEGEL. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy: Volume 3**, p. 139.

¹⁶ HEGEL. **Werke in 20 Bänden**, vol. 20, p. 294: "Die Gedanken sind sehr oberflächlich, le grand tout de la nature ist das Letzte; das ganze wiederholt sich auf allgemeine Weise, die Darstellung ist matt".

¹⁷ HEGEL. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy: Volume 3**, p. 384.

undetermined in itself, to sensation, mechanism, self-seeking, and utility.”¹⁸ As Frederick Beiser rightly argues, Hegel rejects the naturalistic view that holds that “not only everything objective, physical, or material” but also “everything ideal, normative and formal is explicable according to laws of nature.”¹⁹ Robert Pippin explicitly agrees on this point as well.²⁰ If so, what other kinds of naturalism does Hegel reject?

4. *Hegel refutes Quinean naturalism*

As Kenneth Westphal rightly claims, it is agreed that Hegel does not hold naturalism “in one of its currently popular senses in epistemology, that the only genuine justification is natural-scientific justification.”²¹ The reference is to Quine’s *Naturalized Epistemology* which argues that since the knowing subject is naturally embodied, knowledge itself is a natural phenomenon and thus epistemology should be pursued as a natural empirical science: “Epistemology [...] simply falls into place as a chapter of psychology and hence of natural Science. It studies a natural phenomenon, viz., a physical human subject.”²² Roughly, even if Hegel agrees with Quine that epistemology falls into psychology, as the highest part of ‘Subjective Spirit’ in the *Encyclopaedia*, Hegel still thinks that to regard psychology only as natural science, as Quine does, is nothing but a bad form of empiricism and formalism. Quine’s methodological naturalism vastly differs from Hegel’s approach, because Quine, in contrast to Hegel, regards empirical natural science as the only proper way to true knowledge. Indeed, as Paul Redding argues, Hegel’s critique of metaphysics is not consistent with this kind of anti-transcendental naturalism, which is “more common to analytic philosophy.”²³ Hegel rather holds that “while we are each fundamentally limited and conditioned in our particular cognitive capacities, we are, nevertheless, in virtue of our rational natures, somehow capable of going beyond those limits.”²⁴ Moreover, it is plausible to claim that

¹⁸ HEGEL. *Lectures on the History of Philosophy: Volume 3*, p. 385.

¹⁹ BEISER. *German Idealism*, p. 598, note 4.

²⁰ Cf. PIPPIN. *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy*, p. 33.

²¹ WESTPHAL. *Hegel’s Epistemology*, pp. 52f.

²² QUINE, W.V.O. *Naturalized Epistemology*. In: Quine, W.V.O. *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1969, pp. 82ff.

²³ REDDING. *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of the Hegelian Thought*, p. 20.

²⁴ REDDING. *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of the Hegelian Thought*, p. 222.

Hegel grounds the particular epistemological capacity of human beings in “the *recognitively* intersubjective structures of spirit to which we all belong.”²⁵

Be this as it may, there is a specific passage in the *Philosophy of Nature* that seems to incriminate Hegel as a confirmed methodological naturalist in the Quinean spirit: “Not only must philosophy be in agreement with our empirical knowledge of Nature, but the *origin* and the *formation* of the Philosophy of Nature presupposes and is conditioned by physics”.²⁶ Westphal has already brought this citation as a conclusive proof for Hegel’s naturalism.²⁷ Yet, as it is understandable from the rest of the text, this statement only goes to show that Hegel does not affirm a principal collision between philosophy and empirical knowledge of nature, for he regards the latter also as containing rational-conceptual elements – even if the physicists are unaware of them as such. Without mentioning the case of Westphal, Terry Pinkard justly notes that this citation only seems like a proof for Hegel’s Quinean naturalism, while it is not.²⁸ As Pinkard has shown in his interpretation, the nature described by natural sciences, which deal only with the finite, is not the ‘whole’ or ‘absolute’ that Hegel looks for, which means that Hegel does not accept the results of the natural sciences as the ‘absolute idea.’²⁹ Consequently, philosophy of spirit, which includes epistemological considerations and culminates in the discussion of the ‘absolute spirit’ and ‘philosophy’ itself, can explicate the essence of nature in even a more comprehensive and self-reflective way than philosophy of nature.³⁰ Hegel claims that natural sciences are not that purely empirical as they maintain, for they involve the mathematical a priori.³¹ Hegel, like Aristotle,³² does not think that the physicists alone can fully explicate the general content of all the conceptual schemes employed in their science. Hegel demands from philosophy only ‘compatibility’ with natural science, not ‘identity,’ for the natural science is just a presupposition in the sense of a ‘starting point’ for philosophy.³³ In addition, Pinkard rightly suggests that the importance of Hegel’s

²⁵ REDDING. *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of the Hegelian Thought*, p. 222..

²⁶ HEGEL, G.W.F. *Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature: Part Two of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*. Trans. Miller, A.V. from Nicolin and Poggeler’s edition (1959) and from the *Zusätze* in Michelet’s text (1847). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 6, §246 note.

²⁷ Cf. WESTPHAL. *Hegel’s Epistemology*, p. 52.

²⁸ Cf. PINKARD. *Hegel’s Naturalism*. p. 19.

²⁹ Cf. PINKARD. *Hegel’s Naturalism*, pp. 19ff.

³⁰ Cf. PINKARD. *Hegel’s Naturalism*, pp. 19ff.

³¹ Cf. PINKARD. *Hegel’s Naturalism*, pp. 19ff.

³² Cf. ARISTOTLE. *Metaphysics*. In: *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*. Trans. H. Tredennick, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd, 1989, vol. 17, chapter IV, 1005a, 40-50.

³³ Cf. PAPAZOGLU. *Hegel and Naturalism*, p. 23. Interestingly, Papazoglou presents a similar reading like Pinkard, yet, while citing Hegel directly from Pinkard and ignoring Pinkard’s critique, Papazoglou reproaches

first drafts to *Philosophy of Nature* from 1803–6 lies in the way they already show that Hegel “needed a non-reductionist and non-naturalist account of the genesis of spirit out of nature.”³⁴ Hegel completed this kind of account in his logical explication of the transition from the category of ‘nature’ to that of ‘spirit’ in his *Encyclopaedia* from 1817.

