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## Why Hegel Now (Again) – and in What Form?

**Robert Stern**

**Abstract:** This paper considers the prospects for the current revival of interest in Hegel, and the direction it might take. Looking back to Richard J. Bernstein's paper from 1977, on 'Why Hegel Now?', it contrasts his optimistic assessment of a rapprochement between Hegel and analytic philosophy with Sebastian Gardner's more pessimistic view, where Gardner argues that Hegel's idealist account of value makes any such rapprochement impossible. The paper explores Hegel's account of value further, arguing for a middle way between these extremes of optimism and pessimism, proposing an Aristotelian reading which is more metaphysical than Bernstein recognizes, but not as at odds with thinking in current analytic philosophy as Gardner suggests, as it finds a counterpart in the work of Philippa Foot, Michael Thompson, Rosalind Hursthouse and others.

**Key words:** G. W. F. Hegel, Richard J. Bernstein, Sebastian Gardner, Norman Kemp Smith, Philippa Foot, Michael Thompson, Rosalind Hursthouse, Aristotelian naturalism, axiology

### 1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to consider the relation between Hegel and the recent history of analytic philosophy, and what we should think about the prospects for genuine convergence and co-operation between these two traditions. On the one hand, writing in the 1970s but continuing to hold the same today, Richard J. Bernstein has offered what might be called *the optimistic view*, which sees hope for ever greater rapprochement, as analytic philosophy itself takes an increasingly Hegelian turn. On the other hand, more recently Sebastian Gardner has argued strongly for the *pessimistic view*, that there are fundamental differences in approach between analytic philosophy and German Idealism generally, including Hegel, and that various attempts by prominent so-called

'analytic Hegelians' to connect the two are misconceived: what we are faced with, in fact, is an 'either/or'. His claim, in particular, is that while analytic philosophy is predominantly naturalistic, the sort of 'soft naturalism' that has been attributed to Hegel is a delusion both interpretatively and philosophically, and once this is seen through, the contrast between the two positions remains stark. My own suggestion (typically for an Hegelian, perhaps) is to try to steer between the two options of optimism and pessimism: that is, Gardner is right to warn against facile optimism here, but on the other hand, there is a way of taking Hegel's idealism which while it does not fit the position of 'soft naturalism' Gardner criticizes, is nonetheless close enough to naturalism to provide some bridge between Hegel and analytic philosophy, but not in the way that Bernstein identifies.

## **2. Optimism: Bernstein**

In a well-known article from 1977, Richard J. Bernstein posed the question: 'Why Hegel Now?'. The article starts as follows:

During the past decade there has been an explosion of interest in Hegel. One can barely keep up with the new editions, translations, commentaries, and articles that have been appearing throughout the world. The reasons for this burst of scholarly activity vary in different cultural milieus, but the question is especially perplexing in the context of Anglo-American philosophy. If there is one philosopher who had been thought to be dead and buried, who embodied all the vice of the wrong way of philosophizing, who seemed to have been killed off by abuse and ridicule, it was Hegel.<sup>1</sup>

A similar question might be posed today regarding Anglo-American philosophy, insofar as there has been a continuation in the 'explosion of interest', with even

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<sup>1</sup> Richard J. Bernstein, 'Why Hegel Now?', *The Review of Metaphysics* 31 (1977), 29.

more editions, translation, commentaries and articles appearing since Bernstein wrote. And not only has the burst of scholarly energy grown, but so too has the attempt to *employ* Hegel in a constructive way within contemporary philosophical thinking, to treat Hegel as a valuable aid in moving philosophy forward.

In his article, Bernstein not only gives reasons for why the Hegel revival of the 70s happened, but also give reasons for why it was set to continue and grow – and thus he presents what might be called the optimistic view, that Hegelian thinking and Anglo-American ‘analytic’ philosophy are set for greater and greater rapprochement. It is enlightening to consider both aspects of his discussion.

