The Transition from Nature to 'Spirit' in Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT: In this paper I show that Hegel's reading of the beginnings of the history of philosophy reflects his philosophical account of the transition from nature to 'spirit,' as that is found in his *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. I give an account of how Hegel sees the birth of philosophical thought itself as a kind of break from nature. This break from nature is gradual and begins with Thales who, despite giving an account of reality through water, a natural element, is already seen as offering a philosophical principle; water is not merely an empirical, natural entity in Thales' claim. The gradual break from nature continues with Anaxagoras whose philosophical principle becomes mind itself, as well as with the Sophists and their reasons-based explanations. Hegel identifies the real break of 'spirit' with nature in an episode in Plato's *Phaedo*. However Hegel sees this break of spirit from nature as causing a problem akin to one that John McDowell identifies, namely the difficulty of seeing how the space of reasons relate to nature. I conclude with Hegel's solution to the break between nature and spirit, their unification under the 'Idea,' and so the end of the history of philosophy.

KEYWORDS: Hegel, history of philosophy, nature, spirit, McDowell.

1. Introduction

A key question that arises in Hegel's philosophy concerns the relationship between nature and 'spirit.' Hegel's unique account of that relationship sees 'spirit' as emerging in some way out of nature, gradually breaking off of nature through various stages ('subjective spirit,' 'objective spirit,' 'absolute spirit'), only to then show us that despite the seeming opposition between nature and 'spirit,' they are both aspects of the same thing, the 'Idea,' and thus are in some sense united again.

Hegel's account of the relationship between nature and 'spirit' may seem like a historical curiosity, but this is in fact a case where the history of philosophy offers an interesting alternative to the contemporary discussion of a similar issue. In its contemporary expression, the issue is about the relationship between nature and the space of reasons, as

discussed by John McDowell in his *Mind and World*.[1] Hegel's concept of 'spirit' might be broader than that of the Sellarsian 'space of reasons,' however one way of understanding Hegel's 'spirit,' namely as a socially embodied collective mindedness that evolves through history, brings it close to the concept of the 'space of reasons,' a logical space that one occupies when, again, exhibiting a kind of mindedness (in particular, a mindedness that enables one to judge and act on the basis of reasons).[2] Hegel's way of understanding the relationship between nature and 'spirit' is quite unlike the way that McDowell understands the relationship between nature and the space of reasons. Unlike McDowell, Hegel does not begin by seeing the relationship between nature and 'spirit' as a placement problem to be solved, i.e. Hegel does not start with a conception of reality as nature, only to then ask where 'spirit' or reason fit within it. What is more, Hegel does not see the solution of the tension between nature and 'spirit' as resolvable by expanding the concept of nature so that it can include 'spirit,' like McDowell does.[3]

The place where the relationship between nature and 'spirit' is most explicitly discussed is in *Hegel's Encyclopaedia*, and more specifically at the end of the second volume, the *Philosophy of Nature*, and the beginning of the third and final volume, the *Philosophy of Spirit.* However, in this paper I wish to discuss another place in the Hegelian corpus where the relationship between nature and 'spirit,' or nature and reason, is discussed, if in a more indirect way, namely in *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. Hegel's reading of certain early episodes in the history of philosophy captures one of the unique features of Hegel's thought regarding the relation between nature and 'spirit,' namely its dynamic character: Hegel sees the very birth of philosophy, as well as the crucial move away from the 'nature'-oriented Pre-Socratic philosophy to Socrates' 'reason'-oriented philosophy, as a kind

[1] MCDOWELL, J. **Mind and World**. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996.
See also HALBIG, C. Varieties of Nature in Hegel and McDowell. In: Lindgaard, J. (ed.). **John McDowell: Experience, Norm and Nature**. Blackwell, 2008 and PIPPIN, R. **Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

[2] As McDowell hints at, the space of reasons need not be thought of as static, a given rational structure, but something that unfolds and develops as human history progresses forwards through time: "Ensuring that our empirical concepts and conceptions pass muster is ongoing and arduous work for the understanding…There is no guarantee that the world is completely within the reach of a system of concepts and conceptions as it stands at some particular moment in its historical development. Exactly not; that is why the obligation to reflect is perpetual." MCDOWELL. **Mind and World,** p. 40.

[3] McDowell's way of overcoming the apparent opposition between nature and the space of reasons is to expand the concept of nature so as to include what he calls second nature (a nature that we acquire by becoming encultured, learning a language and becoming normatively trained by our linguistic community). The space of reasons can then be seen as being part of nature by virtue of the fact that our second nature (our normative side) is structured by the space of reasons.

of break from nature, mirroring the way he sees 'spirit' as having to break from nature, only to later on find a way of reuniting. When it comes to the history of philosophy, this reunion has to wait until Hegel's philosophy comes on the scene and shows us how nature and 'spirit' are both aspects of the 'Idea.'