Yet, in spite of this refutation of naturalism in Hegel, there are claims for Hegel’s own version of naturalism, which treats the mind as a purely natural phenomenon. We shall turn now to analyze such claims.

5. *Naturalistic readings of Hegel*

The common argument for Hegel’s naturalism has the structure of first refuting ‘strong’ ontological and methodological, just as we did until now, and then circumspectly finding a ‘weak’ or ‘soft’ version of naturalism in Hegel. These readings benevolently seek to defend Hegel’s philosophy from being diagnosed as dubious and unscientific, perhaps metaphysical, religious or even theistic. It is therefore worthy to observe the naturalistic arguments and offer queries and questions.

5.1. *Spirit as “powers within nature” (Beiser)*

Frederick Beiser’s interpretation of Hegel is committed to naturalism about the mental, as he believes that for Hegel “spirit is only the highest degree of organization and development of the organic powers within nature”³⁵ and therefore Hegel explains the “transcendental self-consciousness according to its place within nature.”³⁶ Beiser designates Hegel’s view as nothing else than a “form of scientific naturalism:”³⁷ “everything subjective, mental, or conscious is explicable according to laws of nature,” not only “everything objective, physical, or material.”³⁸ In a rhetorical manner, reminding the ‘false dilemma,’ Beiser offers only bad alternatives to naturalism: determinist historicism, positivistic

Pinkard for not understanding the citation and for falsely holding Hegel to be a Quinean naturalist – exactly the opposite of what Pinkard argues.

³⁴ PINKARD. *Hegel. A Biography*, p. 187.

³⁵ BEISER. Introduction, p. 9.

³⁶ BEISER. *German Idealism*, p. 355.

³⁷ BEISER. Introduction, p. 8.

³⁸ BEISER. *German Idealism*, p. 598, note 4. For a slightly different view from Beiser, a more critical one, see STONE, A. Hegel, Naturalism and the Philosophy of Nature. In: *Hegel Bulletin*, vol. 34, issue 1, May 2013.

mysticism³⁹ or “a form of speculation about supernatural entities, such as God, Providence, and the soul.”⁴⁰ He argues:

Schelling and Hegel also insist that their metaphysics has nothing to do with the supernatural. Their conception of metaphysics is indeed profoundly naturalistic. They banish all occult forces and the supernatural from the universe, explaining everything in terms of natural laws.⁴¹

Beiser thus claims that the “highest being,” which is at the heart of the metaphysical question and which Hegel calls “the absolute,” is according to Hegel “the universe as the whole” and that this is simply equivalent with nature.⁴² This formulation, however, is very far from Hegel's own thoughts. The question arises as to why spirit should mean to Hegel the highest degree of organization of the ‘organic powers within nature’ and not, as Hegel puts it himself, of the *Idee*, i.e. the ‘form’ or the ‘type’ of being. Beiser irretrievably locates the knowing subject ‘only in the organic nature,’ not in ‘the world,’ i.e. the human world as well as the world of thought. Such theory of knowledge that places the conscious being only ‘in nature’ corresponds to a mystical animalization of consciousness. This constrained naturalization holds *ab initio* an indefensible presupposition: it does not identify the ‘noumenal’ in the realm of pure thought, nor in the social realm, but in the naked animality. The imagined bearer of the obscuring ‘powers within nature’ becomes itself an indeterminate entity working somehow ‘in’ the things.

Hegel, on his part, criticized in *Phenomenology of Spirit* in *Observing Reason* the mystical use of the category *Kraft* as a rather problematic metaphysical construction which is from its essence not a purely natural ‘given.’ For Hegel, the search for powers in nature as well as the very assumption of such powers is an activity of reason, which determines these powers according to its own conceptual schema, to its own power, the power of reason. For Hegel, spirit is not simply a product of nature, because nature, which is finite, temporal and mortal, cannot go beyond the limits of itself and produce something like spirit, which is infinite in its essence. In fact, Hegel argues that spirit and nature are both products of the *Idee*, which ‘posits’ itself and ‘returns’ to itself. Hegel does not reduce spirit only to the ‘powers within nature,’ because he believes that spirit is free in a way that nature is not. Hegel

³⁹ Cf. BEISER. *German Idealism*, p. 2.

⁴⁰ BEISER. *German Idealism*, p. 5.

⁴¹ BEISER. *German Idealism*, p. 2.

⁴² BEISER. Introduction, p. 8.

designates the belief that takes the principle of *Geist* to be some kind of natural force as the *Naturreligion* that identifies the divine somehow with the natural.⁴³ He criticizes that since the 'immediate' natural religion still does not acknowledge that the spiritual implies a self-aware subjectivity, it does not reach a true concept of freedom, but only a pantheistic one. Given Hegel's own terms, Beiser's interpretation – and generally, the whole conception of the naturalism about the mental – is more likely to correspond to the belief of *Naturreligion* than to Hegel's genuine view. Beiser maintains quite rightly that Hegel himself criticized Schelling's idea of the absolute as "excessive naturalism" that underestimates "the realm of spirit that consists in society, the state, and history."⁴⁴

Beiser has noticed the need to revise and moderate his view, as he attacked Hegel's scholarship for letting Hegel's thoughts "appear more respectable to contemporary analytic philosophy."⁴⁵ Beiser could have in mind, for example, Westphal, who describes the key theses of Hegel's epistemology as "fallibilism, pragmatism and non-foundationalism,"⁴⁶ using distinctly and exclusively a set of contemporary terms and almost none of Hegel's original expressions. Westphal, whose view will be presented in the next section, wrongly believes that Hegel's ideas are valuable *just because* they can be completely found in contemporary theory of knowledge. At some point, Beiser himself stopped speaking of Hegel's naturalism and began criticizing scholars for flattening Hegel's claims with non-hermeneutical methods.⁴⁷ He came to the remarkable conclusion that "the predominant concern of Anglophone scholarship on German idealism has been to emasculate, domesticate and sanitize it, to make it weak, safe and clean for home consumption."⁴⁸ The significance of Beiser's position consists in the element of its self-critique and in its upholding of hermeneutic effort in the inquiry. Beiser, however, indirectly attacks his own position,

⁴³ In Hegel's **Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion**, in the section "A. Immediate Religion, or Nature Religion," pp. 209–223; HEGEL. **Werke in 20 Bänden**, vol. 16, pp. 259–278. In order not to confuse the terms, Hegel stresses that the unreasonable "nature religion" should not be mixed up with Rousseau's or Kant's enlightened idea of intellectual *Vernunftreligion*, which was also called "natural religion."

