

Life and Mind in Hegel's *Logic* and Subjective Spirit

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Abstract

This paper aims to understand Hegel's claim in the introduction to his *Philosophy of Mind* that mind is an actualization of the Idea and argues that this claim provides us with a novel and defensible way of understanding Hegel's naturalism. I suggest that Hegel's approach to naturalism should be understood as 'formal', and argue that Hegel's *Logic*, particularly the section on the 'Idea', provides us with a method for this approach. In the first part of the paper, I present an interpretation of Hegel's method in which life plays a central role. In the second part of the paper, I develop Hegel's method by providing a reading of Hegel's Subjective Spirit, focusing on the sections 'Anthropology' and 'Phenomenology' in particular, arguing that they display the dialectic between life and cognition outlined by Hegel's Idea.

The aim of this paper is to understand the claim that mind is an actualization of the Idea and argue that this claim provides us with a novel and defensible way of understanding Hegel's so-called naturalism.¹ For those interested in exploring the plausibility, extent, and exact character of Hegel's naturalism, the *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit* has been an especially important text, primarily due to two factors. The first concerns its particular placement within the context of Hegel's system: the forms of Subjective Spirit follow directly from Hegel's discussion of organics and the animal organism in the *Philosophy of Nature*, and in fact, the transition to *Geist* already takes place in the concluding paragraph of that text. This provides good evidence that Hegel meant for there to be a strong sense of continuity between nature and spirit, and perhaps even that nature lays the groundwork for the discussion of spirit which makes up the third part of his philosophical system. The second factor concerns the way in which the *Philosophy of Mind* begins with a discussion of anthropology, and specifically, with the determination of mind as the natural soul. The Anthropology, with its strong emphasis on the embodiment of mind, along with its famous discussion of habit (a determination that is also present in Hegel's discussion of the animal), also provides a strong case for understanding Hegel as *some* sort of naturalist, insofar

as his account of human freedom appears to be grounded, in *some* sense, in our animal nature.

Although I am in general agreement with the above assessment, my strategy in this paper will be somewhat different. I will argue that understanding Hegel's naturalism requires us to turn to his *Science of Logic*, and specifically, that we need to understand the logical Idea presented therein as a method for the *Philosophy of Mind*. Far from venturing into a kind of rampant, indefensible idealism, understanding mind as an actualization of the Idea provides important insights into exactly what kind of naturalism Hegel is in fact committed to, given his often conflicting statements regarding the precise import of nature for spirit. I will suggest that far from attempting to reduce mind to something natural, Hegel's primary interest is in understanding the formal characteristics of living activity in general, which provides a framework for understanding the basic shape of minded, human activity. What results is not only a novel approach to the problems surrounding mind's relation to nature, but further, a way of approaching Hegel's Subjective Spirit as a contribution to philosophical anthropology.

This paper will proceed in two parts: in the first part of the paper (sections I–III) I will clarify what it means for the Idea to be a method for Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind* and outline a conception of *formal naturalism*. Specifically, I will turn to an analysis of the 'Life' chapter in Hegel's *Logic* and argue that it provides us with three formal conditions for thinking about minded activity. In the second part of the paper (sections IV–VI) I turn to the Philosophy of Subjective Spirit and show exactly how the method of the *Logic* pertains to Hegel's determination of mind. Reading the Subjective Spirit as a philosophical anthropology, I provide a brief account of the Anthropology and the Phenomenology in particular in order to both clarify Hegel's philosophical method, and to defend against some common misunderstandings that arise in these sections.

I. Naturalism and *Geist* as the self-actualization of the Idea

Hegel famously begins the introduction to the *Philosophy of Mind* by making reference to the Delphic command, *know thyself*. Following in the footsteps of Aristotle's *De Anima*, the pursuit of self-knowledge as knowledge of *Geist* or mind poses two immediate problems for those faced with this task. The first difficulty concerns the object of investigation: unlike most objects that we seek to know, mind is not a thing or fixed object at all, but is 'absolutely restless, pure *activity* [*Tätigkeit*]' (PM: §378Z; my emphasis).² Mind is not a thing with properties in the manner of other things, and we cannot treat mind as 'mere aggregate of self-standing forces', trying to learn about the parts disconnected from the functioning of the whole (ibid.). Hegel criticizes both the rational and empirical

psychology of his day for misunderstanding their objects of study, accusing the former of reducing mind to a ‘soul-thing’ and the latter of clumsily treating the activities of the mind as one would the parts of a machine. Understanding mind as activity requires that we understand *Geist* in its free self-development, suggesting that self-knowledge is different in kind from the other types of knowledge that we usually pursue.³

The difficulty concerning *Geist* as an object immediately points to a second difficulty concerning the method or approach one must take with respect to acquiring knowledge of mind. The command to know oneself does not arise from an external ‘alien power’, but is instead mind’s *own* absolute law (*PM*: §377Z); it is a law dictated by mind itself, exemplifying the self-relation of mind as one of self-legislation. The difficulty of carrying out this command lies in the fact that knowledge of mind is fundamentally and necessarily reflexive and self-referring, for the object of investigation is equally a subject and a self. This reflexivity provides some insight into the nature of the activity that is characteristic of mind: we are not only barred from taking a neutral, observational, or exclusively spectatorial perspective with respect to mind, but further, the activity of mind continually constitutes and transforms what mind *is*. *Geist*, then, is a kind of self-referential activity, one for which being and doing are inseparably bound together. Mind must therefore be understood not only as activity, but as activity that continually acts upon itself in an ongoing process of self-actualization.

Although Hegel was surely not the first—and certainly not the last—to reflect upon the peculiar difficulty of the self-referential nature of self-knowledge, he does, however, propose a rather novel approach to the problem, which I believe has not received the attention it deserves. With regard to the question of method, Hegel reminds us that in approaching the topic of *Geist*, we do not have to start from scratch, for there are resources from his *Logic* that can be employed in this context. More specifically, Hegel claims that mind—in its subjective, objective and absolute forms—‘must be grasped as an actualization of the [logical] Idea’, and that mind is in fact ‘the most concrete, most developed form achieved by the Idea in its self-actualization’ (*PM*: §377Z). Although there has long been debate concerning the relation between Hegel’s logic and his *Realphilosophie*, along with a high degree of suspicion concerning the plausibility of Hegelian logic itself, I nonetheless want to defend the thesis that mind is an actualization of the Idea, and argue that, far from venturing into speculative metaphysics in a pejorative sense, understanding this claim provides important insights into the character of Hegel’s naturalism.

