

## NATURE IN HEGEL'S SYSTEM: RE-THINKING IDEALISM WITH-IN NATURE

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### ABSTRACT

*Hegel's system of philosophy offers a complex line of thought for a type of idealism, drastically different from its widely known critical readings. By examining the relationships between logic-nature and nature-spirit, the paper aims to prove that the place of nature in Hegel's system does not allow to be conceived of as mystically idealist since philosophy, as a system of thought, in its development has to have some bearings on the material world at some point. The paper firstly provides compatible definitions of the terms, idealism and naturalism, with Hegel's system. While the paper takes the definition of idealism in a Hegelian sense, for the purpose of the paper, non-reductive naturalism is regarded as compatible type of naturalism with Hegel's system. In the light of the given definitions, the paper secondly examines the relation of nature to the Logic in Hegel's system, and thirdly, examines the relation of nature to spirit. The relations of nature to logic and to spirit enable us to conclude that Hegel's system of philosophy is open for involving the elements of non-reductive naturalism along with idealism.*

**Keywords:** Idealism, Hegel, Logic, Nature, Spirit

## HEGEL'İN SİSTEMİNDE DOĞA: İDEALİZMİ DOĞAYLA/DOĞADA YENİDEN DÜŞÜNMEK

### ÖZ

*Hegel'in felsefe sistemi, geniş çapta bilinen eleştirel okumalarından büyük ölçüde farklı bir idealizm için kompleks bir düşünce dizilimi sunar. Bu makale Hegel'in sisteminde doğanın konumunu sistemin mistik bir idealizm olarak düşünülmesine izin vermediğini, düşünce sistemi olarak felsefenin gelişiminde bir noktada maddi dünya ile ilişkilendirilmesi gerektiği fikrini, mantık-doğa ve doğanın ilişkilerini inceleyerek göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu makale, önce idealizm ve natüralizm terimlerinin Hegel'in sistemi ile uyumlu tanımlarını sunar. Makale Hegelci bir anlamda idealizm tanımını kabul ederken, indirgemeci-olmayan natüralizmi, Hegel'in sistemiyle uyumlu bir natüralizm biçimi olarak, amacı için kabul eder. Verilen tanımlar ışığında, makale ikincil olarak Hegel'in sisteminde mantık ile doğa arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemekte ve üçüncü olarak doğanın tin ile ilişkisini incelemektedir. Doğanın mantık ve tin ile ilişkisi, Hegel'in felsefe sisteminin idealizmle birlikte indirgemeci-olmayan natüralizmin unsurlarını içermeye açık olduğuna dair sonuç çıkarmamıza olanak tanır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İdealizm, Hegel, Mantık, Doğa, Tin

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## Introduction

Regarding the well-known criticisms<sup>1</sup> on Hegel, especially on his concept of absolute idealism, Hegel is unavoidably a mystical idealist and there is no other way to consider his philosophy without its mystical tendency. From a general perspective, reading Hegel's philosophy might give an impression to the reader that the world of Hegel is fully mystical and spiritual. Magee tackles with mysticism and its historical dimension in Hegel's time.<sup>2</sup> He finds some historical connections justifying that Hegel is influenced by some mystic schools of his time. Nevertheless, there is an alternative way in which Hegel's idealism may well be considered as compatible with a specific type of naturalism, and thus not mystical.

One of the main purposes of Hegel's philosophy is to eradicate dualism in almost every aspect, such as the dualism of subjective and objective, of mind and body, of known and knower and of being and thought. His reading of history of philosophy leads us to think that the entire history of thought involves the dualism of some sort, except a few philosophers. Hegel conceives of dualism as an issue that sets some limits to acquiring a unified understanding of the world. His philosophical project, widely called absolute idealism, tackles the issues of dualism. However, idealism, known to us as the superiority of thought on things, is not what Hegel tries to tell us in his philosophy. What we can see in his project is a mode of idealism that involves thought sublating itself and non-thoughts within itself. One way to see his non-idealistic tendency is to look at his philosophy of nature. It is a systematic investigation for understanding the nature that can converge idealistic and naturalist tendencies within its own conception.

