

# Interpretation

A JOURNAL OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Summer 2022

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# Interpretation

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## Hegel's Philosophy of Nature as Foundational for His Political Philosophy

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Commentary on Hegel's political philosophy has largely circumvented his philosophy of nature—which Hegel himself placed at the heart of his philosophic opus. *The Nature-Philosophy* (*Die Naturphilosophie*) is literally the central (and longest) of the three parts of Hegel's most complete published expression of his philosophy as a whole—the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. I wish to suggest that greater attention to Hegel's philosophy of nature, especially in its complementarity and contrast with the philosophy of nature elaborated by Hegel's great teacher, Aristotle, will shed crucially needed light on Hegel's understanding of human nature and humanity's place in nature, not least as a political animal. Above all, I submit, such a comparative study is essential to our better understanding of Hegel's—as well as Aristotle's—conception of human *individuality*, of the individuality of the statesman and citizen, and of the supreme form of individuality in the consciousness which constitutes the highest norm for humanity's civic existence. It is my impression that too much of the discussion of Hegel's political philosophy has tended to eclipse the fact that for Hegel, even more than for Aristotle, the highest purpose of civic existence is the cultivation of the life of individual philosophers dedicated to study of the whole of being.

### NATURE AS “RIDDLE AND PROBLEM”

For one coming to Hegel's philosophy of nature from that of Aristotle, what is most amazing and thought provoking is Hegel's answer to his own massive question, “What is nature?” Hegel articulates with unrivalled clarity the deeply perplexing dimension of this question—a “riddle and problem”

which, Hegel ventures to suggest, “is why Aristotle said that philosophy started from wonder.”<sup>1</sup>

In studying nature simply to understand it, we first seek “to step back from the natural things, to leave them as they are,” and to conform our understanding to them. “We thereby begin from sensory knowledge of nature.” But the senses by themselves give us only awareness of *particulars*—an awareness that we share with other animals. As humans, however, distinguished by thinking spirit, we immediately perceive, and express in language, each sensed particular as an *instance* of a universal class or kind of entity or attribute: “this here” is perceived to be *a horse*, or *a dog*, or *a red color*, and so forth. Thus, particular natural entities (which for Hegel are, most concretely, plants and animals)<sup>2</sup> and their particular attributes immediately “acquire the determination of universality for us.” But this means that “the more thought enters into our representation of things, the less do the things retain their naturalness,” as “their singularity and immediacy.” Hegel expresses the loss in an uncharacteristically elegiac register: “all-pervading thought impoverishes the wealth of infinite natural shapes; their springtime dies, their play of colors fades.” The “sound of life in nature is silenced in the stillness of thought”; nature’s “warm fullness, that gives itself a thousand delightfully wonderful shapes, shrivels into arid forms and shapeless generalities that resemble a murky northern fog” (9.16 [N 7, sec. 246]).

<sup>1</sup> 9.12 (N 3). Citations of Hegel’s works, other than the lectures on the history of philosophy and on the philosophy of history, will be to volume and page of the handy, paperback *Werke*, 20 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), followed by parentheses with page numbers of widely available English versions (though I have altered the translations in my quotations, for more literal accuracy), with titles of those translations abbreviated as follows:

N = *Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature, Part Two of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2007);

EM = *Philosophy of Mind: Part III of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971);

EL = *The Encyclopaedia Logic* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1991);

SL = *The Science of Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010);

PhS = *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

The lectures on the history of philosophy, abbreviated as LHPh, and the lectures on the philosophy of world history, abbreviated as LPhWH, will be cited by volume and page of *Vorlesungen: Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1983–), followed by parentheses with volume and pages of *Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825–6*, vols. 2 and 3 (Oxford: Clarendon, 2007 and 2009) and of *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> “The *merely contingent* things of the world are a very abstract determination. The organic formations and their goal-determinations [*Zweckbestimmungen*] belong to a higher circle, *to life*”—8.134 (EL 98, sec. 50); see also 9.114 (N 89–90, sec. 275): “it is absurd to regard the stars as superior to, e.g. plants; the sun is still not concrete”; “only light-matter is present in sun and stars.” Hegel for the most part ignores Aristotle’s characterization of the heavenly bodies as divine (LHPh 8.71–74 [2.237–40]).

But what is worse, “we also find that the theoretical approach is self-contradictory, inasmuch as it seems to bring about the direct opposite of what it intends”: for “we want to know the nature that really is, not something that is not”; but “instead of leaving her as she is, and taking her as she is in truth, instead of simply perceiving her, we make her into something quite different.” Insofar as “we think things, we make them into something universal; but things are singular, and the Lion in general [*überhaupt*] does not exist.” We “make them something subjective, produced by us, belonging to us, and indeed as human properties: for natural things do not think, and are not mental presentations [*Vorstellungen*] or thoughts.” So, “it might seem that what we are beginning is thus made impossible.” We have, “with this position, straightway established a duality, object and subject, and their separation, a something on this side and a something beyond.” Our “intention, however, is much rather to get hold, to grasp nature, to make her ours, so that she is not something alien, beyond.” So “here, then, comes the difficulty: how do we, as subjects, get over to objects?” This, therefore, “is the point at which the issue becomes: the nature of cognition—this is the interest of philosophy.”<sup>3</sup>

#### ARISTOTLE'S ARTICULATION OF THE PERPLEXITY

Aristotle would certainly recognize Hegel's “riddle and problem”; and for Aristotle this entails and signals permanent limits on the human capacity fully to penetrate comprehendingly what exists and is to be rationally analyzed as “nature” (*physis*) and “substantial being(s).”<sup>4</sup> For “scientific

<sup>3</sup> 9.16–17 (N 7–8, sec. 246). See also Hegel's discussion of medieval nominalism in LHPH 9.41–42 (3.51): “this is now the issue, and it is of great interest”; “this a much higher version of the antithesis than as the ancients knew it.” Cf. Sebastian Rand, “Hegel's Philosophy of Nature,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Hegel*, ed. Dean Moyar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 390–91 and n20. Hegel in LHPH 9.78 (3.92) cites Bacon's formulation of the problem in *Novum Organum* 2.2–3. For Kant's formulation, see his *Vorlesungen über Rationaltheologie*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Akademie ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1972), 28.996: “Our understanding can do nothing else than through universal indications to know things; this is, however, a limitation of human understanding, and this is not found with God—in Whom we think the maximum of understanding, which is, an intuiting understanding [*einen anschauenden Verstand*].”

<sup>4</sup> *ousia(i)*—the fullest sublunar forms of which are for Aristotle plants and animals: see esp. *Metaphysics* (henceforth M; all translations from Greek are my own) 1032a19–20, 34a4, 23, 40b5–16, 43a5, b21–23, 69a32, 70a8, 71a1–3, 77a21–23; compare 1017b10–25, 20a20, 28b10ff., 42a8ff.; *On Soul* 412a11–13. The nonartificial lifeless entities can be “much, but not many” (M 1056b16); “none of them is a one, but they are like a heap [*sōros*], until they are metabolized [*pephthē*] and there comes into being some one out of them” (M 1040b8–10). For the (traditionally underestimated) importance of Aristotle's biological works and thought in illuminating and clarifying his metaphysics and ontology, see esp. Montgomery Furth, *Substance, Form and Psyche: An Aristotelean Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