2. The Birth of Philosophy

From the very introduction to his *Lectures in the History of Philosophy*, Hegel engages with the issue of the distinction between nature and some human attribute that cannot be accurately understood as mere nature. Hegel identifies that uniquely human attribute as 'thought,' something he understands as a free and self-creating event, unlike the events that take place in the natural world. Hegel then sees the beginning or 'becoming' of philosophy as such a free, spontaneous event:

> This Becoming [of philosophy] is not merely a passive moment, as we suppose movements such as those of the sun and the moon to be. It is no mere movement in the unresisting medium of space and time. What we must represent to ourselves is the activity of free thought; we have to present the history of the world of thought as it has arisen and produced itself.…There is an old tradition that it is the faculty of thought which separates men from beasts; and to this tradition we shall adhere.[4]

This distinction between the natural movement of objects in space-time, and the movement of thought mirrors the different characteristics Hegel attributes to nature vs. 'spirit' in the *Encyclopaedia*: Nature is an expression of necessity, whereas spirit is an expression of freedom, spontaneity and self-creation and not subject to the same descriptions as celestial objects or animals. The beginning of philosophy is also characterised by Hegel as the moment of a break with nature, in particular a moment when 'spirit' (or Mind, under a different translation of *Geist*[5]) separates and frees itself from nature and matter:

[4] HEGEL, G.W.F. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy:** Volume I. Trans. by Haldane, E.S. and Simson, F. H. (ed.). New York: Humanities Press, 1974, p. 4.

[5] Haldane and Simson oscillate between the two in their translation, usually otping for 'Mind', although no explicit mention of these choices is made in the translator's note. Arguably, in translating 'Geist' as 'Mind' one looses some of the nuance of the term. Even though Hegel's term *Geist* can be seen as a radical re-conceptualisation of what in Descartes' philosophy figures as 'mind', the fact that it not only rejects the idea of the mind as a thing, but attempts to capture spheres of reality beyond the merely subjective, and onto the inter-subjective/objective spheres of ethics, institutions, politics, art, religion and philosophy, makes the term 'spirit' a more appropriate rendering, despite the Christian connotations of the term linking it to an immaterial divine power. (And of course Hegel sees his term 'Geist' as a radical re-interpretation of the Christian term as well,

> Since Mind requires to separate itself from its natural will and engrossment in matter if it wishes to enter upon Philosophy, it cannot do so in the form with which the world-spirit commences and which takes precedence of that separation. This stage of the unity of Mind and Nature which as immediate is not the true and perfect state, is mainly found in the Oriental conception of existence; therefore Philosophy first begins in the Grecian world.[6]

For Hegel then, this division that later on in the history of philosophy will become problematic, namely the separation of 'spirit' from nature (a division that still plagues contemporary philosophy in the form that John McDowell has pointed out, namely as the difficulty of locating the space of reasons within nature) is, according to him, a necessary prerequisite for philosophy to take off. This necessary separation of 'spirit' from nature he sees happening in Ancient Greek thought, and that is why he locates the beginning of philosophy there. Hegel here also implies the existence of a primordial unity between nature and 'spirit,' something that is in tune with what Hegel says in the *Encyclopaedia*:

> The union of the two determinations is, namely, what is called the primal state of innocence, where spirit is identical with nature; whereas the standpoint of the divided consciousness is the fall of man from the eternal divine unity.[7]

> Spirit has its beginning in nature in general. One must not think merely of external nature, but also of the sensuous nature of man himself, his sensuous, bodily being, being in relation with other general objects; mere sensing is confined solely to animals. The extreme to which spirit tends is its freedom, its infinity, its being in and of itself…if we ask what spirit is, the immediate answer is that it is this motion, this process of proceeding forth from, of freeing itself from nature.[8]

Despite seeing the break of 'spirit' from nature as a necessary condition for philosophy to properly begin, Hegel also tells us that the unity of 'spirit' with nature is divine, and that the situation of separation is tantamount to a metaphysical 'fall', hinting that the ambition must be to somehow regain that unity. In its freeing itself from nature, 'spirit' at first sees its

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perhaps more so than a re-interpretation of Descartes' 'mind'.) After all, the term 'spirit' survives in our contemporary vocabulary in ways that are closer to the meaning of Hegel's term 'Geist' than our use of the term 'mind'. Such examples are 'team-spirit', 'a nation's spirit', and of course, the spirit of the times, usually left untranslated as Zeitgeist.

[6] HEGEL. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy:** Volume I, p. 96.

[7] HEGEL, G.W.F. **Philosophy of Nature: Part Two of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)**. Trans. by A.V. Miller from Nicolin and Poggeler's edition (1959) and from the Zusätze in Michelet's text (1847). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 8.

[8] HEGEL. G.W.F. Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit. Translated and edited by M. Petry. Dordrecht: Riedel, 1978, I, p. 4-7.

relation to nature as one of opposition, but ultimately, in Hegel's system, finds that nature and 'spirit,' even though distinct, are also, in some sense, part of the same unity, the 'Idea.'

3. A case study of two Pre-Socratics: Thales and Anaxagoras

Looking at the Pre-Socratics, and in particular Thales and Anaxagoras, is important for two reasons: The first reason is that Thales marks for Hegel the beginning of philosophy, and as already mentioned, he sees the birth of philosophical thought as a break with nature. The second reason is that the Pre-Socratics are important in a discussion of the relationship between nature and 'spirit' because of 'the mode of explanation' that is common among the Pre-Socratics. Especially the early Pre-Socratics look at nature for a principle of explanation of the world; nature is seen as a potential source of explanation. This might sound confusing, given Hegel's claim that philosophy begins with a break with nature, but as I shall try and explain, even though many of the Pre-Socratics make use of nature in the form of natural elements in their philosophy, they do so as explanatory 'principles,' not as bits of nature *per se*.