The main aim of this paper is to argue that there is room for a type of naturalism in Hegel's philosophy, particularly, when conceiving Hegel's philosophy of nature as an indispensable part of his system and hence his idealism is not merely mystical but merely logical. The argument requires some conceptual amendments, specifically in naturalism on the grounds that expecting to find hard-core naturalism in Hegel would end up with disappointment. Firstly, I will provide a conceptual discussion over idealism and naturalism. Then, I will

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<sup>1</sup> Please see two major criticisms to Hegel in Bertrand Russell, *Our Knowledge of the External World as a Field for Scientific Method in Philosophy*, Rev., Allen & Unwin (1926) and in Karl R. Popper. *The Open Society and Its Enemies. Volume 2, The High Tide of Prophecy: Hegel, Marx, and the Aftermath*. Fifth Edition (rev.), London: Routledge & Kegan Paul (1966).

<sup>2</sup> Glenn A. Magee, "Hegel and Mysticism", in Beiser F. (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth Century Philosophy*. Cambridge University Press (2008).

give a plausible account of what Hegel's Logic is in relation to nature. This section will focus on the transition from the idea to nature, to explicitly designate the place of nature in Hegel's system. The result of the discussion will lead us either to the confirmation of the superiority of the idea to nature in fashioning nature as an externality of the idea, or to the denial of this superiority with the view that nature and the idea are in unison. In the third chapter, nature will be taken into consideration with spirit to demonstrate how nature, in the sense closer to a type of naturalism, is compatible with the Hegelian spirit. In this section, the discussion will take place against Gardner's argument, that Hegel is not possibly compatible with any version of naturalism.<sup>3</sup> I will argue that spirit is a feature of nature. Nature has a significant place in Hegel's system. It is ontologically no less essential than the idea and spirit. Therefore, the main aim of the paper is to demonstrate the possibility for a type of naturalism in Hegel's philosophy of nature and prove that Hegel's system entails some indispensable naturalistic elements.

### **Conceptual Analysis: Idealism and Naturalism**

In this section, I will give ontological accounts of idealism and naturalism. It is vital to designate how those broad concepts are going to be taken. It determines in what sense the argument I argue is plausible and sound. I will try to explain idealism in a Hegelian sense whereas naturalism will be defined as detached from Hegel's system. Hegel's system is conceived as idealist. Also, he conceptualises his philosophical system under the term absolute idealism. However, what is understood by idealism differs from the usual sense of the term in Hegel's system. Hegelian idealism, like the term idealism, comes with diverse interpretations.

There is not a common understanding of what absolute idealism is. I will mention two accounts of absolute idealism. These accounts are grounded on the discussion between metaphysical and non-metaphysical readings of Hegel.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, the metaphysical Hegelianism claims that Hegel's philosophy is an objective explanation of the structure of reality since unfoldingness of the idea is not all about an anthropomorphic thought but the unification of objective and subjective idea. For this view, absolute idealism is a form of realism, which

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<sup>3</sup> Sebastian Gardner, "The Limits of Naturalism and the Metaphysics of German Idealism", in Hammer E. (ed.) *German Idealism: Contemporary Perspectives*, Routledge (2007): 19-49.

<sup>4</sup> Alison Stone, *Petrified Intelligence: Nature in Hegel's Philosophy*. State University of New York Press: Albany (2005): 22-27.

encompasses not only the empirical world but also the conceptual world. The non-metaphysical view, on the other hand, argues that Hegel's idealism cannot involve realist elements since there is not any reality independent from the idea, which is taken as subjective. Non-metaphysical Hegelians consider Hegel's idealism as the continuity of Kant's transcendental idealism in which the reality is independent from us, and the reality is only conceivable through categories of the understanding. The latter reading of Hegel's idealism has some known errors. Firstly, Hegel's absolute idealism does not follow the Kantian idealism regarding Hegel's intention of overcoming the Kantian dualism between the noumenal and the phenomenal. Secondly, abolishing metaphysical elements in Hegel's system might distort the structure of the closed system. In accordance with metaphysical Hegelianism, idealism can be defined as the view that the idea is the form of the reality, which is also capable of explaining the reality in a logical sense.