knowing is of the universal,” but “the universal is not substantial being.”<sup>5</sup> “Substantial being of each is that which is unique to each, which does not belong to another, while the universal is common/shared” (M 1038b10 and context). “Substantial being is said, most authoritatively and primarily and emphatically, to be what is neither said to be *of* nor *in* some substratum: for example, ‘the particular human,’ or, ‘the particular horse.’” Of course, in addition, “*secondary* substantial beings are spoken of—the species to which the primary substantial beings are said to belong, and also the genera of these species, such as: the particular human being belongs in the species of the human, and the genus of the species is the animal.” But then these *secondary* substantial beings, like “all the other” qualifications, are spoken “either *of* the primary substantial beings as substratum or *in* them as substratum” (*Categories* 2a11–15, 2a35–b2). “Every substantial being seems to signify a particular: as regards the *primary* substantial beings, it’s indisputable and true that it signifies a particular; for the thing being made clear is indivisible and one in number; but as regards the *secondary* substantial beings, by the way one speaks it *appears* similarly that the declaration signifies a particular, when one speaks of ‘human’ or ‘animal’—but not truly, but rather that signifies” a “what sort/quality [*poion*] of substantial being” (ibid. 3b10–18). Now “of the perceptible substantial beings as particulars there is neither definition nor demonstration, because they have matter, of which the nature is such that it can both exist and not exist; therefore,” Aristotle somewhat grimly adds, “all of the particular instances of them are perishable” (M 1039b28–31). Aristotle more engagingly adds: “If someone were to define you, he would say: ‘an animal, lean, or white, or something else’—which would apply also to another” (M 1040a13–14). This fact, “that all scientific knowledge is of the universal, so that necessarily the first principles of the beings are universal, and not separate substantial beings, is especially perplexing among the things that have been said,” and “is on one hand true, as said, but is on the other hand not true.” For “scientific knowledge, like scientific knowing,” in “actuality [*energeia*] defines a particular and is of a defined particular.” Thus “sight sees color in general [only] incidentally—because this particular color which it is seeing is color—and the grammarian contemplates this particular A, as an A” (M 1087a11–21). It “is impossible to have a view of the universals except through induction,” and “it is impossible to carry out induction for

<sup>5</sup> M 1086b33 and 1087a2; see also 1039b27ff., as well as 1003a7–10, 1036a2–8, 1026b10 with context, 1026a24–31; also Walter Leszl, “Knowledge of the Universal and Knowledge of the Particular in Aristotle,” *Review of Metaphysics* 26 (1972): 278–81, who refers us to Hermann Bonitz, *Index Aristotelicus* (Berlin: Reimer, 1870), 20b25–28 and 279a22–25.

those lacking sense perception; for the sense perception is of the individuals; for it is not given to scientific knowledge to grasp them" (*Posterior Analytics* 81b2–9).

Hegel's "gulf" is thus anticipated by Aristotle. The world of concern to us, the world of *pragmata*, the world in which we live, as an intelligible world, is largely, but by no means entirely, constituted by humanity's mind and its universals—engaging with and interpreting particular substantial beings that are perceived as "sensory magnitudes" that in their *uniquely divergent* individuality are in some measure opaque to mind with its insuperable universals, including the categories of the sensory.<sup>6</sup>

And the gulf widens, Aristotle indicates, when we realize that we have no direct access through either perception or intellectual intuition to what we can infer is likely to be some sort of spatially extended, moving, material substratum underlying even the four material elements—earth, air, water, and fire—which Aristotle (and Hegel following Aristotle) designates as the perceivable universal material for all earthly sensory magnitudes. Aristotle points to this problem of the deeper substratum, I believe, by passages that have traditionally if dubiously been interpreted as indicating his belief in some utterly formless "prime matter."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Ibn Khaldun brings out the grave theological challenge to which this opens Aristotle: "The arguments concerning the corporeal existents constitute what the philosophers call the science of physics. The insufficiency lies in the fact that conformity between the results of thinking—which, as they assume, are produced by rational norms and reasoning—and the outside world is not unequivocal. The first are the judgments of the mind, which are general ones, whereas the existents of the outside world are individual in their matter. Perhaps, there is something in the matter that prevents correspondence between the universals of the mind and the individual outside, except for what is attested by sensual perception. . . . The arguments concerning the existents beyond sensual perception—the spiritualia—constitute what the philosophers call 'the divine science' or 'metaphysics.' The essences of the spiritualia are completely unknown. One cannot get at them, nor can they be proven by logical arguments, because an abstraction of intelligibilia from the individual existents of the outside world is possible only in the case of things we can perceive by the senses, from which the universals are thus derived. . . . We have, thus, no demonstrations for them, and we have no way whatever of affirming their existence, except through inner experiences of the human soul, and especially the dream visions which are within the intuitive experience of all." *The Muqaddimah*, 3 vols., trans. Franz Rosenthal, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Bollingen, 1980), 3.251–52.

<sup>7</sup> Most relevant are M 1010b30–1011a2, 1015a7–10, 1029a11–30, 1044a15–17, 1049a24–27, 1070b10–13; *Physics* 192a31, 217a21–b11; *On Heaven* 305a22–32, 312b20ff.; *On Coming into Being and Passing Away* 314a8–13, b1–5, 317b23–36, 320a2–5, b12–14, 318, 23, 322b11–21, 328a19–22, 329a8–12, 324–35, 332a6–13, 17–20, 327–b1, 334a24–25, b2–7, 335a28–33; Aristotle refers us also to Plato's *Timaeus* 49a–51b. For the controversy over the traditional view, see esp. William Charlton's incisive analysis, *Aristotle's Physics Books I and II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 76–77 and appendix—responded to by Howard Robinson, "Prime Matter in Aristotle," *Phronesis* 19 (1974):168–88, and Christopher Williams, *Aristotle's De Generatione et Corruptione* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), appendix.

## HEGEL ELIMINATES THE GULF

Hegel sees in Kant the most powerfully extreme expression of the “gulf”—and Hegel defines his own thought in this regard as the overcoming of Kant’s problematic: “as for the grasping of the objects of our immediate consciousness, which form the content of empirical cognition, as *mere appearances* [*blosser Erscheinungen*], this anyway must be regarded as a very important result of the Kantian philosophy.” Hegel agrees with Kant that our “immediate consciousness of the being-there [*Dasein*] of *external* things,” insofar as it is taken to be “immediate knowing of the *being* of external things,” is “deception and error,” and “there is no truth in the sensible as such”; “the *being* of these external things is much rather contingent, passing away, an *appearance*” (*Schein*); “they are essentially this: to have only a being-there that is separable from their concept, their essence.” No doubt, for “our ordinary (that is, the naive sensory-understanding) consciousness, the objects that it knows count as self-standing and self-founded in their singularity [*Vereinzelung*].” But it “must certainly be maintained against this that the objects of which we have immediate knowledge are mere appearances, i.e., they do not have the ground of their being within themselves, but within something else.” According to “the Kantian philosophy, however, the things that we know about are only appearances *for us*, while what they are *in themselves* remains for us an inaccessible beyond”; and “the naive consciousness has rightly taken exception to this subjective idealism, according to which the content of our consciousness is something that is *only* ours, something posited only through *us*.” In fact, “the true situation is this, that the things of which we have immediate knowledge are mere appearances, not only *for us*, but also *in-themselves*, and that the proper determination of these things, which are in this sense ‘finite,’ consists in having the ground of their being not within themselves but in the universal divine Idea.” Whereas “according to Kant, thoughts, although they are universal and necessary determinations, are still *only our* thoughts, and are cut off from what the thing is *in itself* by an impassable gulf,” Hegel rejoins: “on the contrary, the true objectivity of thinking is this: that the thoughts are not merely our thoughts, but at the same time the *in-itself* of the things and of whatever else is objective overall.” This “conception of things must also be called idealism, but, as distinct from the subjective idealism of [Kant’s] Critical Philosophy, it is *absolute idealism*.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> 8.116 (EL 83, sec. 41), 8.122–23 (EL 88–89, sec. 45), and 8.166 (EL 122–23, sec. 76); see also 3.29–31 (PhS 16–17) and 10.232–34 (EM 181–83, sec. 441). For lucid and helpful accounts of how Kant’s doctrine of divine reason, beyond understanding, adumbrates and helped inspire Hegel’s teaching on thought-determinations as the in-itself of things, see Clinton Tolley, “Hegel and Kant on Reason

