

# Nature, spirit and second nature: Hegel and McDowell\*

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**ABSTRACT:** Both Hegel and McDowell make use of the expression ‘second nature’. Furthermore, each philosopher is concerned to connect talk of ‘second nature’ with a larger issue: that of the relation between nature and spirit. According to McDowell, being ‘reminded’ of the perfectly familiar phenomenon of second nature is to do the work of ‘deconstricting’ the conception of nature that bald naturalists operate with. Hegel, by contrast, works in the opposite direction. For Hegel, the phenomenon of second nature is to be understood in light of a prior characterization of the relation between nature and spirit, according to which spirit is the ‘truth of’ nature. This essay attempts to get into focus the difficulties (beginning from the surface grammar of the expressions ‘nature’, ‘second nature’, and ‘first nature’) that must be sorted out before we can properly understand how each philosopher connects the topic of second nature with the wider issue of how nature and spirit are related, and to provide a sketch of the philosophical issues that must be faced once we have the difficulties clearly in view. The philosophical difficulties faced by Hegel differ from those faced by McDowell, as reflects their difference in approach. Those faced by Hegel concern how precisely to spell out the conception of nature – such that ‘spirit is the truth of nature’ – in which his conception of second nature is embedded; those faced by McDowell concern how his ‘reminder’ about second nature is to be understood in the absence of something analogous to Hegel’s attempts to spell out a conception of nature.

**KEYWORDS:** Hegel, McDowell, second nature, naturalism.

John McDowell has, in various writings, recommended what he calls a ‘naturalism of second nature’. Such a naturalism, unlike a ‘bald naturalism’ that takes nature to be identical with what the natural sciences study, aspires to respect the *sui generis* character of the operations of spontaneity (or, to put it in Sellarsian terms, their placement in the ‘space of reasons’).<sup>1</sup> At the same time, it promises to save us from a ‘platonism’<sup>2</sup> that, in its effort to safeguard the *sui generis* character of spontaneity, threatens to extrude spontaneity from the realm of the natural

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<sup>1</sup> See McDOWELL, J. **Mind and World**. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1996, esp. Lecture V.

<sup>2</sup> McDowell writes ‘platonism’ with a lower-case ‘p’, as befits his wanting to capture the flavour of platonism in mathematics, not that of a view attributable to Plato. See McDOWELL, **Mind and World**, p. 77, n. 7.



(thereby rendering it, presumably, ‘supernatural’). Securing such a ‘naturalism of second nature’ or ‘liberal naturalism’ involves, McDowell hints, the ‘deconstruction’ of the concept ‘nature’ itself. This deconstruction is effected once we recognize the phenomenon of ‘second nature’. It ought to be a familiar thought, McDowell thinks, that we human beings get to be educated into a moral outlook in a manner that makes that moral outlook ‘second nature’ to us; and this becoming second nature to us of a moral outlook (in the optimal case, of ‘virtue’) is something that takes place in the ordinary maturation of a human animal. The way we are thus inducted into the space of reasons involves, as we might put it, nothing supernatural, since such induction consists in something’s becoming ‘second nature’ to us. Once we are reminded<sup>3</sup> of second nature, we will have restored to us a conception of nature that is suitably deconstructed.

Hegel, like McDowell, makes mention of ‘second nature’, and accords what for him falls under this label a significant place in his Philosophy of Spirit. This might be sufficient to motivate a comparative investigation of the use to which Hegel and McDowell, respectively, put what each of them calls ‘second nature’. Hegel’s system is, furthermore, centrally concerned with the relation between nature and spirit – and therein engages the wider question of how spontaneity is related to what is natural. Indeed, Hegel’s treatment of this relation has motivated a number of commentators to suspect that Hegel’s overall view of the nature–spirit relation is in some important sense akin to that captured by McDowell’s ‘naturalism of second nature’.<sup>4</sup>

Supposing we were to launch such a comparative investigation, then, it seems that we might choose to focus either on the more specific (i.e., their respective treatment of the notion of ‘second nature’ itself), or on the more general (i.e., their respective treatments of the nature–spirit relation and the aptness in the case of each philosopher of characterizing their overall view as some kind of naturalism). On the more specific level, we would see that the characterizations of ‘second nature’ that Hegel and McDowell give are fundamentally in harmony with each other. Each conceives of ‘second nature’ in terms of a kind of habituation that is exemplified in

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<sup>3</sup> When McDowell speaks of his invocation of second nature as a ‘reminder’, this is meant in a Wittgensteinian sense. See WITTGENSTEIN, L. **Philosophical Investigations**. Oxford: Blackwell, 1951, §127; cf. **Mind and World**, p. 95, where McDowell tells us that the ‘ism’ he advocates (at this point in the text given the label ‘naturalized platonism’, but earlier dubbed ‘naturalism of second nature’) “is not a label for a bit of constructive philosophy. The phrase serves only as shorthand for a ‘reminder’, an attempt to recall our thinking from running in grooves that make it look as if we need constructive philosophy.”

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. PINKARD, T. **Hegel’s Naturalism**. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

education or *Bildung*. Assessing to what extent their stance on the more general issue coincides would be more difficult. This, I want to suggest, is due to a fundamental difference in how each of Hegel and McDowell go about connecting the more specific with the more general issue. Namely, there is a difference in the relative priority that each ascribes to the more general issue (what is the nature–spirit relation?) as compared with the more specific issue (how is the phenomenon of ‘second nature’ to be understood?). Hegel’s approach involves first sorting out the general issue; McDowell begins from an appeal to ‘second nature’ and uses that to motivate a stance on the general issue. McDowell wants the work of ‘deconstructing’ the concept of nature to be performed by his reminder about second nature: it is being reminded of second nature that effects the deconstruction. Hegel, by contrast, embeds the notion of second nature within a framework that has already settled – prior to the elaboration he provides of the topic of second nature – the relationship between nature and spirit. Second nature is, for Hegel, an important manifestation of spiritedness; but he does not, as McDowell does, drawn upon it as a guide to the naturalness of spirit.