There is either no common definition of naturalism agreed by the naturalists. It is divided into various forms such as, epistemological, ontological, methodological, and so on. Accordingly, defining an ontological account of naturalism will be by no means satisfactory, even though it is necessary to set limits against some possible criticism. Naturalism can be summed up as the view that "the spacetime world is the whole world. The entities, properties, events, and facts in spacetime are all the entities, properties, etc. of the world"<sup>5</sup>. To expand the view, Kim suggests that "all that exists is that which exists in the 'space-time-causal' world, and this is a 'self-sufficient' system"<sup>6</sup>. This view implicitly relies on natural sciences since they understand nature in connection with causality. To identify naturalism, it is the view that anything has existence is causally related to another entity in the spatio-temporal realm. This account of naturalism, at first sight, seems to disregard some entities that cannot be yet explainable by natural sciences. The human spirit, as the domain of normativity, would be a proper abstract-conceptual entity that might have a causal relation to – or at least a relation to – nature. As Kim illustrates, any abstract entity, that is causally relatable to natural phenomena, would have room in a naturalist account. This account opens a way in which hard core naturalism is adjusted to a new position, that is able to explain supernatural entities in a non-reductive way. For instance, Kant's distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal is seen as incompatible with naturalism, according to this definition, on the grounds that what the noumenal is basically has no dependence on the natural

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<sup>5</sup> Jaegwon Kim, "The American Origin of Philosophical Naturalism", in *Journal of Philosophical Research vol.28 Philosophy in America at the Turn of the Century*. (2003): 90.

<sup>6</sup> Kim, *The American Origin of Philosophical Naturalism*, 88.

(phenomenal) world. In other words, noumenal entities are present in themselves.

The point where correspondence is structured between natural and supernatural entities would be a version of naturalism, which is able to explain supernatural entities. One criticism might be on the untenable justification of natural and supernatural together within a system. A response to the criticism might be that the correspondence is able to lead to a causal relation to the extent which superiority does not emerge between the two entities sharing ontological commonality.

Briefly, when the reductionism and scientism in naturalism are abandoned, a type of naturalism emerges<sup>7</sup>. I believe that non-reductive naturalism is appropriate to explain the world as a whole. As opposed to reductive or scientist naturalism, it is not built on the straight rejection of supernatural entities, which is philosophically question begging if natural sciences are not accepted as an ultimate way to have a comprehensive view of the world.

### **Nature in Relation to Logic**

Logic plays a key role in identifying nature within Hegel's system since if logic is taken as the beginning point of Hegel's philosophy, nature is seen in the end of *the Science of Logic* in relation to the absolute idea. It is crucial how to interpret Hegel's logical system, for it influences the type of idealism derived from the *Logic*, and thus, how and where nature has a place in the system. The

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<sup>7</sup> There are plenty of phrases in the literature roughly referring the same conception such as liberal naturalism, soft naturalism, domesticated naturalism, and non-reductive naturalism. I would like to use non-reductive naturalism to refer the type given above since it does seem more concise than the others.

*Logic* opens with *pure being*<sup>8,9</sup>, which is presuppositionless<sup>10</sup>. One of the reasons for this presuppositionless beginning is to free thought from its own pre-determined concepts constituted either through the empirical world or the thought itself.<sup>11</sup> So, *Pure being* has to be also empty without any determinations. Its emptiness make itself vanish into *nothing*. This vanishing is the first necessary step for pure being to unfold itself, which makes pure being no other than *nothing*. This contradictory move from being to vanishing into nothing is the thrust of its move, namely, unfoldingness. This move takes place in the realm of itself. That is, it does not require anything more than itself. Its presence is not reducible to any other entities either to justify or to unjustify its ontological existence; in other words, it is a priori. The *Logic* provides the explanation of categories of both thought and being.<sup>12</sup> It demonstrates the logico-ontological connection in the formation of thought and being. In the course of the *Logic*, pure being ends up being *the concept* or *idea*. The idea does not merely refer to human thought or mind but it also refers to the form of thought and being together. From this point, we can deduce that the presence of the idea as something human-independent does not allow us to consider that Hegel's idealism is subjective idealism as such. On the other hand, the concept, which is "the pure concept

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<sup>8</sup> I will use the following abbreviations for Hegel's works:

SL G. W. F., Hegel. *The Science of Logic*. Trans. Di Giovanni, G., New York: Cambridge University Press (2010).

EL G. W. F., Hegel. *The Encyclopaedia Logic, with the Zusätze*. Trans. Geraets, T., Suchting, W., & Harris, H., Indianapolis: Hackett (1991).