Thus Hegel makes the breathtaking and astounding claim that the particular sensory magnitudes extended in space which Aristotle took to be the true substantial beings are in fact only phenomenal, or apparent, “external-to-itself-being” (*aussersichsein*) of an underlying immaterial, nonspatial, *ideational* substantial being that is a universal, total, conceptual system designated by Hegel as *the Concept* (*Begriff*), or *the Idea* (*Idea*). “Only to the sensory consciousness does nature appear as the primary, immediate being.”<sup>9</sup> “Reason is the certainty which consciousness has of being all reality,” with “the consciousness of the *non-being* of anything that is other” (3.179 [PhS 137]). So “logic coincides with metaphysics, the science of *things* grasped in thoughts which has counted as expressing *the essentialities* [*Wesenheiten*] of *the things*” (8.81 [EL 56, sec. 24]). As an illustration: the underlying substantial being of the solar system is not the apparent sun and its particular satellites moving in space and time, but rather the correct, fundamental scientific and philosophic “laws” of those apparent material entities and their apparent motions. “These laws are the soul [*Seele*] of the solar system” (LPhWH 12.161 [1.247]). “The *true* inner” is “the same as that which we call law”—“as regards external nature, for example, the law of the motion of the planets” as “an inner, necessary unity” (10.211 [EM 163, sec. 422]). These “laws” (today physics speaks also of “equations”) do “not exist externally [in space] as universal: the kind as such cannot be perceived; the laws of the motion of the heavenly bodies are not written in the sky”; “so one does not see, and does not hear, the universal”; “only for the mind/spirit is it” (8.78 [EL 53–54, sec. 21])—but not only for or in *human* minds, nor only for or in *consciousness* in *any* form.<sup>10</sup>

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and the Unconditioned,” *Hegel-Studien* 50 (2017): 131–41 and “The Subject in Hegel’s Absolute Idea,” *Hegel Bulletin* 40 (2019): 151–54; see also Hegel’s own account of Kant’s Transcendental Dialectic, in LHPH 9.162–64 (3.184–87).

<sup>9</sup> 9.28 (N 17, sec. 248)—and so Hegel in his philosophy of nature soon provides the antistrophe to his earlier elegiac salute to nature’s “singularity and immediacy”: “the naive mind [*der unbefangene Geist*], when it intuits vital Nature, as we find made vivid especially by Goethe in a sensory way, feels the life and the universal connectedness in Nature; it divines that the universe is an organic whole and a rational totality, even as it feels in single life-forms an inner oneness with itself”; and “so, in the Philosophy of Nature, people have fallen back on intuition [*Anschauung*] and set it above reflective thought; but this is a mistake [*ein Abweg*]; “every particular must be brought back in thinking to simple universality”—9.21 (N 11–12, sec. 246).

<sup>10</sup> In the past couple of generations an attempt has been made to interpret Hegel as nonmetaphysical, as instead “contributing to the Kantian project of spelling out the nature and conditions of specifically human cognition” (Tolley, “The Subject in Hegel’s Absolute Idea,” 143–44, quoting Robert Pippin, *Hegel’s Idealism* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], 6, 8, 40 and Pippin, “The Significance of Self-Consciousness in Idealist Theories of Logic,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 114 [2014]: 149). This approach misses or avoids the ontological problem of nature’s particularity that I am discussing. For helpful presentations, see also Alison Stone, *Petrified Intelligence* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 19–27; James Kreines, “Hegel’s Metaphysics: Changing the Debate,”

The true, ultimate principles of nature, underlying gravity, motion, thinking, and so forth, would not disappear if the human species, or for that matter all other conscious species, became extinct. “When one says, ‘thought as objective thought is the innerness of the world,’ it can appear as if consciousness is therewith being ascribed to natural things.” But “we feel a repugnance against conceiving the inner activity of things to be thinking, since we say the human distinguishes itself from the natural through thinking.” So “we must talk about nature as the system of non-conscious [*bewusstlosen*] thought.” Therefore “instead of using the expression *thoughts*, it is better, in order to avoid misunderstanding, to speak of thought-determination [*Denkbestimmung*]” and of “a system of thought-determinations overall [*ein System von Denkbestimmungen überhaupt*] in which the antithesis between subjective and objective (in its usual meaning) falls away” (8.81 [EL 56, sec. 24]). Hegel repeatedly insists that the forms of what he calls “subjective” thought—such as concepts, judgments, and syllogisms—do not necessarily pertain to or exist in *conscious* or *self-conscious* “subjective” thinking. The term “*subjective*” (Hegel concedes) can bring with it the “misunderstanding” that it refers to “determinations that belong to the form of *consciousness*” (5.62 [SL 42–43, “Introd.” end]). Hegel is well aware that “judgment is usually taken” as being “simply present in self-conscious thinking”; but he insists that “the judgment is to be taken in a totally universal sense: *all things are a judgment*—that is, they are *singulars* which are in themselves, or as inner nature, *universality*, or a *universal* that is *individualized*” (8.318–19 [EL 245–46, sec. 167]); “*everything is a syllogism*; everything is *concept*” (8.332 [EL 257, sec. 181]); “the Concept is also not to be considered here as the act of the self-conscious understanding, not as subjective understanding, but as the concept in and for itself, which constitutes a stage of nature as well as of spirit” (6.257 [SL 517]).<sup>11</sup>

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*Philosophy Compass* 1 (2006): 466–80; and Simon Lumsden, “The Rise of the Non-Metaphysical Hegel,” *Philosophy Compass* 3 (2008): 51–65; see also Klaus Hartmann, “Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View,” in *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Alasdair MacIntyre (New York: Anchor Books, 1972); Terry Pinkard, *Hegel’s “Dialectic”* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); as well as the more recent Robert Pippin, “Hegel on Logic as Metaphysics,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Hegel*, and Rocio Zambrana, *Hegel’s Theory of Intelligibility* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015). For critique (briefly anticipated by Errol Harris, “The Philosophy of Nature in Hegel’s System,” *Review of Metaphysics* 3 [1949]: 222–23) see esp. again Tolley, “The Subject in Hegel’s Absolute Idea”; Alfredo Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 78–82; and Robert Stern, *Hegelian Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)—but consider the complaint of Stern’s follower Paniel Cárdenas, “Contemporary Hegelian Scholarship: On Robert Stern’s Holistic Reading of Hegel,” *Topicos, Revista de Filosofía* 50 (2016): 139: “Stern’s account, though, seems to be crying out for a more detailed treatment of the individuation of objects”; “this seems to be not fully explained nor treated in Hegel either.”

<sup>11</sup> See also Tolley, “The Subject in Hegel’s Absolute Idea,” 160–63. This does not mean that the forms

This “meaning of thinking and of its determinations is more precisely expressed,” Hegel declares, “when the Ancients say, *nous* governs the world” (8.81–82 [EL 56–57, sec. 24]; see also 5.44 [SL, 29]). But “by this one must not think right away of thinking as it is in our consciousness, but of objective thinking.” We say, a “table is also rationally made”; but in this artificial case, “the understanding is as an external form,” imposed “on the object.” That “is not how we must take all this, but here the understanding, the universal, is the immanent nature of the objects themselves; this is the principle” (LHP 8.93–94, [2.94–95]).

“An example closer at hand is when we, in speaking of a definite animal, say, ‘it is *animal*.’” The “*animal as such* cannot be pointed out; only a specific animal can ever be.” But “to be animal, the species as the universal, belongs to the determinate animal and constitutes its determinate essentiality.” “The things overall have an enduring, inner nature, and an external being-there [*äusserliches Dasein*].” They “live and die, come to be and pass away”; but “their essentiality, their universality, is the species [*Gattung*], and this is not to be grasped as simply something in common” (8.82 [EL 56–57, sec. 24]). “One can often hear it said,” by “empiricists of various sorts” (Hegel refers especially to Locke), “that these classes and orders one only makes up, as aids to cognition.” This “metaphysical empiricism,” Hegel concedes, “is the procedure in the ordinary sciences.”<sup>12</sup> But Hegel further observes that when scientists “determine the universal as law, force, matter, then they cannot allow that it counts only as an external form and a subjective addition”; no!—then “one attributes objective reality to the laws; the forces are immanent; and matter is the true nature of the thing itself.” Hegel demands

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of the Concept are unalive: while “the Logic of the Concept is usually understood as a merely *formal* science,” its forms regarded as “dead, inactive, and indifferent receptacles of representations or thoughts,” the truth is that, “being forms of the Concept they are, on the contrary, *the living spirit of the actual*; and only that is true of the actual which is *true by the power of these forms, through them and in them*. Yet the truth of these forms for themselves has never been considered and investigated until now”—this Hegel sees as one of his great innovations in logic: 8.310 (EL 239, sec. 162). Helpful is the formulation of Robert Stern, *Hegel, Kant and the Structure of the Object* (London: Routledge, 1990), 118: “For Hegel it is not Mind that brings together Idea and Nature, but ultimately Idea that makes possible the unity of Nature and Mind.”