⁴⁴ BEISER. **German Idealism**, pp. 9f.

⁴⁵ BEISER. **German Idealism**, p. 508.

⁴⁶ WESTPHAL. **Hegel's Epistemology**, p. 51.

⁴⁷ In Beiser's essay: *Dark Days: Anglophone Scholarship since the 1960s*. In: Hammer E. (Ed.). **German Idealism, Contemporary Perspectives**. London: Routledge, 2007, pp. 70–90. Still, when Beiser comes again to speak of Hegel's non-mechanical paradigm of the organic nature, he offers a rather Schellingian model, according to which "the mental realm is only the highest degree of organization and development of the organic powers of nature; the mental and physical differ only in degree rather than kind: the mental is the invisible form of the physical, the physical the visible form of the mental" (BEISER. *Dark Days*, p. 83). Schelling's idea of nature was indeed decisive for Hegel, but mostly to the extent that Hegel argues also 'against' it.

⁴⁸ BEISER. *Dark Days*, p. 70.

because he himself does not provide the reader with any hermeneutic investigation that deals with Hegel's original texts. Although he recognizes the problem of the "non-metaphysical"⁴⁹ interpretation of Hegel as responsible for 'dark days,' he does not associate it explicitly with the problem of attributing naturalism to Hegel.

5.2. *The "biological needs" of self-consciousness as a proof that thought presupposes nature (Westphal)*

Westphal believes that "Hegel's naturalistic account of thought"⁵⁰ is to be found in Hegel's discussion on desire in the chapter *Self-Consciousness* in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. According to Westphal, Hegel claims that the condition for the existence of self-consciousness is a 'law-like natural structure,' because

any world in which we human beings can be self-conscious is one that has a natural structure unto itself that provides us with at least a minimum necessary degree of regularity and variety among the contents of our sensations.⁵¹

Westphal elaborates his thesis and claims that:

Naturalist elements appear in Hegel's epistemology in his theses that biological needs (one root of consciousness) involve elementary classification of objects, that the contents of conscious awareness derive from a public world, and that classificatory thought presupposes natural structures in the world.⁵²

Even though one can indeed agree with the premise that self-consciousness is capable of 'classifying' objects of desire in the shared outerworld, several objections to this argument as a whole arise.

To begin with, Hegel himself does not speak of "biological needs" (*biologische Bedürfnisse*), at least not in the context of self-consciousness. He speaks of *Begierde*, which means "desire", and which Westphal falsely translates as "need" (*Bedürfnis*). Desire is for Hegel not simply biological, but like volition, an intentional act of a self-conscious being.

⁴⁹ This term was coined by Klaus Hartmann in his essay: HARTMANN, K. Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View. In: MacIntyre, A. (Ed.). *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1972.

⁵⁰ WESTPHAL, K. *Hegel's Epistemological Realism: A Study of the Aim and Method of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989, p. 160.

⁵¹ WESTPHAL. *Hegel's Epistemology*, pp. 70f.

⁵² WESTPHAL. *Hegel's Epistemology*, p. 52.

Even if it is true that Hegel refers to the desire of self-consciousness as directed towards objects of consumption, Westphal ignores the fact that Hegel clearly says that self-consciousness attains true satisfaction of its “desire” only by another self-conscious being, not just by a natural object.⁵³ For Hegel, self-consciousness reaches satisfaction by *Anerkennen*, the ‘act of mutual recognition,’ not by “classifying,”⁵⁴ the translation that Westphal seems to prefer for *Anerkennen*. To claim that consciousness consumes biological objects in order to physically exist in the living world is to show only one side of the coin, while hiding the other. The other side of this coin, which Hegel also highlights, if not even more strongly, is to claim that consciousness consumes other kinds of ‘objects,’ namely self-conscious beings. It belongs to the heart of the Hegelian idea of self-consciousness that it needs another self-consciousness in order to become truly self-conscious and so to reach its fully developed concept. Westphal insists on Hegel’s “naturalism” because he believes that to acknowledge any interaction between nature and consciousness already means to be a naturalist. Yet it is not clear why such a premise should be an adequate interpretation of Hegel’s philosophical intentions.

In fact, the problem with Westphal’s reading is that Westphal himself also confirms that self-consciousness ought not to be identified with a “biological organism”⁵⁵ and that “Hegel argues that our capacity for classificatory thought is not merely a natural phenomenon.”⁵⁶ He acknowledges that Hegel’s idea of absolute spirit corresponds to the “social whole” and the “human community.”⁵⁷ But at the same time, he ignores the hard problem of Hegelian epistemology: the question of how to justify the intellectual possibility of an unconditioned point of view that enables true self-knowledge. In Westphal’s view, spirit remains overall “within its natural setting”⁵⁸ and always presupposes a “natural environment.”⁵⁹

Westphal’s naturalist reading may seem to attain confirmation from the following sentence in Hegel’s “Philosophy of Spirit:” “From our point of view Mind has for its

⁵³ Cf. HEGEL, G.W.F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. Miller, V. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977, p. 110; HEGEL. *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 3, p. 144.

⁵⁴ Cf. HEGEL. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 112; HEGEL. *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 3, p. 147.

⁵⁵ WESTPHAL. *Hegel’s Epistemological Realism*, p. 161.

⁵⁶ WESTPHAL. *Hegel’s Epistemology*, p. 63.

⁵⁷ WESTPHAL. *Hegel’s Epistemology*, p. 63.

⁵⁸ WESTPHAL. *Hegel’s Epistemology*, p. 63.