EPN G. W. F., Hegel. *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*. Trans. Petry M. J., Allen & Unwin (1970).

EPM G. W. F., Hegel. *Philosophy of Mind*, Trans. Inwood, M. J., Oxford: Clarendon (2007).

A Addition

R Remark

The numbers coming after the abbreviations refer to page numbers for SL and article numbers for EL, EPN, and EPM.

<sup>9</sup> SL, 48.

<sup>10</sup> Although many might think such beginning without a presupposition is impossible, Stephen Houlgate rightly insists on the necessity of a presuppositionless beginning for Hegel's philosophy and why the beginning should be no other than pure being. For more see, Stephen Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic: From Being to Infinity*, West Lafayette, Ind. London: Purdue University Press (2006), 29-32.

<sup>11</sup> Hegel offers a critical engagement with the philosophical traditions and reveals why their beginning is problematic for a science of thinking. Since the paper is concerned with the relation of nature to the *Logic*, I cannot offer a complete account of why for Hegel philosophy should take its beginning from a presuppositionless point. For more about Hegel's criticism please see, EL § 26-78.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic: From Being to Infinity*, 31.

conceptually comprehending itself”<sup>13</sup>, expresses the course of the *Logic* from being to the concept as a self-contained system.

The idea entails its own content and form hence it is absolute. “The idea, namely, in positing itself as the absolute unity of the pure concept and its reality and thus collecting itself in the immediacy of being, is in this form as totality – nature.”<sup>14</sup> In those lines, the transition appears to take place from the idea to nature. The idea as the form of nature is something other to itself. This otherness emerges as the nature. In the literature, the transition is much debated between some<sup>15</sup> claiming that the transition takes place and some<sup>16</sup> arguing that there is no such a transition. Hegel explains that:

“The pure idea [...] is rather an absolute liberation for which there is no longer an immediate determination which is not equally posited and is not concept; in this freedom, therefore, there is no transition that takes place; [...] The transition is to be grasped, therefore, in the sense that the idea freely discharges itself, absolutely certain of itself and internally at rest.”<sup>17</sup>

The transition, if there is any, is only a “logical transition”<sup>18</sup> where the determinations of the idea resemble the determinations (the form) of nature. Logic ends up being the form of nature by being able to explain the determinate form of nature throughout its own unfolding. This refutes the transition from the idea to nature. Therefore, they coexist in Hegel’s system rather than any of them becoming another. “It [the absolute idea]<sup>19</sup> resolves to release out of itself into freedom the moment of its particularity or of the initial determining and otherness, [i.e.,] the immediate Idea as its reflexion, or itself as Nature”<sup>20</sup>. To sum up, “What we began with was being, abstract [pure]<sup>21</sup> being, while now we have the Idea as being; and this Idea that is, is Nature”<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> SL, 753.

<sup>14</sup> SL, 752.

<sup>15</sup> Drees, Martin, “The Logic of Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature”, in Hegel and Newtonianism, (ed.) Petry, M., Springer Netherlands: Dordrecht (1993): 93.

<sup>16</sup> Houlgate, Stephen. “Logic and Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature: A Response to John Burbidge”, 110.

<sup>17</sup> SL, 753-754

<sup>18</sup> Houlgate, Stephen. “Logic and Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature: A Response to John Burbidge”, 110.

<sup>19</sup> The parenthesis is mine.

<sup>20</sup> EL, §244.

<sup>21</sup> The parenthesis is mine.

<sup>22</sup> EL, §244 A.

Logic coincides with nature. The absolute idea corresponds to “[...] types of structure that occur in nature, although, the correspondence is not perfect, since the phenomena also bear logically contingent features”<sup>23</sup>. There is a logical correspondence between the determinations of being or the idea and the determinations of nature. This means that they have commensurable features in form. The content of the absolute idea becomes a mere form when it is thought of in relation to nature. The absolute idea here does not fashion nature or presuppose nature, but it coincides with the determinations of nature. On the other hand, nature has something more than what the absolute idea can explain. Those are contingencies of nature, which are unattainable to the *Logic*. Even though the *Logic* entails contingency where the actuality is the subject-matter, contingencies of the *Logic* is superseded in the tension of possibility and necessity, so that the actuality is structured. The *Logic*, as the absolute idea, is purged from the contingent features and it becomes the pure form of itself as well as that of nature. As the *Logic* unfolds itself, the correspondence between logic and nature becomes apparent.