First, at a general level, it provides insight into Hegel’s philosophical method and demonstrates how we can understand his naturalism as a variety of liberal naturalism that I will refer to in this essay as *formal*, following from an approach

to Hegel's *Logic* as a theory of absolute form. Naturalism is a highly contested term, but in contemporary discussions it usually refers to a type of scientific naturalism that is classified as either ontological or methodological, where both positions are often (but not always) held in tandem.⁴ Strictly speaking, Hegel is of course not a naturalist in the ontological or methodological sense, and in fact, it can be quite difficult to place him clearly in these debates at all, for there is not sufficient agreement regarding the presupposed terms and frame of discussion (some of this is simply due to the immense changes that have taken place in the natural and human sciences since Hegel's time). Usually, when Hegel is considered a naturalist in contemporary terms, he is classified as a liberal, broad, or soft naturalist, a position that is itself contentious and which faces some characteristic problems of its own.⁵ Very roughly defined, liberal naturalism can be viewed as an attempt to tread the middle ground that opposes both narrow forms of scientific naturalism and extravagant forms of supernaturalist metaphysics, by employing and developing an expanded conception of the natural in which 'nature includes *second nature*' (McDowell 1994: xx).⁶ In particular, and along Aristotelian lines, the characteristic activities associated with *Geist*—mindedness, freedom, seeking truth and goodness—are conceived as actualizations of our existence as animals.⁷

Building on this broad McDowellian thesis, I suggest that Hegel's naturalism can be construed as formal in the following sense: life, as the immediate actuality of the logical Idea, provides the minimal form, shape and categorial structure that makes meaning-making and intelligibility available to self-consciousness, expressing the basic form of all minded activity. Life is the first actuality of the self-referential activity characteristic of mind, and the self-consciousness most characteristic of minded activity is, first and foremost, knowledge of the universal form of life-activity.⁸ To say that mind is the actualization of the logical Idea is, then, not to suggest that mind is a copy of some eternal, idealized Platonic idea; rather, it suggests that the self-developing activity of *Geist* is a self-conscious actualization of life-form activity.⁹ What is meant by form here should not be viewed as opposed to matter or content, but refers to an Aristotelian conception of form in which form and matter are essentially related, where form constitutes an immanent organizing principle of matter, and expresses its essential character.¹⁰ Hegel's incessant and well-known critiques of empty formalism in the philosophy of his predecessors should thus be viewed as a critique of what he views as a faulty conception of form, rather than an abandonment of pursuing a theory of form altogether. In the context of the thesis that *Geist* is a self-actualization of the Idea, we can consider his naturalism as formal in the following senses:

1) Hegel presents life as the immediate Idea because living activity and organization represent the primary instances of self-formation in which form is

not imposed externally (and hence, is not merely externally related to its matter). Referring to this immanent, essential form as form-activity (or activity of form—*Formtätigkeit*, to be further discussed below), Hegel attempts to determine the essential features of living activity that provide the basis for minded activity.¹¹ Life as Idea provides the potential, the necessary form, from which the minded form-activity of *Geist* is self-actualized.

2) Hegel's naturalism is formal because its project is not an attempt to reduce spirit to living nature, or even to argue that spirit can be exhaustively explained by the scientific methods that are undoubtedly crucial for our understanding of living nature. Rather, just as he refers to 'shapes of spirit' (*Gestalten des Geistes*) in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel is suggesting that living activity has an essential form or shape that we can identify, that is immanent to species-life and the individuals who participate in it, and that provides a minimal form to *Geist* that is irreducible. That is, no matter how sophisticated minded life becomes, no matter how far it departs from what can be considered 'natural' ways of existing, *Geist* retains a form that is common to all living things that informs the shape of its rational capacities and activities.¹² Rather than posing an absolute limit to human freedom, living form is instead a condition for the actualization of our freedom.

At the more specific level pertaining to the philosophy of subjective spirit, the thesis that mind is an actualization of the idea helps us understand the undeniable importance of life in Hegel's conception of mind in its subjective senses. In particular, it allows us to grasp the ongoing and varied modes of the dialectic between life and mind that structures each particular form of subjective mind, as well as the philosophy of subjective spirit as a whole. I contend that if we take Hegel's naturalism as formal in the sense discussed above, then there is no problem of squaring the apparent contradiction between claims asserting the importance of life for mind, and claims for the development of mind in opposition to nature. However much mind comes to oppose itself to nature, mind's activity never ceases to be a mode of life-activity. I will take up this issue in more detail in later sections, but for now I want to turn to Hegel's treatment of the Idea as a philosophical method in the *Logic*.

II. Idea as method

Hegel's infamous remarks declaring that the 'Idea' is the eternal, absolute foundation of his philosophical system, and indeed, of everything actual, has, not surprisingly, long raised the eyebrows of those committed to understanding his texts, as well as those just waiting for an easy way to dismiss what they already viewed as an indefensible, metaphysical philosophy. However, we can immediately quell the fears concerning the metaphysical ambitions of Hegel's concept of the

Idea by understanding its primary function as a philosophical method, being neither an ideal form nor an abstract concept. Hegel understands method in a rather literal sense, as a mode, a way, or manner in which something develops. In the *Science of Logic*, method concerns the manner and mode of the development of thinking as such, and more specifically, of the ‘process of cognition’ (*SL*: 825). Essentially, method as mode concerns the way in which something proceeds, or more specifically, a manner of activity, which allows us to see why Hegel criticizes an understanding of method that takes it as something wholly external to that which it formally organizes. Far from being something externally applied to a particular endeavor, method describes the necessary way in which something unfolds, which also explains why Hegel arrives at a discussion of method only at the very end of the *Logic*. There is clearly a parallel between Hegel’s approach to form and Hegel’s approach to method: in both cases, Hegel is critical of external relationships in which the relata are mutually indifferent to one another.