I will not attempt here to determine how we should understand the relation between Hegel’s overall stance on the general issue and that of McDowell. Nor will I get into the details of how to understand their respective conceptions of ‘second nature’. What I will attempt to do is preliminary to carrying out such tasks, and amounts to pointing out the location of some difficulties that need to be overcome before they can be embarked on. I will begin from a consideration of the grammar of the expressions ‘nature’, ‘first nature’, and ‘second nature’ (§1).<sup>5</sup> Attention to grammar will help us in different ways when it comes to McDowell’s texts, on the one hand, and Hegel’s, on the other. In the case of McDowell’s texts (which I examine in §2) there is work to be done to disentangle the surface grammar of these expressions as they appear in his texts. I aim to show that such disentanglement can be successfully carried out, and that we will then see more clearly the questions that remain over for McDowell’s invocation of second nature. In the case of Hegel’s employments of the expression ‘second nature’ (which I examine in §3) we will immediately recognize a uniform surface grammar across his texts and reported utterances. This surface uniformity masks, however, that Hegel’s way of treating the associated

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<sup>5</sup> ‘Grammar’ here in the ordinary, familiar sense, not in the special sense associated with the work of Wittgenstein.

concepts involves a philosophical effort to bridge a divide that the grammatical distinctions outlined in §1 bring out – namely between a conception of nature associated with one kind of grammatical behaviour (non-pluralizable, not admitting of the definite article) and another (pluralizable, admitting of the definite article). In §4 I examine further the conception of nature – avowedly Aristotelian in inspiration – that is operative both in Hegel’s framing of the wider issue (the nature–spirit relation) and in his elaboration of the notion of second nature, and indicate some of the complexities facing Hegel’s efforts in this area. I contrast this situation with that facing McDowell. Since for McDowell, unlike Hegel, it is by focusing on second nature that we get nature right (in McDowell’s terms, effectively ‘deconstricting’ a bald naturalist conception of nature), not the other way round, McDowell spares himself the complexities Hegel faces over elaborating a conception of nature prior to speaking of second nature. But this comes at the price of making it difficult to see how talk of ‘second nature’ is fitted to do the work of getting us the right conception of nature.

### 1. *Three grammatical behaviours*

Both Hegel and McDowell employ the expression ‘second nature’. Hegel employs it several times in Part III of his *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* and in his *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*. McDowell employs it several times in his *Mind and World* and in his roughly contemporaneous *Two Sorts of Naturalism*.<sup>6</sup>

Talk of ‘second nature’ is bound to suggest an implicit contrast with ‘first nature’, and both Hegel and McDowell find a use for this expression. Furthermore, both Hegel and McDowell are concerned to bring the notion of ‘second nature’ into contact with that of ‘nature’. McDowell explicitly relates his “reminder” to the task of “rectifying a constriction that the concept of nature

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<sup>6</sup> HEGEL, G. W. F. *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*. Dritter Teil: Die Philosophie des Geistes. In: **Werke**. Ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986, vol. 10 [hereafter, E]; HEGEL, G. W. F. *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*. In: **Werke**, vol. 7 [hereafter, PR]; McDOWELL, J. **Mind and World**; McDOWELL, J. *Two Sorts of Naturalism* [1995]. In: **Mind, Value, and Reality**. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998 [hereafter, TSN]. As will become apparent in §3, Hegel uses the expression both in published passages and in oral *Zusätze* as these are reported by his students.

is liable to undergo in our thinking.”<sup>7</sup> The deconstruction makes available what McDowell calls a “naturalism of second nature.”<sup>8</sup> For Hegel, too, it matters that his remarks about second nature relate back to a conception of what belongs to nature.

For McDowell, it is important that talk of second nature will allow him to say that “nature includes *second nature*,” or that “second nature is nature too.”<sup>9</sup> Or again, he tells us that “there is nothing against” bringing the “richer reality” that is revealed by second nature “under the rubric of nature too.”<sup>10</sup> It will matter, then, that second nature ‘is natural’ in a way that brings it under the rubric of nature, properly conceived (by contrast with the improper conception that drives bald naturalism). For Hegel, it will matter that ‘second nature’ can be related back to the conception of ‘nature’ that he had worked to elaborate in his *Philosophy of Nature* (as expounded in Part II of the *Encyclopaedia*). For him, too, it matters that what belongs to second nature ‘is natural’ in a sense that links up with nature, properly conceived.

I think that significant obstacles stand in the way of understanding the use that is being made of the notions of ‘second nature’ and ‘first nature’ in these texts, and the ostensible relation to that of ‘nature’ that the texts exploit, if we fail to get a grip on the grammatical behaviour of the expressions concerned. If we fail to get a grip on the grammar, it will remain obscure how it can be that second nature ‘is natural’ in an appropriate sense, or how second nature can be brought under the rubric of nature, properly conceived.

In order to get the grammatical issues gradually into focus, we can start by considering the grammatical behaviour of the word ‘nature’ itself. We can begin from two ways we use the word ‘nature’, in each of which the word exhibits a different grammatical behaviour. The distinction

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<sup>7</sup> McDOWELL, *Two Sorts of Naturalism*, p. 167. Cf. McDOWELL, *Mind and World*, p. 77: “If we can rethink our conception of nature so as to make room for spontaneity, even though we deny that spontaneity is capturable by the resources of bald naturalism, we shall by the same token be rethinking our conception of what it takes for a position to deserve to be called ‘naturalism’.”

<sup>8</sup> McDowell employs this phrase at *Mind and World*, pp. 91, 98, 110, 115, 178. Cf. talk at TSN, p. 194, of ‘the naturalism that makes play with second nature’.

<sup>9</sup> McDOWELL, *Mind and World*, p. xx; McDOWELL, J. On Pippin’s Postscript. In: *Having the World in View*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2009, p. 186.

<sup>10</sup> McDOWELL, *Two Sorts of Naturalism*, p. 192.

between these two grammatical behaviours can be thought of as akin, in a loose way, to the distinction between ‘mass nouns’ and ‘count nouns’.<sup>11</sup>

In the first usage, the word ‘nature’ ordinarily does not admit of the indefinite article.<sup>12</sup> Here we speak of ‘nature’, not of ‘a nature’. To employ the indefinite article here would carry with it the misleading implicature that one nature among others is being picked out.<sup>13</sup> Concomitantly, this usage of ‘nature’ does not ordinarily admit of pluralization. These features suggest that in such usage the behaviour of the word ‘nature’ is akin to that of a ‘mass noun’.

In the second usage, the word ‘nature’ admits of pluralization, and of the indefinite article. We speak of ‘the nature of  $\xi$ ’. This – ‘the’ nature of  $\xi$  – is ‘a’ nature (namely that nature which  $\xi$  has). It is a nature among others: the nature of  $\psi$ , the nature of  $\zeta$ , ... . These features suggest that in such usage the behaviour of the word ‘nature’ is akin to that of a ‘count noun’.

In using the word ‘nature’ as exhibiting the first grammatical behaviour, we are liable to think of it as picking out some sort of realm or domain to which things might or might not belong. An instance of such talk is when McDowell speaks of “the realm of law.”<sup>14</sup> Anything said to belong to such a realm is, just in virtue of thus belonging, said to be natural.