It is important to emphasise that logic and nature are the two independent domains. Nature does not determine itself according to the rules of logic and neither logic determines itself according to the determinations of nature. The concept of nature is not determined as thought-like, or it is not completely obtained from thought.<sup>24</sup> The only connection of nature with logic is the logical connection. Hegel considers nature as the externality or otherness of the idea, or it is the idea but only as the form of otherness.<sup>25</sup> Nature cannot be the logical since its contingent features does not allow itself to have a certain determinate form as logic does. Since these domains do not depend on one another, it is hard to say that the one of them is prior to another.<sup>26</sup> However, for Beiser<sup>27</sup>, principally no arguments of the philosophy of nature depend on assumptions of the *Logic* even though the primary purpose of the *Logic* is derived from *Naturphilosophie*. According to him, the primary purpose of the

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<sup>23</sup>Brigitte, Falkenburg. “How to save Phenomena: Meaning and Reference in Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature”, in Houlgate S. (ed.) *Hegel and the Philosophy of Nature*, State University of New York Press (1998): 129.

<sup>24</sup> William, Maker. “The Very Idea of the Idea of Nature, or Why Hegel Is Not an Idealist”, in Houlgate S. (ed.) *Hegel and the Philosophy of Nature*, State University of New York Press (1998): 10.

<sup>25</sup> EL, §192.

<sup>26</sup> This point might be thought of as problematic by some since the *Logic* for Hegel is a primary philosophy for a reason, which I mentioned previously. The reason Hegel begins philosophy with *Logic* is because only logical thought can be the one that can be set away from the assumptions and presuppositions.

<sup>27</sup> Beiser, Frederick. “Hegel and *Naturphilosophie*”, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 34(1), (2003): 143.



*Logic* is to present the necessity of thinking organically. This subtle purpose can violate the harmony between the ontological status of nature and logic, which guarantees the coexistent domains, on the grounds that logic, as a self-contained and a priori system is not supposed to be derived from another domain but itself. What is apt is to consider nature and logic as distinct domains, which are connected by the correspondence in determinations. This view enables us to think that nature as givenness is partially intelligible to the *Logic* in terms of nature's universal categories.

While what is not fully determinate in nature has contingent features, which are unintelligible for logic to fully grasp, these contingencies are explained by the natural sciences. Philosophy as speculative science has a peculiar relationship with natural sciences since determinations of the idea are necessary and substantial determinations of nature. Hegel explains the relationship between philosophy and natural sciences by stating that “this impotence [Contingency]<sup>28</sup> on the part of nature sets limits to philosophy; and it is the height of pointlessness to demand of the Notion that it should explain, and as it is said, construe or deduce these contingent products of nature [...]”<sup>29</sup>. Nature is partially unexplainable by logic (speculative science). However, natural sciences make unexplainable phenomena of nature graspable for logic.

“Speculative science does not leave the empirical content of the other sciences aside, but recognises and uses it, and in the same way recognises and employs what is universal in these sciences, [i.e.,] the laws, the classifications, etc., for its own content; but also it introduces other categories into these universals and gives them currency.”<sup>30</sup>

For philosophy, what natural sciences discover from nature is the matter of philosophy's own activity. Natural sciences, in Hegel's system, are concerned with particular phenomena of nature, which are contingent or, in other words, are not fully determinate in thought. As far as the findings of natural sciences are concerned, philosophy comes on the scene with the role of a universaliser. Philosophy abstracts particular contingent phenomena of nature and make them universal insofar as they are eligible to be universalised. That is seen as the methodological connection between philosophy and natural sciences, which leads to the epistemological unification of philosophy and natural sciences as

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<sup>28</sup> The parenthesis is mine.

<sup>29</sup> EPN, §250 R.

<sup>30</sup> EL, §9.

well as the ontological unification of nature and logic, which is proven in the same way.