⁵⁹ WESTPHAL. *Hegel’s Epistemology*, p. 59.

presupposition Nature.”⁶⁰ For Hegel, however, it would be only a common-sense view to think that mind needs nature in order to be, and that hence nature is more ‘important’ than nature and comes ‘before’ it. Only naive realism grasps nature as objectively and totally different from the mind and totally independent of it. Hegel’s theory of *Reflexion* at the beginning of the *Logic of Essence*, maintains the operative category of ‘presupposition’ (*Voraussetzung*) does not articulate in any way that the ‘presupposed’ (*Vorausgesetzte*) is a casual ‘reason’ for that which presupposes it (*Voraussetzende*). On the contrary, for Hegel, the presupposed is logically subordinate, an abstract essence whose content is less determined. In our case, this means concretely that nature is not the logical reason for spirit, but an entity less determined. Hegel’s sentence, thus, does not come to express the primacy of nature over spirit, but the opposite: only for us, the cognitive individual subjects, it seems that nature is nothing but a given reality. Furthermore, by examining Hegel’s words closely, we find that in the original not only the word “presupposition” is italicized, but also the words “nature” and “from our point of view.”⁶¹ William Wallace has dropped from the translation that which makes the significant difference: the function of highlighting “*from our point of view*”, which says in the original ‘for us’ (*für uns*), is to indicate the state of mind that is *still subjective and insufficient*. Hegel stresses the supremacy of spirit over nature in the *Encyclopaedia Logic* when he claims that “nature is not just something fixed and complete on its own account, which could therefore subsist even without spirit; rather, it is only in spirit that nature attains to its goal and its truth.”⁶²

Westphal’s final verdict on Hegel’s *Psychology*, namely that “Hegel’s philosophical psychology is deeply naturalist,”⁶³ is consistent with his own naturalistic view, but it is perplexing because Hegel’s *Psychology* is located in *Philosophy of Spirit*, not *Philosophy of Nature*, and it explicitly treats ‘spirit as spirit,’ and not as ‘natural soul.’ The latter is conceived only as spirit’s initial default ‘natural moment’ which Hegel discusses in his *Anthropology*, not *Psychology*.

⁶⁰ HEGEL, G.W.F. **Philosophy of Mind. Translated from the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences with Five Introductory Essays.** Trans. Wallace, W. New York, NY: Cosimo, Inc, 2008, p. 6, §381; HEGEL. **Werke in 20 Bänden**, vol. 10, p. 17.

⁶¹ HEGEL. **Werke in 20 Bänden**, vol. 10, p. 17. Michael Inwood has revised Wallace’s translation and improved it: “*For us* mind has *nature* as its *presupposition*” (HEGEL, G.W.F. **Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind, with Zusätze.** Trans. Wallace, W. and Miller, A.V. Revised by Inwood, M.J. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 9, §381).

⁶² HEGEL, G.W.F. **The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part 1**, p. 153, §96, Addition; HEGEL. **Werke in 20 Bänden**, vol. 8, p. 204.

⁶³ WESTPHAL. **Hegel’s Epistemology**, p. 55.

Pinkard's reading stresses the same natural factor in the embodiment of the human knowing subject, yet with different arguments. In what follows I shall demonstrate Pinkard's reasons for reading Hegel's spirit through a naturalistic lens.

5.3. "Disenchanted" naturalism: the natural freedom of natural mind (Pinkard)

Pinkard declares in Hegel's name that: "We are embodied agents, bound by the limits of our organic nature and always working within a particular, bounded social space."⁶⁴ If this were Hegel's main thought regarding spirit or science, he could indeed have been considered as ascribing to a skeptical form of naturalism about the mental. However, Pinkard presents more concrete arguments in favor of Hegel's naturalism.

(1) In a quite surprising manner, Pinkard explains Hegel's alleged view concerning the natural character of human consciousness with a 'neuroscientific' anecdote:

The human agent, 'by virtue of certain biological characteristics having to do with its brain and its nervous systems' (among other things), actualizes something that is already in play in animal life but that, as put to work in that way, becomes fundamentally different from it.⁶⁵

The question arises, however, as to whether the text in apostrophes is also claimed by Hegel. Even if one agrees with the assumption that human life, grasped as spirit life, is in Hegel 'fundamentally different' from animal life, Pinkard's own explanation for the difference is 'biological' in its essence and based on the 'particularity' of the 'human brain.' The phrase "by virtue of" suggests a kind of causality that is rather in question. Pinkard locates the anthropological difference at the natural instead of the cognitive level. He does not emphasize that the capacity of thinking is the significant factor in the constitution of human self-consciousness. He appears to speak of animals and people, but in fact refers to the zoological characteristics of animals, believing that "Hegel holds that human agents, by virtue of thinking of themselves as animals, thereby become special animals, namely, self-interpreting ones."⁶⁶ Pinkard does not account for his own 'assimilationism' dressed up as 'differentialism.' In a contradictory manner, he actually endorses a view that relapses into strong naturalism *à la* Beiser: "Human subjectivity emerges as a kind of reflexive

⁶⁴ PINKARD. *Hegel's Naturalism*, pp. 104f.

⁶⁵ PINKARD. *Hegel's Naturalism*, p. 48 (my apostrophes).

⁶⁶ PINKARD. *Hegel's Naturalism*, p. 18.

complication of this kind of organic, animal self-relation, not as something radically other than animal life.”⁶⁷ In this, Pinkard is not alone. A precedent was set by Willem DeVries who claimed that Hegel “saw man as arising out of and continuous with nature and capable of being understood only in this natural context.”⁶⁸ But does Hegel really hold that man arises ‘only’ in a natural context? In Hegel’s *Preliminary Conception* of logic in the *Encyclopaedia* we find the following thought: “Insofar as he is spirit, man is not a natural being.”⁶⁹ Likewise, at the outset of the *Philosophy of Spirit* we learn that spirit: “does not emerge in a natural manner from nature. [...] this emergence is not in the flesh but spiritual, it is not to be understood as a natural emergence but as a development of the concept.”⁷⁰ After the transition from nature to spirit, spirit does not remain natural in its essence and what comes back to itself is not nature, but rather the spirit or the *Idee*. Hegel explicitly says that at some point in the transition from nature to spirit “nature has vanished” and is only *aufgehoben* in spirit.⁷¹ In Pinkard’s interpretation, Hegel’s philosophy of spirit as a whole would seem to have evaporated.