In offering reasons for the 70s revival, he starts by quoting some comments by Walter Kaufmann,<sup>2</sup> who proposed the following as his reason for the revival in interest in Hegel in the 70s: ‘Hegel is immensely interesting’; ‘he provides a striking alternative to all kinds of positivism and to the mainstream of Anglo-American philosophy’; there is student interest in his work; and ‘[t]he explosion of interest in Marx’. Bernstein objects to this, that ‘this “explanation” doesn’t really explain, or at best merely scratches the surface’,<sup>3</sup> as it needs to be explained why people *find* Hegel ‘immensely interesting’ now, why people are seeking an alternative to positivism, why students are interested in him; and while there may be some connection between Marx and Hegel, a concern with Marx was not part of the mainstream current of Anglo-American philosophy, so this cannot explain the preoccupation with Hegel there either.

Bernstein argues instead that a proper explanation needs to focus on what really grounds any true revival, namely ‘the realization that there is a basic affinity between the problems that are in the foreground of current philosophical discussion and those with which the relevant philosopher was struggling’,<sup>4</sup> a realization that he then sets out to clarify. He starts by putting Hegel in a familiar trajectory from Hume to Kant, as the positivist revival of the former came to be

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<sup>2</sup> Walter Kaufmann, ‘Coming to Terms With Hegel’, *Times Literary Supplement*, January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1976, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Bernstein, ‘Why Hegel Now?’, 35. Wilfrid Sellars, ‘The Double-Knowledge Approach to the Mind-Body Problem’ *New Scholasticism* 45 (1971), 270.

<sup>4</sup> Bernstein, ‘Why Hegel Now?’, 38.

replaced by the conceptual turn associated with the latter – but where he then quotes Wilfrid Sellars as remarking ‘...now that philosophy has gone “back to Kant” for the second time, can a Hegelian “trip” be far behind?’.<sup>5</sup> Tellingly, he illustrates this claim by reference to ‘contemporary philosophy of science’, which he insists ‘is more than a subspeciality of philosophy’, but is instead ‘the locus of some of the most exciting and controversial epistemological and metaphysical disputes’<sup>6</sup> – where of course Bernstein is writing in the shadow of the upheaval in the field caused by Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, which was published in 1962. Taking philosophy of science as central, Bernstein lists the following themes which he thinks point in an Hegelian direction. First, various distinctions taken for granted by ‘early logical positivists and empiricists’ concerning the nature of science have been put into doubt, such as the distinctions between observation and theory, historical and philosophical issues, and science as knowledge and science as activity. Second, the criteria for scientific verification, falsification or confirmation cannot be abstracted from historical context. Third, scientific change involves anomalies and the clash of paradigms and theories. Fourth, traditional conceptions of rationality do not apply to science as a rational activity. And fifth, science takes place in a social context.

Bernstein therefore sees a close connection between developments in contemporary philosophy of science, and thus (because of the latter’s disciplinary centrality) contemporary epistemology, and a transition from Kant to Hegel. For, while Kant had moved beyond empiricism in recognizing the theory-ladenness of observation, his account of the concepts with which we structure experience was static and ahistorical, while also seeming to leave us in a sceptical problem concerning our knowledge of ‘things in themselves’. Hegel, by contrast, gives an account of the historical development of our thinking in terms of dialectical clashes between conceptual schemes, but also shows why the sceptical problem does not arise, as the thought of a world somehow outside or prior to such schemes is not intelligible; they are not merely ‘alternative conceptual frameworks’ giving us different views of a world independent of

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<sup>5</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>6</sup> Op. cit.

them, as there is no such world. In adopting such a view, Bernstein claims, there is a clear affinity between Richard Rorty and Hegel, referencing Rorty's article with the telling title 'The World Well Lost',<sup>7</sup> thus underlining the remarkable way that philosophy in the 70s and Hegel's own thinking had come to converge, in a way that explains the latter's current significance and revival within 'philosophy of science, and analytic epistemology'.<sup>8</sup>

Having mentioned these two fields of analytic philosophy, Bernstein then adds a third, which is 'the theory of action', where he thinks contemporary philosophers have come to see that '[i]n attempting to account for what is distinctive about human action (or at least some types of human action), it is necessary to examine the ways in which actions themselves are constituted by rules, practices, and institutions', where this naturally again leads to Hegel, for '[f]ew philosophers have equaled Hegel in the passion with which he argued that the character and dynamics of human action must be understood within the context of intersubjective interactions'.<sup>9</sup>

