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Stern, R.A. orcid.org/0000-0003-2967-647X (2015) *Hegelianism vs Spinozism? A. W. Moore on Hegel*. *Philosophical Topics*, 43 (1&2). pp. 97-112. ISSN 0276-2080

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HEGELIANISM VS SPINOZISM? A. W. MOORE ON HEGEL

Robert Stern

In writing about Gilles Deleuze in his wonderful new book, Adrian Moore comments on the generosity of spirit with which Deleuze deals with his interlocutors from the historical past: ‘His aim is always to make as much as he can, in every sense of that phrase, of what they have to offer’ (p. 544).¹ One sense of that phrase might be construed as a kind of creative misappropriation – or, to use Deleuze’s own earthier way of putting it, in a passage quoted by Moore, ‘a sort of buggery’ designed to give birth to a shared child between author and interpreter that ‘was bound to be monstrous’ (ibid.). But another sense of the phrase is less transgressive, and can just suggest instead an attempt to focus on what is right and positive about a philosopher, rather than a harping on about their weaknesses and possible errors. What Moore says about Deleuze, at least in this second sense, may also be said of Moore himself: that he always looks for what we can learn from an historical figure, what makes them important and worthwhile, and so interprets them with a generosity of spirit that he may be said to share with Deleuze. Of course, that does not mean that no philosophers are criticized in this book, and no preferences are expressed; but it does mean that the attempt is made to think with the grain of the figures discussed, to understand their concerns and preoccupations, rather than to catch them out or to set them against some alien standard.²

This, at any rate, is certainly the approach Moore takes to Hegel, and what transpires is all the better for it. Thus, rather than carping on about the difficulty and obscurity of Hegel’s writing,³ or patronizing him for any alleged weaknesses in his logic or philosophical method, or his supposedly dated views concerning the natural

¹ All unattributed references are to A. W. Moore, *The Evolution of Modern Metaphysics: Making Sense of Things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

² In many respects, in fact, Moore’s hermeneutical stance mirrors his picture of metaphysics itself, as a ‘making sense of things’ in a way that brings a kind of intelligibility to its subject, which involves issues of creativity, affirmation, and engagement. Moore probably also thinks that something similar is true of Deleuze.

³ Though he can’t resist noting it: see pp. 143-4. But as his later discussion makes clear, Moore sees that this is no mere ineptitude on Hegel’s part, but reflects Hegel’s attempt to usher in new ways of thinking: see pp. 182-86.

sciences, Moore instead offers a generously positive account of Hegel's contribution to the history of metaphysics, which treats him with the seriousness that his originality and significance really deserve. (To see how things have changed in this regard, a comparison with Russell's remarkably ungenerous chapter on Hegel in his *History of Western Philosophy* is instructive – not to mention Popper's in that travesty of a book, *The Open Society and its Enemies*.)

And yet, as has been said, to approach a philosopher in a generous spirit is not to do so uncritically, and Moore does subject Hegel to criticisms, as we shall see. In what follows, I will begin by setting out the context that Moore gives to his discussion of Hegel, and the themes that he focuses on. We will then consider the ways in which Moore judges Hegel to fall short, and how far the concerns he raises are justified. While I think there are ways of conceiving of Hegel's position that could be said to escape Moore's objections, at the very least he shows how they can be pressed against some important parts of Hegel's text, if not others; thus one of the many ways in which Moore's book is significant is in underlining the importance of this challenge.

I

Moore's account of Hegel sets him against a particular background. As is to be expected, this includes Kant and Fichte as the other major German Idealists – though Schelling is not included, which is a pity as it would have been very interesting to hear Moore's views on this protean thinker; but even a book this long must have some omissions. Somewhat less usually, the background also includes Spinoza and Deleuze. This can be explained insofar as Moore's discussion of metaphysics in general raises four central disputes against which he places Hegel and the other thinkers he considers, namely: metaphysics vs anti-metaphysics; transcendence vs immanence; transcendentalism vs naturalism; and negation vs affirmation. In his handling of these questions, a major influence is Deleuze, who is given a positive treatment that will come as a surprise to most analytically trained metaphysicians⁴ – and thus to a lesser extent Moore also follows Spinoza and Nietzsche and Bergson,

⁴ But towards the very end of the book, some concerns are raised about Deleuze from a more Wittgensteinian perspective: see pp. 604-5. Nonetheless, while Wittgenstein is Moore's most significant 'touchstone' (p. 589), for the figures that concern me in the context of this paper, Deleuze has the primary role.

where Hegel is then played off against these exemplars in relation to Moore's four themes.

Thus, Deleuze (and Spinoza) are said to argue for: metaphysics not anti-metaphysics; immanence not transcendence; naturalism not transcendentalism; and affirmation not negation. On the first two issues, Moore suggests, Hegel is on the same side, in also opting for metaphysics and rejecting transcendence.⁵ But on the second two, he claims that there is an important contrast, where Hegel is said to opt for 'transcendentalism-cum-naturalism', and negation not affirmation. So, measured against Deleuze and Spinoza, Hegel gets close but no cigar.