In using ‘nature’ as exhibiting the second grammatical behaviour, we are liable to think of it as picking out something like the nature of a thing – that, roughly, which characterizes the thing

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<sup>11</sup> I say ‘in a loose way’ since it is not clear that the distinction between the grammatical behaviour of mass nouns and that of count nouns is as clear-cut as it has often been taken to be, and because that distinction does not itself matter for my purposes. I am happy if the reader will concede that I am pointing up a contrast between the grammatical behaviours exhibited in usages specifically of the word ‘nature’ that she will recognize as familiar. For a classic discussion of the mass/count distinction, see QUINE, W. V. O. **Word and Object**. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2013. For a searching treatment of the difficulties that attend that distinction, see LAYCOCK, H. **Words without Objects: Semantics, Ontology, and Logic for Non-Singularity**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> It is sometimes said that mass nouns do not admit of articles, definite or indefinite. It is not clear whether mass nouns in English always exclude the definite article. In any case mass nouns do admit the definite article in (for instance) German. For our purposes here, we may note that German speakers (including, obviously, Hegel) speak of *die Natur*.

<sup>13</sup> I am borrowing ‘implicature’ from Paul Grice. See GRICE, P. Logic and Conversation. In: **Studies in the Way of Words**. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989, pp. 22–40. I am not attempting to use the term in any technical sense, but only for the easily appreciated core idea it picks out: that of what is taken to go along with what is being explicitly said, where ‘go along with’ need not involve logical entailment.

<sup>14</sup> McDOWELL, **Mind and World**, pp. 71ff. McDowell invents the phrase ‘realm of law’ as a label for what in Sellars contrasts with placement in the space of reasons (what, in Sellarsian language, admits of ‘empirical description’; see SELLARS, W. Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind. In: Feigl, H. and Scriven, M. (eds.), **Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science**. vol. 1. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956. §36). McDowell in later writings drops the phrase ‘realm of law’ in favour of ‘realm of natural-scientific intelligibility’; for our merely grammatical purposes, however, all that counts is the idea of a realm – no matter what the realm is a realm of.

as the kind of thing it is. (This corresponds to one, central, way Aristotle employs the word *phusis*, to mean ‘principle of change and stasis’.) Such a nature might or might not be part of nature; we might well speak of the nature of a divine (or otherwise supernatural) entity.

The connection I have pointed out between each grammatical behaviour and the kind of thing that usage of the word ‘nature’ as behaving thus is liable to make us think of is not, it is important to stress, inevitable. We are ordinarily led to associate the first grammatical behaviour with thinking of nature as a realm; we are ordinarily led to associate the second grammatical behaviour with thinking in terms of an Aristotelian-style principle of change and stasis. But this need not be so. I could think (although this would be innovative with respect to our ordinary ways of speaking) that there was more than one realm aptly called ‘nature’: I might think that there were multiple such realms (such natures). Kant, in a passage in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, suggests that there is, in just such a way, more than one nature: there is sensible nature and supersensible nature.<sup>15</sup> This is a departure from ordinary usage that might be compared to, for instance, the departure from ordinary usage involved in speaking of two worlds. It is a philosophical innovation to speak of there being two worlds (say, the phenomenal world and the noumenal world); its innovativeness is to be understood in light of the normal behaviour of the word ‘world’ as not pluralizable.

It is more difficult to imagine someone insisting that there was only one *phusis* that was somehow the nature of each and every individual thing, but perhaps the thought is not unintelligible. (Someone might think that the nature that Spinoza calls ‘God’ behaves in something like this way.)

There is a further grammatical behaviour to consider – one that is exhibited by the expression ‘second nature’. The expression ‘second nature’ can behave adverbially. This is, I think, the grammatical behaviour of the expression that is exhibited in its central usage. This is certainly true of its most widespread colloquial usage. Characteristically this usage is exhibited in expressions of the form ‘ $\phi$  is second nature to  $\alpha$ ’ or, perhaps more characteristically still, ‘ $\phi$  has

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<sup>15</sup> Kant writes, in the Deduction of the Principles of Pure Practical Reason: “This law is to furnish the sensible world, as a *sensible nature* (in what concerns rational beings), with the form of a world of the understanding, that is, of a *supersensible nature*, though without infringing upon the mechanism of the former.” (Ak. 5: 43) He goes on to align this contrast with one between ‘the *ectypal world (natura ectypa)*’ and ‘the *archetypal world (natura archetypa)*’ (loc. cit.).

become second nature to  $\alpha$ '. Derivative from this is a use of 'second nature' as a substantive expression, as when McDowell speaks of 'virtue' as 'a' second nature that one might possess; to say that virtue is the second nature that I possess amounts to saying that virtue is second nature to me. Similarly, Hegel speaks of habit as 'a second nature'. What is habitual is what has become second nature to one. And what has become second nature to one is one's second nature. This substantivized use of 'second nature' would seem to correspond to the second behaviour of 'nature' outlined above (that which is akin to the behaviour of 'count nouns'), and accordingly to admit of pluralization.<sup>16</sup> Various permutations of the question of how to connect this substantivized use of 'second nature' with uses of 'first nature' and 'nature' will be to the forefront in what follows.

## 2. McDowell's use of 'second nature'

I now want to look more closely at McDowell's texts.

McDowell's recuperation of the notion of 'second nature' from the writings of Aristotle draws on a context in which the behaviour of the expression is squarely the central adverbial one. The context is that of Aristotle's discussion of moral education, which is concerned with habituation into virtue – that is, virtue's becoming second nature to subjects of such education.

That McDowell claims to retrieve his notion of 'second nature' from Aristotle<sup>17</sup> might lead us to suppose the source of his use of the notion to be a passage in *Nicomachean Ethics* where Aristotle remarks that 'even habit is hard to change just because it is like nature [ $\tau\eta\ \phi\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\epsilon\iota\ \epsilon\acute{\omicron}\upsilon\kappa\epsilon\nu$ ]' (1152a30–33).<sup>18</sup> There is a traditional association of this passage with the topic of second nature, due to Latin translations of Aristotle's text that introduced the expression *altera*

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<sup>16</sup> For an example of repeated use of the expression 'second natures', see KUKLA, R.; RUETSCHKE, L. Contingent Natures and Virtuous Knowers: Could Epistemology Be 'Gendered'? *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 32, 2002, 389–418.

<sup>17</sup> McDOWELL, *Mind and World*, p. 84; Two Sorts of Naturalism, p. 184.

<sup>18</sup> Sarah Broadie appears to assume that this passage is McDowell's source, if we go by the Bekker numbers she provides in the following: "This is not his basic biological and psychological nature, but the 'second nature' (1152a30–33) into which he has been formed by upbringing and practice" (BROADIE, S. *Ethics with Aristotle*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 91).



*natura* at this juncture. This passage is not, however, McDowell's point of departure in his appeal to 'second nature'.