Overall, then, Bernstein both explains the reasons why the 70s revival in interest in Hegel had a solid intellectual basis in the direction taken by analytic philosophy at that time, and also why he thinks it is set to continue. And in later writings,<sup>10</sup> he suggests that this early optimism was indeed born out, pointing in particular to those doughty so-called 'Pittsburgh Hegelians' John McDowell and Robert Brandom, where both have analytic credentials, and combine this with a serious interest in, and commitment to, Hegel. In this context, Bernstein does not mention philosophy of science as such a bridge (perhaps because the centrality to this discipline to philosophy has somewhat dropped away since the heyday of the 70s), but turns to pragmatism instead, with Sellars again as a key figure. In this context, then, the interpreters of Hegel who have in turn influenced McDowell and Brandom, such as Robert Pippin and Terry Pinkard, are seen as

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<sup>7</sup> Op. cit. 41. Richard Rorty, 'The World Well Lost' *Journal of Philosophy* 69 (1972), 649-665.

<sup>8</sup> Bernstein, 'Why Hegel Now?', 42

<sup>9</sup> Op. cit. 43.

<sup>10</sup> See for example Richard J Bernstein, 'McDowell's Domesticated Hegelianism', in Nicholas H. Smith (ed), *Reading McDowell: On 'Mind and World'* (London: Routledge, 2002), 9-24, and *The Pragmatic Turn* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 95-105.

helping push Hegel scholarship in the right direction, and taking Hegel in a way that ensured such connections would flourish.

### 3. Pessimism: Gardner

In marked contrast to this kind of upbeat and positive story, however, Sebastian Gardner has recently<sup>11</sup> poured a good deal of cold water on this way of viewing the relation between Hegel and contemporary analytic philosophy, and has suggested that we should view them as radically different alternatives instead; to assimilate them, it is argued, does no favours to the intellectual strengths of either side, and just produces an unstable and bland compromise of positions that should really be kept apart. In this respect, then, Gardner's approach represents a striking contrast to Bernstein's, and offers a blast against the perhaps rather smug assimilationism of much recent Hegel scholarship, and its hopes of 'domesticating Hegel'.

At the centre of Gardner's view is his claim that the outlook of contemporary analytic philosophy is essentially *naturalistic*, whereas that of idealism in general, including Hegel's idealism, is not – where for him, the fundamental division comes over questions concerning *value*, and is thus a matter of axiology, which again he puts at the heart of the debate, and of the development of German Idealism itself.<sup>12</sup> Now of course, to say exactly what

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<sup>11</sup> See 'The Limits of Naturalism and the Metaphysics of German Idealism', in Espen Hammer (ed), *German Idealism: Contemporary Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 19-49. For an equally pessimistic voice, on related grounds, see Frederick C. Beiser, 'Introduction: The Puzzling Hegel Renaissance', in Frederick C. Beiser (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1-14.

<sup>12</sup> This focus on value is also central to Gardner's treatment of German Idealism in his paper 'From Kant to Post-Kantian Idealism I: German Idealism', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supplementary volume, 76 (2002), 211-28. In this paper, Gardner argues that the theme of value also shows how German idealism and German romanticism can be seen to connect to one another in important ways, where he characterizes the latter position as follows: 'German romanticism...insists on regarding value as in some sense an object of experience, and our relation to this object as teleological, i.e. such that the subject who enjoys consciousness of this object necessarily finds itself endowed

naturalism is, is notoriously hard to do in any uncontentious way, as are defining its precise parameters: is it a metaphysical, a methodological or a disciplinary claim – so does it concern what there is; how we go about investigating what there is; or how the natural sciences stand in connection to other disciplines? In setting up his argument, Gardner doesn't quite say, but instead takes his lead from a 1919 paper by the Kant translator and scholar Norman Kemp Smith, who defines naturalism as the view that 'man is a being whose capacities, even in their highest activities, are intelligible only as exercised *exclusively in subordination* to the specific requirements of his *terrestrial* environment' – where Kemp Smith then goes on to contrast this to idealism, with its 'supreme concern to show that the aesthetic and spiritual values have a more than merely human significance', so that man is measured 'against standards for which [his natural environment] cannot account'.<sup>13</sup> As Gardner sets things up, therefore, the crucial issue concerns the nature of *value*, and whether values are absolute and unconditioned and hence independent of our particular human needs, interests and 'terrestrial' concerns, or whether they fundamentally rest on the latter.