I now want to say something briefly about each of these themes, focusing more on the last two where some disagreement between Hegel and Deleuze/Spinoza (and Moore) seems to arise. I will not try to settle that disagreement, but hope at least to suggest that things are a little more complicated on the Hegelian side than the Deleuzian critique that Moore offers can fully allow.⁶

⁵ I put this last point negatively, because Moore does not see Hegel as opting for immanence as if we were cut off from the transcendent, but rather as rejecting the whole immanence/transcendence distinction: see p. 166.

⁶ The Deleuze-Hegel relation has been fairly widely discussed in recent years, as has the Spinoza-Hegel relation. For some notable contributions to the former, see Catherine Malabou, 'Who's Afraid of Hegelian Wolves?', in Paul Patton (ed), *Deleuze: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 114-38; Simon Duffy, *The Logic of Expression: Quality, Quantity and Intensity in Spinoza, Hegel, and Deleuze* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); and Henry Somers-Hall, *Hegel, Deleuze, and the Critique of Representation: Dialectics of Negation and Difference* (Albany: SUNY, 2012). I have offered some comments on this in my 'Individual Existence and the Philosophy of Difference', reprinted in my *Hegelian Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 345-70. For some notable contributions to the latter, see Pierre Macherey, *Hegel or Spinoza*, translated by Susan M. Ruddick (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Yitzhak Y. Melamed, 'Acosmism or Weak Individuals? Hegel, Spinoza, and the Reality of the Finite', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 44 (2010), pp. 77-92; and his "'Omnis determinatio est negatio": Determination, Negation and Self-Negation in Spinoza, Kant, and Hegel', in Eckart Förster and Yitzhak Y. Melamed (eds), *Spinoza and German Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 175-96; Dean Moyar, 'Thought and Metaphysics: Hegel's Critical Reception of Spinoza', in Eckart Förster and Yitzhak Y. Melamed (eds), *Spinoza and German Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 197-213; Samuel Newlands, 'Hegel's Idealist Reading of Spinoza', *Philosophy Compass*, 6 (2011), pp. 100-8. And for those interested in the Deleuze-Spinoza relation, a good place to start is Pierre Macherey, 'The Encounter with Spinoza', in Paul Patton (ed), *Deleuze: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 139-61.

II

We can begin, then, by outlining how Moore sees Hegel in relation to the dispute between metaphysicians and anti-metaphysicians. For Moore himself, ‘metaphysics is the most general attempt to make sense of things’ (p. 1), and as such is something whose possibility cannot be denied (pp. 3-4). For Hegel, too, as Moore understands him, metaphysics is about rendering the world intelligible and comprehensible, and so making sense of it in this manner, while Hegel also sees it as inescapable – for to reject metaphysics is to make certain metaphysical assumptions. Thus, in a passage that Moore quotes twice (on p. 4 and p. 191), Hegel is recorded by his students as saying: ‘metaphysics is nothing but the range of universal thought-determinations, and as it were the diamond net into which we bring everything [allen Stoff] to make it intelligible [verständlich]’ (EN, §246A).⁷ Now, there has been much debate in recent years over metaphysical vs non-metaphysical readings of Hegel, but for reasons that

⁷ References to the works of Hegel will be given in the following form:

- EL The Encyclopedia Logic, translated by T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting and H. S Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991)
- EM Philosophy of Mind, translated by William Wallace and A. V. Miller, revised by Michael Inwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)
- EN Philosophy of Nature, translated by M. J Petry, 3 vols (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969)
- LHP Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825-6: Volume III, Medieval and Modern Philosophy, translated by Robert F. Brown and J. M Stewart, revised edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)
- PR Elements of the Philosophy of Right, translated by Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)
- PS The Phenomenology of Spirit, translated by A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977)
- SL Science of Logic, translated by A. V. Miler (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969)

Where appropriate, references are given to the section number of the work, where R indicates that they come from one of Hegel’s remarks, and A that they come from the student notes appended to most sections.

cannot be gone into fully here,⁸ I am happy to agree with Moore when he writes: ‘On my conception of metaphysics, then, Hegel is as great a champion of metaphysics as there could be. Metaphysics is at the heart of his system’ (p. 191).

But then the question arises, on this Hegelian view, what is it that we are to make sense of or render intelligible – something immanent or transcendent? Hegel’s use of terms like ‘the Absolute’ and ‘Spirit’ have encouraged readers to believe that his fundamental metaphysical reality is other-worldly and beyond the realm of mere finite things, and thus have encouraged the idea that he is a transcendent metaphysician. However, one of his objections to traditional rationalist metaphysics, and one of his reasons for sympathizing with the empiricist reaction against such metaphysics, is precisely because it turned us away from the world of which we are part, and directed us to a metaphysical beyond: ‘From Empiricism the call went out: “Stop chasing about among empty abstractions, look at what is there for the taking, grasp the here and now, human and natural, just as it is here before us, and enjoy it!” And there is no denying that this all contains an essentially justified moment. This world, the here and now, the present, was to be substituted for the empty Beyond, for the spiderwebs and cloudy shapes of the abstract understanding’ (EL §38A). Hegel thus moves from the *metaphysica specialis* that precisely investigates such transcendent entities, to a *metaphysica generalis* that attempts to limn the necessary structure of the reality in which we find ourselves. Moreover, it is precisely this immanence that makes sense of crucial Hegelian claims concerning the dialectical relation between the finite and the infinite, where the latter is not said to be in any way outside the former, as well as his rejection of Kantian things-in-themselves as beyond the limits of our understanding.⁹ Here again, therefore, while others might demur, I am perfectly happy to go with Moore’s assessment of Hegel’s position.