Anaxagoras, as a Pre-Socratic philosopher, is even more important for the purposes of this project as he is the first to attempt a break from this line of thought, as he chooses *νους* (mind) as the principle of explanation, rather than a natural element. In doing so Hegel sees a first step being taken towards understanding the world in terms of 'spirit', rather than in terms of nature. However, as will be discussed later, Socrates' criticism of Anaxagoras in Plato's *Phaedo* shows that this transition is mere lip service and that Anaxagoras is still bound by the paradigmatic Pre-Socratic mode of thinking. We have to wait until the Sophists to see any real transition from natural modes of explanation to a new type of explanatory account, but it is only in Socrates's philosophy that we can clearly recognise the emergence of something which we can identify with a different form of explanation, one that belongs to 'spirit,' or in contemporary terms, to Sellars' 'space of reasons'.

3.1 Thales

According to Hegel philosophy begins with Thales who claimed that everything is water. This claim of universality, that everything is really just one natural element, water,

does not seem to be a mere empirical claim about what everything in the world is made of. Instead, according to Hegel, the claim that everything is water should be understood as something like 'Water is the *principle* according to which everything else is to be understood'. The reason behind this claim seems to be that Thales saw himself as making a claim about the essence of things, and the way he understood essence was as that which was devoid of form; water, then, seemed to be the closest element in existence which lacked form more than anything else.[9] The important thought to take away, and one that Hegel emphasises several times, is that we should not understand Thales' claim as an empirical claim, or a claim about the physical, or natural, but as a philosophical claim:

> The simple proposition of Thales, therefore, is philosophy, because in it water, though sensuous, is not looked at in its particularity as opposed to other natural things, but as Thought in which everything is resolved and comprehended.[10]

Thales' claim, according to Hegel, counts as a philosophical claim; it is a claim about the Absolute, a claim about the ultimate way reality is intelligible. This way of thinking about Thales' principle, then, makes it compatible with Hegel's idea that philosophy begins with a break of thought from nature, even though Thales' thought makes use of a natural element as a paradigm of intelligibility. Nature in Thales' thought (and in that of the other Pre-Socratics) is not material nature as such, but nature as a form of intelligibility.

3.2 Anaxagoras

If Thales marks a break with nature by being the first to make a claim about the Absolute, Anaxagoras seems to mark an even bigger break, for his principle of intelligibility

[9] "Water thus has not got a sensuous universality, but a speculative one merely; to be speculative universality, however, would necessitate its being Notion and having what is sensuous removed. Here we have the strife between sensuous universality and universality of the Notion. The real essence of nature has to be defined, that is, nature has to be expressed as the simple essence of thought. Now simple essence, the Notion of the universal, is that which is devoid of form, but this water as it is, comes into the determination of form, and is this, in relation to others, a particular existence just like everything that is natural…Now, if the need of unity implies us to recognize for separate things a universal, water, although it has the drawback of being a particular thing, can easily be utilised as the One." HEGEL. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy: Volume I**, p. 177-178. [Haldane makes it clear in his translator's note that 'Begriff' is translated as 'Notion', (following Miller's convention in his translation of HEGEL. G.W.F **Phenomenology of Spirit (1977)**. Trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press) rather than as 'concept', to highlight the technical use it has in Hegel's philosophy, and distance it from the common use of the term 'concept', for example, avoiding any association of 'Begriff' with mental representations.]

[10] HEGEL. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy:** Volume I, p. 178-179.

is no longer one that draws on nature's elements, nor on abstract ontological categories, like those of Parmenides or Heraclitus, but on mind's power, thought itself:

> With Anaxagoras a light, if still a weak one, begins to dawn, because the understanding is now recognized as the principle…We have had Being, Becoming, The One, as principles; they are universal thoughts and not sensuous…Anaxagoras now says that it is not gods, sensuous principles, elements or thoughts – which really are determinations of reflection – but that it is the Universal, Thought itself, in and for itself, without opposition, all embracing, which is the substance or the principle…Thought, as pure free process in itself, is the self-determining universal, and is not distinguished from conscious thought.[11]

Hegel recognizes the importance of Anaxagoras' claim for the furthering of the break between philosophy and nature. Natural entities have already been abandoned as possible candidates for the principle before Anaxagoras comes on stage, but it is he who takes things all the way to the opposite end of the spectrum. Hegel, however, remains sober about Anaxagoras' philosophy living up to its programmatic declarations, and of it being a 'real' break with that of the other Pre-Socratics. However, despite the fact that he accepts the criticisms that Anaxagoras attracted from both Plato and Aristotle (that the principle of νους is merely formal, that Anaxagoras does not make any substantial application of his principle etc.), he still recognises in it something of great significance.