We can quickly note two things that follow here from this conception of method. First, if method is a manner of activity, then methods are specific to their objects. We can illustrate this point with an example from Hegel who criticizes Spinoza for using the geometric method to discover the truth of a decidedly non-geometrical object, namely, self-causing, infinite substance. Applying the geometric method to substance is like using a calculator to understand the nature and extent of our friendship—a calculator may be helpful for adding up the dinner check, but it is a very inadequate instrument for determining the history of our relationship and the way in which it may have developed.¹³ Second, although methods are specific to their objects, the method that Hegel calls the Idea, and more specifically, the absolute Idea, describes a *universal* method for cognitive activity as such. By this Hegel is suggesting that we can identify a form of activity that captures reason *in toto*, describing the fundamental shape of reason in *all* of its functioning and development. The method, Hegel writes, ‘expands into [a] system’ as ‘cognition rolls onwards from content to content’ (*SL*: 838, 840).¹⁴ In other words, once we grasp the fundamental form of cognition’s activity, method becomes the basis for the determination of further knowledge, specifically, of nature and spirit, which make up the totality of Hegel’s philosophical system. This highly ambitious, universal method for cognition is what Hegel calls absolute form, a method that aims to determine the ‘form-activity’ or *Formtätigkeit* of reason as such, in its ongoing process of following through the command for self-knowledge. Method, then, to borrow words from Kant, is ‘the determination of the formal conditions of a complete system of ... reason’ (Kant 2003: A708/B736).

Hegel will transform this Kantian thought by reading ‘formal conditions’ not according to Kant’s theory of form, but according to his own, where formal conditions speak not only to something’s essential form, determined by its own

activity.¹⁵ As we will see, formal conditions are also closely connected with ends and purposes (*Zwecke*), insofar as something's essential form is determined by the aims and goals it pursues. If method determines the formal conditions of reason, then method is not only an internal organizing principle of reason, but it also sets out the ultimate ends pursued by reason's activity. Although truth, goodness, freedom are undoubtedly such ultimate ends, Hegel will suggest that such ends are themselves shapeless and empty, unless they are also informed by the ends of life.

III. Life-form activity (*Lebensformtätigkeit*) as the basis for cognition

Why does the discussion of method start with an account of life? We can begin by emphasizing again the notion of activity (*Tätigkeit*) that is central not only to Hegel's concept of *Geist*, but equally central for his notion of thought. Activity for Hegel is the process of transforming a subjective end, purpose, or goal into something objective and actual through the use of specific means. The most basic model for this kind of purposive activity, discussed in the chapter on teleology immediately preceding the section on the Idea, is Kant's conception of inner purposiveness, a type of self-relation in which something is the cause and effect of itself, exhibiting a primitive form of self-determination.¹⁶ This concept of inner purposiveness or life-activity is, for Hegel, 'Kant's great service to philosophy', for it allows us to understand the activity of reason not only negatively (via the limitations of the finite discursive understanding), but positively, as a mode of living activity that produces itself as its own end (*SL*: 737). Unlike Fichte, for example, who argues that the self-positing activity of the infinite 'I' is the absolute, unconditioned foundation of knowledge, Hegel argues at the conclusion of his *Logic* that the activity of the 'I' is in fact a species of a larger, more primary form of activity characteristic of sentient living things. Although there is no doubt that the activity of the 'I' is distinctive in many ways, with a capacity for self-consciousness and freedom that is unmatched in the non-human natural world, there is equally no doubt that, for Hegel, the activity of the 'I' cannot in fact be grasped or determined at all in absolute isolation from a determination of the activity characteristic of sentient life in general. Although Hegel presents many different versions of this argument throughout his system, in the *Logic*, the argument operates at a purely conceptual level, where Hegel is suggesting that our very understanding of the concept of activity presupposes that we have an understanding of the concept of life. The concept of life is a more determinate, more concrete, more filled out version of the concept of activity—one that we need to understand if we are to grasp the form of activity characteristic of cognition.

To fill out the concept of activity as the realization of subjective ends as objective, Hegel identifies three essential characteristics of what we can call life-form activity (*Lebensformtätigkeit*) that provides the basis for cognition. The logical concept of life is presented as a presupposition of cognition, but it is carefully distinguished from the treatment of natural life that is the presupposition of *concrete* cognition, treated in anthropology and psychology. Although Hegel will discuss mind's essential relation to its animal existence throughout the *Philosophy of Mind*, the *Logic* aims to highlight what Hegel takes to be the formal aspects of this existence: the logical concept of life attempts to identify the formal characteristics of sentient living activity, determining the mode of life-form activity that is relevant for cognition in general, independent of particular external manifestations.

The first characteristic identified by Hegel (which is also one of the first problems taken up in the anthropology) is that 'the living being possesses corporeality (*Leiblichkeit*) ... by nature' (*SL*: 766). Whereas the anthropology reflects upon the specific embodiment of human beings as a natural part of subjective mind, the method prescribed in the *Logic* determines corporeality as a formal, *a priori* condition for cognitive activity as such.¹⁷ Cognition presupposes actualization in an individual, organic body that produces itself as both producer and product via its own inner drive (*Trieb*) (*SL*: 767). Corporeality therefore formally constrains, without thereby determining, the activity of cognition, insofar as concrete cognitive activity is necessarily actualized in the drives or urges of an embodied, living individual.