I think commentators have insufficiently appreciated that McDowell himself, in his appeal to second nature, is making reference to Myles Burnyeat's reading of Aristotle on moral education, and that this reading recovers the idea of 'second nature' from a different stretch of *Nicomachean Ethics* altogether.<sup>19</sup> McDowell explicitly draws on Burnyeat's reconstruction in two of his own essays on Aristotle's ethics, as well as referring to it in *Mind and World*.<sup>20</sup> Whereas commentaries on McDowell tend to look for a connection with the treatment of 'second nature' in the writings of Hans-Georg Gadamer, to which McDowell briefly alludes, McDowell's treatment owes far more to Burnyeat's reading of Aristotle on moral education than to anything Gadamer says.<sup>21</sup>

Burnyeat convincingly locates Aristotle's account as a response to the question with which Meno opens proceedings in Plato's eponymous dialogue: 'Can you tell me, Socrates—can virtue be taught [διδασκτὸν], or is it rather to be acquired by practice [ἄσκητόν]? Or is it neither to be practised nor to be learned but something that comes to men by nature [φύσει] or in some other way?' (*Meno*, 70a) Burnyeat effectively brings out that Aristotle's account rejects Meno's assumption that these options are exclusive, offering instead a story about moral education in which an intellectual grasp of virtue comes gradually to infuse dispositions, so as to become second nature to the subject of education.

Burnyeat reads the expression 'second nature' into Aristotle in the passage from *Nicomachean Ethics* (1147a21–22) that he translates as follows:

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<sup>19</sup> BURNYEAT, M. Aristotle on Learning to Be Good. In: Rorty, A. O. (ed.). *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

<sup>20</sup> McDOWELL, *Mind and World*, p. 84; Some Issues in Aristotle's Moral Psychology. In: **Mind, Value, and Reality**. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998; McDOWELL, J. Eudaimonism and Realism in Aristotle's Ethics. In: **The Engaged Intellect**. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> As a textual matter, the expression 'second nature' turns up repeatedly in Burnyeat's essay. Gadamer, in *Truth and Method*, speaks only once, and rather vaguely, of "our 'ethos'" having "become a second 'nature'" (GADAMER, H-G. **Truth and Method**. Trans. J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall. London/New York: Continuum, 2004. pp. 572–73).

Those who have learned a subject for the first time connect together the propositions in an orderly way, but do not yet know them; for the propositions need to become second nature to them [δεῖ γὰρ συμφυῆναι], and that takes time.<sup>22</sup>

(Where Burnyeat has ‘need to become second nature to them’, W. D. Ross has ‘has to become part of themselves’, and T. H. Irwin has ‘it must grow into them’. Burnyeat’s rendering is apt in bringing out the etymological relationship that συμφυῆναι bears to φύσις.) It is, as Burnyeat elaborates, ‘ideas or beliefs’ that are becoming second nature to someone<sup>23</sup> and “learning to do what is virtuous” is equated with “mak[ing] it a habit or second nature to one.”<sup>24</sup>

Each time the term ‘second nature’ turns up in Burnyeat’s essay, its grammatical behaviour is adverbial.<sup>25</sup> That is, the way he uses it invariably fits the formula ‘ξ is second nature to α’. Turning to McDowell’s texts, we find the adverbial usage together with other usages. What I want to suggest is that the adverbial usage should be regarded as central, with the other usages to be construed as derivative from it. That is effectively to suggest that it is perfectly permissible to employ expressions such as ‘the second nature of α’, so long as it is recognized that this is a way of recasting something like ‘what is second nature to α’ or ‘what has become second nature to α’. In the passage in which McDowell first introduces, as he puts it, ‘the notion of second nature’ in *Mind and World*, his treatment of it closely reflects that of Burnyeat, and its grammatical behaviour mirrors the adverbial usage that we find throughout Burnyeat’s discussion:

The notion is all but explicit in Aristotle’s account of how ethical character is formed. Since ethical character includes dispositions of the practical intellect, part of what happens when character is formed is that the practical intellect acquires a determinate shape. So practical wisdom is *second nature* to its possessors.<sup>26</sup>

When McDowell goes on to speak of “having one’s eyes opened to reasons at large by acquiring a second nature”<sup>27</sup> we can reasonably regard this as recastable in an adverbial form. My acquiring ‘a’ second nature just is virtue (if my upbringing turns out well, something other than virtue if it goes less well) ‘becoming second nature to’ me.

<sup>22</sup> BURNYEAT, Aristotle on Learning to Be Good, p. 74.

<sup>23</sup> BURNYEAT, Aristotle on Learning to Be Good, p. 74.

<sup>24</sup> BURNYEAT, Aristotle on Learning to Be Good, p. 78.

<sup>25</sup> BURNYEAT, Aristotle on Learning to Be Good, pp. 74, 77, 78, 84, 88.

<sup>26</sup> McDOWELL, *Mind and World*, p. 84 [emphasis added].

<sup>27</sup> McDOWELL, *Mind and World*, p. 84.

McDowell offers, in *Two Sorts of Naturalism*, some guidance on how to understand his substantivized usage of the expression ‘second nature’ in relation to that expression’s central adverbial usage. Here it becomes clear that his use of ‘the second nature of  $\alpha$ ’ is to be understood in the following way. McDowell tells us there that “the second nature acquired in moral education is a specific shaping of practical *logos*.”<sup>28</sup> In the optimal case, “the second nature one has acquired is virtue.”<sup>29</sup> In other words, *the second nature that I possess* is just that which, through moral education, has come to be second nature to me.

Strictly speaking, this use of ‘second nature’ (as a noun-expression, not an adverbial one) requires the use of an article (and is pluralizable). There are various second natures; it is at best misleading to speak of ‘second nature’ (dropping the article). Thus when McDowell writes, “Whether confidence is in order or not is for second nature itself to assess,”<sup>30</sup> I think what is meant is that whether confidence is in order or not is for ‘the second nature in question’ itself to assess: it is some ‘specific’ second nature among other possible such natures that we are to think of here.

(As an aside, we might note a legitimate use of ‘second nature’ (without an article). This can be thought of on an analogy with the word ‘language’. In being morally educated, I come to possess some second nature or other (where speaking of ‘the’ second nature that I thereby come to possess is, I have suggested, derivative from the central adverbial usage: the moral outlook in question has ‘become second nature’ to me). Similarly, when I learn to speak, I come to speak some language or other. But we can, in addition, speak of the phenomenon of speaking some language or other as: language (no article).)

Further complexities attend McDowell’s use of the expression ‘first nature’. At times McDowell’s texts can encourage the sense that a deceptively simple dividing line exists between ‘first nature’ and ‘second nature’. It can seem, namely, as if mere (non-rational) animals have only ‘first’ natures, and that these first natures are simply bits of nature (as captured, perhaps, by

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<sup>28</sup> McDOWELL, *Two Sorts of Naturalism*, p. 188.