Now, Gardner argues, viewed clear-headedly there is no way to bring these two views together, and indeed that seems right, if we put them in a standard Euthyphro format:

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with purposiveness by virtue of this relation... Value conceived as manifested in this objectual mode allows itself to be conceived more readily in a straightforwardly realist manner than value conceived in a strictly practical mode, and this satisfaction of the natural realism of pre-philosophical consciousness, in conjunction with the teleological dimension, is plausibly a ground for regarding the romantic world-view as of enduring philosophical importance' (op. cit. 221-2).

<sup>13</sup> Norman Kemp Smith, 'The Present Situation in Philosophy' *The Philosophical Review* 29 (1920) 25; cited Gardner, 'The Limits of Naturalism' 21. Cf. also Kemp Smith, 'The Present Situation' 6, where he characterizes naturalism as 'frankly revolutionary', in trying 'to trace moral distinctions to social conventions adopted for their beneficial consequences in forwarding the secular welfare of the individual and of society'; and p. 18: 'Naturalism has to treat human values as merely relative'; and p. 20: '[for naturalism] should we attempt to consider moral or spiritual values in abstraction from the complex contingencies in which alone they are known to be, they lose all definiteness and meaning. They are so many forms of adaptation, and are as specific as the environment that prescribes and defines them'

Naturalism: What has value is fixed by what we as humans determine ourselves by, in the light of our prior interests and concerns

Idealism: We determine ourselves by what has value, which things have prior to our interests and concerns

However, Gardner thinks this contrast has been blurred by the rise of so-called 'soft naturalism', which wants to combine elements of both views, but ends up with an unstable and incoherent compromise, which cannot really fend off the challenge of hard naturalism. For, in trying to find a place for values within nature as conceived by the sciences, in the end it can only do so by introducing a 'perspectival' element into its account of those values, but which then makes them less than real from the standpoint of the hard naturalist; a move to fully non-naturalistic idealism is therefore required if the hard naturalist is to be properly countered:

The reflexive move – the reference back to the reality of such-and-such to *our* concepts, *our* practices, taken on their own – thus misses the point: the hard naturalist will reasonably reply that it is not in doubt that our concepts and practices weigh with *us*, but that the whole issue concerns what it *means*, in the *overall* scheme of things, for something to be a practice of ours. What are *we*, the hard naturalist asks, such that the fact of a representational practice's being ours is supposed to raise its status, not merely in the trivial sense of its having status in *our* eyes, but in the sense of its ranking alongside the hard reality of natural science. The metaphysical significance of the soft naturalist's use of the first person plural has to be *shown*, not merely asserted.<sup>14</sup>

Now, once hard naturalism and idealism emerge as the only (and competing) options, and once it is accepted that analytic philosophy must gravitate to the former pole, Bernstein's more optimistic scenario looks too rosy, and to have been bought at the price of confusion. For, what made the convergence of analytic philosophy and idealism seem plausible, was the claim that the latter is less metaphysically rebarbative than it may once have seemed, where so-called 'metaphysical' readings have been replaced by the sort of

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<sup>14</sup> Gardner 'The Limits of Naturalism' 34.

socialized and historicized form of idealism that Bernstein so admires, often dubbed 'non-metaphysical'.<sup>15</sup> But, Gardner argues, if Idealism is to hold on to the axiological commitments that are so distinctive of it, and if it can only do so by standing up properly against hard naturalism, then it must go beyond any such non-metaphysical view, and must instead ground the values it champions in a clearly anti-naturalist commitment to something *beyond* the human perspective, namely the perspective of absolute spirit – at which point, the hope of any rapprochement with analytic philosophy has been well and truly lost.<sup>16</sup> Thus, pointing to texts in which Hegel appears to robustly set *Geist* prior to and outside nature, Gardner argues that this is no accident, but precisely what one would expect, given the realism about value that he and the other Idealists wanted to maintain, a realism that cannot be maintained by 'soft naturalism' and thus by 'non-metaphysical' readings of the idealist position.