The second characteristic of life-form-activity that forms the basis for cognition is a relation to the external world. Living activity relates itself to an external world to which it stands in opposition, but which, through its own activity, can also come to correspond with its own ends. Through what Hegel calls the life-process, the living being negotiates its disparity and identity with the external world to various degrees of contradiction, pain, excitation, violence and satisfaction, but regardless of failure or success, the relation to externality is a formal, *a priori* condition that is part of the life-form-activity presupposed by cognition. Just as life reproduces itself by relating to, assimilating, appropriating, and transforming the external world according to its own purposes, cognition produces truth and goodness by shaping the world according to its own self-consciously determined ends. Hegel writes that through the 'external life process', the living individual has '*sublated its particularity* and raised itself to *universality*. ... [positing] itself as real universal life, that is, as *genus* [*Gattung*]' (*SL*: 772). The thought here is that in producing and reproducing its self-identity in relation to the external world, individual activity comes to fulfill not only particular ends—finding a nutritious meal, avoiding a predator, defining a concept, carrying out an experiment, constructing a theory—but universal ones that carry theoretical and practical validity in reference to (what Michael

Thompson calls) a ‘wider context’, namely in reference to members of one’s own kind (Thompson 2008: 56ff.).

The genus (or species—*Gattung*) is the third, and in some ways, the most important characteristic of life-form-activity, not only from the point of view of self-conscious cognition, but also from the point of view of *Geist*. There are two aspects of the genus process that are most pertinent insofar as it constitutes an *a priori* formal condition of cognitive activity. The first is what Hegel calls ‘duplication’: instead of presupposing and producing a relation to the external world, life-form-activity of the genus is ‘a presupposing of an objectivity that is identical with it ... a relating of the living being to itself as to another living being’ (*SL*: 773). This duplication is clearly echoed in the duplication of self-consciousnesses from the famous scene in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which is also present in the ‘Phenomenology’ section of the *Philosophy of Mind*. Hegel is suggesting that the relation to another of my own kind is a life-form condition of cognition: there must always be ‘at least two’ in order for the kind of activity characteristic of life and cognition to take place at all. Here, an important dimension of Hegel’s holism comes into view: the species is conceptually prior to the individual, for we cannot have a concept of an individual at all without thinking of its relation to a species, but the concept of the species is not dependent on any particular individual for its articulation and exceeds the aggregate of individuals that may belong to it.

The second aspect of the genus-process identified by Hegel is reciprocity: the members of a species exist in a relation mutual longing, tension and contradiction, a life-form condition that is actualized for cognition in the process of recognition. Reciprocity specifies that cognition takes place through the mutual relation of self-consciousnesses, or more specifically, that truth and goodness are actualized for cognition through the reciprocal activities of members of the genus. Through the processes of reciprocity, the genus is realized, or as Hegel writes, the genus obtains its ‘actuality’ (*SL*: 774). The realization of the genus is the culmination of the process that began with the activity of a living individual, suggesting that the aim of life activity is not only the production of an individual, but the production of the species as a whole. This will equally be true of the activity of *Geist*: what begins with an account of mind in its subjective senses (as soul, consciousness, and theoretical and practical mind) develops into objective spirit as the totality of *Geist* determining itself as ethical life.

With these three essential characteristics of life-form activity in place, cognition emerges as the explicit, self-conscious awareness of the genus, as the Idea in its self-conscious form. What marks the difference between the Idea as life and the Idea as self-conscious cognition is a familiar Hegelian distinction between something *in itself* (*an sich*) and something *for itself* (*für sich*), a distinction that some translators of Hegel have rendered as *implicit* and *explicit* respectively.¹⁸

While Hegel's usage of these terms is not always consistent, *in itself* generally denotes a determination of immediacy in which full development or self-awareness has not yet been realized. The determination of *for itself* denotes a kind of self-relation that is not only the result of development, but most importantly, is one that we can call self-conscious or self-aware. Both here in the transition to the self-conscious Idea, and in the more well-known transition to self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel argues that the genus that is *for itself*, or the self-consciousness of life-form, is the key to understanding the activity of self-consciousness that we associate with *Geist*. However, there are two arguments that are distinctive to the *Logic* account that will help to sum up the reconstruction of the Idea provided thus far. First, the *Logic* provides the clearest and most complete statement of Hegel's mature position regarding the ubiquitous concept of life that is found throughout his system, in both early and later writings, and that undeniably plays a central role in his thought. Most importantly, it specifies the *formal* role played by the concept of life—that it is presented as a thesis concerning the *Formtätigkeit* of cognition, providing the formal, *a priori* outlines of meaning-making activity that come to be fully realized in the theoretical and practical activities of self-conscious cognition. Second, the Idea as presented in the *Logic* is intended as a philosophical method that provides the basis for understanding the other aspects of Hegel's system. Although it is surely unorthodox, Hegel argues that the ongoing dialectic between life and cognition constitutes a method that is specific to human reason, shaping all our modes of knowledge, particularly when it comes to knowledge of ourselves and the dimensions of minded activity that are the topic of the *Philosophy of Mind*.

IV. The puzzle of paragraph §381

With an understanding of the logical Idea as a philosophical method in view, we can now turn directly to the question of how *Geist*, particularly in its subjective dimension, constitutes a concrete actualization of the Idea. Under the heading, 'Concept of Mind', Hegel states the following in paragraph §381 of the *Philosophy of Mind*:

For us, mind has nature as its presupposition [Voraussetzung], though mind is the truth of nature, and is thus absolutely first with respect to it. In this truth nature has vanished, and mind has emerged as the Idea that has reached its being-for-self. The object of the Idea as well as the subject is the concept. This identity is absolute negativity, since in nature the concept has its complete, external objectivity, but this externalization of the concept has been sublated and the concept has, in this

externalization, become identical with itself. And so the concept is this identity only so far as it is at the same time a return out of nature. (PM: §381)

This famous passage is, even by Hegel's standards, rather paradoxical, and depending on what one emphasizes within it, one could potentially come to differing conclusions concerning what Hegel means to say. In one and the same breath, Hegel appears to be at once affirming and denying the significance of nature for mind, and indeed, this passage has been employed to support the cases for both Hegel's naturalism and his anti-naturalism.¹⁹

