

Hegel and Naturalism

Alexis Papazoglou

I. Introduction: The Question of Naturalism and Hegel

In the recent Hegel literature there has been an effort to portray Hegel's philosophy as compatible with naturalism, or even as a form of naturalism (see for example Pippin 2008 and Pinkard 2012). Despite the attractions of such a project, there is, it seems to me, another, and potentially more interesting way of looking at the relationship of Hegel to naturalism. Instead of showing how Hegel's philosophy can be compatible with naturalism, I propose to show how Hegel's philosophy offers a challenge to naturalism. Naturalism has become the dominant ideology in much of contemporary analytic philosophy (Kim 2003: 84), but also within other disciplines. Evolutionary psychology and behavioral genetics, which attract a lot of media attention, attempt to explain the human mind and human behavior in purely naturalistic terms, usually in terms of the biological past and makeup of humans (Pinker 2002). Philosophy's task is, among other things, to examine the assumptions of human practices including its own. In that vein I am interested in showing how Hegel can be seen as someone offering a challenge to our contemporary philosophical culture and its underlying naturalist premise.

Of course that Hegel never explicitly talks about naturalism in his writings already presents us with the problem of risking anachronism. The other great problem is the fact that naturalism is an elusive philosophical position. There are a few different versions of the key theses of naturalism, so that if our aim is to diagnose Hegel's philosophy as naturalist or anti-naturalist it would seem we have to pick which version of naturalism we are going to work with. In diagnosing Hegel's relationship to naturalism I start with the simplest and most common version of naturalism, scientific naturalism. I then move on to liberal naturalism and finally discuss a historical version of naturalism as found in Plato. The strategy is to begin by showing how the two commitments of scientific naturalism, the ontological and epistemological theses, have no clear or obvious equivalents in Hegel's thought; rather, Hegel focuses instead on the issue of intelligibility or forms of explanation. In the context of these latter issues, Hegel's first way of challenging naturalism comes to view. Next, I discuss so-called liberal naturalism and specifically John McDowell's version of it, which can be seen as a step forward in the dialectic of naturalism, to the extent that it is concerned with the question of intelligibility, and in particular the intelligibility of the space of reasons and its relation to nature. Scientific naturalism, liberal naturalism objects, leaves no room within nature for the intelligibility that belongs to the space of reasons. McDowell's liberal naturalism addresses this issue

by bringing the space of reasons within a more generous conception of nature through the introduction of the concept of second nature. However, as I will show, Hegel's way of doing credit to the space of reasons is headed in the opposite direction from that of liberal naturalism. To show this I revisit the historical origins of the dichotomy between the space of reasons and nature as I find it in Plato's *Phaedo* and discuss Hegel's treatment of the relevant episode in the dialogue. Finally I investigate how Hegel's claim that *Geist* is prior to nature relates to a version of naturalism one can find in Plato's *Laws*. There, I show how for Hegel the issue of naturalism once more does not turn on ontology but on the question of intelligibility and forms of explanation and that for him the intelligibility of nature is subordinate to that of *Geist*. I conclude that Hegel is not a naturalist as he does not believe that what it is to give a complete account of reality is to give an account of reality as nature; such a complete account would require showing how reality is intelligible, a manifestation of the *Idea*. Furthermore, Hegel could not qualify as a naturalist since he sees the intelligibility of nature as subordinate to that of *Geist*.

II. Hegel and Scientific Naturalism

David Papineau gives a good summary of the key points of contemporary scientific naturalism: 'Reality is exhausted by nature, containing nothing 'supernatural'... [T]he scientific method should be used to investigate all areas of reality, including the 'human spirit' (Papineau 2009). In a recent volume that aims to challenge scientific naturalism the latter is again identified as having

...two important and characteristic themes... 1. An Ontological Theme: a commitment to an exclusively scientific conception of nature; 2. A Methodological Theme: a re-conception of the traditional relation between philosophy and science according to which philosophical inquiry is conceived as continuous with science. (De Caro M., Macarthur D. 2004: 3)

So scientific naturalism makes an ontological claim and a methodological claim. The ontological claim is that the domain of reality is equivalent to the domain of nature (and therefore contains no supernatural ontology) and that the ontology of nature is given by the sciences investigating nature. The methodological claim is that the way to acquire knowledge about reality, including the human spirit, is the scientific method. So even humanistic disciplines such as philosophy which in the past might have been seen as following a different method of investigation from the natural sciences, scientific naturalism claims that they should be methodologically continuous with the latter.