Briefly, there are four arguments that can prove the idea that Hegel's logic is compatible with non-reductive naturalism. Firstly, logic is presuppositionless, which means that it is an independent, self-justificatory system, and quasi-mathematical<sup>31</sup>. Secondly, logic *logically* coincides with nature in terms of form. This resemblance does not contain a superior relation between the two. Thirdly, logic and nature are independent domains, which logically correspond to each other. This correspondence enables Hegel's system to set the two distinct domains ontologically in harmony. Nature, when thought of as being independent from logic, provides a ground for the unique place of nature in Hegel's system. Fourthly, Hegel's logic, only when dealing with the objects of nature, can be complete with natural sciences since the unintelligibility of contingencies in nature can only be graspable through natural sciences. All things considered, Hegel's logic, in relation to nature, might be ontologically compatible with non-reductive naturalism, for there is a sufficient connection that reconciles the abstract with the non-abstract.

### **Nature in Relation to Spirit**

The ontological harmony between logic and nature is the one side of the main argument of this paper. In order to support the argument, the next step is concerned with the ontological relationship between nature and spirit. In this chapter, I will argue that the relationship seemingly does not have an idealistic tendency. Rather, it is open to be considered in a naturalist way with the condition that naturalism needs to extended to involve abstract beings.

Spirit and nature have a specific relationship which differs from the relationship between logic and nature. Spirit is not an independent entity from nature in the beginning. It requires a ground, which is nature, to establish itself. In other words, spirit arises from nature. There are two views that the interpretations of the existence of spirit lead to distinct results. The first view claims that spirit, by discharging itself from nature, becomes a phenomenon, which has no dependence any more on nature as an independent being, while

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<sup>31</sup> What is meant by calling the logic quasi-mathematical is basically that its abstract structure and its resemblance to nature reminds abstract structure of mathematics and its resemblance to nature in physics. This would be an imperfect example and I have no intention to reduce logic to mathematics in any sense. However, just to clarify my point that the logic shares its form with nature, despite its self-containedness, this example might work.

the second view argues that even though spirit acquires its own being from nature, it acts within nature.

To expand the first view, I will take Gardner's arguments into consideration. Gardner thinks that German idealism, particularly Hegel's philosophy, is nowhere close to any type of naturalism. Instead, it can only be considered as an idealist as opposed to the naturalist position. His paper<sup>32</sup> is based, as a first step, on Kemp Smith's understanding of philosophical positions. For Smith, philosophy has three main positions: idealism, naturalism, and scepticism. Scepticism is merely a pseudo-position where the philosophical discussion takes place between idealism and naturalism. After reflecting Smith's axiology-based account of naturalism and idealism, Gardner claims that naturalism inherently has deep problems in value.<sup>33</sup> He mentions non-reductionist account of naturalism by calling it soft naturalism. Accordingly, soft naturalism is the view that some phenomena in nature are irreducible to hard natural facts and are conceivable whereas hard naturalism suggests that "[...] the reality of phenomena in the Lebenswelt [...] derives from the hard-natural facts to which they reduce".<sup>34</sup> Soft naturalism roughly tries to ontologically encompass what is excluded by hard naturalism. This does not allow soft naturalism to have a clear unified account of abstract and non-abstract entities. Therefore, soft naturalism, in the end, is supposed to put more emphasis either on hard naturalist or idealist understanding of nature. Gardner thinks that soft naturalism eventually falls on either idealism or hard naturalism. It is, then, only a pseudo-position.

When it comes to German Idealism, specifically Hegel, he proposes to consider the existence of spirit in Hegel's philosophy in the debate between naturalism and idealism. As is known, spirit is mainly about philosophy of value, which naturalism inherently tends to lack in giving a proper explanation about. He states that "Hegel affirms that nature as such has a telos, aim, goal, namely

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<sup>32</sup> Sebastian, Gardner. "The Limits of Naturalism and the Metaphysics of German Idealism", in Hammer E. (ed.) *German Idealism: Contemporary Perspectives*, Routledge (2007): 19-49.

There are some other criticisms to Gardner's paper from different perspectives. To see, Robert, Stern. "Why Hegel Now (Again) – and in What Form?". *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, 78, (2016): 187–210. and Paul Giladi. "Liberal Naturalism: The Curious Case of Hegel". *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, (2014):1–23.

<sup>33</sup> Sebastian, Gardner. "The Limits of Naturalism and the Metaphysics of German Idealism", 25.

<sup>34</sup> Sebastian, Gardner. "The Limits of Naturalism and the Metaphysics of German Idealism", 29.