<sup>12</sup> LHP 9.117, 123 (3.134, 139); cf. Edward Halper, “The Logic of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Nature*,” in *Hegel and the Philosophy of Nature*, ed. Stephen Houlgate (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 45: “throughout the modern period the laws governing nature were understood to be ontologically distinct from the material they governed. This is, I suggest, Hegel’s problem of otherness.... The Philosophy of Nature aims to show that the rational principles are not outside of nature but somehow present within it.... If philosophers do not pursue this question, it is only because they doubt that we can truly grasp nature.”

that “something similar be conceded in regard to genera too: namely, that they are not just a grouping of similarities, an abstraction made by us, that they not only have common features, but that they are the objects’ own inner essence,” forming “a graduated scale of nature itself.” This “universality of the things is not something subjective, belonging to us, but much rather, over and against the transitory phenomenon, the noumenon [*Noumen*]*—*the true, objective, actuality of the thing itself: like the Platonic ideas, which are not somewhere off in the beyond, but are the substantial species existing in the particular things” (9.19–20 [N 9–10, sec. 246]). So although Hegel complains that “what always intrudes is the mistaken view [*die schiefe Vorstellung*], as if the singular things are genuine actualities, as they are-there in their finitude,” he does not for a moment deny that the (apparent) individuality of the sensory particulars and especially of the living particulars can and must be preserved in thinking about the universal, about the species: while on one hand “genera and forces are the innerness of Nature, and, in contrast to this universal, the external and individual is the transient,” on the other hand “the cognition which comprehends” (*das begreifendes Erkennen*) is the “affirmative universality which gives permanence to the determinations; for the true individuality is at the same time universality in itself”; “this is,” Hegel claims, “the Aristotelian concept”—“the universal, the vitality, and the particular is identical [*identisch*], is intuited in a unity, in the case of the organic products of nature.”<sup>13</sup> We may note that Aristotle comes perhaps closest to Hegel when in the *Categories* (2b31–33, 36–37) he writes that the species “alone of the predications/categories [*katēgoroumenōn*] shows/reveals [*dēloi*]” the “what is” of the “primary substantial being,” and “so, reasonably, these [the species] alone among the others [namely, predications/categories] are said to be substantial beings”; and when in the *Posterior Analytics* (100b1–2) he writes, “for on one hand perceiving is according to the particular, but on the other hand perception is of the universal, such as of human, not of Callias a human.”

#### NATURE AS TELEOLOGICAL

Following Aristotle, Hegel conceives living being as defined by goals, aims, or ends (*Zwecke*) which are “not to be thought of immediately or simply in the form of consciousness”: “Aristotle’s definition of life contains the inner-goal-orientation and thereby stands infinitely far above the modern concept of teleology, which had only the *finite*, the *external*, goal-orientation in view.” What “*Zweck* involves is precisely the activity of realizing”; and “the greatest

<sup>13</sup> LHPH 9.111 and 170 (3.128 and 193) and 9.22 (N 12, sec. 246).

example of this is afforded by the living being,” which has “goals [*Zwecke*], about which it knows nothing”; “its activity does not remain one that is mechanical or chemical,” and “the product of this process, what results, is the animal itself that already was present; it is end-in-itself [*Selbstzweck*].”<sup>14</sup> Doubtless, this goal “has need” of “sheerly external necessity” (mechanical, chemical, etc.); indeed, “everything that has a goal is not without” what is thus *externally* “necessary”; but the *externally* “necessary serves only as a material, as a presupposition [*Hypothese*].” “*Zweck*” may be “portrayed as a circle, as an activity returning into itself,” whereas “external necessity is like a line which may extend forward or backward as far as it may, because the relationship” is “external only, and lacking self-determination.”<sup>15</sup> To “combine in thought these two principles”—internal goal and external necessity—is “the principal concept of what is natural.” Hegel laments that this “Aristotelian concept of nature, of organic life, has gotten lost”; “only in Kantian philosophy has it come forward again”; “it is missing from the examination of things organic when we rely upon pressure and reaction, chemical relationships.”<sup>16</sup>

Hegel goes far beyond both Aristotle and Kant, however, in holding that “nature is *in itself* a living whole”—which “brings itself forth to being-there as Spirit, which is the truth and the end-goal of nature” (9.36 [N 24, sec. 251]).

On the other hand, as regards the goals that define all higher subhuman animal life, Hegel stresses more than does Aristotle an insuperable incomprehensibility: “this animal awareness [*Gescheitheit*],” that is the “goal” of the animal’s “vitality, we can call an incomprehensibility [*Unbegreifliches*] for us,” since “though humans may study the animals, and imagine themselves in their place, one cannot really represent to oneself what is in the soul of an animal.” Humans “cannot succeed in imagining themselves in the nature of a dog or cat.” Although “we are living beings ourselves, our vitality is determined through spirituality” which “is to itself clear, free, revealed to spirit,” having “nothing alien in itself,” but “animal nature is hidden [*Verbergen*].”

<sup>14</sup> 8.360 (EL 280, sec. 204) and LHPH 8.99–101(2.101–2); see also 9.472–73 (N 388–89, sec. 360); LHPH 9.52 (3.63), on Giordano Bruno; and 3.26 (PhS 14, para. 22).

<sup>15</sup> Pierre Aubenque, “Hegel et Aristote,” in *Hegel et la pensée grecque*, ed. Jacques d’Hondt (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1974), 101 commenting on this aptly cites “la formule fréquent chez ARISTOTE: ‘L’homme engendre l’homme’ et le passage moins souvent cité de *Physique*, II, 1, 193 b 12–13: La nature entendue comme genèse est un acheminement vers la nature.”

<sup>16</sup> LHPH 8.75–78 (2.242–44); see also 9.169–70 (3.192–93). But as is justly observed by Orlando Carpi, “L’Interpretazione Hegeliana di Aristotele,” *Divus Thomas* 99 (1996): 100, “Hegel vede uniti in Aristotele questi due punti di vista che, per esempio nella cultura moderna, costituiscono un’antinomia, come appare anche nella ‘Critica del giudizio’ di Kant.”

The “life of the particularized animal is as incomprehensible as the non-conceptual caprice [*Willkür*] of humans.” Accordingly, Hegel has a (humanly revealing) dim view of affection for pets: “the unfree spirit, the superficial will, wants nothing more than to place itself with particularities, to enjoy itself with particularities, to feel good with beasts, like old maids who are at home with cats and dogs as like-minded souls”; but for “the deeper spirit, such particularity is other,” and “a spirit who is in this way bound to such particularity shows thereby that it is quite unfree” (LPhWH 12.287–89, 291–92 [1.349–50, 353]).

But we also encounter here a profound ontological contrast between Hegel and Aristotle. For as previous quotations indicate, when Hegel speaks of the animal as “end-in-itself,” he means at least as much the species, the undying universal essence instantiated in the individual, as he does the mortal, uniquely divergent, ultimately apparent or phenomenal, individual specimen—and this is especially clear in Hegel’s account of death, and of sexual procreation or *eros*. Death, according to Hegel, is “the overcoming of the singular, and therewith the coming-forth of the species, of spirit; for the negation of the natural, i.e., of immediate singularity, is this, that the universal, the species is established” (9.539 [N 443, sec. 376]). Closely related to this halcyon conception of death is the Hegelian conception of the sexual relationship: as “a *process* that begins with the *need*” consisting in the fact that “the individual as *singular* is not in accord with the immanent species,” and “has the *feeling* of this lack.” The species is thus “in the individual, as straining against the lack of accord in the singular actuality of the animal,” a straining “to achieve a feeling of self in another of the species, to integrate with it through the union, and through this mediation to unite the species with itself and to bring the species to being-there—that’s *copulation*.” This copulative dual “union is the disappearance of the sexes into that which has become the onefold species.” The “process is,” that the male and female “establish themselves also in living vitality as that which they are in themselves—*one* species”—and “their identity as such” is “felt by themselves.” What is more, “this feeling of universality is the highest to which the animal can be brought.” The “species maintains itself only through the going-under of the individuals, who in the process of copulation fulfill their defining character [*Bestimmung*], and, insofar as they have nothing higher, therewith go on to death.”<sup>17</sup> Or as *The Science of Logic* has it (6.486 [SL 688]):

<sup>17</sup> 9.516–17 (N 411–12, sec. 369 and 370—in 3rd ed., sec. 368 and 369); see the repetition in 10.19–20 (EM 10–11, sec. 381), and the account of distinctively human sexuality and puberty in 10.50, 83, 89–90 (EM 35, sec. 390; 61–62, sec. 396; 67, sec. 398).