It is noteworthy that Papineau uses 'the human spirit' as something that might seem *prima facie* not to be natural, but that in fact scientific naturalism claims it is. When it comes to defending Hegel as compatible with naturalism, the arguments often turn on ontology and in particular the ontology of perhaps Hegel's most controversial concept,

Geist. The defense often comes in the form of arguing that *Geist*, though it might seem to be something ontologically different from nature, isn't in fact ontologically separate from it (Pippin 2008: 52, 61). For example, it is not the case that Hegel is a dualist a la Descartes, with nature being material and *Geist* immaterial. Hegel writes:

The soul is no separate immaterial entity...The question of the immateriality of the soul has no interest, except where, on the one hand, matter is regarded as something *true* and mind conceived as a *thing*, on the other. (Hegel, 1971: ¶ 389)

In this passage Hegel is making the point that the question of whether the soul (for him one of the stages of *Geist*) is material or not would only make sense against the assumption of the truth of materialism (which he goes on to challenge as an adequate metaphysics even for the natural sciences themselves) and the assumption that *Geist* is a thing. But *Geist* is not a thing, it's not an ontological entity that can accurately be described as material or immaterial. *Geist* is more aptly, as Pippin observes, understood as activity, the activity of certain natural beings (Pippin 2008: 42). But the activity that constitutes *Geist*, ontologically speaking, does not involve any non-natural beings. In that sense Pippin sees Hegel as being in agreement with a naturalism that claims that ontologically speaking the domain of reality is exhausted by nature. Pinkard follows a similar path but makes a further step claiming that not only does Hegel think that, ontologically, reality is identical to nature, but that furthermore, for Hegel nature's ontology is given by the natural sciences. Pinkard sites passages from Hegel that could have been written, as he says, by Quine, and proclaims that '[s]trikingly, Hegel simply has no problem with giving modern natural science the credit for finding out about the way the world is' (Pinkard 2005: 23). In the passage that Pinkard cites Hegel says that

Not only must philosophy be in agreement with our empirical knowledge of Nature, but the *origin* and *formation* of the Philosophy of Nature presupposes and is conditioned by empirical physics. (Hegel 1970: ¶ 246, Remark)

It is not obvious that for Hegel the ontology of nature is *given* to us by the natural sciences; the quotation can be read as simply stating that philosophy has to be *compatible* with the natural sciences, and have the findings of the natural sciences as its starting point¹. This does not mean that the ontology of any philosophical explanation of nature has to be *identical* with that of the natural sciences. A discussion of Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* and its *a priori* or *a posteriori* status would be needed in order to give an answer to the question of what Hegel thinks determines the ontology of nature². However I do not wish to enter this discussion here since the way I would like to portray Hegel's anti-naturalism does not depend on him challenging the authority of the natural sciences on

ontological matters. Either way, both Pippin and Pinkard agree that for Hegel the world does not contain any supernatural entities. This however makes for a rather minimal naturalism, one that is relatively uninformative and thus perhaps not worthy of the designation, at least as a substantive philosophical position.

The methodological side of scientific naturalism makes, I think, a bolder claim and is thus more controversial. With regards to this aspect of scientific naturalism, however, Hegel seems to either lack a position, or to refuse to engage in the discussion of methodology, seeing it as misguided. Pinkard points out the conspicuous lack of a discussion about the methodology of science by Hegel (Pinkard 2005: 19). We can perhaps see this as Hegel's refusal to engage directly with epistemological issues concerning methodology, something he makes clear he is against in the introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel 1977: 46-48). Following Pippin, we can see Hegel's Encyclopedia as trying to change the agenda from the traditional modern epistemological questions regarding the best method for acquiring knowledge, to a discussion about explanation and forms of intelligibility³. When it comes to the latter, Hegel does have things to say regarding the natural sciences and the forms of explanation that they employ.

In the *Science of Logic* Hegel investigates the forms of explanation that (as we find out in the *Philosophy of Nature*) he sees as belonging to the natural sciences: mechanism, chemism and teleology. Following the excellent analysis by James Kreines (Kreines 2004), I believe that Hegel's point in *The Science of Logic* is that both mechanism and chemism are in a way explanatory inadequate. This inadequacy is not to do with the fact that they can only explain certain natural phenomena and not others, but with the fact that they are *in themselves* incomplete explanatory accounts; they could not in *principle* be all that explanation amounts to. In *The Science of Logic* Hegel shows that mechanism and chemism cannot be the absolute; neither of these two forms of explanation can be the ultimate form of explanation. Hegel shows how mechanism and chemism are dependent on teleology in order for them to *count* as explanatory (Hegel 1969: 711-737). Kreines makes it clear that the point Hegel is making is that the limits of mechanism and chemism have to do with the intrinsic nature of these forms of explanation (Kreines 2004: 50). After all, this argument takes place in the *Logic*, before considering particular natural phenomena in the *Philosophy of Nature*.

So according to Hegel teleology is self-sufficiently explanatory whereas mechanism and chemism are not, as their explanatory status is dependent on teleology⁴. If teleology is given the highest status as a form of explanation, where does that leave Hegel in relation to scientific naturalism? The status of teleology is rather ambivalent, to say the least, in today's science. Whether there is a place for it still or not in biology is a debated issue, but the orthodox majority lies on the side that claims that teleology in biology is a thing of the past and no longer necessary for explaining biological phenomena⁵. But even if we were to concede that teleology does have a role to play in contemporary biology, there would be no hope of convincing contemporary scientific

naturalists that the mechanical, causal explanations that parts of physics offer are somehow dependent for their validity on teleological explanations. So in claiming that teleology is the queen of explanations and that all other explanations that are part of the natural sciences are dependent for their explanatory status on teleology, Hegel can be seen as rather distant from contemporary scientific naturalism. Moreover, as will become clear later in the context of the discussion of the priority of *Geist* over nature, even teleological explanations of natural phenomena are not absolute for Hegel because they depend on a form of explanation that belongs to *Geist* and not to nature.