Turning, now, to some of the more problematic issues, we can consider where Hegel stands in relation to the transcendentalism vs naturalism debate. On the one hand, Hegel is clearly no orthodox Kantian; but many have been inclined to see him as a Kantian in some broad sense, and thus as a transcendental thinker at bottom,

⁸ For further discussion, see the Introduction to my *Hegelian Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 1-41.

⁹ Moore himself places particular emphasis on the ‘limit argument’ against Kant’s transcendental idealism, an argument which also has an important role in Hegel’s critique of Kant: see pp. 133-42 and pp. 164-67.

where for example his talk of the ‘diamond net’ spoken of above may sound like a rather Kantian way of putting things, as pointing to a framework of categories that we cast over the world – though in Hegel’s case, while somehow avoiding the Kantian spectre of things-in-themselves that lie outside that framework. To understand Moore’s position on this, we first have to say a little more about how he conceives of the transcendentalism/naturalism distinction.

As I understand it, Moore takes transcendentalism to be the view that we are somehow outside the natural order of the world, and that we bring order to that world, such that our sense-making of the world cannot be itself made sense of in terms of the world of which we make sense. By contrast, for naturalism we are part of the natural order of the world and so can ourselves be understood in those terms, where the world has its order already independently of our sense-making (cf. p. 142 and pp. 145-50) – where then Quinean naturalism is variant on this position, according to which natural science is taken to be in a privileged position to give us insight into that order (cf. pp. 304-5).

Now, when it comes to Hegel, he is said by Moore to fit neither side very exactly, but to offer a ‘transcendentalism-cum-naturalism’, according to which we are part of the natural order of the world, which has its order without us, but where we bring that order to consciousness in grasping it (including as it is present in us), in a way that other parts of nature do not (and where that grasping involves philosophy as much as natural science) (cf. pp. 168-9). In this way, then, Hegel can be seen to stand somewhere between transcendentalism and naturalism.

If I am right here about where Moore places Hegel and what he means by doing so, then I am again in broad agreement with him. For, Hegel precisely presents his own view in these terms in many places, according to which (as Moore puts it): ‘Reality, for Hegel, makes sense. But it does so not just in the intransitive sense that it is understandable. It does so also in the transitive sense that it understands. And, since what it understands is itself, it does each of these by doing the other’ (p. 169). So, for example, Hegel comments that ‘Nature does not bring the nous to consciousness for itself; only man reduplicates himself in such a way as to be the universal that is for the universal’ (EL §24A), and also as follows:

The determination and the purpose of the philosophy of nature is therefore that spirit should find its own essence, its counterpart, i.e. the concept, within

nature. The study of nature is therefore the liberation of what belongs to spirit within nature, for spirit is in nature in so far as it relates itself not to another, but to itself. This is likewise the liberation of nature, which in itself is reason; it is only through spirit however, that reason as such comes forth from nature into existence. Spirit has the certainty which Adam has when he beheld Eve, “This is flesh of my flesh, this is bone of my bones”. (EN §246A)

On Hegel’s account, therefore, as well as transcendentalism-cum-naturalism, we also have representation-cum-expressivism: our role is both to represent the rational order of things in thought, but by so doing also enable that rational order to be further developed and expressed. Thus (in Moore’s terms), for Hegel doing metaphysics is both making sense of the sense that things have, and giving a further sense to them, and so making [= creating] sense as well, but not in a way that puts that further sense ‘between’ the world and us – in the way it does for Kant (at least on Hegel’s account). Once again, I am happy to agree with Moore over this way of characterising Hegel’s position.

So, while Hegel may incorporate elements of transcendentalism for Moore, he manages to combine it with elements of the kind of naturalism Moore admires in Spinoza and Deleuze, while also adopting their metaphysical and immanent approaches, so to this extent there is a good deal of common ground, and nothing major to object to so far in Hegel, from Moore’s perspective. However, we now come to the fourth theme that concerns Moore, namely the debate concerning affirmation and negation, where here he clearly thinks that Hegel falls short compared to Spinoza and Deleuze. It is therefore this crucial issue which I would like to turn to next.

III

First, it is important to understand what the distinction between affirmation and negation amounts to. This is made clearer in several passages in which Moore writes about Nietzsche, as well as Spinoza and Deleuze: ‘So what is it to affirm the world? It is, in spite of all the suffering, to remain committed to life. It is to create the meaning and value that are otherwise lacking, by suitably making sense of things’ (p. 392); ‘Both Spinoza and Nietzsche have an overriding concern with the affirmation of life, or with what I called in the previous section the affirmation of the world....Both thinkers take the affirmation of life to be our greatest ethical achievement. Both see it

as a way of welcoming the future with joy, a way of being active rather than passive in the midst of life's afflictions' (pp. 396-7); 'Deleuze emphasizes this affinity [between Spinoza and Nietzsche] and endorses all that these two thinkers most fundamentally share... For at the heart of what they most fundamentally share is a celebration of activity, an affirmation of life, in all its diversity. Deleuze, like both of them, rejects the idea that life needs somehow to be justified, whether by some telos towards which everything is striving or by some transcendent structure in terms of which everything makes sense. Nature has no grand design. Nor is there anything transcendent to it. The celebration of activity and the affirmation of life are the celebration and the affirmation of immanence. And they reside in an ethic of empowerment, a concern with how things can be, not in a morality of obligation, a concern with how things ought to be' (pp. 547-8).