<sup>29</sup> McDOWELL, *Two Sorts of Naturalism*, p. 188. Sometimes, in TSN, it can sound as if the acquisition of my second nature just is my acquisition of *logos*, for example when McDowell writes: “In acquiring one’s second nature – that is, in acquiring *logos* – one learned to take a distinctive pleasure in acting in certain ways” (p. 188). This is misleading, if it is not understood as involving the acquisition of *logos* in a determinate form or shape. What I acquire is not *logos*, but a determinate shaping of it.

<sup>30</sup> McDOWELL, *Two Sorts of Naturalism*, p. 194.

biology), as seems to be suggested when McDowell writes, in the context of a discussion of the difference that second nature makes, that “nature controls the behaviour of a non-rational animal.”<sup>31</sup> A difference is made, the thought might then go, when second nature is ‘added’ to the component of *nature* that is the organism’s first nature. And: “if the second nature one has acquired is virtue, ... the dictates of virtue have acquired an authority that replaces the authority abdicated by first nature with the onset of reason.”<sup>32</sup> McDowell’s parable of the rational wolves (TSN, §3) might look like it encourages such a picture. We are asked to imagine (in what remains a ‘pretence’<sup>33</sup>) that some wolves have ‘acquired’ reason. Such a wolf will, rational as he now is, “be able to let his mind roam over possibilities of behaviour other than what comes naturally to wolves.”<sup>34</sup> Here it can seem as if the rational wolf, in acquiring reason, has acquired a kind of monitoring capacity (second nature) that allows him to step back from his wolfish nature (first nature).

McDowell’s parable needs to be handled with care. The parable is offered in a specific dialectical context – that of urging Philippa Foot to make it clear that her brand of ethical naturalism is not one that makes the mistake of thinking that such a naturalism could be built on merely natural, extra-ethical facts about human beings. The point of the parable is that in the case of a rational animal a gap opens up between the natural patterns of such an animal’s life and what it will consider worth going for, such that the former (the natural patterns) do not settle the latter (what is worth going for). In making this point against the type of naturalistic opponent he has specified, McDowell allows himself use of the expression “first nature.”<sup>35</sup> But it would be a mistake to suppose that this commits him to speaking, in his own voice, of a distinct ‘first nature’ that the rational wolf possesses, distinct from its ‘second nature’. After all, what would the first nature of the rational wolf (call him *Canis lupus sapiens*) be? Would it be just the nature of the ordinary grey wolf (*Canis lupus lupus*), so that the ordinary grey wolf and the rational wolf share in a first nature? To speak in such a way would seem to suggest that ‘first nature’ lines up, after all, with the bald naturalist’s conception of nature. And that would be to lose sight of the idea of

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<sup>31</sup> McDOWELL, *Two Sorts of Naturalism*, p. 188.

<sup>32</sup> McDOWELL, *Two Sorts of Naturalism*, p. 188.

<sup>33</sup> McDOWELL, *Two Sorts of Naturalism*, p. 170.

<sup>34</sup> McDOWELL, *Two Sorts of Naturalism*, p. 170.

<sup>35</sup> Note that at TSN, p. 188 McDowell speaks, more carefully, of ‘what we might call his first nature’.

appealing to second nature to ‘deconstruct’ that conception of nature, instead offering simply to ‘enlarge’ it by adding to what is already there.

At times, in reading McDowell’s texts, it can be difficult to preserve the connection to the central adverbial usage of ‘second nature’, as when we are told, for example, that “our nature is largely second nature”<sup>36</sup> or that “nature includes *second nature*.”<sup>37</sup> Here surface grammar obscures, but does not by itself obstruct, the overall aim of McDowell’s reminder about ‘second nature’: to deconstruct the concept of nature in such a way as to have specific shapings of *logos* (‘second natures’ got through habituation into an outlook) come out ‘natural’. What is not yet clear, however, is how McDowell can secure it that what results is a deconstruction of ‘nature’. To this I return in §4.

### 3. Hegel’s use of ‘second nature’

I turn now to an examination of Hegel’s handling of the expression ‘second nature’.

In terms of surface grammar, Hegel’s handling of expression ‘second nature’ is more straightforward than what we find in McDowell’s texts. We find ‘second nature’ behaving grammatically in only one way in Hegel’s texts. The expression always occurs as part of the phrase ‘a second nature’ (*eine zweite Natur*). Grammatically, then, ‘second nature’ in Hegel’s uses of it uniformly exhibits the second behaviour I identified in §1.

This grammatical uniformity disguises that Hegel uses the expression ‘a second nature’ in two different ways. Only the first way he uses it involves the philosophical innovation of multiplying realms of nature. In this usage, there is the realm (‘nature’, *die Natur*) that *Encyclopaedia* II had been concerned with and there is the realm (‘spirit’, *der Geist*) that *Encyclopaedia* III is concerned with. *Geist* is now described as ‘a second nature’ – second, that is, after the first nature that is properly called, in his parlance, ‘nature’. In the single instance of this usage that we find in his texts, he speaks (PR §4) of “the world of spirit brought forth out of

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<sup>36</sup> McDOWELL, *Mind and World*, pp. 87, 91.

<sup>37</sup> McDOWELL, *Mind and World*, p. xx [emphasis in the original].

itself as a second nature” (“die Welt des Geistes aus ihm Selbst hervorgebracht, als eine zweite Natur”).<sup>38</sup>

The second way Hegel uses it equates the idea of ‘second nature’ with that of ‘habit’. This usage treats ‘second nature’ as a nominalization of the central adverbial use of ‘second nature’. A habit or second nature is, here, the outcome of a process of habituation in which something has become second nature (has become a habit) to some subject  $\alpha$ . All instances of Hegel’s use of the expression ‘second nature’ in the texts under examination, with the exception of the PR §4 usage just cited, are of this second type.

At PR §151 he says the following:

But when individuals are simply identified with the actual order, ethical life appears as their general mode of conduct, i.e. as custom (*Sitte*), while the habitual practice of ethical living appears as a second nature which, put in the place of the first, purely natural will, is the soul of custom permeating it through and through, the significance and the actuality of its existence. It is spirit living and present as a world, and the substance of spirit thus exists now for the first time as spirit.<sup>39</sup>

In a Remark from *Encyclopaedia* III, Hegel breaks down the phrase ‘a second nature’ into ‘a second’ and ‘nature’, as follows:

Habit has rightly been called a second nature, – *nature*, for it is an immediate being of the soul, – a *second*, for it is an immediacy *posited* by the soul, a forming and shaping of the corporeality belonging to both the determinations of feeling as such and the determinations of representation and will as corporealized (§401).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> In the light of this formulation of Hegel’s, it is perfectly apt for Seyla Benhabib to equate ‘*Geist*’ and ‘second nature’ in the striking way she does in the following passage: “*Geist*[,] which emerges from nature, transforms nature into a second world; this ‘second nature’ comprises the human, historical world of tradition, institutions, laws, and practices (*objektiver Geist*), as well as the self-reflection of knowing and acting subjects upon objective spirit [...]” (BENHABIB, S. **Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics**. Malden MA: Polity, 1992, p. 245). Compare the passage from Kant’s *Critique of Practical Reason* cited above.