Spirit"<sup>35</sup> by referring to EPN §376 A. Moreover, spirit is no less before and after nature, but it is all there along by presupposing nature. To attain a proper understanding of German Idealism, German Idealism is supposed to be interpreted in a way that it saves itself from the paradox of indefensible hard naturalism in terms of philosophy of value and fundamentally problematic soft naturalism. Gardner concludes that German idealism is able to overcome naturalism, if we accept that "the liberation of Geist from nature is true and complete, (and) that normativity<sup>36</sup> does not end up being reabsorbed into nature".<sup>37</sup>

There can be two objections to Gardner's arguments. Firstly, considering the liberation of spirit from nature as spirit's ontological departure from nature might cause a problem of dualism. The abstraction of spirit from the boundaries of nature would lead Hegel's philosophy to fall into dualism between nature and spirit, which Hegel intends to overcome, although it is not hard to see that Hegel seems to be giving more importance to spirit rather than nature.<sup>38</sup> However, spirit is still grounded in nature. What is needed is not to lean on the idealistic tendency, but to interpret the idea of spirit as strictly connected to nature all along, which saves Hegel from falling into the dualism. Secondly, regarding Hegel's philosophical position in the scale of philosophy, it is hard to put his system in either of extremes. Hegel's philosophy can be read as a means in which extreme views are melted and arise as a new synthesis. Even Hegel's absolute idealism is not an idealism as such. In other words, Hegel's philosophy demonstrates a perfect unification of the ideal and the non-ideal. With those objections, the second view might be more tenable to establish.

The second view, I support, only nuances from the first view in the position of spirit with nature. Firstly, spirit, as accumulative entirety of human activities, arises from nature. Its ontological state requires a ground, which is nature. Spirit, in relation with nature, resembles philosophy or it is philosophy whose duty is to comprehend itself within nature by conceptualising nature and itself simultaneously. It does not mean that the activities of spirit are only about natural facts since spirit can conceive of itself as the subject-matter. This aspect of spirit seems to become apart from nature; however, as a ground and the otherness, nature is indispensable for spirit. Secondly, although the liberation of

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<sup>35</sup> Sebastian, Gardner. "The Limits of Naturalism and the Metaphysics of German Idealism", 38.

<sup>36</sup> Gardner interchangeably uses the terms normativity and spirit.

<sup>37</sup> Sebastian, Gardner. "The Limits of Naturalism and the Metaphysics of German Idealism", 44-45.

<sup>38</sup> Beiser, Frederick. "Hegel and *Naturphilosophie*", 144.

spirit eventually actualises in nature, spirit still stays in the boundaries of nature, but nature is here not the concept of nature known to us as merely spatio-temporal but larger than that, it grounds and gives birth to the way in which abstract entities are structured. Nature is always in relation to spirit and vice versa. As Hegel explains that

“[...] spirit is nature's antecedent and to an equal extent its consequent, it is not merely the metaphysical Idea of it. It is precisely because spirit constitutes the end of nature, that it is antecedent to it. Nature has gone forth from spirit; it has not done this empirically however, for while it presupposes nature, *it is already constantly contained within it.*”<sup>39,40</sup>

The complicated relationship between nature and spirit can be stated as the following: even though spirit is able to fashion nature, or spirit presupposes nature, spirit is always already surrounded by nature. This unusual connection, that a presupposing thing can be contained by another thing, which is presupposed by the former, leads us to consider what nature is in relation to spirit in Hegel's system. It is merely conceptual challenge to understand the determinations of nature, with which philosophy deals.

“That is to say, philosophical thinking knows that nature is idealized not merely by us, that nature's asunderness is not an entirely insuperable limitation for nature itself, for its concept, but that the eternal Idea immanent in nature or, what is the same thing, the implicit mind *at work in the interior of nature*<sup>41</sup> itself effects the idealization, the sublation of asunderness[...]”<sup>42</sup>

Those two passages can give a clear understanding of spirit in relation to nature. However, Hegel states that “the emergence of mind from nature must not be conceived as if nature were the absolutely immediate, [...] it is rather nature that is posited by mind [spirit], and mind is what is absolutely first.”<sup>43</sup> This passage can be seen as evidence of platonic idealism that proves the idealist tendency of Hegel's nature, but after a few lines, Hegel explains that the presupposition of spirit consists of the truth, which is derived from the logical idea and nature, which means that spirit comes into existence out of the logical idea and nature. The connection still seems to be fairly complex. In my view, these

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<sup>39</sup> EPN, §376 A.