Hegel ascribes to all pre-Socratic philosophers an early disenchantment of nature:

> All the ideas of those philosophers have this in common, that nature is through them undeified; they brought the poetic view of nature down to the prosaic, and destroyed the poetic point of view which ascribes to all that is not considered lifeless, a life proper to itself…The loss of this point of view is not to be lamented as if unity with nature, pure faith, innocent purity and childlike spirit went with it. Innocent and childlike it may have been, but reason is just the going forth from such innocence and unity with nature. So as soon as mind grasps itself, it must for that very reason confront the "other" of itself as a negation of consciousness, i.e. look on it as something devoid of mind, as unconscious and lifeless thing, and it must first come to itself through this opposition.[12]

This attempt at disenchanting nature that Hegel credits the pre-Socratics with is seen by him as necessary, as a leaving behind of an innocent and childlike image of nature where it is seen as unified with 'spirit.' This process of developing an opposition between 'spirit' and nature

[11] HEGEL. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy:** Volume I, p. 319.
[12] HEGEL. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy:** Volume I, p. 327.

then reaches its pinnacle in Pre-Socratic thought with Anaxagoras who identified *νους* as the principle through which reality was to be intelligible. However, this accolade that Anaxagoras receives for completing the process of disenchanting nature in that philosophical context seems to be in tension with the implications that Anaxagoras' position has for nature: If the principle is *νους*, then it follows that everything, including nature, should be understood as a manifestation of *νους*, and this seems to go in the opposite direction of disenchanting nature:

> By this [the principle of νους] we must not represent to ourselves subjective thought; Here, on the contrary, quite objective thought is meant, active understanding – as we say, there is reason in the world, or we speak of genera in nature which are the universal. The nature is not formed from without as men make a table; this is also made with understanding, but through an understanding outside wood. This external form, which is called the understanding, immediately occurs to us in speaking of the understanding; but here the universal is meant, that which is the immanent nature of the object itself.[13]

The point that Hegel seems to be making is that the kind of 'rational structure' that nature would exhibit as part of the manifestation of *νους*, in Anaxagoras' philosophy, is not the same that is exhibited, for example, in an intentionally designed object. It is not the case that nature exhibits the same rational structure as that of the subjective minds of individuals, or even the products of human intentionality such as artefacts; Anaxagoras' *νους* is more objective, as is the rational structure that reality exhibits as a result of being a manifestation of *νους*. So the claim here is that Anaxagoras is hinting towards the idea that rationality, or mindedness goes beyond the individual minds of subjects. Before the emergence of philosophy nature and mind were seen as identical, but it was a 'subjective' mindedness that was seen to inhabit nature. This found expression, for example, in seeing nature as having been designed by a subject much like humans design artefacts; what is more, nature was seen as designed for the purpose of satisfying human interests. This distinction between subjective and objective mindedness is similar to the distinction that Hegel draws between internal and external teleology in the *Philosophy of Nature*.[14] Anaxagoras then can be seen as the first philosopher to recognise that

[13] HEGEL. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy:** Volume I, p. 331.

[14] "The teleological standpoint which was formerly so popular, was based, it is true, on a reference to Spirit, but it was confined to external purposiveness only, and took Spirit in the sense of finite Spirit caught up in natural ends; but because the finite ends which natural objects were shown to subserve were so trivial, teleology has become discredited as an argument for the wisdom of God. The notion of end, however, is not merely external to Nature, as it is, for example, when I say that the wool of the sheep is there only to provide me with clothes; for this often results in trivial reflections, as in the Xenia, where God's wisdom is admired in that He has provided cork-trees for bottle stoppers, or herbs for curing disordered stomachs, and cinnabar for cosmetics. The notion

reality might be the manifestation of an internal rational structure, one that has not been imposed by an intelligent subject, but one that is a part of the nature of reality itself, a thought that Hegel himself will try and systematise in his philosophy by seeing nature as a manifestation of the 'Idea.' I will return to Hegel's reading of Anaxagoras in the discussion of Socrates and his critique of Anaxagoras.

4. The Emergence of the Space of Reasons

4.1 The Sophists

The Sophists are not often seen as an important moment in the history of philosophy and usually their significance is seen as residing in the fact that their teachings prompted the emergence of the philosophy of Socrates and Plato as a reaction to them. Hegel's attitude towards the Sophists is subtler than this default reading, as he accepts that the Sophists are part of the history of philosophy, even if they only just make the qualification: "On account of their formal culture, the Sophists have a place in philosophy; on account of their reflection they have not."[15]

But what does it mean that the Sophists are philosophers 'on account of their formal culture?' We could take it to mean that the Sophists participated in the same kind of discourse, partook of the same 'rituals' that previous philosophers did, and even though they had little to contribute to this type of discourse, merely by means of participating in it they qualify as philosophers. This reading would however depend on a quite modern and loose interpretation of the term 'culture'. Hegel provides us with a quite different meaning of the term:

> Now culture is certainly an indefinite expression. It has, however, this meaning, that what free thought is to attain must come out of itself and be personal conviction; it is then no longer believed but investigated – in short, it is the so-called enlightenment of modern times. Thought seeks general principles by which it criticizes everything

of end as immanent in natural objects is their simple determinateness, e.g. the seed of the plant, which contains the real possibility of all that is to exist in the tree, and thus, as a purposive activity, is directed solely towards self-preservation. This notion of end was already recognised by Aristotle, too, and he called this activity the *nature of a thing*; the true teleological method – and this is the highest – consists therefore, in the method of regarding Nature as free in her own peculiar vital activity." HEGEL. **Philosophy of Nature**, p.5-6.