Pinkard’s epistemological naturalism corresponds to the assimilationist cognitive-ethologic approach which we have explicated before. It misses a critical Hegelian argument in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, according to which the intelligence of individuals is rather, as Stekeler articulates it, an “effect of the collectively passed on general forms of human life.”⁷² Such tradition-making, i.e. passing-on-praxis, is not done by a single brain of an individual, no matter how developed, but by a concepts-sharing community, which is a universal transsubjective being. The evolution of the individual brains has a rather biological explanation: they evolve for the sake of species longevity.⁷³

⁶⁷ PINKARD. *Hegel’s Naturalism*, p. 30.

⁶⁸ DEVRIES, *Hegel’s Theory of Mental Activity*, p. xii.

⁶⁹ HEGEL. *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part 1*, p. 63, §24, Addition 3; HEGEL. *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 8, p. 90.

⁷⁰ HEGEL. *Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind, with Zusätze*, p. 15, §381, *Zusatz*; HEGEL. *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 10, p. 25.

⁷¹ HEGEL. *Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind, with Zusätze*, p. 9, §381; HEGEL. *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 10, p. 17.

⁷² STEKELER, P. *Hegel’s Phenomenologie des Geistes: Ein dialogischer Kommentar*. Hamburg: Meiner, 2014, p. 38: “Effekt gemeinsam tradierter allgemeiner Formen menschlichen Lebens.”

⁷³ STEKELER. *Hegel’s Phenomenologie des Geistes*, pp. 37f: “Zentral und fundamental ist dabei Hegels Kritik an der bis heute üblichen ‘empiristischen’ und ‘individualistischen’ Auffassung, die Intelligenz des Einzelnen und die geistige Welt überhaupt würde einfach hervorgebracht durch das Verhalten und oder die Gehirne der einzelnen Menschen, wie sie sich im Laufe der Evolution nach den aus der Biologie bekannten Weisen zum Zweck des Überlebens der Gattung herausgebildet hatte.”

(2) To further prove that Hegel banishes all “nonnatural powers”, Pinkard suggests that Hegel refutes a “dualist account of freedom as involving nonnatural powers”⁷⁴ by referring to Hegel’s words on ‘law-like freedom.’ “We have said that *freedom* is to be asserted as the basic essence of spirit, the freedom *from* and *in* the natural, which, however, must not be taken as arbitrary choice (*Willkür*) but rather as law-like freedom.”⁷⁵ Although Hegel clearly argues that freedom belongs to the essence of spirit and is free from the natural, Pinkard still presumes that the idea of the law-likeness of freedom, the idea of law in general, belongs only to the domain of nature and somehow ‘refutes’ the nonnatural element. Hegel criticizes this view in the chapter *Observing Reason*, where he argues that law (*Gesetz*) in general, hence also natural law, is a product of spirit’s own act of ‘positing’ (*Setzung*), of thinking about the various forms of being and formulating the relations between them. Insofar as the spirit ‘posits’ the laws, it finds, validates and formulates them. ‘Legislation’ (*Gesetzgebung*) is thus an act executed and altered by the spirit, not by nature. When the spirit looks for laws of nature and articulates them, it actually deals with itself and articulates something very fundamental about itself. The laws Hegel has in mind include social laws (norms), state laws (legislation) and divine laws (commands). They all stem from a free subject or a community of subjects, and they are all brought forth by the faculty of ‘reason.’ As such, they are grasped as a self-conscious process of collective self-determination. Therefore, contrary to the common sense view, Hegel does not hold that the concept of ‘law-like freedom’ is a *contradictio in adjecto*.

(3) Pinkard also attempts to prove Hegel’s naturalism by contraposition, arguing that Hegel is not a spiritualist, for he “does not hold that natural, material objects are (to use an admittedly slippery term) reducible in any kind of way to mental or spiritual objects.”⁷⁶ Even if one agrees with Pinkard that Hegel is certainly not a mad *Jenseits*-spiritualist who imagines that all is spirit, objections to Pinkard’s definition can be raised. Firstly, not everyone who is not a proper spiritualist is automatically a naturalist. To prove naturalism reliably, one should rather prove that all the mental or spiritual objects are effectively reducible to natural objects. One cannot only prove that the opposite does not occur. Secondly, and more significantly, in the chapter *Sensation in Anthropology*, Hegel shows that just as the soul enacts the natural

⁷⁴ PINKARD. *Hegel’s Naturalism*, p. 30.

⁷⁵ PINKARD. *Hegel’s Naturalism*, p. 43 note 62. This citation stems according to Pinkard, who translated it himself, from “Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel et al., **Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Geistes: Berlin 1827/1828** (Vorlesungen / Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel; Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1994), xxxviii, 321 pp., p. 19.”

⁷⁶ PINKARD. *Hegel’s Naturalism*, p. 38, note 28.

objects by “sensing” (*empfinden*) them, i.e. by making them into an intelligible part of itself, to an ‘ideality’ within the soul, the soul also externalizes itself into the outer nature in order to become visible and so to be “found” (*gefunden*). Hegel interprets certain corporal phenomena as supervening on spirit’s motions: the spirit embodies itself through mimic, gesture, blushing, laughing and crying, and in this way becomes perceptible for another sensing soul. In both cases, in the internalization and the externalization, the soul itself is the actualizing agent, not nature.