III. Hegel, Liberal Naturalism and the Origins of a Dichotomy

Scientific naturalism has undergone a lot of criticism with the main complaint being that it creates various placement problems, making it difficult or impossible to see how truths about values, reasons, mathematical entities etc fit within nature, if the latter is seen as exhausted by the picture the natural sciences give us (Price 2011: 186-187). Here I will focus on McDowell's attempt to offer a more liberal naturalism, which attempts to overcome the problem of seeing how reason fits within nature, with the aim of assessing whether Hegel might qualify as a philosopher who would gladly join the club of liberal naturalists, as some commentators seem to think. The move away from scientific naturalism and towards McDowell's liberal naturalism can be seen as a move in Hegel's direction. The concern with methodology is dropped and although there is still, superficially, a concern with ontology in that liberal naturalism also wants to rule out anything supernatural, the main issue, at least in McDowell's case, becomes the relationship between the logical space of reasons and the logical space of the natural sciences. In other words, the issue becomes the relationship between two distinct kinds of intelligibility. However, despite the fact that Hegel's philosophy shares some of the concerns of liberal naturalism, ultimately it heads in the opposite direction.

McDowell's complaint about scientific naturalism is that its conception of nature as what the natural sciences reveal to us, is too narrow and leaves no room in nature for a *sui generis* space of reasons. The logical space of the natural sciences and the logical space of reasons, according to McDowell, both belong to nature, yet the logical space of reasons cannot in any way be reduced to/be explained by that of the natural sciences. McDowell attempts to overcome this 'paradox' of scientific naturalism by expanding the category of nature. Nature for McDowell should not be defined solely as the domain of investigation of the natural sciences, what McDowell calls first nature. Nature, according to McDowell, also includes what he calls second nature: the process of acquiring and our later possession of the skills and habits of being responsive to reasons in thought and action. This we acquire, in turn, through the acquisition of language and the appropriate training we receive by our community of speakers. Second nature is not within the reach of the logical space of the natural sciences, according to McDowell, because it cannot be explained in the terms that characterize the explanations of the natural sciences, yet it is

still a part of nature because it is an integral part of human life.⁶ Therefore the logical space of reasons, as the explanatory framework of second nature, is also part of nature (McDowell 1996: Lecture IV).

McDowell's way of bringing the space of reasons within the realm of nature has attracted severe criticism, some of which can be seen as damaging enough to undermine the solution that he offers. The main problem for many lies in the inability to show in what way first and second nature are connected, and thus are both part of the same domain, i.e. nature (See Gubeljic, Link, Muller and Osburg 1999, and Macdonald 2006). This is not the place to give an analysis of this criticism and assess whether McDowell's response is satisfactory. What concerns me here is whether Hegel can be seen as a liberal naturalist along the lines of McDowell or whether he follows a different path that avoids this objection. Does Hegel, like McDowell, believe in a first / second nature distinction, where the logical space of the natural sciences accounts for the first and the logical space of reasons accounts for the second? Some commentators have found in Hegel a conception of second nature much like McDowell's (See for example Pinkard 2012 and Testa 2010). Others disagree that there is a conception of second nature equivalent to that of McDowell's to be found in Hegel (See for example Halbig 2008). I will not enter this debate here. Where I think the issue as to whether Hegel is a liberal naturalist along the lines of McDowell or not turns on is the question of how he sees the relationship between the logical space of reasons and the logical space of nature, that is, whether he sees the latter as containing the former as McDowell does⁷.

McDowell suggests that the tension between the forms of explanation corresponding to the two logical spaces, that of reasons and that of nature, is a distinctly modern problem, the result of the rise of science and the way it conceptualizes the logical space of nature. However, I wish to flag a reminder from a well-known passage in Plato's *Phaedo* that suggests that the tension between natural and reason-based accounts of events, at least in some proto-form, is already present in antiquity. In the passage in question Socrates describes how he was let down by Anaxagoras who claimed to explain everything in terms of nous (mind), which Socrates interprets as explaining things in terms of what is best, but in practice proceeded to explain things by reference to natural entities and processes, like most of the natural philosophers before him would have done. He goes on to say that if Anaxagoras was to explain why he, Socrates, was in his cell in Athens about to receive the hemlock, he would do so by reference to his bones and muscles, their functions and how they all fit together, and he would omit, as Socrates says, the true causes of his situation, namely that the Athenians thought it was best to condemn him to death and that he in turn decided it was best not to escape and receive the punishment. In this passage we can see Socrates putting his finger on the issue that concerns McDowell, the opposition between the space of reasons and a logical space which represents nature⁸.