[15] HEGEL. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy: Volume I**, p. 371.

> which is by us esteemed, and nothing has value to us which is not in conformity with these principles.[16]

One way of reading Hegel's qualification of the Sophists as philosophers on account of their culture, then, is that they qualify because they accepted criticism as a method of correcting beliefs. In particular, for the Sophists it is the mind of each individual that is accepted as a criterion for criticising, and as a result, accepting or rejecting 'everything which is by us esteemed.' The philosophical culture that the Sophists are a part of, according to Hegel, is a culture of freedom because no belief is accepted as binding in any way unless it undergoes critical scrutiny and survives the process. The Sophists are therefore of immense importance because this freedom that thought provides us with, the ability to step back from our practices and scrutinise them, evaluate them and criticise them, is first found in them. The kind of freedom that Sophists are seeking is one from social practices and customs, rather than desires and impulses. One begins with a tendency to act in accordance with or to have the beliefs of one's tradition; the philosophical culture that the Sophists create however urges individuals to not simply believe things or to act in certain ways because of the social norms of their time, because of tradition, religion or even the law, but to reflect and to find reasons for the things they believe in and for the ways they act:

> Religion taught that the gods are the powers which rule over men. Immediate morality recognised the rule of laws; man was to find satisfaction in conforming to laws, and was to assume that others also find satisfaction because they follow these laws. But from the reflection which here breaks in, it no longer satisfied man to obey law as an authority and external necessity, for he desires to satisfy himself in himself, to convince himself, through his reflection, of what is binding upon him, what is his end and what he has to do for this end.[17]

So, according to Hegel's reading, the philosophy of the Sophists is the first instance in the history of philosophy where giving oneself the law, to use German idealist terminology, is proposed as the only way in which humans can guide their life, but still be free. It is the first instance, according to this retrospective Hegelian reading, where being free is defined as not accepting an externally imposed law which does not survive critical scrutiny and isn't intelligible to oneself. For the Sophists, however, what is doing the scrutinising of the

[16] HEGEL. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy: Volume I**, p. 356.
[17] HEGEL. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy:** Volume I, p. 357.

accepted forms of life is an instrumental reason which weighs whether one's individual impulses and desires are satisfied or not, given the present practices, laws etc, rather than some universal rational principle: "Thus the impulses and desires that man has, become his power; and only inasmuch as he affords them satisfaction does he become satisfied." [18]

So even though the Sophists can be seen as offering the conditions for freedom, namely by rejecting custom as in itself a sufficient reason to believe or act, and at the same time might be seen as carving out a 'space of reasons,' since criticising and distancing oneself from custom requires providing reasons for disagreeing with them, this is still not a freedom which signifies a complete break with nature. The reasons that the Sophists propose as candidates for opposing custom and held belief are still within the confines of nature: they are a person's desires and impulses. The criteria by which the given, external law can be criticised are not therefore in accordance with some rational principle which lies outside of nature, but are in line with each individual's point of view, which is equated, at this stage, with the individual's desires. The difference between the Sophists and Socrates/Plato will be that the latter create a universal space of reasons, one that is not defined by an individual's desires, but also one that seems to lie outside of nature.

4.2 Socrates

For Hegel Socrates is of great importance in the history of philosophy, he believes that "a mental turning point exhibited itself in him in the form of philosophic thought."[19] However it isn't that obvious at first what new thing Socrates introduces to the philosophical scene. Anaxagoras before him proclaimed that "thought, the understanding, is the self-determining universal" and Socrates agrees. Furthermore, he shares with the Sophists the idea that it is conscious reflecting which should determine belief and action: "Reflection and the reference of any judgement to consciousness is held by Socrates in common with the Sophists." So what is it that makes Socrates' thought so distinctive in the history of philosophy so as to represent a 'turning point' in thought? The distinct contribution that Socrates brings to philosophy is that he synthesises the thought of Anaxagoras that *νους* is the principle of explanation of the world with the methods of criticism of the Sophists. To understand how that happened it would be useful to first look at Socrates' criticisms of Anaxagoras.

[18] HEGEL. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy:** Volume I, p. 357.
[19] HEGEL. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy:** Volume I, p. 384.