Now, in citing Norman Kemp Smith, Gardner is right to see him as speaking for a kind of orthodoxy within the British idealist tradition of which Kemp Smith was a part.<sup>17</sup> And certainly many other members of this group would have shared Kemp Smith's view of idealism and its relation to the question of value. To take just one further example, from James Seth:

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. also 'German Idealism', pp. 212-3: 'There is also, among some of German idealism's defenders, a tendency to suppose that the best reconstruction of German idealism will be one that brings it into line with (and thereby shows it to be formative in the creation of) the post-metaphysical, broadly naturalistic climate which appears to be the legacy of both Anglophone and continental European philosophy of the last two centuries. This orientation is visible in some of the most striking recent work on Hegel'.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. also 'German Idealism', p. 213: 'The thesis that German idealism is value-driven, as I wish to understand it, comes into conflict with this post-metaphysical tendency, for reasons that will emerge'. Cf. also p. 228: 'Third, it should be emphasised that the axiological reading entails a metaphysical, ontologically committed interpretation of German idealism: if German idealist metaphysics seeks to accommodate the axiological demand articulated in German romanticism, then a non-metaphysical, ontologically deflationary construal of German idealism, even if it were to make complete sense of the internal machinery of the German idealist systems, omits their prime mover and final end'. In this paper, Gardner uses Fichte's conception of positing as an example of the kind of 'inflationary' view that he thinks is required.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. 'The Present Situation of Philosophy', where Kemp Smith remarks that he is 'speaking as a convinced idealist' (p. 6).

That metaphysics [of ethics] may be either naturalistic or idealistic. On the one hand, the law of human life may be reduced to terms of natural law, the moral ideal may be resolved into the reality of nature. Or, on the other hand, the ultimate measure of human conduct and character may be found in a spiritual order which transcends the natural; the moral ideal may be found to express a divine Reality to which the real world of nature would, in itself, give no clue.... Thus an adequate interpretation of morality compels us to predicate an ultimate and absolute moral Reality, a supreme Ground of goodness as well as of truth; and the moral idealism which we have maintained against empirical realism in ethics brings us in the end to a moral realism, to a conviction of the reality of the moral ideal.<sup>18</sup>

And a view of this sort also finds defenders among more contemporary authors who take similar views in arguing against naturalism and in favour of theism, based on the objectivity of value. For example, John Cottingham has written recently:

What does it mean, however, to say that God is the source of goodness? To begin with, it evidently implies a firm denial of relativism. If goodness derives from an objective being that exists independently of us, then this rules out pragmatic and relativistic conceptions according to which the good is simply what works for us, or what is currently approved in our culture circle; nor can the good be something we can create or invent by our own choices or acts of will, in the way Friedrich Nietzsche envisaged... But in addition to underwriting *objectivity* and *nonrelativity*, the idea of a divine source of goodness also implies a certain kind of *authority*. This connects with the notion (by no means confined to theists) that beauty and goodness exert some kind of normative pull on us. Beauty is *to be*

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<sup>18</sup> James Seth, *A Study of Ethical Principles* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1905), 359-60 and 425. For other examples, see: J. R. Illingworth, *Personality Human and Divine* (London: Macmillan 1902), 110-11; Hastings Rashall, *The Theory of Good and Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907), II, 212; A. S. Pringle-Pattison, *The Idea of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1916), 42; W. R. Sorley, *Moral Values and the Idea of God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1918), 352-3; A. E. Taylor, *Does God Exist?* (London: Macmillan, 1945), 92-3.

*admired, goodness is to be pursued.* These values in a certain sense constrain us, whether we like it or not.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, if we also put Hegel in this tradition as Gardner suggests we should, with its clear anti-naturalism, Gardner's pessimism would seem to be fully justified: The reconciliationist agenda so hoped for by Bernstein, and championed by McDowell, Brandom, Pippin, Pinkard and many others must therefore be abandoned, and all such hopes dashed upon the rocks.