In the *Phaedo* Socrates simply rejects the natural account as the incorrect one and thinks it is obvious that the reasons-based account is the one which *really* explains why he is in the cell. Socrates says that the account that would have been offered by Anaxagoras

would neglect to mention the *true* causes of the situation, namely 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. (Plato 1997: 97c – 98e)

There seem to be important differences between contemporary philosophers and Socrates on this issue: Firstly, we have a greater reluctance to just brush aside the natural account as completely irrelevant. This reluctance might indeed have to do with the rise of modern natural science and its acquiring a position of authority, and so perhaps the claim that the worry about the relationship between explanations that belong to the logical space of nature and explanations that belong to the logical space of reasons is a modern problem might have some truth to it after all. Secondly, Plato’s Socrates is not at all reluctant to concede that the two different explanations, natural and reason-based, correspond to two different ontologies, the material body and the immaterial soul. However, in contrast, most contemporary philosophers do not want to find out that in offering reasons for our judgments and actions we commit ourselves to a metaphysics that is distinct from the part of ourselves that belongs to nature (our body). This is then why the relation between the logical space of reasons and the logical space of nature becomes a problem for us; we want to be able to do justice to both forms of explanation, without becoming Platonists. Liberal naturalism, I claim, is a response to this desire. What liberal naturalist philosophers like McDowell *really* want to show is how the two types of account, natural and reason-based, fit together; how they might be *unified* in providing us with a complete, non-bifurcated picture of ourselves. Showing that reason-based accounts are natural is one way of achieving this kind of unity. What might turn out to be the distinctly modern characteristic of this philosophical anxiety about the relation of the two different logical spaces might not be so much our stronger belief in the explanatory power of the logical space of nature (though that also), but our uneasiness with dichotomy. Unifying then one type of account with the other by seeing both of them as belonging to a greater logical space of nature (containing the forms of intelligibility of both first and second nature) is one way of dealing with this desire for unity and this is what, according to this interpretation, McDowell’s naturalism is offering. This suspicion that the motivation behind naturalism is a desire for unity is in line with Wilfrid Sellars’s diagnosis about philosophy. This might not come as a surprise given that it was Sellars who inspired McDowell’s investigations into the relationship between the logical spaces of nature and reasons. In ‘Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man’ Sellars portrays modern philosophy as attempting to see how the ‘every-day’ picture that we have of ourselves (e.g. as persons and rational agents) and the image of ourselves that

science offers us, can fit together. Philosophy's task is seen by Sellars as offering a 'stereoscopic view', a unified picture of the whole: 'The aim of philosophy, abstractly formulated, is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term' (Sellars 2007: 369) and later 'It is the 'eye on the whole' which distinguishes the philosophical enterprise. (Sellars 2007: 371)

If I am right that the philosophical impulse behind naturalism is the desire to see both these forms of explanation as ultimately part of the same explanatory framework, then Hegel is highly relevant to this project. Hegel is a paradigm of a philosopher who strongly opposed dichotomy and thought unity was the holy grail of philosophy; in fact he proclaimed that 'dichotomy is the source of the need for philosophy' (Hegel 1977 B: 89). However Hegel proceeds to resolve the tension between nature and the space of reasons in exactly the opposite way from that of McDowell's liberal naturalism. Hegel is very much aware of the importance of the *Phaedo* episode discussed above. In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, commenting on the relevant passage, he says the following:

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. (Hegel 1974: 342)

Hegel applauds Plato for setting up the two distinct accounts in opposition to one another. He says that the first account offers what he calls 'merely external causes' which he identifies with mechanism and chemism. We can in turn identify this first type of account with the one belonging to the logical space of nature, for these are the forms of explanation that Hegel assigns to the natural sciences of physics and chemistry. Hegel identifies the second account with 'the cause proceeding from ends', in other words a teleological kind of account, which we can in turn identify with the kind of account that belongs to the logical space of reasons (a reason can be identified as a type of end). One might protest and say that for Hegel teleology is a form of explanation that also belongs to the logical space of nature since, for him, it is the form of explanation of biology. Here, however, the ends under question are Socrates' reasons and not ends to do with his biology.

So we can see Hegel indentifying the opposition between the two logical spaces in the *Phaedo* and also siding with Socrates in believing in the superiority of the explanation that is offered by the space of reasons, the explanation from ends, as opposed to the inferior, merely external causes that the logical space of nature offers. However, Hegel is quick to spot that this division between the space of reasons and the realm of nature that Socrates seems to have introduced creates a problem, namely the difficulty of locating the space of reasons within nature. If what explains Socrates' actions is not something that

belongs to the logical space of nature, but to the logical space of reasons, then how can reasons be explanatory of what takes place within nature, namely Socrates' actions?