Hegel agrees with Socrates' well-known criticism of Anaxagoras that even though it seemed that Anaxagoras departed from the rest of the Pre-Socratics by identifying *νους* as the central principle through which the world is to be understood, rather than natural elements, he does not actually practice what he preaches. Rather what Anaxagoras did, according to Socrates, is stay within the mode of explanation of the rest of the Pre-Socratics:

> This wonderful hope was dashed as I went on reading and saw that the man made no use of Mind, nor gave it any responsibility for the management of things, but mentioned as causes air and ether and water and many other strange things.[20]

Though Socrates was hoping to find in Anaxagoras a new type of explanation of things by using thought and reason, he discovered that Anaxagoras in fact sticks with natural explanations, like most of the Greek philosophers until that time. Looking at the text from *Phaedo* will be helpful in seeing how Socrates seems to be reaching out for a new mode of explanation, and trying to give birth to a space of reasons autonomous from nature:

> That seemed to me much like saying that Socrates' actions are all due to his mind, and then in trying to tell the causes of everything I do, to say that the reason I am sitting here is because my body consists of bones and sinews, because the bones are hard and are separated by joints, that the sinews are such as to contract and relax, that they surround the bones along with flesh and skin which hold them together, then as the bones are hanging in their sockets, the relaxation and contraction of the sinews enable me to bend my limbs, and that is the cause of my sitting here with my limbs bent. Again, he would mention other such causes for my talking to you: sounds and air and hearing, and a thousand other such things, but he would neglect to mention the true causes, that after the Athenians decided it was better to condemn me, for this reason it seems best to me to sit here and more right to remain and to endure whatever penalty they ordered.[21]

In this passage we can see Socrates as pointing out for the first time in the history of philosophy a version of what is identified by McDowell as the opposition between the logical space of reasons and nature. In Socrates' case, as is evident from the passage quoted, what represents nature is not a particular type of account, i.e. a causal or law-like account; in fact Socrates refers to both accounts, the one that makes reference to nature and the one that makes reference to reasons, as causal accounts; what represents nature in Socrates' case is a

[20] PLATO. Phaedo. GRUBE, G.M.A. (Trans.). In: COOPER, J.M. (Ed). **Plato: Complete Works**. Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett, 97c.
[21] PLATO. Phaedo, 97c-98e.

particular ontology, namely bones, muscles, flesh, skin etc and their properties, being hard, being flexible, being held together etc. On the other hand, what characterises the logical space of reasons is again, to some extent, an ontology, namely Socrates, the Athenians and the properties of this ontology, namely the ability to act on the basis of reasons, of what is thought to be best. The whole Platonic dialogue in fact can be seen as an elucidation of the ontology of the soul and its eternal, immaterial nature in contradistinction to the body and its finite, perishable mode of being. However I think it is possible to talk intelligibly about the distinction between the two types of account (namely natural and reason-based) without going into the details regarding the corresponding ontology that Socrates is hinting at, namely the distinction between body and soul. It is also perhaps worth noting that the space of reasons that Socrates is carving up is not normative in the sense that we often think of normativity post-Kant, namely as carrying an obligation of some kind, a 'should'; what characterises Socrates' space of reasons instead is the idea that acting in accordance with reason is acting in the best way: the Athenians decided it was 'better' for them to condemn Socrates and Socrates decided it was 'best' for him to stay in Athens rather than to flee to Megara. It is also clear from Socrates' analysis of Anaxagoras that if it was νους that guided events in the world, then this would be, to borrow a phrase from Leibniz, the best of possible worlds.

So Socrates presents to us two distinct accounts, two distinct explanations, of the same state of affairs, namely his being in a cell in Athens and about to drink hemlock: On the one hand he presents what we can call a natural account, what he takes to be the way the pre-Socratic philosophers would have attempted to explain the situation, one which makes reference to bones, muscles etc and their functions, and on the other hand we have an account that makes reference to Socrates, to the Athenians and to the reasons on which they acted which brought about the state of affairs in question. In his commentary on this passage, Hegel clearly recognises that the two opposing logical spaces, that of nature and that of reasons, appear in clear distinction for the first time:

> Plato here correctly places the two kinds of reason and cause in opposition to one-another – the cause proceeding from ends, and the inferior, subject, and merely external causes of chemistry, mechanism etc – in order to show the discrepancy between them, as here exemplified in the case of a man with consciousness. Anaxagoras seems to define an end and to wish to proceed from it; but he immediately lets this go again and proceeds to quite external causes.[22]

[22] HEGEL. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy:** Volume I, p. 342.

There are two important things that take place here: The one is that Anaxagoras' *νους* ceases to be an abstract principle and becomes incorporated and instantiated in the minds of human beings as reason. However, despite the fact that reason is instantiated within the minds of individuals, it does not have the subjective characteristics of the Sophists' instrumental reason, one which accepts or rejects things depending on whether they are aligned with the desires of the individual, but has a universal/objective character. Reason here is not merely the capacity to weigh what is best for the particular individual, but capable of discovering what is good, objectively. Having access to the space of reasons, means having access to something public and objective:

> But the opposition into which Socrates and Plato were in their philosophy necessarily brought in regard to the Sophists was as follows: The objective produced through thought is at the same time in and for itself, thus being raised above all particularity of interests and desires, and being the power over them. Hence because on the one hand, to Socrates and Plato, the moment of subjective freedom is the directing of the consciousness into itself, on the other, this return is also determined as a coming out from particular subjectivity. [23]

So the difference between Socrates and the Sophists is that whereas for the Sophists the subjective basis of judgement implies particularity, for Socrates it implies universality. For the Sophists, what counts as a reason depends on the individual subject. In the case of Socrates however, a reason is something objective, even if it is accessed via the subject; humans can access an objective realm of reason via their subjectivity. However Hegel is cautious to point our that this objectivity of the space of reasons is not an 'external' objectivity, i.e. something that is merely imposed on the subjects from outside them, from the world or some other authority, but an objectivity that is, we might say, self-legislated and is objective in the sense that it is universal:

> Thus Socrates' principle is that man has to find from himself both the end of his actions and the end of the world, and must attain the truth through himself…But objectivity has been the significance of substantial universality, and not of external objectivity; thus truth is now posited as a product mediated through thought, while untrained morality as Sophocles makes Antigone say, is 'the eternal law of the Gods; And no one knew from whence it came'.[24]

[23] HEGEL. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy:** Volume I, p. 387.
[24] HEGEL. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy:** Volume I, p. 386.