One way to read this passage is to understand it as the corresponding statement of method for the *Philosophy of Mind*, one that mirrors Hegel's Idea, while being adjusted for the demands specific to the knowledge of mind in its concrete actualization. Hegel attempts to clarify his paradoxical statement from §381 by reminding us of an argument from his *Logic*, inherited from Spinoza, concerning the nature of determinacy, namely that 'every determinacy is a determinacy only in contrast to another determinacy', or *omnis determinatio est negatio* (PM: §381Z; see also *SL*: 133). Mind gains its determinacy in contrast with the determinacy of nature, just as logical cognition gained its determinacy in contrast with the determinacy of life. Now, nature clearly covers a much broader scope than life: not only does it constitute an entirely separate prong of Hegel's system (of which organic activity is merely a part), but moreover, nature as a whole (determinations that include space and time, the formation of the earth, the weather, etc.) is posited as the 'other' of mind such that it comes to stand in for the dimensions of conscious life that are immediate or decidedly unchosen, forming a stark contrast to dimensions of conscious life that are freely self-determined. Whereas Hegel's interest in the concept of life always seems to concern the form of living activity and its characteristic relation of self-production, nature denotes, more often than not, a somewhat fixed and given determination to which mind finds itself opposed.

Although I fully grant that the distinction between nature and life is not always clear in Hegel, I want to propose the following: in opposing itself to nature in countless ways (with varying degrees of success and satisfaction), the development of mind never ceases to be fundamentally shaped by the life-activity that provides the formal conditions for cognition. If we take Hegel's naturalism in the formal sense that I have proposed, then mind, even in opposing itself to, reshaping, and superseding determinations that are presented as natural and immediate, nonetheless remains a form of life-activity that is corporeal, that relates to externality, and exists in relations of reciprocity with other members of its species. Mind thus posits itself in opposition to nature as an essential moment of its self-determination without ceasing to be an actualization of life-form

activity. In the following sections I will suggest that we can understand *subjective* mind—as a whole and in each of its modes—in precisely this way, namely, as an actualization of the form-activity determined by the Idea.

V. Anthropology, Phenomenology, Psychology

For better or for worse, Hegel tends to be rather obsessive in the employment of his philosophical method, attempting to present both his system as a whole, and each individual part, as neatly shaped according to the Idea (sometimes too neatly, for example, in trying to reduce the 5 senses to 3). Nonetheless, the dialectic between life and cognition plays an important structuring role in Hegel's account of subjective mind in a way that is both defensible and illuminating, beginning with an account of the natural soul in the Anthropology. The Anthropology, perhaps more than anywhere else in Hegel's work, presents the human being as a human animal, 'with the mind still in the grip of nature, related to its bodiliness/corporeality [*Leiblichkeit*]' (PM: §387Z).²⁰ The natural determination of mind is the 'foundation of the human', and as such, the Anthropology provides a basis for the development of mind in all of its different aspects (ibid.). The soul develops into consciousness and self-consciousness by establishing a relationship (*Verhältnis*) to external objects and ultimately, with other living, self-conscious I's.

This is documented in the section on 'Phenomenology', a process of development that is most well-known from Hegel's earlier 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Whereas the Anthropology documents the variety of ways in which the human soul lives as a corporeal being, the Phenomenology carefully documents the emergence of self-consciousness as constituted by its embodied *and* self-conscious relations to external objects and other self-conscious members of its own species, determining the process through which we gain conscious awareness of living form. This is an important dimension of Hegel's self-consciousness argument that is often misread, and scholars generally take the moment of self-consciousness's willingness to risk its natural, material life to be decisive (see, for example, Brandom 2007 and Pippin 2011). The formal reading that I have proposed will help to clarify this important moment in the Phenomenology.

Finally, subjective mind develops into '*mind as such*', and specifically, into theoretical and practical mindedness, documented in the section on Psychology (PM: §440A). Although Hegel argues that mind as such is the 'elevation above nature and natural determinacy', the psychological dimensions of mind continue to be manifestations of the dialectic between life and cognition in at least two fundamental ways. First, the determinations of theoretical and practical mind outlined by Hegel (intuition, representation, and thinking; practical feeling, drives and freedom of choice, and happiness) are all specifications of the means through

which self-consciousness determines its relation to itself, to the world, and to other self-consciousnesses. Thus, although self-consciousness employs these means in the processes through which it opposes itself to and fundamentally transforms both inner and outer nature, psychology remains a part of the general activity of self-consciousness that is conditioned by life-form activity. We can read the psychology as a further specification of self-conscious life rather than as a departure from it; generally, it is also important to remember that we are, in fact, always soul, self-consciousness, and mind at once. Secondly, psychology is the concrete actualization of the Idea of logical cognition, which also takes theoretical and practical forms. Just as theoretical and practical cognition (in the *Logic*) were the self-conscious actualizations of a living urge, drive or impulse that pursued truth and goodness respectively (see *WL*: 775–823), theoretical and practical mind (in Subjective Spirit) ‘must be conceived as a drive (*Trieb*)’ and essentially as ‘activity (*Tätigkeit*)’, both of which begin with a kind of feeling (*Gefühl*) (*PM*: §443Z). Grounded in the embodiment of living activity, feeling is a determination present in all three forms of subjective mind (*PM*: §445). Theoretical and practical feeling (theoretical feeling is what Hegel calls intuition) come to be rationally mediated by thinking and willing, activities that result in the concluding determination of subjective mind as free.

In the remainder of this paper I will very briefly discuss the Anthropology and Phenomenology in particular as concrete actualizations of the Idea, suggesting that what results from what I have been calling Hegel’s formal naturalism grounded in the logical Idea is a kind of philosophical anthropology *avant la lettre*. I focus on Anthropology and Phenomenology because they help bring into focus the emergence of mind as conditioned by the three life-form conditions outlined above: Anthropology highlights the embodied character of minded life-activity, mind in its various dimensions of bodiliness; Phenomenology highlights the development of self-consciousness through our relations to and appropriations of external objects and, more importantly, our reciprocal relations with other members of our species, which have come to be known as recognition.