'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' (Hegel 1974: 343)

Hegel correctly spots that this division of logical spaces seems to banish reason, or ends, from nature. The ends in question here seem to lie outside of nature, and in the consciousness or soul of the individual, Socrates. McDowell's worry regarding the place of reasons within nature is already there, identified clearly by Hegel. However, it doesn't look like Hegel attempts to solve this problem in the same way McDowell does. Hegel critiques the way Socrates chose to correct Anaxagoras. For the Socrates of the *Phaedo* that which is paradigmatically explanatory, *the end*, the good, lies outside of nature, it is part of a separate domain, that of the immaterial, eternal soul, yet that end is supposed to be able to determine events *within* nature. Hegel sees this divide between the natural world, where actions take place, and the world of ends, which is one lying outside of nature, as problematic and wants to bring back into the realm of nature the ends 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. (Hegel 1974: 344)

Here we get a glimpse of Hegel's solution to the duality of reason and nature. It is in tune more with the intentions of Anaxagoras than the *Phaedo's* Socrates, as the whole world, including most importantly nature and the causal relations of its occupiers, is seen as guided by the *Idea*. 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, like in Plato, but are immanent in it. Here of course the way Hegel's *Idea* is interpreted will lead to radically different interpretations of Hegel's solution. 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 sense. This greater logical space includes both the logical space of reasons as well as the logical space of nature.

According to what is being suggested here concerning the existence of a greater logical space of intelligibility, the *Idea*, which 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 (Pippin 2008: 49-50). 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, (natural) teleology, and the Sellarsian logical space of reasons are not separated by an unbridgeable chasm; they are interdependent forms of intelligibility. As I will show in the next section, just as Hegel shows how mechanism and chemism are dependent on teleology, all three are in turn dependent on the Sellarsian logical space of reasons, or for Hegel, *Geist*.

IV. Hegel and Naturalism in Plato’s *Laws*

In his paper ‘Three Sorts of Naturalism’, a clear engagement with McDowell’s paper ‘Two Sorts of Naturalism’ where he first introduces the distinction between scientific naturalism and his own liberal version, Hans Fink revisits a different Plato dialogue to offer an account of the historical origins of naturalism, Plato’s *Laws* (Fink 2008). In the *Laws* two competing conceptions of nature appear. One is that which is heralded by the materialists of the age, who claim that something is natural if it has come into existence by inert force, chance or necessity. That which is natural is ontologically prior with respect to that which has come to be through art, or law, or nurture.

The Athenian in the dialogue challenges the conception of nature that the materialists offer. He argues that what is essential in the definition of nature is that it represents what is primary in existence, caused by its own inner force and by nothing else. The Athenian then argues that it is the soul that is ontologically prior, and so nature should be equated with the soul or the mind. As Fink points out, this seems to lead to a rampant Platonism, perhaps in this case more accurately described as idealism, where the natural world (under its every-day conception) is somehow posited by or dependent for its reality on the soul, or mind. So the *Laws* present two conceptions of nature. Both of them agree on the premises that:

1. Nature is that which is prior
2. Being prior means being ontologically prior; that which causes itself to come into existence and that on which every other aspect of reality depends.

3. What is ontologically prior is also explanatory prior. Thus, whatever ends up counting as nature will also be that through which the rest of reality will be explained.

The disagreement between the materialists and the Athenian is about what actually is ontologically prior:

4. The materialists claim that matter in its various random configurations is that which is ontologically prior

5. The Athenian claims that it is the soul/mind which is ontologically prior.

We can see how the two opposing conceptions of nature can be mapped onto two corresponding conceptions of naturalism, broadly following the definition of scientific naturalism as the position that reality is exhausted by nature and that all of reality, including the human spirit, is to be understood through the methods appropriate for understanding nature¹⁰. The naturalism that the *Laws*' materialists represent holds that the soul/mind/human spirit is to be understood in continuity with the rest of material reality, and therefore as a product of 'chance, inert force and necessity', the 'scientific' principles of the time, much like contemporary scientific naturalists claim are sufficient for understanding the human spirit. The naturalism of the Athenian on the other hand would hold that the human spirit is to be understood as just that, its reality not derivative, dependent on something else and hence self-explanatory. On the contrary, according to this position, it would be nature, in the usual sense of the term, whose explanation would depend on the human spirit.

Thinking of contemporary naturalism against the background of Plato's *Laws* we can see how the issue of priority is linked to the discussion: Contemporary naturalism can be interpreted as claiming that nature is ontologically prior to the human spirit. Following again the above analysis of Plato's *Laws*, naturalism can be interpreted as claiming that nature, because it is ontologically prior to the human spirit, has also explanatory priority; the human spirit is to be explained in the terms that explain nature. Naturalism therefore claims an ontological and explanatory priority of nature over the human spirit.