<sup>39</sup> HEGEL, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, §151. “Aber in der einfachen *Identität* mit der Wirklichkeit der Individuen erscheint das Sittliche, als die allgemeine Handlungsweise derselben, als *Sitte* – die *Gewohnheit* desselben als eine *zweite Natur*, die an die Stelle des ersten bloß natürlichen Willens gesetzt und die durchdringende Seele, Bedeutung und Wirklichkeit ihres Daseins ist, der als eine Welt lebendige und vorhandene *Geist*, dessen Substanz so erst als Geist ist.”

<sup>40</sup> HEGEL, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, §410R. “Die *Gewohnheit* ist mit Recht eine zweite Natur genannt worden, – *Natur*, denn sie ist ein unmittelbares Sein der Seele, – eine *zweite*, denn sie ist eine von der Seele *gesetzte* Unmittelbarkeit, eine Ein- und Durchbildung der Leiblichkeit, die den Gefühlsbestimmungen als solchen und den Vorstellungs- [und] Willensbestimmtheiten als verleiblichten (§401) zukommt.”

The *Zusatz* to this passage recorded by Boumann reports Hegel as saying:

Although, on the one hand, habit makes a human being free, yet, on the other hand, it makes him its *slave*, and though it is not an *immediate first* nature dominated by the singularity of sensations but rather a *second nature posited* by the soul – yet it is all the same a *nature*, something *posited* taking on the shape of an *immediate*, an *ideality* of what has being, itself still burdened with the form of *being*, consequently something that does not correspond to free spirit, something merely *anthropological*.<sup>41</sup>

The contrast between ‘a first nature’ and ‘a second nature’ again figures in the *Zusatz* to PR §151, in a passage that brings the concept of education (*die Pädagogik*) into play:

Education is the art of making human beings ethical: it regards the human being as natural and shows him the way to a second birth, the way to transform his first nature into a second, spiritual, nature, so that this spirited item [*dieses Geistige*] becomes *habitual* in him. At this point the clash between the natural and the subjective will disappears, the subject’s internal struggle dies away [...]<sup>42</sup>

Large questions remain over how Hegel’s account is supposed to work. In particular, what is the relation between the merely ‘anthropological’ aspects of us (those aspects belonging to our merely animal – natural – being) and the ‘spirited’ aspects of us? In the *Zusatz* to §410 quoted above, Hegel casts ‘second nature’, *qua* nature, as “something *merely* anthropological,” reflecting the wider question of the intrusion of material dealing with the merely natural aspects of human beings into his ‘philosophy of spirit’. Such questions are evidently beyond the scope of the present essay.<sup>43</sup> What I want to emphasize here is merely that Hegel associates the phenomenon

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<sup>41</sup> HEGEL, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, §410Z. “Obgleich daher der Mensch durch die Gewohnheit einerseits frei wird, so macht ihn dieselbe doch andererseits zu ihrem *Sklassen* und ist eine zwar nicht *unmittelbare, erste*, von der Einzelheit der Empfindungen beherrschte, vielmehr von der Seele *gesetzte, zweite Natur* – aber doch immer eine *Natur*, ein die Gestalt eines *Unmittelbaren* annehmendes *Gesetztes*, eine selber noch mit der Form des *Seins* behaftete *Idealität* des Seienden, folglich etwas dem freien Geiste Nichtentsprechendes, etwas bloß *Anthropologisches*.”

<sup>42</sup> HEGEL, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, §151. “Die Pädagogik ist die Kunst, die Menschen sittlich zu machen: sie betrachtet den Menschen als natürlich und zeigt den Weg, ihn wiederzugebären, seine erste Natur zu einer zweiten geistigen umzuwandeln, so daß dieses *Geistige* in ihm zur *Gewohnheit* wird. In ihr verschwindet der Gegensatz des natürlichen und subjektiven Willens ...”

<sup>43</sup> A question belonging in this area that I do not broach here is that of whether Hegel countenances the notion of habit in the case of the brutes. Matthias Haase argues that Hegel does not, in line with a genuinely Aristotelian tradition (encompassing Aristotle and Aquinas), and that this marks a contrast with ‘neo-Aristotelians’ such as Ryle,

of second nature, along similar lines to McDowell, with the kind of habituation that spirited animals such as we are undergo through processes of education or *Bildung*. And so, for Hegel as for McDowell, ‘a second nature’ is an outcome of such education or *Bildung*.

#### 4. Hegel and McDowell on nature

Hegel’s treatment of ‘second nature’ is embedded within a systematic context that endeavours to make it plain, prior to the specification in the Philosophy of Spirit of how second nature figures in *geistig* life, how spirit and nature are related. The relation between the two is captured in Hegel’s slogan, ‘spirit is the truth of nature’.

*For us spirit has nature as its presupposition, and spirit is the truth of nature, and is thus absolutely first with respect to it. In this truth nature has vanished, and spirit has emerged as the Idea that has reached its being-for-self.*<sup>44</sup>

The *Zusatz* to this paragraph recorded by Hegel’s student Boumann helpfully adds:

It is already evident from our discussion so far that the emergence of spirit from nature must not be conceived as if nature were the absolutely immediate, the first, the original positing agent, while spirit, by contrast, were only something posited by nature; it is rather nature that is posited by spirit, and spirit is what is absolutely first.<sup>45</sup>

It is, then, ‘spirit’ that is logically prior to ‘nature’. Nature has to be understood in terms of spirit; that is, nature has to be understood as the imperfect actualization of the Idea that stands revealed in its imperfection by the perfect actualization – spirit – that sweeps it aside.<sup>46</sup>

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Kenny and McDowell. See HAASE, M. Geist und Gewohnheit. Hegels Begriff der anthropologischen Differenz. In: Kern, A. and Kietzmann, C. (eds.). **Selbstbewusstes Leben**. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2017.

<sup>44</sup> HEGEL, Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse, §381.

<sup>45</sup> HEGEL, Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse, §381Z.