The space of reasons, then, even though it is objective and universal, must be seen as a human creation, and not as a discovery.

Hegel is quick to spot that this creation of a space of reasons and the strict division between it and the realm of nature creates a problem, namely the difficulty of locating the space of reasons within the world. But if reasons, which don't have a place within nature, lead to actions within nature, that leads to a deep puzzlement:

> But the positive element in the conclusion of Socrates seems, on the other hand, to be unsatisfying, because it goes to the other extreme, namely to desire causes for nature which do not appear to be in it, but which fall outside of it in consciousness. For what is good and beautiful is partly due to the thought of consciousness as such; end or purposive action is mostly an act of consciousness and not of nature. But in so far as ends become positive in nature, the end, as end, on the other hand, falls outside of it in our judgement only; as such it is not in nature itself, for in it there are only what we call natural causes, and for its comprehension we have only to seek and show causes that are immanent. According to this, we distinguish, for instance, in Socrates the end and ground of his action as consciousness, and the causes of his actual action: and the latter we would undoubtedly seek in his bones, muscles, nerves etc.[25]

What Hegel is pointing out here is that rejecting natural processes as the causes of events, and at the same time locating the true causes or ground of events beyond the realm of nature creates a problem of unity: How does the ground of an action (Socrates' consciousness) get in touch with Socrates' body, which is what finally carries out the action? Socrates seems to have striped the locus of ends away from nature; ends can only be sought in the consciousness of individuals which in turn have to lie outside of nature, yet the effects of these ends 'can' be seen in nature. Hegel isn't satisfied with Socrates' criticism of Anaxagoras exactly because of this consequence. What Hegel seems to be suggesting is that the correct reaction to this kind of puzzle should be to bring back into the realm of nature the space of reasons that Socrates banished from it:

> We have not to represent the good or the end in so one-sided a manner that we think of it existing as such in the perceiving mind, and in opposition to what is; but set free from this form, we must take it in its essence as the Idea of all existence. The nature of things must be recognised in accordance with the Notion, which is the independent, unfettered consideration of things; and because it is that which things

[25] HEGEL. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy:** Volume I, p. 343.

> are in and for themselves, it controls the relationship of natural causes. The Notion is the end, the true cause, but that which recedes into itself; it is the implicitly existent first from which movement proceeds and which becomes result; it is not only an end present in the imagination before its actuality exists, but is also present in reality.[26]

Here we get a glimpse of Hegel's solution to the duality of mind and nature. It seems to be in tune more with Anaxagoras than Socrates as the whole world, including most importantly nature and the causal relations of its occupiers, is seen as guided by the Notion. A type of re-enchantment of nature seems to be taking place, for Hegel objects to seeing ends as residing merely in the individual's mind; ends, including the ultimate end, the 'Idea,' are present in all of reality. It looks like a naturalized Platonism, what McDowell calls his own position, where the Forms, or the 'Idea,' in Hegel's language, no longer lie outside of nature, as they do in Plato, but are immanent in it.

5. Hegel's Reconciliation and the End of Philosophy

The history of philosophy has to wait until the arrival of Hegel so that the tension between 'spirit' and nature can be resolved. In the 'Final Result' part of his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, an account of his own philosophy, Hegel explains how he sees this issue of the relationship between nature and 'spirit' as having been resolved:

> The present standpoint of philosophy is that the Idea is known in its necessity; the sides of this diremption, Nature and Spirit, are each of them recognized as representing the totality of the Idea, and not only as being in themselves identical, but as producing this one identity for themselves; and in this way, the identity is recognized as necessary. Nature, and the world or history of Spirit, are the two realities; what exists as actual Nature is an image of divine Reason; the forms of self-conscious Reason are also forms of Nature.[27]

It is clear, then, that Hegel's final approach to the nature-'spirit' relationship is anti-dualistic. Nature and 'spirit' might be separate in some sense ('two realities'), but they are also identical

[26] HEGEL. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy:** Volume I, p. 344.
[27] HEGEL. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy:** Volume III, trans. Haldane, E.S., Simson, F. H. (Ed.). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955, p. 545.

in another sense, they are part of the same one 'Idea,' and philosophy's task is to show that despite the appearance of their separateness, they are, in some sense, identical.