<sup>40</sup> The emphasis is mine.

<sup>41</sup> The emphasis is mine.

<sup>42</sup> EPM §381.

<sup>43</sup> EPM §381.

passages are supposed to be read in a way that does not harm Hegel's ultimate purpose, namely, overcoming dualism. Any reading, taking spirit completely detached from nature, might collapse into the problem of dualism that we are supposed to eschew in Hegel's system.

The relationship between nature and spirit does not fit into the general conception of naturalism. For a proper understanding of nature and spirit, there needs to be an extra explanation for the account of naturalism. This would help establish a non-dualist and non-reductionist naturalism with which Hegel's system is compatible. Any reductionist account of idealism and naturalism (it does not matter how the reduction occurs, from spirit to nature or from nature to spirit) collapses into the realm of dualism in respect to Hegel's system, since they take for granted that there are two distinct entities implying one's alleged superiority to another one. Hegel's nature entails a type of naturalist element which terminates the dualism and might provide a ground through which non-reductionist naturalism emerges. What is needed, in the relationship between spirit and nature, is to have an account of spirit, which defines spirit and its own activities within nature. It is not necessarily supposed to be reducible to natural facts, since Gardner plainly demonstrates that reductionist naturalism inherently fails regarding the matters related to the domain of spirit. But it is important to see that spirit is within nature or arises from nature and is inherently bound up with it because the only domain, in which spirit acts, is nature. The hardcore naturalistic account offers no help to justify the presence of spirit; however, the amended account of naturalism might accept the view that the Hegelian conception of spirit is plausible with a type of naturalism, which is extended to the domain of spirit. Hegel's philosophy is compatible with this attempt, for he defines one of the aims of philosophy of nature as "the conciliation of spirit with nature"<sup>44</sup>

There are two views that can be briefly extracted from the reading of the relationship between nature and spirit in Hegel's system. The first view undermines the ontological status of nature by considering it less fundamental than spirit, but it is apparent that nature seems to play a significant role in the system. The second view considers nature as significant since nature is present no less than spirit in the system. This is the question as to choosing a side between indefensible platonic idealism as a direct denial of any type of naturalism and more tenable conceptual realism compatible with non-

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<sup>44</sup> Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Naturphilosophie* 1819-20, §189, cited in Cinzia, Ferrini. "Transition to Spirit", in De Laurentis, A. & Edwards, J. (eds.) *The Bloomsbury Companion to Hegel*. Bloomsbury Academic (2013): 132.

reductive naturalism. I think, the latter would be more appropriate to defend regarding the characteristics of Hegel's system.

### **Conclusion**

I have tried to demonstrate that, in Hegel's system, there are ontologically intertwined domains, logic, nature, and spirit, and that none of those has a superiority over the others. Nature is not the only reality for Hegel, unlike reductionist naturalists, who conceptualise nature as the only truth. Logic and spirit are also the parts of the same truth. The domain of the truth consists of logic, nature, and spirit in unison. The unison of the domains does not justify placing Hegel in a camp of hard-core idealism since merely logic is not comprehensive enough to understand and reveal the complex determinations of the other domains. In addition to that, it is not plausible to consider Hegel's philosophy of nature as a naturalist in general sense, because some abstract entities, such as right, ethics and spirit, are not reducible to natural facts, even though nature is ontologically the ground for spirit and its activities.

Disregarding the place of nature in Hegel's system might make Hegel an implausible idealist, but accepting nature's significance might lead Hegel to get closer to a sort of idealism that welcomes the natural within itself. Non-reductionist naturalism is compatible with the view that ontological domains are immanently connected to one another. From the point of view arguing for the compatibility of a non-reductive naturalism with Hegel's system, I conclude that Hegel's system is finer than the criticisms of his idealism, and it provides sufficient arguments for its defence against to those criticisms.

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HEGEL'İN SİSTEMİNDE DOĐA: İDEALİZMİ DOĐAYLA/DOĐADA YENİDEN DÜŐÜNMEK  
NATURE IN HEGEL'S SYSTEM: RE-THINKING IDEALISM WITH-IN NATURE  
Mert Can YİRMİBEŐ