One thing should be made clear at the outset: while the terminology of 'joy' is used here, that is not to be understood to imply that affirmation is a happy welcoming of whatever life throws at us, no matter how horrific or tragic.¹⁰ Rather, what is meant is joy in a Spinozistic sense, as a kind of empowerment, a bringing of power to the subject, where this can come about as much by standing up to something as by embracing it. What really counts, then, is precisely this engagement with life, rather than being dulled to it or rendered inert in the face of it. But this then is where certain kinds of metaphysical picture can come in, as we tell ourselves stories that undercut our engagement with the world and what is happening to us in it, by reducing the way in which we relate to these happenings, as if they were to be given a meaning or significance that prevents our being empowered by them.

Now, as we have seen, on many issues Moore thinks that Hegel is close to Spinoza and Deleuze and even then to Nietzsche.¹¹ But on this question of affirmation, he argues that there is a fundamental difference, where Moore's own

¹⁰ This, at least, is how I think Moore wants to understand the position, though it perhaps does not fit with everything that Nietzsche says on the subject: see, for example, §276 of the *Gay Science*, where an aspect of the *amor fati* that is proposed there is said to include a 'yes-saying' even to what is ugly.

¹¹ Cf. pp. 398-9: 'Some of what Spinoza and Nietzsche share Hegel shares too. All three reject the transcendent, albeit in Hegel's case by rejecting the very distinction between the immanent and the transcendent. And this commits all three, as I see it, to atheism, albeit in each case to an atheism of a notably unstraightforward sort... All three also in some sense champion ethics over morality'.

sympathies clearly lie with the non-Hegelian approach. Thus, he argues that Hegel thinks ‘the true is the whole’, and as a result views friction, fragmentation, suffering and so on as justified through its role within the development of this unity, which therefore has a telos that redeems it. As a result, then, Hegel offers a kind of consoling picture, which enervates us in relation to these features of life, as we then do not have to fully face up to them and so are not empowered thereby (see pp. 399-400). This then contrasts with the more positive response of Nietzsche and others, where Moore comments of Hegel’s approach as he interprets it: □ ‘Nietzsche would see this as a failure of nerve, a failure to confront the suffering squarely and, through creation and affirmation rather than through precission and negation, to defy it’ (p. 399). Ultimately, then, this means that despite what was said above, there is a kind of hankering for transcendence in Hegel, which in Nietzschean terms amounts to a form of asceticism:

For Hegel there is ultimately no truth save the absolute truth of the whole. All that we experience – all that is ‘fragmented, fractured, transitory, and unstable,’ to reclaim my own phrase from the previous section [cf. p. 390] – bespeaks falsehood. And it bespeaks falsehood of a kind that needs to be both sublated and reintegrated into that absolute truth by various processes of negation. This means that, although Hegel eschews any immanent/transcendent distinction, his philosophy contains something of the asceticist’s depreciation of all that we experience in favour of what is ultimately true and ultimately real. (p. 399)

As a result, this sets up a deeper contrast with Hegel: for whereas the value and meaning championed by Nietzsche is created, is a sense-making of things in their singularity rather than as part of the whole, and is from within the world, Hegel’s is said to be aimed at discovering value, of operating at the level of the whole, and ultimately requires us to view the world from a perspective elevated above it (cf. pp. 392-3).

It would appear, then, that what for Moore causes trouble for Hegel, is his holism, and his view that ‘nothing less than the unified whole ultimately makes sense’ (p. 180). It might be said, however, that Spinoza in his own way is as much as a holist as Hegel, and Moore recognizes this, writing of Spinoza’s substance that it is an ‘all embracing, self-sufficient, unified being whose essence each particular expresses in

some way, that integrated being in which all particulars are bound together in relations of necessitation', while Spinoza's 'third kind of knowledge' gives us insight into this unity, whereby '[w]e must see all things, ourselves included, in their essential relation to the whole, "sub specie aeternitatis" as Spinoza famously puts it' (p. 62).¹² Nonetheless, Moore still argues that there is a significant difference between the two thinkers, which he thinks is reflected in Hegel's criticisms of his predecessor.

There is, however, a complication here, which Moore does not remark upon, which in this context is arguably of great significance. This is that although Hegel was indeed critical of Spinoza (while at the same time acknowledging his huge interest and importance),¹³ this was not because he read Spinoza as a holist whose position he wished to develop in a different way, but because he read Spinoza as a monist. For Hegel, however, this meant that in the end Spinoza could not prevent his substance from lacking any determination, any positive features at all, as such determination requires differentiation between things – which is why (in passages Moore quotes on pp. 180-1), Hegel claims a substance of this sort must become an 'abstraction' or a 'dark shapeless abyss'.¹⁴ Thus, from the fact that Hegel criticises Spinoza, we should not assume that he wanted to reject holism, as it is the latter's perceived monism that is really the focus of Hegel's concerns. For, while Hegel may have accepted that Spinoza perhaps wanted to be a holist, he thinks that given his conception of substance, which he thinks treats differentiation as a kind of privation of being, this was impossible for Spinoza because as a result all the parts that might make up the

¹² Cf. also p. 177: 'It is hard not to be struck by deep affinities between Hegel and Spinoza, especially by their shared vision of reality as a single infinite substance of which we and all the episodes that constitute our lives are but an aspect'; and p. 597: '[Spinoza introduced] a conception of nature in which everything finite is not only a part of nature but a mode of a single substance, expressing, in its own particular way, the essence of that substance'. For some evidence of Spinoza's holism, see his letter to Oldenburg, number 32, November 1665.