What we make of Hegel's solution on the separation between nature and 'spirit,' nature and the space of reasons will, of course, depend on the way Hegel's 'Idea' is interpreted. On this point I want to side with Robert Pippin and his interpretation of the 'Idea' as the logical space of intelligibility in the broadest possible sense. This greater logical space, according to how I read it, includes both the logical space of reasons, in its Sellarsian form, as well as a logical space of nature which includes explanations that make reference to natural processes, causes, laws etc. According to this reading, concerning the existence of a greater logical space of intelligibility, the 'Idea,' one that encompasses the different ways in which different parts of reality are intelligible, Hegel can be seen as doing the exact opposite of what McDowell does in *Mind and World*. In the attempt to resolve the tension between the space of reasons and nature, instead of broadening the category of nature, so that it can include the space of reasons, which is what McDowell does with his concept of second nature, Hegel is broadening the space of reasons (it becomes the 'Idea'), so that it can include nature. The 'Idea' is the space of reasons in a sense broader than the one of the space of reasons McDowell is concerned with, i.e. the logical space in which we ask and give reasons for our judgments and actions. The 'Idea' encompasses both this Sellarsian logical space of reasons as well as the logical space of nature. Hegel 'reminds us' that the two logical spaces represent the ways in which reality is intelligible, and the 'Idea' represents the unity of intelligibility.[28] Nature is not intelligible/rational 'in the same way' as, say, Socrates' actions are, but the logical space of nature is part of a greater logical space of reason: mechanism, chemism, teleology, and the Sellarsian logical space of reasons are not separated by an unbridgeable chasm; they are interdependent forms of intelligibility.

Of course one might argue that the two positions are not that different; that the Hegelian distinction between nature and 'spirit,' is the same as the distinction McDowell draws between *first nature* and *second nature*.[29] 'Spirit,' according to this reading, would mark an

[28] PIPPIN. **Hegel's Practical Philosophy**, p. 49-50. In his, PINKARD, T. Hegel's Phenomenology and Logic: an overview. In: Ameriks, K. (Ed.). **The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, Pinkard offers a similar reading to that of Pippin's, but identifies the *Idea* with the space of reasons in the more narrow, Sellarsian sense, leaving the logical space of nature outside of the scope of the *Idea*. Given that Hegel clearly sees both 'spirit' and nature as manifestations of the *Idea*, I side with Pippin's reading on this matter.

[29] First nature being that which can be given an exhaustive account in terms of the explanations offered by the natural sciences (mechanism, chemism and teleology, in Hegel's context), second nature being that which

opposition to first nature (the mechanical, chemical and biological nature, that Hegel speaks of), but could still be understood as nature, along the lines of the secondary sense we find in McDowell.[30] But what would it mean that 'spirit,' despite its character, which, as explained above, is to separate itself from nature, can be still understood as nature, in some secondary sense? If we follow the line of thought presented in Hegel's lectures, namely that the transition from nature to 'spirit' marks the transition to a new kind of reason-based intelligibility, 'spirit's' attempt to free itself from nature is an attempt to cease to be intelligible as a natural being and to become intelligible as a spiritual being. If this is the case, then calling 'spirit' nature creates a puzzle: In what way could 'spirit' remain intelligible as natural, even in a secondary sense, if Hegel's point is that nature and 'spirit' are to be understood differently? Perhaps one motivation for such a reading could be to remain within a naturalist framework. McDowell, despite revolting against a scientific form of naturalism, still wants to remain a naturalist, even if of a reformed kind. Attempting to show that the space of reasons, or 'spirit' in Hegel's case, can be understood as nature, in 'some' sense, is a way of remaining within the greater framework of naturalism, namely a framework that is committed to the idea that that reality is equivalent to nature, and hence that all explanations, all the ways in which reality is intelligible, are natural, in one sense or another.

However, Hegel's philosophical system as a whole can be seen as an alternative to naturalism, broadly construed, and so any attempt to read 'spirit' as natural in some sense, seems mistaken. One can see both McDowell and Hegel aiming at showing that the world and our accounts of it are unified in some way. McDowell, as a naturalist of sorts, attempts to show that this unity can be given by nature, with first and second nature being the two species of the overarching genus.[31] Hegel's way of showing how the world and our accounts of it are unified, however, heads in the opposite direction, namely attempting to show how reality is unified in the 'Idea,' that is, in the ultimate logical space of intelligibility and its expressions in nature and 'spirit.' Hegel, that is, does not attempt to show that 'spirit' and (first) nature are

requires an account in terms of the Sellarsian space of reasons, and which cannot be given an exhaustive account through natural scientific explanations.

[30] For a reading along these lines see PINKARD, T. **Hegel's Naturalism: Mind, Nature, and the Final Ends of Life**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

[31] For a similar comparison between Hegel and McDowell see QUANTE, M. Reconciling Mind and World: Some Initial Considerations for Opening a Dialogue between Hegel and McDowell. **The Southern Journal of Philosophy**, Volume 40, Issue 1, 2002, p 87-89.

both manifestations of nature, but attempts to show that they are both manifestations of the 'Idea,' manifestations of intelligibility.

The division of nature and 'spirit' then, that signifies the beginning of philosophy is, according to Hegel, finally overcome in his philosophy, thus, perhaps, signifying for the philosopher the end of the history of philosophy itself.

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