(4) Finally, Pinkard claims that Hegel is a naturalist because he acknowledges the existence of soul in animals, in contrast to what Pinkard regards as the anti-naturalist religions which purportedly deny soul in animals: “Hegel divides animals from people not on the religious ground that animals do not have souls – on Hegel's account, they do have souls – but on the ground that they cannot *think*, that is, cannot entertain reasons as reasons.”⁷⁷ It is not clear, however, what exactly the ‘religious ground that animals do not have soul’ is. Which religion does Pinkard mean? Branches of Christianity may differ over whether the soul of animals is immortal: Baptists doubt it, as does the Church of Christ, and some Catholics negate it.⁷⁸ But which religion in the world deprives animals of having a soul at all? Pinkard apparently relies on the *Preface to the Second Edition of the Encyclopaedia*, where Hegel deals with the issue. Hegel, however, writes there:

It is *thinking* that first makes the soul – with which the lower animals are endowed too – into spirit; and philosophy is only a consciousness concerning [...] spirit [...] which distinguishes it from the lower animals, and makes it capable of religion.⁷⁹

Also in the second paragraph in the *Encyclopaedia* we read that one ought not to forget that due to thinking “only man is capable of religion, and that the lower animals have no religion.”⁸⁰ In both cases Hegel speaks of *Tier*, ‘animal,’ not exactly ‘lower animals’ – a translation which rather confirms the vague prejudice that man ‘is’ animal, only a ‘higher’ one, and the other ‘animals’ are from their nature just ‘lower animals.’ Pinkard’s interpretation conveys therefore the impression that the attribute ‘naturalism’ is used against

⁷⁷ PINKARD. *Hegel's Naturalism*, p. 44 note 72.

⁷⁸ <http://do-animals-have-souls.info/organised-religions.html>.

⁷⁹ HEGEL. *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part 1*, p. 12.

⁸⁰ HEGEL. *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part 1*, p. 25.

religion in general, while it is not evident that Hegel would adopt this line of thought. What Hegel originally claims is not generally hostile to religion.

Out of the discourse of naturalism about the mental, there emerges a further reading that interprets the social-habitual consciousness as the naturalistic side of Hegel's collective spirit: the view of social naturalism.

5.4. *Social naturalism (Testa)*

Italo Testa stands in the recent tradition of naturalistic readings of Hegel as he convincingly refutes any “physicalist, reductionist or eliminativist” naturalism in Hegel's system,⁸¹ while simultaneously establishing a naturalistic thesis about Hegel's “epistemological realism:” “This thesis could be called ‘Hegel's naturalism:’ the idea that there is one single reality – living reality – and different levels of description of it.”⁸² On the surface, this definition may sound plausible. However, Testa argues that Hegel holds an ‘explicit’ epistemological position, namely a “natural theory of mind,”⁸³ that is expressed in the sentence: “Spirit, *for us*, has *Nature* as its *presupposition*.”⁸⁴ Testa's goal is to look for the sense in which this ‘natural theory of mind’ can be correctly related to the “social space.”⁸⁵ Based only on two appearances of the term ‘second nature’ in paragraphs 4 and 151 in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Testa identifies in Hegel what he labels “social naturalism,”⁸⁶ a form of McDowellian “second-natural naturalism.”⁸⁷ Testa declares that social life in the form of the “social and institutional bodies” ‘is’ the ‘second nature’ of humans, because “the institutions of social life are extensions and objectifications of human nature and of individual mind.”⁸⁸

Looking carefully at Hegel's words in the paragraphs which Testa left without a commentary, we actually find that in both paragraphs Hegel says “*as a second nature*” (*als*

⁸¹ TESTA, I. Hegel's Naturalism or Soul and Body in the *Encyclopaedia*. In: Stern, D.S. (Ed.). **Essays on Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit**. New York, NY: SUNY Press, 2013, p. 35.

⁸² TESTA. Hegel's Naturalism, pp. 23f.

⁸³ TESTA. Hegel's Naturalism, p. 30.

⁸⁴ TESTA. Hegel's Naturalism, p. 21.

⁸⁵ TESTA. Hegel's Naturalism, p. 31.

⁸⁶ TESTA. Hegel's Naturalism, p. 31.

⁸⁷ TESTA. Hegel's Naturalism, p. 28. What follows here is not designed to be a refutation of ‘second-natural naturalism,’ as developed by McDowell in *World and Mind*, but only of the evidence given by Testa for its existence in Hegel.

⁸⁸ TESTA. Hegel's Naturalism, p. 35.

eine zweite Natur), not “is a second nature.”⁸⁹ This difference may appear to be hair-splitting, but the question arises as to what precisely Hegel compares with “second nature” and why. As such, consideration of the context in which this term appears is appropriate.

In paragraph 4, it is evident that the object of Hegel's analysis is the idea of “right” (*Recht*), not society. He clearly grounds this idea in the spiritual realm and in the free will, not in nature. His claim is that, by producing the realm of right, the spirit produces its own world which, while like a second nature in some respect, is actually not nature, but culture. Nature develops by itself, but culture requires effort and a process of learning. Hegel's conception here is set in an analogy with nature as that which is which is ‘produced’ (*hervorgebracht*), as *natura naturata*, not *natura naturans*.

In paragraph 151, Hegel argues that the ethical habit, *das Sittliche*, appears ‘as’ a second nature, only if it is taken to be identical with what ‘individuals simply do,’ how they are without the effort to change. Again, he does not define the ethical realm itself as natural in any sense. In fact, by this Hegel shows that he is aware of the Aristotelian origin of the concept of “second nature”. Whereas Testa uses the term “second nature” in quite a trivial manner and even literally, Hegel, like Aristotle, does not mean nature or even the social realm, but a property an individual cannot easily change. Furthermore, in paragraph 146 Hegel argues that the individual subjects believe that the valid ethical laws possess even ‘more authority’ than the natural constraints. Here we find the analogy with nature as a ‘mighty power,’ which is experienced by the individual subjects ‘as if’ it were ultimately independent and self-determined. For Hegel, to say that nature is really independent is wrong, because nature is conceptually formed in contrast to the independent spirit. This would be as wrong as saying that social realities must be considered as unalterable givens.