¹³ Cf. LHP: 122: 'The general point to notice here is that thinking, or the spirit, has to place itself at the standpoint of Spinozism. This idea of Spinoza's must be acknowledged to be true and well-grounded. There is an absolute substance, and it is what is true. But it is not yet the whole truth, for substance must also be thought of as inwardly active and alive, and in that way must determine itself as spirit'. This of course echoes Hegel's famous remark in the Preface to the Phenomenology, that 'everything turns on grasping the True, not only as Substance, but equally as Subject' (PS: 10, §17), which is briefly discussed further below.

¹⁴ EL §36A and §151A.

whole are lost. Moore thus I think understates things when he writes: ‘Hegel would deny that there is anything to bind the Spinozist particulars together’ (p. 181, note 61); I think Hegel would deny that for the Spinozist, there can really be any particulars at all.

In an important way, then, the question that Moore poses – namely, how did Hegel set himself apart from Spinoza’s holism – becomes a counter-factual question: if Hegel had read Spinoza as a holist (in the way that Moore does), how might he have responded to him? Now, Moore I think would still be confident that Hegel would have rejected Spinoza’s position, and thus that there is a clear contrast to be drawn between the former’s problematic holism and the latter’s acceptable kind. But I think this issue is hard to resolve, and it is this that I want to focus on for the rest of this paper, to see if there might not be a good deal of continuity between Hegel’s holism and the form of holism that Moore attributes to Spinoza.

Moore puts the fundamental divergence as follows: ‘There is a profound difference, then,¹⁵ between Spinoza’s conception of substance, as that self-subsistent whole in which all particulars are bound together, and Hegel’s conception of substance, as an organic unity of opposed elements of finitude, whose oppositions are resolved in processes of *Aufhebung*’ (p. 181). As I understand it, then, on Moore’s view the opposition between the two might be put as follows: whereas both qua holists see reality as comprising a whole made up of parts, Hegel’s parts initially stand opposed to one another in a way that is overcome and that will then realize a higher unity, whereas Spinoza’s particulars simply express that unity in their own way without being *aufgehoben*, and are thus bound together in a kind of harmony. Moore then argues that ‘this difference [between Spinoza and Hegel] then occasions many others’, which he highlights as follows (and which I have numbered for ease of reference later):

[1] Where Spinoza believed that each part of nature positively expresses the essence of substance, Hegel believed that nature is substance’s ‘other’, the forum in which these processes of *Aufhebung* are played out so that substance

¹⁵ This ‘then’ refers to the passage from EL §151A that we have already mentioned. But as I read that passage, as I have said, it is an attack on Spinoza’s perceived monism, not his holism – so when it comes to the latter it does not establish any ‘profound difference’. I will not try to establish here whose reading of Spinoza is the correct one – Hegel’s or Moore’s – but for what it is worth, I am more sympathetic to the latter’s view.

can exist for itself, a forum which, in this very otherness, must itself be aufgehoben so that substance can exist in and for itself.... [2] Again, where Spinoza found the paradigm of sense-making in the adequate knowledge of particular essences, Hegel holds that there is no sense ultimately to be made save in the integrated whole. [3] Or, to put it another way, where Spinoza found a paradigm of sense-making in our ideas of what particular things can do, ideas that positively express their own reasons for being true, Hegel finds only moments of falsehood that need to be aufgehoben in order for the truth to be fully and properly realized. [4] Or, to put it yet a third way, where Spinoza found, in the various differences and oppositions that we confront, an invitation to extend our knowledge by making sense of them, Hegel holds that the various differences and oppositions that we confront need to be overcome for true knowledge, that is, substance's knowledge of itself, to be possible at all. Where Spinoza had no truck with the negative, Hegel talks of 'looking the negative in the face, and tarrying with it...[and converting] it into being' (Phenomenology, Preface, §32). These two thinkers, in countless ways, are worlds apart. (p. 181)

I would now like to briefly consider each of these points in turn, where I will suggest some ways in which the Hegelian can respond to Moore, and claim that he exaggerates the difference between the two forms of holism under consideration.