Given this way of framing the naturalist's agenda, as one of the ontological and explanatory priority of nature, a new way of seeing Hegel's opposition to naturalism becomes available. For Hegel claims, contrary to naturalism, that it is spirit or *Geist* that is prior to nature, and not the other way around. In the introduction to the *Philosophy of Spirit* Hegel makes the following statement regarding the relationship between nature and spirit:

From our point of view Spirit has for its presupposition Nature, of which it is the truth and for that reason its absolute prius. In this its truth Nature is vanished, and Spirit has resulted as the 'Idea' entered on possession of itself. (Hegel 1971: ¶ 381)

The elucidation that follows makes the statement a bit clearer:

...the procession of mind or Spirit from Nature must not be understood as if Nature were the absolute immediate and the *prius*, and the original positing agent, Spirit, on the contrary were only something posited by Nature; rather it is Nature which is posited by Spirit, and the latter is the absolute *prius*. (Hegel 1971: ¶ 381 *Zusatz*)

This claim, that spirit is prior to nature, sounds uncannily like the statement of the Athenian in Plato's *Laws* making Hegel look like a Platonist. However Hegel differs in a crucial manner from the *Laws*' Athenian: In the *Laws* ontological and explanatory priority go hand in hand; in Hegel, I claim, these two issues come apart.

Robert Pippin referring to the text book interpretation of Hegel, almost certainly having Charles Taylor's *Hegel* book in mind, says the following:

For Hegel (it is some times said) reason, die Vernunft, is the underlying noetic structure of reality, the structure of Divine Mind or Cosmic Spirit, developing or expressing itself externally (nature) and returning to itself in a final self consciousness (spirit). (Pippin 2008: 42)

The claim seems to be that reality is a manifestation, the development, the expression of a Cosmic Spirit, or *Geist* in Hegel's language, and so nature is also simply a manifestation of this Cosmic Spirit and does not have reality in itself as nature. Taylor's interpretation, it is fair to say, plays up the religious undercurrents in Hegel's philosophy and so *Geist* is presented as a reinterpretation of the Christian God:

[F]or Hegel, the Absolute is subject. That which underlies and manifests itself in all reality, what for Spinoza was substance....Hegel understands as spirit. But spirit or subjectivity is necessarily embodied. Hence *Geist* or God cannot exist separately from the universe which he sustains and in which he manifests himself (Taylor 1975: 23).

The bottom line seems to be that for Taylor, nature is a manifestation of *Geist*. So nature, even though it initially appears to be an 'other' to which subjectivity and *Geist* are opposed, it turns out that nature is also *Geist*, expressed differently: 'The general structure of the universe ... is thus determined by virtue of its being the embodiment of *Geist*' (Taylor 1975: 27).

If we follow Taylor's reading of Hegel the latter could only come out to be a naturalist in the reversed Platonist sense in which mind/*Geist* is ontologically prior and all the rest of reality a manifestation of it. But Hegel is not a Platonist; if anything, he is an Aristotelian. Writing on Hegel's absolute idealism Frederic Beiser reminds us of the

Aristotelian distinction between that which is first in order of explanation from that which is first in order of being. Beiser writes:

To say that the universal is prior to the particular does not mean that it is a cause prior in time to the particular; rather it is only to say that it is the reason or purpose of the thing. This reason or purpose does not exist as such prior to the thing but comes into existence only through it, embodying itself through the complete and full development of the thing. (Beiser 2005: 56-57)

I think this distinction between first in the order of being (first ontologically) and first in the order of explanation is also the crucial one for understanding the relationship between nature (first in the order of being) and *Geist* (first in the order of explanation) in Hegel. The claim is that *Geist*, although it does not have ontological priority over nature, although it is not what creates nature or what nature depends on for its existence, nevertheless has a priority in the order of explanation or intelligibility: the way nature is intelligible is somehow subordinate to the way *Geist* is intelligible. One way to interpret this priority of the intelligibility of *Geist* over that of nature is along the same lines that mechanism was shown to be dependent on teleology in the context of the *Logic*: One must already be relying on the form of intelligibility of *Geist* if one is to find nature intelligible. The reason for this is that in order to find *anything* intelligible, one has to have certain criteria about what *counts* as intelligible, and these criteria are only available within the space of intelligibility of *Geist*, the space of reasons. In order to find a natural phenomenon intelligible in a particular way, one must have available reasons for why that particular natural phenomenon is intelligible, for example, only through teleology rather than, say, mechanism. Although Hegel does not make this argument explicitly in the *Philosophy of Spirit* where the claim for the priority of *Geist* is made, we can extrapolate from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Logic* an argument in this direction.