Testa, who neither elaborates on McDowell's second-natural naturalism, nor refers to the Aristotelian origin, ignores that Hegel also deals with the question of ‘habit’ as ‘second nature’ from the perspective of the *Philosophy of Spirit*, especially in the *Anthropology* in paragraphs 409–10. In these paragraphs, the mechanism of habit is viewed as ‘one moment’ in the life of the ‘practicing spirit,’ namely the ‘self-feeling subjective spirit.’ But undoubtedly this is only one layer in the concept of spirit, namely the initial still-unconscious part. In this moment, the idea of spirit is intentionally treated in the ‘immediate form,’ in which it appears to the individuals, not to the ‘absolute spirit,’ and hence not as it is truly ‘in and for itself.’

⁸⁹ My emphasis.

Testa would seem to be aware of Hegel's philosophy of spirit 'as a whole' and hence of the problem of concentrating exclusively on parts of the subjective spirit, e.g. on the idea of second nature, when he says: "If the Hegelian philosophy of Spirit reflects such an approach – some form of methodological and ontological holism – then we cannot claim to have dealt with the mind-body question adequately if we have concentrated exclusively on subjective Spirit."⁹⁰ However, while fully reducing the Hegelian conception of the institutionalizing 'objective spirit,' let alone the sphere of 'absolute spirit,' to a programmatic naturalization of social habituation, Testa does not draw the full consequences from his own correct restriction.

After considering the various naturalistic readings, doubts arise about the actual content of Hegel's concept of nature. We thus turn to the presentation of his concept of nature, in order to reconstruct the core issues and to show them as a possible response to naturalism.

6. *Hegel's concept of nature as one of the self-manifestations of 'the idea'*

At the outset of *Philosophy of Nature* Hegel uses the term *Idee*, 'idea,' to determine nature: nature is the idea 'in the form of *otherness*,' the seemingly paradoxical idea that is 'outside' itself, a pure 'externality.' As a form of the idea, 'nature,' like spirit, functions in Hegel's organization of the sciences as a universal metacategory. Hegel's conception of nature as 'idea' may immediately sound as going against the basic tenet that nature is 'not' an idea, but rather the whole of matter – a plenitude of atoms or molecules or infinite amount of things yet to be discovered. A consequence of this tenet is the assumed indeterminacy of nature, the problem of guaranteeing any a priori structure to the multifaceted nature. Being aware of this problem, Hegel designates the concept of nature as being in 'contradiction' with nature's being, an 'unresolved contradiction.' Concerning the extension of the term 'nature,' after reading the *Philosophy of Nature* we understand that Hegel regards the natural realm, unlike the spiritual, as finite. The systematic transition from the category of nature to that of spirit is parallel to the transition within the last part of the logic, 'the idea,' from the idea of 'life' to that of 'recognition.'

While explicating his view of nature, Hegel articulates a non-dualistic distinction between nature and spirit: the 'form of the idea' of nature is different from the form of the idea of spirit, insofar as nature does not hold in itself its own *Begriff* – the concept of itself as

⁹⁰ TESTA. Hegel's Naturalism, p. 16.

'idea.' An animal cannot be self-conscious in the way human spirit can be. Nature is for Hegel only 'one' finite realization of the idea, not the only one. Surely, one can object to the suggested priority of spirit over nature and claim that nature produces precious goods like life. Hegel, who does not hold an 'anti-nature' plea, claims the same, only that he determines the spirit and its products, like works of art, as even *livelier*, containing "a higher kind of life [...] than the natural form."⁹¹ It is of the spirit, not of nature, that Hegel says that it is "the truth and the final goal of Nature and the genuine actuality of the Idea."⁹²

The interrelation between nature and spirit has a teleological meaning: "Spirit, just because it is the goal of Nature, is *prior* to it."⁹³ One has to think of this relation in logical terms, not chronological: since spirit is nature's 'end,' i.e. its 'final purpose' (*Endzweck*), it can be set by the same token as the 'initial reason' for nature's being. Hegel's radical position is that spirit has ontological priority over nature because spirit 'posits' nature, i.e. spirit is that which 'thinks' nature and relates to it conceptually. In Hegel's system, both the organic nature and the idea of spirit exemplify paradigms of the infinite teleology and hence of the *Idee*, in contrast to the finite teleology of mere objectivity. In contrast to the domesticating reading of Hegel, which admits only the convenient epistemological priority of spirit over nature,⁹⁴ Hegel's insight in *Science of Logic* is rather that spirit is both *ratio cognoscendi* and *ratio essendi* of nature, for nature is not just an immediate given. The ontological priority of the spirit is not expressed in terms of 'pure being' or 'abstract essence,' but of the 'concept.' Precisely for this reason, Hegel argues that the "substance" should be also construed as 'subject.' The naturalistic approach conceals spirit's dialectical relationship with nature, which is not dependent or needy. Contrary to ontological naturalism, Hegel takes nature to be only finite realization of the idea, not the whole one.

Even though Hegel conceives, like the naturalist, the soul, the first moment of spirit, as *Naturgeist*, as the life of the physical soul and thereby as part of the general natural life, he still rejects the understanding of spirit's activity 'only' in the context of natural life.⁹⁵ Spirit, which only has a vague clue of itself in nature and does not really find itself in it, clearly goes

⁹¹ HEGEL. *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature (1830)*, p. 18, §248, Remark; HEGEL. *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 9, pp. 28f, §248. Hegel writes: "*eine höhere Lebendigkeit ... als die natürliche Form.*"

⁹² HEGEL. *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature (1830)*, p. 24, §251; HEGEL. *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 9, p. 36, §251.

⁹³ HEGEL. *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature (1830)*, p. 444, §376, Addition; HEGEL. *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 9, p. 538, §376, *Zusatz*.

⁹⁴ Cf. PAPAZOGLU, *Hegel and Naturalism*, p. 33.

⁹⁵ HEGEL. *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 10, p. 53 (§392), *Zusatz*.

beyond mere natural life and becomes independent. This means that the spirit attains its own 'self' and is *selbständig*, 'stands by itself', while ruling the universe – in the broadest sense – with its power of thought. Hegel's conclusion that "the general natural life" is "only a subordinated moment" in the spirit, that the "Mind is just this elevation above nature and physical modes,"⁹⁶ brings to distinctive expression the supremacy of spirit over nature, especially in the question of knowledge.