“in copulation, there perishes the immediacy of the living individuality; the death of this life is the coming forward of spirit; the Idea, that as genus is *in itself* [*an sich*], becomes *for itself* in that it has sublated its particularity that constituted the living species, and has thereby given itself a *reality* which is *itself simple universality*.”

That Aristotle does not conceive animate erotic being (*the* primal root of political existence) in anything close to Hegel's perspective is plain in Aristotle's much more elaborate treatment of animal procreation. For Aristotle, sexual procreation *only secondarily or incidentally* results in a perpetuation of the *species*; sexual procreation is *actually* carried out *chiefly* for the sake of the perpetuation of the *uniquely divergent* individual parents, male and female, for whom the species reproduction is a *means* rather than an end: “for the substantial being of the things that are is in the individual; and if the individual could be such, it would be everlasting; but by species-form that is possible”; and “that is why there is always a continuous generation of humans and of animals.”<sup>18</sup> It is “because it is impossible to share in the everlasting and the divine by continuing, because none of the things subject to perishing persists as the same and one in number,” that “each individual, insofar as it is able to partake, shares in this way, one more, one less; and there persists not itself, but a such-as-itself” (*On Soul* 415b3–8; also 415a23ff., 416a19–20, b16–17). The account of human nature as that of a political animal begins (*Politics* 1252a30) with the “pairing together” of human “male and female for the sake of generation, and this not from choice; but even as in the other animals, and plants, natural is the urge [*to ephiesthai*] to leave behind another, such as oneself, such a one [*hoion auto, toiouton*].” In Aristotle's account of gestation, as the “logos of the motions” of the “spermatic” matter, this chief aim of sexual procreation—to perpetuate as much as is possible the uniquely divergent individual parents, male and the female—is expressed in the pair's complementary but nonetheless competing contributions, which Aristotle interprets as being in a kind of gestational contest, struggling over which parent's spermatic matter and its motions will predominate in determining not only the sex of the offspring but the degree of its exact resemblance to what is unique in each of the parents. And the gestational competitive struggle of uniquely divergent individuals seeking individual perpetuation is still more complex. For “the logos of the motions” of the male and female spermatic material also contains drives inherited from uniquely divergent ancestors, each having left behind a matrix of unfolding embryonic motions aimed at

<sup>18</sup> *Generation of Animals* 731b31–36; see the context and also 735a13–26 as well as 777a4ff.

procreating and thus perpetuating its own uniquely divergent individuality.<sup>19</sup> Hegel exhibits little awareness of this massive, uniquely-divergent-individualistic dimension of Aristotle's ontology of life forms and their erotic, death-defying gestational *agon*.

#### THE INDIVIDUALITY OF HUMAN BEING

Human *particular self-consciousness* fulfills and completes the eternal, all-inclusive, cosmic, conceptual system that, absent humans, would be unself-conscious: "nature does not bring the *nous* to consciousness for itself; humanity is the first to double itself so as to be the universal *for* the universal"—and this happens when "the human being knows oneself as *I*." For while it is true that "what I in my consciousness have, that is for me," nevertheless, my *rationaly* thinking I, like everyone's, is "the pure being-for-itself in which everything particular is negated and overcome-while-being-preserved [*aufgehoben*]."<sup>20</sup> A human can of course experience, and mean, and try to say what "belongs to me as this *unique* individual"; but the moment "I" express this, even to myself alone, I am expressing the universal; for even or precisely the terms "particular," and "unique," and yes, even "this," are *universal* terms and categories. *Every* self-conscious mind is a "particular," and a "unique individual." Since "language expresses only what is universal, then I cannot say what I only *mean*," in *trying to express my feeling* of being different from everyone else. "And the *unsayable*—feeling, sensation"—while certainly not totally false or unimportant, "is not what is most important, most true, but what is most insignificant, most untrue" (8.74 [EL 50–51, sec. 20]).

The full implications of this understanding of human individuality come clearly to sight only in the modern rational state and civil society at the end of the historical process. There "*the realm of ethical life* opens itself up, as nothing other than the absolute spiritual *unity* of the essence of individuals in their self-standing *actuality*," as "in itself universal self-consciousness," and where "the *singular* consciousness is only this existing One, while it is conscious of the universal consciousness in its own singularity as its being, and while its doing and being-there [*Dasein*] is the universal ethos" (3.264 [PhS 204, para. 349]). Hegel makes plain the enormous contrast with the Greek spirit when he says of Greek religiosity that it expressed spiritual

<sup>19</sup> See esp. *Generation of Animals* 768b29 and 772b33, and contexts, describing the struggle between the uniquely divergent, individual, male and female, parental and ancestral components during the process of gestation: "on one hand, mastery is gained here; but on the other hand, not there."

<sup>20</sup> 8.82–83 (EL 57–58, sec. 24); see similarly 10.21–22 (EM 11, sec. 381).

“essentiality” as “interior and human,” as “individuality”—but too much in the form of rare, elite, *natural bodily* beauty and excellence. The “freedom of spirit was with the Greeks still associated with the human-natural [*Menschlich-Natürlich*]; “knowing-oneself-as-free” was “still too associated with the natural”; “they did not yet grasp spirit” in “accord with its universality,” but “only” as “it brings itself forth as individuality”; “therefore they could not have the thought, the Christian idea, of the unity of the divine and human nature”; divinity belonged only to the “human who had worked up, produced, enhanced, idealized oneself” (LPhWH 12.338–42 [1.388–90]). Mature modernity in its historically realized, purer, political rationality has transfigured into self-conscious universality the Greek, natural, human individuality that was rooted in the body with its passions (for it is passion, according to Hegel, that separates and distinguishes one human from another). As Hegel puts it in the last paragraph of the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (3.67 [PhS 45–46]), “at a time when the universality of the spirit has grown so much stronger, and when the singular, as is fitting, has correspondingly become even more a matter of indifference,” as “the nature of science implies, the individual must thus all the more forget oneself...must both anticipate less for oneself and may demand less for oneself.” Through the redirection and discipline of human passion under the tutelage of reason, the modern liberal, “bourgeois” state and its self-indulgently passionate citizenship are in the process of being transcended-while-being-incorporated (*aufgehoben*).

What this means becomes more concrete and clear when we compare the paradoxically much greater harmony between individuality and universality that was achieved in premodern politics, in the personalities of subphilosophic “world-historical individuals” (*welthistorischen Individuen*)—revolutionary leaders, exemplified by Julius Caesar. For not only is it “passion” (*Leiden-schaft*) that “separates and distinguishes one human from another”; but an individual’s “purpose is not something chosen [*ein Gewähltes*], but is precisely what emerges from the determinacy of passion.” Now in world-history, the “form” (*Gestalt*) that “the universal has, that brings its activity to appearance,” is the “outlook of these separated and distinguished agents.” By “seizing upon a universality that is higher, over and against the preceding universal” in history, and “making it into their own purposes,” these world-historical individuals “will the enjoyment of their uniqueness”: for “since others do not yet know” this new and higher historical universal for which they launch their political revolutions, the new and higher universal manifests itself in history as the *uniquely defining* passion of the *singular* world-historical revolutionary leader. *Only* “in this way is the goal of the Idea one and the same as

the content of passion,” and *only* in *such* individually unique revolutionary leaders of the past “is the passion the absolute unity of the character and of the universal” (LPhWH 12.60, 66, 68–70 [1.169, 173, 174–76]).