<sup>46</sup> As Alexis Papazoglou has persuasively argued, this indicates that Hegel has things precisely the opposite way round in comparison with those who call themselves naturalists. (PAPAZOGLU, Hegel and Naturalism. **Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain**, 33, 2012, pp. 74–90).. Naturalists take nature to be prior to spirit. Papazoglou indeed speaks appositely, in one place, of ‘Hegel’s anti-naturalism’ (p. 76). Note also Sebastian Rand’s endorsement of Papazoglou’s stance on the question of Hegel’s supposed naturalism in his remark that ‘it is clear that Hegel cannot be a naturalist, since, for Hegel, spirit is the truth of nature’ (RAND, S. Subjetividade animal e o sistema nervosa na *Filosofia da Natureza* de Hegel. **Revista Eletrônica Estudos Hegelianos**, v. 7, n. 12, 2010, p. 35.).



It is important to see that what allows Hegel to make the claim that ‘spirit is the truth of nature’ is a distinctive conception of nature that he takes himself to be borrowing from Aristotle. Hegel is explicitly a revisionist with respect to the conception of nature prevalent in the physics of his day, in seeking to revive an Aristotelian notion of nature that he considers superior to the mechanistic conception of nature of his contemporaries. With this Hegel places himself in a significant quandary, since he still wants to respect the findings of contemporary physics – largely informed by the mechanistic conception he considers deficient – and indeed offers his philosophy of nature as a way of comprehending such findings. Furthermore, Hegel thereby sets himself the task of reconciling two uses of the word ‘nature’ (exhibiting the first two grammatical behaviours outlined in §1 above, in turn): one that thinks of what is natural as what belongs to the realm ‘nature’, and one that thinks of what is natural as what possesses a certain kind of principle.

Despite his attempt to marry an Aristotelian conception with a modern conception of nature, Hegel is entirely explicit that the contemporary conception is deficient, and that Aristotle offers a superior conception of nature. It is therefore surprising that Sebastian Rand should write that “Hegel’s philosophy of nature is entirely intelligible within the context of a straightforward understanding of modern, mathematized natural science, its goals, and its values.”<sup>47</sup> Rand comments, further, that “Hegel has been accused of being an Aristotelian [and] of promoting an ‘anti-Newtonian physics’.”<sup>48</sup> But it becomes amply evident on turning to Hegel’s texts and lecture transcripts that he would embrace the accusation and wholeheartedly affirm his affinity with Aristotle’s conception of nature.

By contrast with Rand, Liberato Santoro-Brienza has brought out the deep consonance between Hegel’s conception of nature and that of Aristotle.<sup>49</sup> As Santoro-Brienza indicates, Hegel offers a sustained discussion of Aristotle’s *Physics* and its conception of nature in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, calling Aristotle’s conception of nature, which he says ‘has been lost’ (19: 177, 179), ‘the true [*wahrhaften*] concept of nature’ (19: 177) and ‘superior to

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<sup>47</sup> RAND, The Importance and Relevance of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Nature*. **The Review of Metaphysics**, 61, 2007, pp. 379–400, p. 381.

<sup>48</sup> RAND, The Importance and Relevance, pp. 391–92.

<sup>49</sup> SANTORO-BRIENZA, L. Aristotle and Hegel on Nature: Some Similarities. **Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain**, 13/2, 1992, pp. 13–29.

the contemporary one' (19: 173).<sup>50</sup> This superiority consists in Aristotle's recognition of 'immanent inner teleology' (19: 174). Aristotle's key point (*Hauptbegriff*) is said to be 'that he conceives of nature as life' (19: 174). The nature of a thing is to be conceived as its *telos* (19: 176, quoting Aristotle's *Physics*). The apex of nature is life, as exhibiting the most elaborate form of teleological organization. And self-conscious life is, accordingly, the highest form of life.

Hegel, like Aristotle, wants to understand living beings as what is pre-eminently natural. It is in living things that form is most predominant over matter. In a living thing, its principle of being (its nature) most fully asserts itself. And Hegel's conception of nature – the realm – is structured in such a way as to have the teleological organization characteristic of organic life as its highest organizing principle. This fits with Aristotle's idea that living things most fully exhibit what it is to be the things they are (they are the 'paradigm instances of substance', as one commentator puts it).<sup>51</sup>

Hegel thinks that Kant was on the way to restoring the lost Aristotelian conception of nature, according to which teleologically organized organic life is nature's highest realization, but faltered in that he insisted on seeing such teleology as having only subjective validity (19: 177). For Hegel, by contrast, it is an objective matter that nature is teleological: indeed, as he specifies, 'the purpose in nature is its λόγος, the truly rational' (19: 180).<sup>52</sup>

Although there is not space to discuss this here, it is worth pointing out that 'nature' seems to have been already a contested concept when Aristotle was writing, and Aristotle's texts bear witness to his grappling with this state of affairs.<sup>53</sup> So we might observe that Hegel's attempts to

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<sup>50</sup> I am quoting here from the TWA, as we wait for the publication of vols. 30/2–6 in the *Gesammelte Werke*, which will make available a critical edition of all of the individual transcripts of Hegel's lectures on the history of philosophy that survive. The TWA here relies on the compilation made by Michelet of the transcripts available to him.

<sup>51</sup> KOSMAN, A. **The Activity of Being**. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2013, p. 87.

<sup>52</sup> There are multifarious complexities when it comes to the extent to which Hegel was operating with a modern conception of nature, even while attempting to restore (what he understood to be) Aristotle's conception. For a discussion of these issues, see FERRARIN, A. **Hegel and Aristotle**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Chapter 7.

<sup>53</sup> See Aristotle's lexicographical entry on *phusis* at *Metaphysics* Δ 4. R. G. Collingwood has suggested that the principal use of *phusis* in ancient Greek thought is to pick out a '*principium*, ἀρχή, or source' but that it 'very rarely, and relatively late, ... also bears the secondary sense of the sum total or aggregate of natural things' (COLLINGWOOD, R. G. **The Idea of Nature**. New York: Oxford University Press, 1945. pp. 43-44). But Aristotle's treatment in Δ 4 seems to suggest the 'aggregate' notion was already in play for him, and his treatment of *phusis* could even be read as seeking to reconcile the two notions. Perhaps the aggregate notion is to be thought of as just the collection of all the things that have natures, as F. M. Cornford suggests when he comments (in an editorial

reconcile various notions of nature recall Aristotle's own efforts in a different context (a context in which Aristotle was setting his teeth against opponents such as Democritus).

Now, there are large questions over how Hegel can accomplish the straddling of the two conceptions of nature, with their variant grammatical behaviours, so as to achieve his Aristotelian-inspired conception of nature as on the way to spirit. It is less difficult to see, on the other hand, how he can see the phenomenon of 'second nature' in the human as a reflection of the way in which spirit (what characterizes the human)<sup>54</sup> is the truth of nature. Once we have in place a conception according to which spirit is the truth of nature, and we humans are spirited beings, it will stand to reason that a detailed account of us will exhibit ways in which we are both natural and spirited – ways epitomized in the habit or second nature that is characteristic of us.