[1] First, when it comes to the question of nature, while Hegel does indeed talk of it as a kind of 'otherness', he does not generally do so in relation to substance, but to the Idea, as in the fundamental transition from the Logic to the Philosophy of Nature in the Encyclopedia. This difference is significant in this context, as I would argue that what underlies this transition then is not that nature is needed by Hegel as a 'forum' in which a substance can carry out its processes of unification over a world of finite things by sublating them,¹⁶ but rather as the material expression for what otherwise would be an uninstantiated and hence abstract conceptual structure, so that ultimately it is not issues concerning holism that are fundamental for Hegel here. To be sure, this 'otherness' for Hegel means that aspects of nature shows elements of contingency and arbitrariness that makes it hard for us to fully comprehend it in a

¹⁶ Cf. p. 587: '[Hegel] sought to reenchant the world by construing nature as the forum in which, through various dialectical processes involving human beings, this subject progresses towards self-knowledge'.

rationally satisfying way, which includes but is not confined to mereological explanations (for example, for Hegel nature can also violate various laws, and also divisions into kinds). But a similar rationalism can arguably be attributed to Spinoza, leading him to also treat finite things as enjoying only a limited degree of existence.¹⁷

[2] Moore's second point would seem to overlook Spinoza's emphasis on the priority of the third kind of knowledge, and the holistic implications of that, which Moore himself had brought out earlier: '[w]e must see all things, ourselves included, in their essential relation to the whole, "sub specie aeternitatis" as Spinoza famously puts it' (p. 62). So it would seem that for Spinoza, too, holistic understanding would represent a 'paradigm of sense-making'. Moreover, Hegel's opposition to abstract universality is in large part shaped by his rejection of the idea that individual things have nothing that makes them particular and unique, or that such particularity is somehow 'second rate' and not a fundamental feature of reality. On the contrary, while he wants to resist the temptation to make that particularity rest on any bare haecceity, he still emphasises that it is required for being. But this means that there is no reason to suppose that Hegel wanted to move 'beyond' or 'above' individual things in their singularity, or to subordinate our cognition of them to a more adequate kind of knowledge.¹⁸

[3] My response to this point would be to suggest that Moore takes Hegel's comments about the false out of context, and so gives them a misleading emphasis. These comments come from the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where Hegel has a particular target in mind: namely, someone who holds that this *Phenomenology* is a waste of time, because rather than telling us directly what is true, it proceeds to consider various positions that turn out to be in error, which then leads to the

¹⁷ For a recent argument to this effect, see Michael Della Rocca, 'Rationalism, Idealism, Monism, and Beyond', in Eckart Förster and Yitzhak Y. Melamed (eds), *Spinoza and German Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 7-26.

¹⁸ Cf. EL §24A: '[I]n speaking of a definite animal, we say that it is [an] "animal". "Animal as such" cannot be pointed out; only a definite animal can ever be pointed at. "The animal" does not exist; on the contrary, this expression refers to the universal nature of single animals, and each existing animal is something that is much more concretely determinate, something particularised'. For further discussion of some of the issues raised here, see 'Individual Existence and the Philosophy of Difference', reprinted in my *Hegelian Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 345-70.

challenge: ‘Why bother with the false?’ (PS: 22, §38). However, Hegel responds, to try to move directly to the truth in this manner can only result in dogmatism, because the only way to establish a true position is to show how it overcomes a false one (PS: 23, §40). This, of course, is a defence of Hegel’s method of immanent critique, through which consciousness must undergo the ‘labour of the negative’ (PS: 10, §19) and hence find its preconceptions undermined, rather than move directly to the truth like a ‘shot from a pistol’, by beginning ‘straight away with absolute knowledge, and [making] short work of other standpoints by declaring it takes no notice of them’ (PS: 16, §27). This, then, is why Hegel claims that ‘truth is not a minted coin that can be given and pocketed ready-made’ (PS: 22, §39; cited Moore p. 180): it can only be arrived at via the overcoming of the false. Of course, there may well be an implied criticism of Spinoza (and others) here in methodological terms, as beginning with certain supposedly self-evidently true axioms (cf. PS: 28, §48). But from the fact that Hegel believed that the *Phenomenology* would show how false forms of consciousness could be aufgehoben, it does not follow that he held particular things were equally false and needed to be aufgehoben in the same way. In fact, when it comes to particular things, Hegel’s claim about their truth and falsehood is again not so much related to the theme of holism, as to the idea that things are false in so far as they do not fully realize the kind under which they fall, which God alone is able to do (cf. EL §24A). So, just as Spinoza’s position concerning the different degrees of reality that belong to finite and infinite beings does not commit him to holding that the former are ‘sublated’ within or by the latter, so it would seem Hegel’s related position concerning degrees of truth doesn’t either.

[4] As regards Moore’s final point, it can be replied that Moore’s way of putting Spinoza’s position – that he ‘found, in the various differences and oppositions that we confront, an invitation to extend our knowledge by making sense of them’ – would be taken by many readers as an excellent way to put *Hegel’s* position, as consciousness works through the *Phenomenology* precisely in this way, by being faced by puzzles and aporia that it must overcome, thereby developing in its understanding of the world. Where Moore seems to think that Hegel goes beyond this, is that he makes such ‘differences and oppositions’ essential to knowledge in a way that Spinoza does not. But this point, it seems, takes us back to the discussion of [3], where the claim is fundamentally a methodological one, which requires us to ‘tarry

with the negative' and so face up to such challenges precisely as a way to 'extend our knowledge by making sense of' what appears to be problematic.