VI. Philosophical anthropology in Hegel’s Subjective Spirit

Hegel’s challenge to Cartesian variants of mind/body dualism in the Anthropology have been widely discussed (see deVries 1988 and Winfield 2010), but in fact, what is most radical about Hegel’s treatment of the soul is that the relation between mind and body is not what frames his discussion of human embodiment at all. Rather, we can begin to think about Hegel’s overall aim in the Anthropology section by employing Plessner’s distinction between *being* a body and *having* a body (Plessner 1970).²¹ Plessner describes the self-relation of human embodiment as one that is

fundamentally ambiguous (or eccentric),²² where we are in the peculiar position of at once 'being an "embodied" [*leibhaftig*] creature and a creature "in the body" [*im Körper*]' (Plessner 1970: 32). *Being* a body describes our absolute boundedness to and absorption in embodied life, the state in which we coincide with our bodies, where there is simply no distinction between my body and my self. *Having* a body entails a certain distance between my body and my self, where I can relate to my body as an instrument or means, exerting control over my embodiment, eventually directing it toward self-conscious ends. Both Hegel and Plessner describe this double relation to embodiment in terms of a 'break' (PM: §409), a 'brokenness' in our embodied self-relation that is 'the basis of human existence, the source, but also the limit of human power' (Plessner 1970: 32).

This 'ambiguous position' of being 'a living body in a physical body' (*Leib im Körper*) describes the predicament of the soul throughout the Anthropology: as we move through the stages of life, from sleeping to waking, in feeling and sensation, in illness and habit. The moment of habit in particular is marked out by Hegel as the moment in which our break with bodiliness becomes explicit, and habit is described as the state in which we are at once free and unfree, as the 'most essential feature of the *existence* of all mental life' and as nothing short of 'death itself' (PM: §410A). In all of its different modes, the soul lives in the brokenness between its being a human body and having one, slowly coming to appropriate and exert control over the body until it is 'thoroughly trained', expressing itself as a '*sign*' (PM: §411).

The dual relation of being and having outlined in the Anthropology is the concrete actualization of what it means for corporeality to formally constrain mindedness without thereby determining it. Hegel clarifies this in the addition to the concluding paragraph of the Anthropology, arguing that the 'soul's pervasion of its bodiliness ... is not *absolute*' (PM: §412Z). Directly citing the logical Idea, Hegel then suggests that the difference between body and soul, the difference between *being* a body and *having* one, must be given 'its due' (*sein Recht behalte*). Because of the logical Idea, and not in spite of its presumed and oft-mentioned reconciling capacities, the ambiguity of concrete, embodied mind is never overcome or superseded; rather, mind as a concrete actualization of the Idea determines itself as the dialectic of this very difference. Hegel writes: 'Something of bodiliness remains, therefore, purely organic and consequently withdrawn from the power of the soul'. This thesis follows the broad outlines of liberal naturalism discussed above: even in its fundamental embodiment, the self-referring activity of mind as soul is actualized as the difference between being and having a body, the anthropological determination of the dialectic between life and cognition spelled out by the form-activity of the logical Idea.

In the transition from Anthropology to Phenomenology, the soul comes to alienate itself from its body, and determines itself as consciousness or the I.²³

Although the I is a result of a certain internalization or inward turn (*Innerlichwerden*) of the soul, mind as consciousness and self-consciousness equally directs itself outward and ‘enters into conflict [*in Kampf*] with external objects’ (PM: §413Z). Given that this section shares much in common with the well-known chapter on self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (there are, however, also some important differences), I simply want to highlight two moments in the emergence of self-consciousness that help to further develop Hegel’s philosophical anthropology, grounded in the logical Idea. The first concerns the role of living form in the transition from consciousness to self-consciousness. On most accounts, the key to Hegel’s conception of self-consciousness is its necessary relation to another self-consciousness: to be a self-consciousness is to be recognized by another self-consciousness and to exist in reciprocal relations with other self-conscious beings. All of this is certainly and importantly true, but a crucial step to the story is generally omitted, in which knowledge of living form constitutes a necessary condition for taking oneself as an object. In some ways, the account provided in the Subjective Spirit clarifies the role of life by emphasizing the importance of interiority and inner difference—both as an essential feature of self-consciousness and as an essential characteristic of living form. In the transformation from the form of consciousness known as *Verstand* (which roughly parallels Kant’s conception of theoretical understanding) to self-consciousness in the form of desire, the living object plays a central role in providing the condition under which consciousness gains awareness of itself, acquiring knowledge of the fundamental form of its own activity. Hegel states the following in paragraph §418:

Consciousness in the form of understanding ... finds its solution in so far as there the object is reduced or elevated to the *appearance* of an *interior* that *is for itself*. Such an appearance is the *living* creature [*Lebendige*]. In the contemplation [*Betrachtung*] of this, self-consciousness is ignited. (PM: §418Z)

Self-consciousness is ‘ignited’ in encountering its identity and difference from the merely living creature, and it is important to note that Hegel presents this moment prior to self-consciousness’ encounter with another self-consciousness. Of course, the priority here is not meant to be temporal, but conceptual: Hegel is suggesting that having some grasp of what I have been calling life-form activity is a necessary condition for first, taking oneself as an object, and second, for encountering another self-consciousness in a way such that meaningful processes of recognition can take place. Hegel makes clear that the significance of contemplating the living creature lies in the agreement or correspondence between living activity and the activity of the I: *Verstand* remains at the level of consciousness and does not attain to genuine self-consciousness because its objects are ‘something dead [*etwas Totes*]’. More specifically, the living object displays the interiority, inner difference, and

perhaps most importantly, the inner *lawfulness* and purposiveness that is characteristic of self-conscious activity, and in its encounter with living form, self-consciousness encounters the fundamental form of its *own* activity, marking a key moment of self knowledge. Unlike the laws of *Verstand* (for example, the law of force and causality), Hegel stresses that the living thing is a law unto itself—an end in itself—and it is in its ‘knowledge’ (*das Wissen*) of life-form activity that self-consciousness is ‘kindled’. This moment in the Phenomenology is the concrete actualization of the logical Idea as we have been discussing it thus far: in acquiring knowledge of life-form activity, consciousness attains an awareness of the basic form of its own activity and is able to take itself as an object.