Nonetheless, the highest or fullest level of human spirit appears in a transcendence of passionate uniqueness, such as is found only in theoretical-philosophic thinking. “When Aristotle summons one to consider oneself *worthy* of comportment of this sort,” then “the worthiness that consciousness ascribes to itself consists precisely in the giving up of *particular* opinions and beliefs and in allowing the *subject-matter* to hold sway over oneself.” In such “thinking there immediately lies *freedom*, because it is the activity of the universal”: a “being-with-self that is undetermined in its subjectivity, and is in its *content* [*Inhalte*] only the *subject-matter* [*Sache*] and its determinations”—and is thus “not a *particular* being or doing of the subject,” but “the consciousness which conducts itself as abstract ‘I,’ as *freed* from all *particularity* of peculiar properties, states, etc., and does only what is universal, in which it is identical with all individuals” (8.80 [EL 55, sec. 23]; see also LHPH 9.161 [3.183]).

Hegel thus strives, in his lengthy treatment of Aristotle, to bring the latter’s conception of the life of *theōria* as close as can be to Hegel’s own conception. Hegel cannot, of course, ignore some major differences. He acknowledges that Aristotle stresses the *receptiveness* and thereby the *passivity* of sensation—as “determined from without.” But, Hegel insists, this “passive aspect can be expounded as one chooses, along lines of subjective idealism or in some other way.” Therefore, Hegel insists, “Aristotle stands, with this moment of passivity, not inferior to idealism.” Hegel then points out that Aristotle’s analysis of sensation shows “activity within receptivity,” a “spontaneity” that “overcomes-while-preserving [*aufheben*] the initial passivity in sensation.” Hegel further stresses that “in sensation, says Aristotle, only the form reaches us, without the matter”—and, Hegel insists, “the form is the object, the universal, as opposed to the sensible, the material.” Hegel finds especially congenial Aristotle’s remarkable statement in *On Soul* 432a1–3: “just as the hand is the tool of tools, so *nous* is the form of forms”; on this Hegel comments: “that, which we nowadays call the unity of the subjective and the objective, gets expressed here in the most definite way.” Aristotle “distinguishes the two very well, but he also expresses their identity no less rigorously and emphatically.” Hegel concedes that “this is, to be sure, the modern expression”; but “the same is also contained in Aristotle” (LHPH 8.83–89 [2.248–53]). Is it? Hegel does not quote or comment on another

weighty statement of Aristotle's in this very context (*On Soul* 432a4–11): “since it seems that there is no separate matter of concern [*pragma*] beyond the sensory magnitudes,” the “intellected things—both those said to be in abstraction and as many as are states and affections of sensed things—are in the sensed forms.” And “on account of this,” when “one engages in theorizing, it is necessary at the same time to contemplate some image; for images are like sensed things, except without matter.” Hegel brushes past this, saying that “it only seems as if Aristotle is speaking about thinking a particular thing alongside something else”; “what he says about thinking, however, is of itself what is absolutely speculative and bears no relation to anything else such as sensation”; “*nous* is everything, totality, the true overall”; *nous* is “true being [*Sein*] in and for itself” (LHPH 8.91 [2.254–55]). Hegel thus “Hegelianizes” Aristotle.<sup>21</sup> “If the science of logic,” Hegel declares, “considers thinking in its activity and its production,” its “content is overall the supersensible world; and to be occupied with that world is to sojourn in it.” “Mathematics has to do with the abstractions of number and of space; these, however, are still sensory, though in an abstract way and without-being-there [*Daseinslose*].” Thought as *nous* “departs from even this last element of the sensory, and is free, by itself; it renounces external and internal senses.”<sup>22</sup> “That,” Hegel proclaims, “is just what freedom is: being by oneself in one's other, depending upon oneself, and being one's own determinant.” In undergoing “all drives, I begin with an other, with what is for me something external. So here we speak of dependence.” The “natural man, who is determined only through his drives, is not by himself; however self-willed he may be, the *content* of his willing and opining is not his own, and his freedom is only a *formal* one.” But when I truly think rationally, “I give up my subjective particularity, sink myself in the subject-matter, let thought follow its own course; and I think badly whenever I add something of my own” (8.84 [EL 58, sec. 24]).

It is very doubtful whether Aristotle understands the thinking human as ever being capable of achieving such a degree of freedom from the sensory, such a transcendence of particularity: “for in many ways the nature of

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Allegra de Laurentiis, “An Early Translation of Aristotle's *De Anima* by G. W. F. Hegel,” *Kronos Philosophical Journal* 10 (2021): 13.

<sup>22</sup> 8.70 (EL 48, sec.19); see Ferrarin's criticism, *Hegel and Aristotle*, 276–77. See also the translator's note 224 to LHPH 2.251: “in discussing *On the Soul* Hegel passes over Aristotle's account of representation or phantasia (Bk. 3, ch. 3), and goes directly to the treatment of thinking in the following chapter, thereby relating thinking to sense perception but without the intervening stage of *phantasia*” (= imagination—always of particulars, which for Aristotle plays a crucial role in all noetic thinking known to us: *On Soul* 403a8, 431 a14–17, b2–7, 432a4–11; *On Memory and Recollection* 449b24–50a6; cf. Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle*, 304–5).

humans is enslaved,” so that there is some truth in what “Simonides says, ‘god alone would have this prize.’”<sup>23</sup> Above all, it is very doubtful whether, for Aristotle, a human is ever thinking with full clarity if insuperably tristful awareness of one’s own individual mortality is not a major part of the being-in-action of one’s self-conscious *nous*.

Hegel is eventually led to judge or to concede that Aristotle’s philosophy left unsatisfied what Hegel experiences as “the most profound need”: that is, the need for a “system” in and by which the universal is “established as the universal from which the particular was to be developed”—“a universal principle for all particularity.” This latter, higher “standpoint” we “reach” with the higher, “second stage” of Greek philosophy, Stoicism—where the “unity of thought, or the systematic element, was emphasized as the defining feature, whereas Aristotle paid more attention to the individual things.” Yet higher still, as the “third stage,” is neo-Platonic emanationism.<sup>24</sup> These higher, and, in contrast to Aristotle, “systematic” second and third stages of Greek philosophizing remained deficient, however. While the “beginning of the mind’s elevation to the universal is when spirit comes to feel” that “all is life,” that “it is all one life and one idea,” and while “in Stoicism the substantial form had this unity, the form of pantheism,” still, for this pantheism “there is a universal substance that finitizes itself and thereby degrades itself.” The “principle of emanation is that the universal, in particularizing itself—God, in creating the world—debases itself through what is particular and limited”; and “this finitization is then devoid of any *return* into itself that overcomes-while-maintaining [*aufheben*] these limitations or this finitization” (LHPh 8.162–63 [2.318–19]). For Hegel, in contrast, the unfolding of nature out of the Concept is the *opposite* of a “degradation,” or “debasement”—and is much more than a mere “overflow,” or “going forth” of *nous* or the Idea, of logos or universal reason or God (as elaborated by, e.g., Alfarabi and Maimonides: LHPh 9.17–20 [3.29–32]); for Hegel, the “going-forth” is an ascent, an enhancement, and finally a fulfillment—through human self-consciousness as a penultimate stage in the process by which the system of thought-determinations (the

<sup>23</sup> I am making use of M 982b30; see also Dominique Dubarle, “La nature chez Hegel et chez Aristote,” *Archives de Philosophie* 38 (1975): 17.

<sup>24</sup> LHPh 8.99–100, 179–91 (2.263, 317–46); cf. Aubenque, “Hegel et Aristote,” 110–14 and Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle*, 47, 82–83, 99; unlike Aubenque and Ferrarin, some of those who have recently, and rightly, stressed the deep affinity between Hegel and Aristotle have overlooked the fact that Hegel clearly judged Aristotle to have remained at a lower stage in the development of rational understanding than Stoicism and neo-Platonism.