From everything that has been said so far, then, it may appear that a rapprochement between Spinoza's holism and Hegel's is feasible, which then raises the question of where this leaves us in relation to the Nietzschean challenge, that any such position must result in a damaging asceticism. One objection might be that Hegel is just an absurd optimist, who believed that everything could be integrated into his holistic story in a way that Spinoza did not, and so failed to face up to the 'friction, opposition, and suffering' with which reality confronts us. But in fact, Hegel was clear that there will be limits here; thus, for example, Hegel writes of the state that it 'is not a work of art; it exists in the world, and hence in the sphere of arbitrariness, contingency, and error' (PR: §258R). A second objection might be that by virtue of being a holist at all, Hegel inevitably sets up order, unity, system, stability, being as a kind of standard for reality to meet, and thus inevitably devalues fragmentation, difference, independence, instability, becoming; and as the world around us contains a good deal of the latter features and not just the former (as Hegel himself admits, for example in his comments on the state just quoted),¹⁹ his position must inevitably become one of transcendent asceticism, which puts a more ideal structure above the world as we find it. However, if this is a worry that applies to Hegel as a holist, it is not yet clear why it should not also apply to Spinoza, as we have not found a sufficient difference between the two to show how the latter can escape a similar charge. Moreover, there also seems to be a way in which Nietzsche, too, shares the basic conception of value that is said to be problematic: for, insofar as Nietzsche's recommendation that we turn from trying to discover value to creating it rests on his claim that this value cannot be found in a world that is without order, this itself assumes that the holist is right, and that order of this kind is required for value to be discovered. Nietzsche therefore seems to share a fundamental feature of the axiology of the position he criticises. Indeed, evidence that Nietzsche shared this axiology is provided in a passage from his notebooks that Moore himself quotes,

¹⁹ Cf. also EM §381A: '[E]verything in nature is mutually external, ad infinitum... The differences into which the concept of nature unfolds are more or less mutually independent existences; of course, through their original unity they stand in mutual relation, so that none can be comprehended without the others; but this relation is in a greater or lesser degree external to them'.

where Nietzsche describes joy as a feeling of ‘the presence of eternal harmony’, and as a ‘sensation of contact with the whole of nature’ (p. 397, note 75).

Another objection might be that because Hegel offers an argument for why the structure of reality must be holistic and not monistic, he then inevitably treats particulars as necessary to the realization of the whole, and so subordinates them to the latter in some way, which fails to do justice to their particularity. It is certainly true that Hegel sees it as a weakness of Spinoza’s position that it does not contain any account for why substance cannot be a mere one but must also involve a plurality;²⁰ but it does not follow that just because Hegel offers such an account, he treats the plurality as posited by that substance in order to stave off its otherwise empty unity, thus subordinating the plurality to the purposes of this substance in some way. His argument, fundamentally, is a logical one: the existence of this plurality can be explained given the incoherence of monism, but where this does not make that plurality the ‘play thing’ of some prior unity. Indeed, this is precisely Hegel’s point: given the logic of his argument, there can be no such prior unity, as without the plurality this unity would be an empty nothing, which cannot then be conceived as positing anything at all. Much like Spinoza, then, Hegel must see the whole as present in and through its parts, where it would be a category mistake to treat it as somehow what comes first, as giving rise to a plurality so that it can then reduce this back to unity again, perhaps as a way to exercise its power.

Nonetheless, I think Moore might well argue that this is still fundamentally where the difference between Spinoza’s and Hegel’s forms of holism lie, and which prompts Nietzschean criticisms of the latter that do not apply to the former; for Moore seems to think that while Hegel treats what is finite, particular, or limited in a kind of instrumental way, as something the whole needs to posit but also overcome as it attains a higher unity, Spinoza does not as there is no such unity ‘beyond’ or ‘above’ the particulars and their interrelations.²¹ And worryingly for the Hegelian, there

²⁰ Cf. SL: 537: ‘[For Spinoza] cognition...does not comprehend and derive from substance that which appears as finite, the determinateness of the attribute and the mode, and generally itself as well, but [cognition] is active as an external understanding, taking up the determinations as givens and tracing them back to the absolute but not taking its beginnings from the latter’.

²¹ Cf. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson (London: Athlone Press, 1986), p. 196: ‘In the second place, [the dialectic] is the thought of the priest who subjects life to the labour of the negative: he needs negation

appears to be textual support for Moore's view, where again the Preface to the *Phenomenology* seems particularly significant. For, it is here that Hegel speaks in terms of a 'self-bifurcating' and 'self-othering' subject or 'living substance' apparently giving rise to an 'indifferent diversity' which it then negates in order to come back to a 'self-restoring sameness', so that this subject may be thought of as a kind of divine love that returns to a harmony with itself after undergoing 'the seriousness, the patience, and the labour of the negative' (PS: 10, §§18-19). This, then, can be used to fuel the Nietzschean worry once again, that the parts of the whole on Hegel's account only exist as a way in which some sort of prior and otherwise empty unity can realize itself, where that realization occurs when all individuals come to be encompassed within a whole, to which those individuals are then subordinate in value. On this picture, the true as subject thus seems to stave off incipient emptiness and abstraction by positing a world of particular entities for it to operate on, while in that operation it restores its original unity by bringing them together into a rational whole. It is then by offering a holism of this type that Hegel distinguishes himself from Spinoza,²² and in a way that raises concerns about the transcendence of this subject which do not apply to his predecessor's position, who precisely did not seek to view the absolute as a subject in this way at all, and is accordingly criticised by Hegel as a result.