The second moment that is key for understanding Hegel’s philosophical anthropology of self-consciousness concerns the famous life and death struggle for recognition. Here again, there is a crucial step of Hegel’s argument that is usually omitted or misunderstood. The willingness on the part of self-consciousness to risk its life for the sake of freedom is generally taken to be decisive, demonstrating self-consciousness’s ultimate departure from and sublation of the aims of mere life. Although this stage is undoubtedly a key moment in the development of free self-consciousness, it turns out that it is only the first step, a step that results in abstract, rather than determinate negation. Hegel draws a distinction between the inner freedom (*innere Freiheit*) that is made manifest through the willingness to sacrifice life and the recognized existence (*anerkannten Dasein*) of freedom that requires a second stage of learning and self-awareness on the part of self-consciousness. For the genuine, recognized existence of freedom, self-consciousness learns that ‘life is as essential as freedom’ (*PM*: §433). That is, self-consciousness has to learn that the aims and form-activity of life are not only the conditions of its freedom—Hegel says that life is the ‘existence of self-consciousness’ freedom [*Daseins seiner Freiheit*]’ (*PM*: §432)—but also, further, that these considerations continue to mediate the processes of recognition as self-consciousness comes to determine itself (through willing and thinking) as free.²⁴

Life continues to mediate the processes of recognition, even at the level of universal self-consciousness or reason, in (at least) two ways. First, insofar as recognition itself is the self-conscious actualization of the genus-process in which living beings relate to other members of their species as a necessary condition of their activity; and second, insofar as the desire to be a self-sufficient, free self-consciousness continues to be pervaded by the demands of life. As we saw above with the bodiliness of the soul, we could say equally here that self-consciousness’ appropriation of and abstraction from life is not absolute, and life as the *Dasein* of self-conscious freedom must also be given its due. This is the phenomenological determination of the dialectic between life and cognition spelled out by the logical Idea: in the process of coming to determine itself as free, self-consciousness negotiates its identity and difference with life as a formal

condition for self-knowledge as it establishes relations to the external world alongside relations with other members of its own species. As with the section on Anthropology, the Phenomenology can be read as framed broadly by the aims of liberal naturalism, which understands self-consciousness as shaped by the irreducible difference between being a living creature and actively taking my life as an object of self-conscious determination.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to understand the claim that mind is the actualization of the Idea. I have argued that this claim amounts to a statement concerning what I called Hegel's *formal* naturalism, namely, that the logical Idea presents the form of cognition's activity as thoroughly shaped by the activity of life. I focused in particular on the forms of subjective mind and argued that their activity displayed the dialectic between life and cognition outlined by Hegel's Idea, resulting in a distinctively Hegelian philosophical anthropology. With the reading of the logical Idea I have proposed in this paper, I also hope to have clarified somewhat the relation between Hegel's logic and *Realphilosophie*, and offered a defense Hegel's philosophical method that I believe to be central to his system as a whole. What remains to be seen is how objective and absolute *Geist* can also be understood as concrete actualizations of the Idea, and whether or not Hegel's ambitions for his absolute method can be carried out successfully for a comprehensive accounting of *Geist*.²⁵

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Notes

¹ I say 'so-called' naturalism to emphasize the contested character of this particular subject: there is not much agreement concerning exactly what naturalism is, and Hegel is often read as an opponent of naturalism, however one chooses to define it. On recent attempts to understand Hegel's project as naturalistic, see for example Stone 2013, Pinkard 2012, Ikäheimo 2012, Testa 2013.

² Abbreviations used:

SL = Hegel, G. W. F. (1969), *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller. Amherst: Humanity Books.
PS = Hegel, G. W. F. (1977), *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

EL = Hegel, G. W. F. (1991), *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting and H. S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett.

PM = Hegel, G. W. F. (2007), *Philosophy of Mind*, trans. W. Wallace and A. V. Miller, ed. M. Inwood. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

³ Charles Taylor argues that the concept of mind as activity is so central for Hegel that we can read his entire philosophy of mind through the lens of problems in the philosophy of action. See Taylor 1985.

⁴ The philosophical problems involved in defining and defending different forms of naturalism are vast and I do not intend to do justice to this rich debate here. On the distinction between ontological and methodological naturalism, its problems, and its alternatives, see De Caro and Macarthur 2004 and 2010.

⁵ See Gardner 2007, Stroud 2004 and Neta 2007. Many of the arguments against liberal naturalism hinge on forcing it into a dilemma in which it cannot hold its indeterminate middle ground, and raising concerns that a broadened conception of nature is either too broad to do serious philosophical work or simply reverts to a supernaturalist metaphysics. However, soft naturalists argue that the dilemma raised by opponents is a false dilemma, and that broadened conceptions of nature can be sufficiently determinate and distinguished from opposing views. For a defense of liberal naturalism against characteristic charges, see De Caro and Voltolini 2010. Stone 2013 argues that naturalism can be a cluster concept, with a number of varied commitments, and that one does not have to hold all of the components at once in order to qualify as naturalist. She contends that the issue should be one of degree rather than of a stark opposition between naturalism and anti-naturalism. In this vein, Hegel can be read as falling between naturalism and anti-naturalism, and can be best viewed as a 'broad naturalist'. Testa (2013) defines his version of Hegel's naturalism as follows: 'Spirit, accordingly, far from constituting another type of thing, is for Hegel nothing other than a determinate constellation of relations of Nature itself as the one single reality. This thesis could be called *Hegel's Naturalism*' (23). Pinkard's (2012) thesis regarding Hegel's naturalism concerns Hegel's conception of nature—what he calls 'disenchanted Aristotelian naturalism' (see 19–20). He tries to show both that there is a 'strong continuity between animal experience and human experience' and that 'there is a sharp break between animal and human awareness', and that these two sides can be held together coherently (27).