Of course Hegel offers another answer to the questions: 'In what way could *Geist* be prior to nature? How can *Geist* have explanatory priority to nature?' The answer that Hegel seems to want give is that *Geist* is the end of nature. Hegel wants to say that the relation between *Geist* and nature can only be explained teleologically. This undermines the explanatory priority of nature: in teleology it is the end that has the explanatory priority and the end of nature is *Geist*: 'Spirit, just because it is the goal of Nature, is *prior* to it...' (Hegel 1970: ¶ 376)

If we read Hegel as literally claiming that *Geist* is the end of nature, we are entering a metaphysical terrain that is hard to convince a contemporary audience to join. This is presumably because of the influence of Darwin's theory of evolution which shows how it is possible for human life to come about through a series of accidental mutations, without any grand plan of nature in place. However, one need not read this claim about *Geist* being the end of nature literally. As Pippin says

[T]here is little evidence that [Hegel] understands teleology in any intentional or realist way, as if nature must be understood as the product of divine design, or as if there were some sort of efficient causal force in the world, pulling the universe forward towards full self-development, as if some eventual end-state drew everything toward it and needed to be invoked to explain what happens. (Pippin 2008: 44-45)

Here is one way of making sense of Hegel's claim regarding *Geist* being the end of nature: Hegel's thought on teleology is influenced by Aristotle (See Ferrarin 2001, 214-217). In Aristotle, the end of something coincides with its form, and the form of something for Aristotle is that which makes it what it is, that which makes it intelligible as a being. So the claim that *Geist* is the end of nature can be read as the claim that *Geist* is what 'makes' nature what it is, what makes it intelligible. Under this reading we're back to my interpretation regarding the priority of *Geist* over nature in terms of intelligibility. *Geist* makes nature what it is, not at the ontological level, as Taylor's reading would suggest, but at the level of intelligibility. *Geist* doesn't posit nature, ontologically speaking, but nature is only intelligible from within and with respect to *Geist*.

Hegel then is not a naturalist, at least in the way of scientific naturalism or McDowell's liberal naturalism. He is not a scientific naturalist as he believes he can show how the forms of explanation of the natural sciences are, in the final analysis, not absolutely explanatory; they are not self-grounding, self-justifying explanations. Natural-scientific explanations depend on *Geist* and its mode of intelligibility in order to count as genuinely explanatory, to be justified as explanatory. Hegel is also not a liberal naturalist, even though John McDowell's version of liberal naturalism moves the discussion towards Hegelian ground by focusing on the issue of different forms of intelligibility, natural - scientific and rational, and their relationship. As I tried to show, although Hegel might share what I diagnosed as liberal naturalism's revulsion from dichotomy and its desire for unity, he ultimately proceeds to satisfy that philosophical desire in exactly the opposite way from that of McDowell. Instead of unifying the seemingly different logical spaces of reason and nature under a broader conception of nature, Hegel unifies them under a broader conception of reason, or intelligibility: the *Idea*. Hegel sees both nature and the Sellarsian space of reasons as manifestations of the *Idea*, the ultimate logical space of intelligibility. Finally, Hegel's claim of the priority of *Geist* over nature also puts him in opposition with naturalism, without however risking an undesirable Platonist metaphysics. *Geist* has explanatory priority over nature, but is not ontologically prior to it. However, despite his anti-naturalist orientation, Hegel manages to achieve a central goal of naturalism (as I presented it in section III), that is, to see how nature and the human spirit can be brought together under the same domain: nature and *Geist* are manifestations of the *Idea*, they are both ways in which intelligibility manifests itself; what is more, they are linked by the fact that nature's intelligibility is dependent on that of *Geist*.

Alexis Papazoglou

University of Cambridge

ajp83@cam.ac.uk

Notes

¹ The philosophical investigation into nature would have to begin by reflecting on what the natural sciences tell us about nature, something which however can then be re-conceptualized and left behind.

² For useful discussions on this see Stone 2005, chapter 1, and Ferrini 2007, pp. 1-22.

³ 'The idea is that the structure "Logic – Philosophy of Nature – Philosophy of Spirit" is an attempt at comprehending the possibility of all determinate intelligibility... This includes but is not exhausted by the issue of what makes for a satisfying explanation of a phenomenon' (Pippin 2008: 49).

⁴ Of course teleology is not the Absolute in the *Logic*, there are other categories that follow, but in terms of forms of explanation that belong to the natural sciences, it is the highest up in the hierarchy

⁵ For a useful discussion see Arie's (2008) 'Teleology'. Arie draws a distinction between Platonic and Aristotelian teleology, much like Hegel does, and explores the question of whether Darwin's theory of evolution puts an end to both forms or just the Platonic one. He concludes that, eventually, Darwin's theory rejects both Platonic and Aristotelian teleology.

⁶ McDowell attracted criticism (Macdonald 2006) for having proposed in *Mind and World* that the form of explanation of the natural sciences is law-like, since not all natural sciences offer explanations of that form. McDowell conceded to the objection (McDowell 2006) but insisted on the *sui generis* intelligibility of the space of reasons. Perhaps one way of doing this would be to point out that the relationship of justification, crucial to the space of reasons, cannot be found in the conceptual apparatus of any natural science.

⁷ For McDowell the space of reasons becomes a part of the logical space of nature, reconceived as containing both first and second nature intelligibility

⁸ Explaining a state of affairs in terms of its natural components and their natural functions is a natural explanation. Explaining one's action in terms of acting in the best possible way, is explaining one's action in terms of reasons

⁹ Here we can see how Hegel's approach avoids the problem McDowell faced with connecting first and second nature: The intelligibility of nature and the intelligibility of the space of reasons are connected to one another through a relation of explanatory dependence.