Now, however, we appear to be faced with an interpretative puzzle. For, notwithstanding what the Preface and similar texts seem to say here, this stands in some tension with Hegel's commitment to the unintelligibility of there being any such one or unity prior to difference, a commitment we have already mentioned. Put most starkly, if being requires differentiation, how can there be a 'living substance' prior to such differentiation through which the latter comes to be posited, as such a subject would require there to have been some such differentiation in order itself to be? So either we have misunderstood one of Hegel's most famous metaphysical commitments (that pure being without differentiation is empty), or we have

to establish his power, he represents the strange will which leads reactive forces to triumph'.

²² As Moore puts it on p. 179: '[T]he way in which the life of substance is played out, namely through processes of negation whereby finite elements of that life are aufgehoben, is radically non-Spinozist'.

misunderstood the meaning of the Preface – where if the latter is the right option, we may be able to equate Hegel’s holism to Spinoza’s after all.

There is, however, perhaps a way to resolve the tension that generates this puzzle, where one important first move is to understand what Hegel may have meant by his claim that it is ‘nature that is posited by mind’ and not the other way round.²³ As Moore himself correctly points out, this Fichtean notion of positing should not be thought of in causal terms, as if it involved the creation of nature by mind (see pp. 156-7). On the contrary, Hegel is perfectly clear that nature must exist prior to the existence of minds or consciousness.²⁴ Thus, it would seem, he is not committed to the picture that gave rise to the puzzle noted above, of an undifferentiated subject bringing about a world of differentiated entities, where it would go against Hegel’s metaphysics for any such subject to exist.

But what, then, is he committed to here, and how does it relate to the nature of his holism? One plausible answer, I think, is that he holds that ‘living substance’ is ‘the movement of positing itself’ rather than something simply posited by nature, because he holds that it becomes a subject by differentiating itself from nature (though not in a way that ultimately leaves them estranged from one another), where this differentiation is brought about by the subject in a way that enables it to be a subject, rather than by nature itself. On this account, nature is there prior to mind, but nonetheless it is only through a process of setting itself apart from nature that mind comes to be, so that in this sense it posits itself.²⁵

Now, if this way of resolving the interpretative puzzle posed above is along the right lines, where does this leave us on the question of Hegel’s relation to

²³ Cf. EM, §381A: ‘But it is already evident from our discussion so far that the emergence of mind from nature must not be conceived as if nature were the absolutely immediate, the first, the original positing agent, while mind, by contrast, were only something posited by nature; it is rather nature that is posited by mind, and mind is what is absolutely first’.

²⁴ Cf. EN §376A, where Hegel observes that although in some sense ‘spirit is nature’s antecedent’, because through spirit the rationality of the idea in nature is brought to consciousness so that the latter requires the former, nonetheless this antecedence is not meant in any empirical sense. Cf. also EM §381: ‘For us mind has nature as its presupposition, 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’.

²⁵ Cf. EM §413 and §413A.

Spinoza? For Moore, as we have seen, the fundamental difference seems to be that Hegel treats finite particulars as play-things in the biography of a spiritual substance, which brings them into existence in order to then overcome their opposition to one another in a way that will constitute a whole. But it would now appear that Hegel can be read as denying that finite particulars are created by spirit at all, and while spirit involves a ‘doubling which sets up opposition’, which is then subsequently resolved, this is not the bringing together of a multiplicity into a unity, but rather through spirit conceiving of itself as different from the world around it, in a way that is subsequently settled as it comes to find itself once again ‘at home’ in that world. There is thus an important implication to Hegel’s claim that ‘the true’ is to be thought of not just as substance but also as subject, but perhaps not quite the one that Moore suggests: it is not that then ‘the life of substance is played out...through processes of negation whereby finite elements of that life are aufgehoben’ (p. 179), but more that the self-consciousness that subjecthood requires will involve the subject in distinguishing the ‘I’ from the ‘not-I’,²⁶ while at the same time avoiding the ultimate bifurcation of mind from world that may seem to follow.

It would seem, then, that it is open to the Hegelian to offer an account of Hegel’s position, even in awkward texts like that of the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, which would reduce the distance between Hegel and Spinoza on the issue of holism, even though other differences will doubtless remain. If so, then, this could provide a basis for responding to the Nietzschean and Deleuzian critique, which appears to depend on such a contrast. Of course, the Nietzschean or Deleuzian could still accept this, but just treat Spinoza himself as an opponent rather than an ally, alongside Hegel. However, as Moore brings out, this anti-Hegelian turn is so much indebted to Spinoza that this may be difficult to achieve. Indeed, this is but one instance in this fascinating book where the nature of such historical interconnections and their philosophical importance is demonstrated. In offering this friendly correction to the reading he gives of Hegel, therefore, I take myself merely to have made an adjustment to a web that Moore has skilfully woven for us, in so brilliantly making sense of the making sense of things that is metaphysics. But he may well

²⁶ Cf. EM §415R: ‘As regards Spinozism, it is to be noted against it that in the judgement by which the mind constitutes itself as I, as free subjectivity in contrast to determinacy, the mind emerges from substance, and philosophy, when it makes this judgement the absolute determination of mind, emerges from Spinozism’.

think (as surely Nietzsche and Deleuze would) that this is an act of generosity too far.²⁷

²⁷ I am very grateful for comments to participants at the conference on Moore's book at which this paper was first presented. I am also very grateful for subsequent discussions with Adrian himself, and also to Stephen Houlgate and Susan James.