“Absolute,” the “Idea,” the “Concept”) comes to comprehend itself in and as individualized nature, as well as individualized human history.

#### NATURE NOT AS GIVEN, BUT AS RATIONALLY NECESSITATED

But then Hegel must show how nature, and not only history, ceases to be understandable as the merely “discovered reality” (*vorgefundene Wirklichkeit*) of “investigative knowing’s objective world,” and instead is understandable as the “objective world whose inner ground and actual subsistence is the Concept” (6.548 [SL 734]). Hegel can not and does not leave nature-extended-in-space as a given;<sup>25</sup> Hegel insists that the being-there of spatial nature can be *proved* to be intelligibly *necessitated by reason*. This insistence is a second major way in which Hegel departs from the ancient (and medieval) emanationist ontologies. Hegel reports with approval Plotinus’s formulation of how spatial nature results from “the first being [*Sein*] overflowing,” in “the progression to determinateness,” through a “going-forth” that is not temporal but eternal, and “not to be defined as a movement and change, for these eventuate in something different, but it is simply this, that it overflows”: “this explication of the Idea” by Plotinus, Hegel declares, “has to be acknowledged as true in all its moments.”<sup>26</sup> *But*: “it does contain one difficulty.” That is: “it does not express the necessity of the self-disclosing, or self-differentiating—it’s just posited, it just happens”; and “this form of the immediacy of movement or determination does not suffice for the Concept” (LHPh 8.181–82 [2.336–37]).

Obviating this “one difficulty” may be said to be what Hegel understands to distinguish above all his “philosophy of nature” from the “empirical sciences” of nature to which his philosophy of nature “owes its development.” While the “empirical sciences” have “prepared the material for philosophy by finding universal determinations, genera, and laws,” the *philosophy* of nature “gives to the content of the empirical sciences of nature the essential

<sup>25</sup> This is true also for the role of nature as geography in Hegel’s philosophy of history: the differentiations between the continents created by the Mediterranean “are necessary, inasmuch as they correspond to the thought-Concept; they are thus in an essential relationship and constitute a rational totality.” If “the middle of the ancient world had not been that [Mediterranean] sea, world history would have been impotent.” So this “geographical grounding must not be taken as” a mere “external occasion for history”; “without that sea, world history could have had no being.”—LPhWH 12.96, 106; see also 112–13 (1.194, 201–2; 204–5).

<sup>26</sup> This elaborates further the crucial thought that Hegel attributes to Aristotle (LHPh 8.71 [2.237]): “the absolute substance, the entity that is truly in and for itself, is accordingly the unmoved, immovable and eternal which is however at the same time pure activity, actus purus. The scholastics have rightly seen in this the definition of God.”

shape of the *freedom* (the *a priori*) of thinking as well as the *validation* of *necessity*—instead of an authentication” through mere “discovery and factual experience.” Thus the empirical discoveries “become illustration and image of what is the original—and completely independent—activity of thought.”<sup>27</sup> In the empirical sciences taken by themselves, without Hegel’s philosophy of nature, “on one hand the relation between universals (species and genera) and the particulars are for themselves mutually external and contingent, just as the relation among particularities that are combined [in species] are for themselves external to each other and contingent”; while “on the other hand, the beginnings” (or first principles) of each empirical science are merely “*immediate*,” or “*discovered*,” or “*presupposed*” (*Unmittelbarkeiten, Gefundenes, Voraussetzungen*). In “both respects, the form of necessity fails to get its due” (8.52 [EL 33, sec. 9]). “Physics must hand its work over to philosophy, in order that the latter may translate the abstract universal transmitted to it [by physics] into the Concept, by showing how this universal [of physics], as an intrinsically necessary whole, proceeds from the Concept.” It is “because the method of physics does not satisfy the Concept, that one must go further” (9.20 [N 10, sec. 246]). Nature as well as history must be proven to manifest “the *generating* [*das Erzeugen*] of the world as one that is posited [*Gesetzten*] by spirit” (10.34 [EM 22, sec. 386]). “Necessity,” as seen not only in “History” but also in “Nature,” must be shown to be “ministering to” *Geist’s/Spirit’s* “revelation” (*Offenbarung*); and thus nature as well as history become “vessels of *Geist’s/Spirit’s* honor” (10.353 [EM 282, sec. 552]). As a result of his philosophy of nature, Hegel claims he has shown that for nature “*Geist/Spirit* is *truth* and is therewith *absolutely primary*.” Hegel goes so far as to asseverate: “in this truth nature is made to vanish, and *Geist/Spirit* has produced itself as the achieved Idea that is-for-itself,” for “whereas in nature the Concept has its complete externalized objectivity, this its alienation is overcome-while-being-preserved [*aufgehoben*] and it has in this become identical with itself,” in a “coming back out of nature” (10.17 [EM 8, sec. 381]; see also 9.42 [N 29, sec. 254]).

<sup>27</sup> 8.57–58 (EL 37, sec. 12); see similarly 9.15 (N 6, sec. 246)—and LHPH 9.76 (3.90), discussing Baconian science; also Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle*, 60. I am not convinced by the argument of Stone, *Petrified Intelligence*, 5–6—following Thomas Webb, “The Problem of Empirical Knowledge in Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature,” *Hegel-Studien* 15 (1980): 177—that in the passages I am quoting Hegel advances “two proposed interpretations of his method” that “are incompatible, assigning inversely symmetrical roles to a priori and empirical knowledge”; it seems to me that Hegel is presenting from different angles a single, consistent method—pretty much the one which Stone finds most compelling, and calls “strong a priori.”

## HOW NATURE IS NECESSITATED BY REASON

The first and foundational step is the demonstration of the *necessity* of the nonspatial Concept's "alienating itself" as space (*Raum*). So exactly how is spatial extension *necessitated* in and by unextended, nonspatial thought? Hegel ups the ante by phrasing this as a theological question:<sup>28</sup> "the first question here is: 'Given God as all-sufficient and without need, how comes it about, that He discloses Himself in a complete unlikeness [*einem schlechthin Ungleichen*]?' Put untheologically, this may be translated as: What inner necessity of "the system of thought-determinations" compels it to emanate what *appears* to be a wholly alien, thought-less, dumb spatial extension? Hegel answers in a nutshell: "in order to be subjectivity and Spirit."<sup>29</sup> The whole of external, *apparently* spatial nature is necessarily required, and emanated into being, in order to achieve the human spirit with its self-conscious subjectivity (otherwise "missing" from the universe or reality), culminating in the human science and philosophy of nature as well as of history.

Now to this one can ask in the first place: What exactly is the intelligible "necessity" impelling the universe's underlying, eternal "system of thought determinations" to *become self-conscious*, or even *conscious*? Why could there not remain forever a universe in accord with the principles of "logic," in Hegel's broad sense—including the laws of nature, the fundamental equations—but empty of any self-conscious minds of logicians or of mathematical scientists? What necessity rules out the possibility that conscious and self-conscious life forms are merely contingent, accidental occurrences in an *essentially* unconscious, but rationally-mathematically determined universe? This question is implicit in Hegel's own theological wording, previously quoted: "Given God as all-sufficient and without need, how comes it about. . .?" Does not Hegel's attempt to derive spatial nature from rationality succumb to the very same objection that Hegel makes to Plotinus's emanation teaching? In elaborating

<sup>28</sup> 9.23 (N 13, sec. 246); see also 5.44 (SL 29)—"one can express oneself as follows, that the content of the science of logic is the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and of a finite spirit" (Hegel then adds a salute to Anaxagoras's doctrine of *nous* governing the universe). A very strong case can be made for stressing the theological dimension of Hegel much more than I have (because of my focus on the philosophy of nature and its particularities); for noteworthy examples, see Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); Emylos Plevrakis, *Das Absolute und der Begriff* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017); Robert Williams, *Hegel on the Proofs and the Personhood of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); and Tolley, "The Subject in Hegel's Absolute Idea." I certainly do not mean to imply that Hegel's theology is not central to his thought overall.