¹⁰ There is nothing quite equivalent to the scientific method in this context, but we can extrapolate and say that whichever is the right method/principles of understanding nature, those same methods apply to the whole of reality.

Bibliography

- Arie, A. (2008) 'Teleology', in David L. Hull and Michael Ruse (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Philosophy of Biology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Beiser, F. (2005), *Hegel*, New York: Routledge.
- De Caro, M., Macarthur, D. (2004), "Introduction: The Nature of Naturalism" in Mario De Caro and David Macarthur (eds.), *Naturalism in Question*. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press
- Ferrarin, A. (2001), *Hegel and Aristotle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ferrini, C. (2007), 'Hegel's Confrontation With The Sciences In 'Observing Reason': Notes For A Discussion', *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*, vol. 55/56:1-27.
- Fink, H. (2008), 'Three Sorts of Naturalism', in Jakob Lindgaard (ed.), *John McDowell: Experience, Norm and Nature*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gubeljic M., Link S., Muller P. and Osburg G. (1999), 'Nature and Second Nature in McDowell's Mind and World' in Marcus Willaschek (eds.) *John McDowell: Reason and Nature, Lecture and Colloquium in Münster*. Münster: LIT – Verlag.
URL=<<http://web.uni-frankfurt.de/fb08/PHIL/willaschek/mcdowellkolloq.pdf>>
- Halbig, C. (2008), 'Varieties of Nature in Hegel and McDowell' in Jakob Lindgaard (ed), *John McDowell: Experience, Norm and Nature*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hegel, G.W.F. (1969), *Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller. Amherst, New York: Humanity Books.
- Hegel, G.W.F. (1970), *Philosophy of Nature: Part Two of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1830), trans. A.V. Miller from Nicolin and Poggeler's edition (1959) and from the *Zusätze* in Michelet's text (1847). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hegel, G.W.F. (1971), *Philosophy of Mind: Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. William Wallace, together with the *Zusätze* in Boumann's text (1845), trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hegel, G.W.F. (1974), *Lectures on the History of Philosophy: Volume I*, trans. Haldane, E.S., Simson, F. H. (ed). New York: Humanities Press.
- Hegel, G.W.F. (1977 A), *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hegel, G.W.F. (1977 B), *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, trans. W. Cerfand and H.S. Harris, Albany: State University of New York.
- Kreines, J. (2004), 'Hegel's Critique of Pure Mechanism and the Philosophical Appeal of the Logic Project', *European Journal of Philosophy* 12 (1): 38–7.
- Macarthur, D. and DeCaro, M. (2010), 'Introduction: Science, Naturalism and the Problem of Normativity' in DeCaro, M and Macarthur D (eds.), *Naturalism and Normativity*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Macdonald, G. (2006), 'The Two Natures: Another Dogma?' in Cynthia Macdonald and Graham Macdonald (eds.), *McDowell and his Critiques*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- McDowell, J. (1996), *Mind and World*. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press
- McDowell, J. (1998), 'Two Sorts of Naturalism' in *Mind, Value and Reality*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- McDowell, J. (1999), 'Responses' in Marcus Willaschek (ed.) *John McDowell: Reason and Nature, Lecture and Colloquium in Münster*. Munster: LIT Verlag.
URL=<http://web.uni-frankfurt.de/fb08/PHIL/willaschek/mcdowellkolloq.pdf>
- McDowell, J. (2006), 'Response to Graham Macdonald', Cynthia Macdonald and Graham Macdonald (eds.), *McDowell and his Critiques*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Papineau, D. (2009), 'Naturalism', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2009 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.),
URL=<<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2009/entries/naturalism/>>.
- Pinkard, T. (2005), 'Speculative Naturphilosophie and the Development of the Empirical Sciences: Hegel's Perspective.' In Gary Gutting (ed.), *Continental Philosophy of Science*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Pinkard, T. (2012), *Hegel's Naturalism: Mind, Nature, and the Final Ends of Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pinker, S. (2002), *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature*. New York: Viking.
- Pippin, R. (2008), *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Plato (1997), 'Phaedo'. Grube G.M.A. (trans.), in Cooper, J.M. (ed.), *Plato: Complete Works*. Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett.
- Price, H. (2011), *Naturalism Without Mirrors*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sellars, W. (2007), 'Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man' in Kevin Sharp and Robert Brandom (eds.), *In the Space of reasons: Selected Essays of Wilfrid Sellars*. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Stone, A. (2005), *Petrified Intelligence: Nature in Hegel's Philosophy*. Albany: State University of New York Press
- Taylor, C. (1975), *Hegel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Testa, I. (2010), 'The Universal Form of Spirit: Hegel on Habit and Sociality' in Andreas Arndt, Paul Cruysberghs and Andrzej Przyłębski (eds.) *Hegel-Jahrbuch 2010: Geist? Erster Teil*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.