McDowell, by contrast, does not see himself as being in the business of specifying the conception of nature that is sufficiently 'relaxed' to include operations of spontaneity, other than by appeal to the notion of 'second nature'. That appeal is supposed, by itself, to effect the deconstruction. Without a prior account of the nature–spirit relation to draw on, it seems as if reassurance must be sought elsewhere in McDowell's proposal that it delivers deconstruction of the 'realm of nature' rather than the introduction of a new topic.

McDowell has indicated, in a response to Graham Macdonald, that, rather than the burden of proof falling on a naturalist of second nature to demonstrate that their conception of nature is the right one, he thinks the burden falls on 'bald naturalists' to show that the right conception of nature is one that lines nature up with the object of the natural sciences. To claim such an equation, McDowell protests, is just an unmotivated prejudice in favour of 'scientism'. McDowell claims, instead, that "a better candidate for being the default view, the view that should stand unless it can be shown to be wrong, is the 'venerable philosophical tradition' that Macdonald admits he finds tempting", a tradition according to which 'human beings are unique

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note to the Loeb edition of the *Physics*) that "English cannot reproduce the ambiguity of ἡ φύσις, which (like the French *la nature*) may mean 'the nature' (of any natural thing) or 'Nature' collectively, the sum total of such natures." (ARISTOTLE. *Physics*, Books 1-4. Trans. and ed. P. H. Wicksteed and F. M. Cornford. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1957, p. 108). If Aristotle contemplates there being such a thing as nature (a realm of the natural), it certainly must exclude the heavens (*Met.* E 1, 1026a9–11). This view he holds in opposition to those who perpetuate 'a myth to the effect that the heavenly bodies are gods and that the divine encompasses the whole of nature [τὴν ὅλην φύσιν]' (*Met.* Λ 8, 1074b4). What, we might wonder, do such mythmakers have in mind when speaking of 'the whole of nature'?

<sup>54</sup> Hegel equates knowledge of spirit with knowledge of the human at E §377.

among living things – outside the reach of the sort of understanding achievable by a scientific biology – in virtue of the freedom that belongs with our responsiveness to reasons as such.”<sup>55</sup> Such freedom is exhibited in the notion of ‘second nature’. But it becomes difficult to see how McDowell can move beyond a stand-off with bald naturalists unless he can specify in what the default superiority that he ascribes to the venerable tradition consists. That tradition, through its long history, saw itself as needing to equip itself with arguments against atomists and other contesting voices, and Hegel’s efforts to argue in favour of an Aristotelian conception of nature against the grain of his time constitute part of this ongoing endeavour over the course of the tradition’s development. Without a specific recommendation as to the merit of the venerable tradition, it becomes difficult to see why adherence to it is indeed superior to “groundless confidence in science.”<sup>56</sup>

In a recent text, McDowell has moved towards saying something about how he understands the relation of nature to spirit, and puts this into contact with his reminder about second nature. That text also helpfully explicitly connects these issues as they figure in Hegel. In the course of his discussion, McDowell suggests that ‘the contrast between first and second nature’ operative in his appeal to second nature “lines up, at least roughly, with the division between the two parts of Hegel’s *Realphilosophie*.”<sup>57</sup> This is helpful but, as we have seen, there are considerable complexities here. As McDowell elaborates, the first nature of a living being is a nature that that being has – and that nature is, for Hegel, one that can be captured as belonging to nature (as that constitutes the topic of Part II of his *Encyclopaedia*). In other words, ‘a first nature’ is something belonging to – ‘nature’. Now clearly if human beings are spirited animals, their nature (which will turn out to be largely a second nature) will not be placeable in what Hegel calls nature. But now McDowell introduces a suggestive notion, that of a ‘generic’ sense of ‘nature’ – a sense of nature that lets nature (as what *Encyclopaedia* II treats of) and spirit (as what *Encyclopaedia* III treats of) be species of the genus ‘nature’ (covering the subject matter both of *Encyclopaedia* II and of *Encyclopaedia* III). As McDowell writes: “My point in invoking second nature was this: Geist’s being otherwise than natural in ‘that’ sense [i.e., in the sense of not being capturable by

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<sup>55</sup> McDOWELL, J. Response to Graham Macdonald. In: Macdonald, C. and Macdonald, G. (eds.). **McDowell and His Critics**. Malden MA: Blackwell, 2006, p. 237.

<sup>56</sup> McDOWELL, loc. cit.

<sup>57</sup> McDOWELL, *Second Nature and Geist*, MS, p. 9.

the resources of *Encyclopaedia II*] does not imply that goings-on in the lives by beings whose form, as the living beings they are, is Geist are anything but natural, now in a generic sense that extends beyond the realm of Nature.”<sup>58</sup> In effect, I think this serves to reformulate the issue I have brought up above. What we might now say is that Hegel has specified how nature and spirit can be species of a genus called nature: namely spirit is the truth of nature. Such a specification of how it is that spirit and nature can be species of a genus called nature is not offered in the course of McDowell’s appeal to second nature (rather, the appeal to second nature is supposed to secure the naturalness of spirit).

Hegel has a comparatively easy time of it in so far as he works to entitle himself to a conception of nature before proceeding to speak of the naturalness of second nature. An assessment of Hegel’s success here will hinge largely on getting clear on whether he genuinely entitles himself to such a conception. It can look as if Hegel needs to entitle himself to expand the conception of nature that he contests (that of contemporary mechanists) by elaborating what he takes to be an Aristotelian conception of nature, on pain of leaving it mysterious how such a modern conception can be reconciled with the overall Aristotelian conception in the way he wants. McDowell is spared such work, but this puts his proposal under a different kind of strain. This strain reflects an underlying difficulty that Sebastian Gardner has raised in relation to ‘soft naturalism’. Gardner writes that the “soft naturalist began with a conception of the natural order shaped by natural science, and then tried to *expand* it to include value; he did not work *from* a prior, rich conception of nature, *to* the reality of value.”<sup>59</sup> And as Gardner persuasively argues, it is difficult to see how such expansion can work if we are not shown how (as Hegel tries to do) a bald naturalist conception of nature might be supplanted by a richer conception of nature argued for on independent (in his case, Aristotelian) grounds.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> McDOWELL, loc. cit.

<sup>59</sup> GARDNER, S. *The Limits of Naturalism and the Metaphysics of German Idealism*. In: Hammer, E. (ed.). **German Idealism: Contemporary Perspectives**. Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 35.

<sup>60</sup> I am grateful for help with earlier versions of this material from John McDowell, Michael Thompson, Stephen Houlgate, Maximilian Tegtmeier, Martijn Wallage, Irina Schumski, Alec Hinshelwood, and Amanda-Lynn Feeney.

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