<sup>29</sup> "um Subjektivität und Geist zu sein"; cf. Martin Drees, "The Logic of Hegel's Philosophy of Nature," in *Hegel and Newtonianism*, ed. Michael John Petry (Dordrecht: Springer, 1993), 93.

his objection to Plotinus, Hegel may even seem to verge on self-criticism, when he writes: “in recent times, one has often heard talk about this going forth from God—from the indifferent goes forth the different”; but, “going forth is always a sensory expression”; “it does not express the *necessity* of the self-disclosing, or self-differentiating; it’s just posited, it just happens.” Or consider the similar terms of Hegel’s critique of Spinoza: “the particular is adopted from representation without that being justified; were it to be justified, Spinoza would have to deduce, to derive it from his substance, but this is not the case.” Hegel adds: “recently this idea has been served up to us again in the following terms, that the thinking world is implicitly the same as the extended world”; but “here is the question: whence comes it that the understanding applies these two forms to the absolute substance, and whence comes these two forms?” (LHPh 8.181–83 and 9.105, 108–9 [2006, 336–37 and 2009, 122–25]).

But even if Hegel explained the precise inner necessity showing why the system of thought determinations must necessarily differentiate itself so as to engender individual self-consciousnesses, one may then ask (and Kant would lead the questioning), Why do these individual self-consciousnesses *necessarily* have to be *incarnate, bodily, spatially* extended, and with *senses* and *sensory* objects? What *necessity* rules out a *purely* spiritual externalization, into a universe of bodiless, nonspatial and nonsensory, rational souls, maybe of many species, undergoing purely spiritual relations and purely spiritual developments and historical change, including coming into being and passing away against the background of knowable, unchanging thought-determinations—resembling the realm that Rousseau and Kant, along with many others, not least Plato’s Socrates (e.g., *Phaedo*, esp. 78–84), hope to find in the afterlife? How is such a *non-spatial, incorporeal* externalization of spirit *ruled out, necessarily*? Would not a *purely* spiritual universe of unembodied souls be a *more* rational, a *more philosophic* externalization—less encumbered by the “contingency and indeterminate irregularity” that Hegel has to admit pervades spatially extended *bodily* nature and “sets limits to philosophy”?<sup>30</sup>

But then, even if Hegel demonstrated that (a) individual self-consciousnesses are a *necessary* emanation of “logic,” and (b) they are inconceivable without (apparent) spatial embodiment,<sup>31</sup> there would remain a massive

<sup>30</sup> 9.34–35 [N 22–23, sec. 250]; cf. Dubarle, “La nature chez Hegel et chez Aristote,” 28–29 and Brigitte Falkenburg, “How to Save the Phenomena: Meaning and Reference in Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature,” in Houlgate, *Hegel and the Philosophy of Nature*, 128–30.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. LHPh 9.109–10 (3.126): “But the human has the self-consciousness of freedom and that the spirit

third question: What precisely is the *process* by which nonspatial, immaterial thought-determination can be clearly and distinctly conceived as *necessarily* emanating, or metamorphosing, or alienating itself into, its “completely unlike” (*schlechthin Ungleichen*)—that is, into apparent spatially extended, unthinking matter? What exactly is meant by the multifarious terminology Hegel applies to this process (9.36 [N 24, sec. 251]): “positing” (*Setzen*), “uttering” (*Äusserung*), “going forth” (*Heraustreten*), “setting forth” (*Auslegung*), “coming-out-of-self” (*Aussersichkommen*), “self-judging” (*Sich-Urteilen*, 10.394 [EM 314, sec. 577]), “intuiting” (*Anschau*, 8.393 [EL 307, sec. 244]), “*deciding for itself, to release itself*” (*sich entschliesst, sich zu entlassen*, *ibid.*), “*resolve of the pure Idea to determine itself as external idea*” (6.573 [SL 753])?<sup>32</sup>

In short, can or does Hegel *really show how* nature as spatially extended matter is derived, *necessarily*, from nonspatial, not-yet-conscious thought-determinations? Or is it not in fact the case that Hegel takes spatially extended nature as “*immediate, discovered, presupposed*” and then asserts, without clear proof or explanation, that this spatial externality must somehow correspond to or be identifiable with what he contends is the nonspatial, immaterial Concept’s needed “self-externalization”?<sup>33</sup> But then how has Hegel *proved* that spatial extension, and the whole natural spatial world, is mere “*appearance*” (*Schein*)—that our “immediate knowing of the *being* of external things is deception and error” and “there is no truth in the sensible as such,” while rational thought in its universality is “the *in-itself* of the things and of whatever else is objective overall” (8.116 [EL 83, sec. 41])? And how does Hegel’s conception of spatial nature exhibit “the essential shape of the *freedom* (the *a priori*) of thinking as well as the *validation of necessity*” (freedom as “eternally determinate in itself”)—if or since, in truth, the thought of space and spatial nature is determined *not* from the concept’s inner, eternal necessity but instead from our human *external empirical* apprehension of spatially extended beings?

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in and for itself is essentially the negative of the bodily and that it first is, what it truly is, in antithesis against the bodily.”

<sup>32</sup> Relevant here is a simple but profound contention stressed by Harris, “The Philosophy of Nature in Hegel’s System,” 217–18 (see also Plato *Timaeus* 49c–50b): “if something emerges from something else, it must first be present, in some way or other, in that from which it emerges. Otherwise it cannot *emerge*, but must come into being *independently*.” There must be “an identity running through it sufficient for us to say that, at every phase, what develops” is, “in some sense, degree or form, what will eventually emerge.” So: how is thought somehow, at bottom, primordially, (also) spatially extended?

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Drees, “The Logic of Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature,” 95–96.

These questions intensify when we consider Hegel's claim to demonstrate the conceptual necessity of *only three* dimensions of space.<sup>34</sup> Hegel proposes that the straight line, the first spatial dimension, emerges as the necessary negation-overcoming of the point (which is the necessary negation-overcoming of undifferentiated space), and then that the plane, the second dimension, emerges as the necessary negation-overcoming of the line, and then that the third dimension emerges as the necessary negation-overcoming of the plane; granting all this, what inner necessity of reason compels the negating-overcoming to then *cease*? Hegel fails to give any reason why a negation of the third dimension, producing a fourth spatial dimension (and etc.?), is rationally inconceivable or impossible.<sup>35</sup>

To conclude: Hegel fails to prove that conceptual necessity is the source of three-dimensional spatial extension and thus of extended spatial nature as we experience it. He thereby fails to refute Aristotle's insistence that "substantial being is said, most authoritatively and primarily and emphatically," of particular, spatially extended, organic beings—with the consequences that (1) there is a greater limit than Hegel supposes on the intelligibility, for our human minds, of these spatially extended, substantial, particular beings (including ourselves) composing nature; and (2) the existence of spatially extended nature in its particularities must be taken as given, as a brute fact, since it has not been shown to be derivable by and from reason.

<sup>34</sup> "The deduction of the necessity that space must have only three dimensions is not a requirement of geometry, insofar as it is not a philosophic science"; but "no thought is given to the necessity of this demonstration. This demonstration rests on the nature of the Concept": 9.44 (N 30–31, sec. 255), and see the context.

<sup>35</sup> For nineteenth-century discussions, consider Henry Manning, ed., *The Fourth Dimension Simply Explained: A Collection of Essays Selected from Those Submitted to the Scientific American's Prize Competition* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1960 [1910]). For Kant's consideration of the possibility of space with other dimensions, see *Gedanken von der wahren Schätzung der lebendigen Kräfte* #10, in *Gesammelte Schriften* 1.24; cf. Herbert James Paton, *Kant's Metaphysics of Experience*, 2 vols. (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1997), 1.160–61. See also Halper, "The Logic of Hegel's Philosophy of Nature," 42. Regarding the human mind's capacity to *envision* a fourth spatial dimension, see Einstein's leading student Hans Reichenbach, "Visualization of Non-Euclidean Geometry," in *The Philosophy of Space and Time* (New York: Dover, 1958 [1927]), 48–57; but contrast Eva Brann, *The World of the Imagination* (Savage, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1991), 604.