⁶ The supernatural is a broad category and can include 'entities (such as God, spirits, entelechies or Cartesian minds), events (such as miracles or magic), or epistemic faculties (such as mystical insight or spiritual intuition)' (DeCaro and Macarthur 2010: 3). The idea of second nature is prominent in the work of Schiller, Schelling and Hegel. See also Khurana 2016.

⁷ See McDowell 1994: 'Exercises of spontaneity belong to our mode of living. And our mode of living is our way of actualizing ourselves as animals. So we can rephrase the thought by saying: exercises of spontaneity belong to our way of actualizing ourselves as animals' (78). And: 'Second nature could not float free of potentialities that belong to a normal human organism' (84). See also McDowell 1998 and 2004. The central difference between McDowell

and Hegel on this process of actualization, a process that both thinkers refer to as *Bildung*, hinges on Hegel's concept of negativity. See Ng 2013.

⁸ See Aristotle's *De Anima* (1981: 412a22ff). Aristotle distinguishes between first and second actuality with two examples: being asleep and being awake, and knowledge and the exercise of knowledge. First actuality is also understood as potentiality, what Hegel calls 'real possibility' in the chapter on *Wirklichkeit* in the *Science of Logic* (*SL*: 546ff.). Hegel also calls soul the 'sleep' of mind in §389 of the Anthropology. On Hegel's concept of actuality, see Ng 2009.

⁹ Evan Thompson's *Mind in Life* (2007), without invoking Hegel and from an enactivist point of view, argues for the continuity of nature and mind by identifying formal, organizational properties shared by life and cognition under the heading of autopoiesis.

¹⁰ That there is an important connection between formal and final causes in Aristotle's understanding of causality is something that Hegel clearly exploits, particularly in the *Logic* understood as a theory of absolute form.

¹¹ Hegel first refers to the activity of form as well as absolute form in the 'Ground' chapter of the *Science of Logic*. See *SL*: 449, 452–4. Activity of form will come up again at a crucial moment in Hegel's discussion of the hypothetical syllogism (*SL*: 700), one that mirrors his analysis of actuality. See also *EL*: §§150, 212.

¹² On the irreducibility of life for thought, see Michael Thompson (2008).

¹³ Although Hegel is highly critical of viewing cognition as an 'instrument', he writes of method that it is 'knowing's own subjective act, the *instrument* and means of cognizing activity, distinguished from that activity, but only as the activity's own essentiality' (*SL*: 827).

¹⁴ On Hegel's absolute method, see Nuzzo 2005 and Zambrana 2015.

¹⁵ We can also understand 'shapes of spirit' in the same way: the 'shape' of spirit, as its essential form, is constituted by its own activity, more specifically in the case of spirit, by its practices, institutions, codified laws and customs.

¹⁶ The concept of inner purposiveness is also an important step in the transition to the Doctrine of the Concept. See Ng 2017.

¹⁷ Like my use of the term 'formal conditions', *a priori* here should not be read in a Kantian vein. Following Jay Bernstein, life can be understood as a material *a priori* for the activities of cognition (Bernstein 2001: 301–6), i.e., *qua* formal cause, it has the status of an *a priori* for human beings despite its being something material and empirical. An objection can be raised that this makes Hegel's logic itself something contingent and empirical, insofar as it appears to rest on what are entirely contingent and empirical features of living and human beings. However, I think this misconstrues both Hegel's undermining of the traditional distinction between the empirical and the *a priori*, and his treatment of the relation between contingency and necessity, which emphasizes the necessity of contingency. Here in particular, I am suggesting that although from a certain (limited) perspective the formal aspects of life discussed by Hegel are empirical and contingent, from a higher perspective we can say that they are absolutely necessary and objective, namely, from the perspective of the form of life of *Geist*. To use an example: echolocation is a necessary organizing principle of the experience of bats, but it can also be considered a contingent empirical fact that bats locate objects in this particular way. But to say

that echolocation is therefore *merely* empirical, contingent, or subjective, looks almost meaningless when one considers the life-form of bats: surely bats successfully locate objects and successfully attain their ends through the use of echolocation, which renders their experience and knowledge gained, something objective. Hegel is making the same point here about us: insofar as this is the form through which subjective ends are transformed into something objective, this form has the status of *a priori* necessity, despite it looking empirical or contingent from another perspective. To insist that certain features of life-activity are merely contingent is to remain at the level of what Hegel calls formal modality (SL: 542–6), which views everything as governed exclusively by chance. Although formal modality is appropriate in certain contexts, it precludes the possibility of achieving a self-understanding of human activity as free. See also *De Anima* 415b12ff and Bernstein 2009.

¹⁸ Miller often uses implicit and explicit for *an sich* and *für sich* but he is not always consistent in this usage and this translation is not without detractors. For our purposes here, I find the concepts of implicit and explicit sufficiently illuminating to justify their use.

¹⁹ For example, Nuzzo 2013 and Testa 2013 read this passage as speaking in favour of Hegel's naturalism, whereas Pippin 1999 reads this passage as speaking in favour of Hegel's anti-naturalism.

²⁰ The Anthropology also contains discussions of race that are full of falsehoods and prejudices. For a sympathetic account of Hegel's Anthropology on this score, see de Laurentiis 2013. For a critique of Hegel, see Bernasconi 1998.

²¹ Another important point of reference here would be Merleau-Ponty 2012. In general the relation between Hegel and Merleau-Ponty has been underexplored.

²² Plessner also calls this the 'eccentric position' (1970). The notion of ambiguity (*Zweideutigkeit* or *Doppelsinnigkeit*) plays an important role in the introduction of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. See *PS*.

²³ 'The soul, when it comes to feel this limitation of its power, reflects itself into itself and expels bodiliness from itself as something *alien* to it. By this *reflection-into-self* the mind completes its liberation from the form of *being*, gives itself the form of *essence*, and becomes the *I* (*PM*: §412Z).

²⁴ See also *PS*: ¶189: 'In this experience self-consciousness learns that life is as essential to it as is pure self-consciousness'.

²⁵ This paper was presented at the 2015 Annual Meeting of the Hegel Society of Great Britain. I thank the audience and organizers of the conference for their helpful comments and questions.

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