7. Hegel's possible response to naturalism

Hegel takes only 'one sphere' of the concept of spirit to be 'natural,' namely the 'initial moment' of its development, which is the beginning of knowing before consciousness turns to be self-consciousness and then spirit. The fully self-conscious spirit represents the scientific viewpoint, which is ready for the 'absolute knowledge,' conceptualized as 'pure science' or simply 'logic.' The initial *natürliches Bewusstsein*, 'natural consciousness,' 'begins' with a *natürliche Vorstellung*, a 'natural opinion' or a 'natural assumption.' Like *doxa*, *Vorstellung* means to Hegel a common belief held by an 'ordinary' consciousness, which just 'begins' its scientific education, its *Bildung*. This approach has a conceptual grounding: nature is 'our idea' for what is not yet conscious of itself 'as' idea. Therefore, naturalness in general, which Hegel regards as the 'otherness' or 'the negative' of the idea, designates to him only spirit's departure point in its cognitive evolution. Hegel formulates his observation regarding philosophical cognition as follows: as long as consciousness conceives itself only in terms of nature and not 'as' idea, it cannot 'go' beyond itself and eventually become *episteme*, conceived as true self-knowledge. Although consciousness has a natural-physical aspect, as a whole, it is not subjected to a biological structure, is not just a 'natural kind.' As Hegel argues: "Whatever is confined within the limits of natural life cannot by its own efforts go beyond its immediate existence; but it is driven beyond it by something else [...] Consciousness, however [...] is something that goes beyond limits, and [...] beyond itself."⁹⁷ In Hegel's *Encyclopaedia*, we find another clear response to the quasi-Kantian naturalistic

⁹⁶ HEGEL. *Philosophy of Mind*, p. 59, § 440.

⁹⁷ HEGEL. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 51 (§80); HEGEL. *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 3, p. 74.

claim about the alleged factuality of the human epistemological finitude, namely “that man is certainly finite and mortal on the side of his nature, but that he is infinite in cognition.”⁹⁸

Hegel's response to the naturalistic worry of a dualistic dichotomy between spirit and nature is that they are 'both' forms of the realized *Idee*, albeit distinguished ones. It is not the case that all is spirit, but rather that all phenomena of the real, both the natural and the spiritual, are related with each other stepwise and each one is related to the infinite idea qua its formation. One ought not to envisage Hegel's *Idee* as a 'mere idea,' *Vorstellung*, the picturing power of imagination that creates a representation of a particular object running through the mind, nor as *bloß Gedachtes*, a thought without a content, without reference to the 'real,' to the *wirklich*, i.e., a thought without an 'actual effect' on reality. Rather, the *Idee* is the most 'concrete' being: “the *adequate Notion*, that which is objectively *true*, or the *true as such*.”⁹⁹ Hegel's thought aims at reaching a conceptual unity in the sense of 'oneness' or 'being one and the same' by means of the very idea of absolute idea, where the 'conscious being' and the 'objective being' are united in their being. Nature and spirit are two distinct manifestations of the same self-identical idea, being in a unity which naturalism aspires to achieve as well with its 'monism of nature.' Per definition though, the naturalist fails to name the 'nonnatural' ingredient in this unity he seeks. Naturalism neglects to acknowledge the manifestation of the nonnatural being, which is *beyond or before nature* and is thus capable of grasping nature as a whole: being spirit.

8. Conclusion

Although Hegel's philosophy can be read as offering an ongoing multifaceted dialogue with diverse streams of naturalism, his own conception of nature and spirit is neither consistent with classical naturalism, nor with Quinean epistemological naturalism, nor with general naturalism about the mental. *An und für sich*, Hegel is not a naturalist, even though the forms of natural study were of interest to him. For Hegel, the different versions of naturalism are 'natural' in the sense of initial and common. The main problem Hegel detects in naturalism is that it wishes to perceive all beings 'im-mediately,' without the medium of *logos*, its conceptual framework that let us see every being 'as such' in the first place. For

⁹⁸ HEGEL. *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, p. 63, §24, Addition 3; HEGEL. *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 8, p. 90.

⁹⁹ HEGEL. *G.W.F. Science of Logic*. Trans. Miller, A.V. Atlantic Highlands. NJ: Humanities Press International, 1969, p. 755; HEGEL. *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 6, p. 462.

Hegel, scientific thinking, in contrast to the philosophically 'uneducated' thought, is what ought 'not' to consist in such de-conceptualizing element.

Obviously, and for a good reason, the endeavor to rehabilitate Hegel from being a nonnaturalist wishes to purify his name from being 'unscientific.' Yet, the naturalistic approach to philosophical texts naturally avoids rigorously scientific hermeneutical methods of interpreting, particularly from providing a critique of Hegel's original texts and from questioning the various translations.¹⁰⁰ In the nature of naturalism, and other ism-terms, lies the tendency to define one's school of thought by delimiting and stressing only one level of the being. Naturalism itself, however, is a free form of the idea, a possible way of human thinking, which therefore cannot be said 'without any doubt' to be conditioned necessarily by specific natural laws or any natural objects known to us. If we think it through to the end, the self-annihilating argument of naturalism about the mental is naturalism's 'own goal.'

Notwithstanding, the various kinds of current naturalism in Hegel research, in the so-called deflationary 'non-metaphysical' reading of Hegel, virtually embody the justified lasting attempt to read spirit in its unity with nature and thus continue to be a fair challenge in a genuine philosophical manner, an 'unresolved contradiction.' The value of the question of naturalism is that it leads us to look for the appropriate way to relate to the being, including nature. Finally, the human condition of sharing a self-aware spirit, not just a common nature, underlies and justifies the normative-ontological space of ethical principles, among them the environmental responsibility towards nature. This is an issue for another essay. The only way to correct naturalism's 'own goal' is to score another goal, beginning with gradually directing the intellectual sight from the natural to another horizon.

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¹⁰⁰ For further critique of the naturalistic 'post-metaphysical reading' of German idealism see: GARDNER, S. *The Limits of Naturalism and the Metaphysics of German Idealism*. In: Hammer, E. (Ed.). **German Idealism, Contemporary Perspectives**. London: Routledge, 2007, pp. 19–49.

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