#### 4. Qualified optimism?

While recognizing that there is considerable force to Gardner's concerns, I now want to put forward the case for a more optimistic position – but based on different grounds from those offered by Bernstein, and which Gardner's critique undermines. The position I will put forward is a kind of metaphysical view, but not so radically anti-naturalist as the conception of spirit that Gardner takes to be central to the axiology of idealism; but nonetheless I hope this view still allows for a defense of the absoluteness of value which he claims to be central to the idealistic outlook.

We can start by following Gardner and accepting his focus on the issue of value as being fundamental. As we have seen, Gardner then objects to the approach of soft naturalist and non-metaphysical readers of Hegel, like Terry Pinkard, who take Geist conceived of in a 'deflationary' sense as bringing normativity into the world; but this then is said to be vulnerable to the challenge that the kind of value and normativity in question is too perspectival – and hence a stronger and more metaphysical notion of Geist is needed, which will break any possible link with naturalism. Gardner thus quotes Pinkard as treating Geist as 'us' qua historically located human beings,<sup>20</sup> and then challenges this approach

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<sup>19</sup> John Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion: Towards a More Humane Approach* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 73.

<sup>20</sup> Gardner, 'The Limits of Naturalism', 37, referring to Terry Pinkard, 'Speculative *Naturphilosophie* and the Development of the Empirical Sciences: Hegel's Perspective', in Gary Gutting (ed), *Continental Philosophy of Science* (Oxford: Blackwell), 23 and 30.

as giving the values that 'we' may then institute a treatment that is altogether insufficiently absolute and objective, and thus leaves the position vulnerable to hard naturalism:

The hard naturalist will claim, once again, than no reason has been given for thinking that there is not a naturalistic explanation to be given for the emergence of normativity from nature, in the light of which it can be seen that *what* emerges is not *Geist*/normativity as Hegelians conceive it – something with *real* autonomy – but simply our *representing ourselves* in *geistig*, normative terms. The sophisticated naturalist may grant, furthermore, than an *appearance* of autonomy and absoluteness is built into the perspective of *Geist*/normativity, and then claim that it is this which leads to the (illusory) view that *Geist*/normativity is independent from nature in the strong, 'absolute' sense affirmed by Hegelians...<sup>21</sup>

Gardner argues, as we have seen, that for Hegel himself this problem does not arise, as on his metaphysical conception of Geist as outside and prior to nature, and as therefore absolute in itself, the kind of value and normativity it institutes suffers from no such relativity – but of course this requires a metaphysical and non-naturalistic reading of Hegel's position that sets him at odds with the analytic mainstream.

However, one assumption that both Gardner and his opponents seem to share, is that on the Hegelian picture, value and normativity are instituted by Geist on a natural world that is intrinsically non-normative – where Geist is either understood in a deflationary sense as 'us', or in an inflationary sense as 'absolute spirit'. Then the issue is whether the former view can keep the axiological commitments of German Idealism in a sufficiently strong sense, or whether this requires moving to the latter. But I would like to now question this shared assumption: for I think it is possible to see value for Hegel arising in a different, more Aristotelian, way, as relating to claims about the natures of things, and how well or badly they realize those natures.

To outline the view: on this sort of account, evaluative claims are based on comparisons between objects as they actually are and the kinds or types of objects they belong to, where the latter brings with it normative implications.

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<sup>21</sup> Gardner, 'The Limits of Naturalism' 37-38.

Given realism about such kinds, a view of this sort can then also claim to be realist about the normative judgements based on them, in a way that escapes Gardner's worries about value being tied to the human perspective, as needing to be imposed on a natural world that is alien to normativity. This also then counts as a metaphysical view, given the ontological commitments it involves. At the same time, however, it is a metaphysical view that perhaps at least has some chance of being made compatible with naturalism in some form – or at least, so contemporary proponents of this sort of approach (such as Philippa Foot and Michael Thompson) might lead one to expect. At any rate, there seems to be more room for hope here than with the appeal to Geist that is required on Gardner's view – where this may then make something like Bernstein's optimism regarding the rapprochement with analytic philosophy more plausible, though on grounds that are still very different from the ones he offers.<sup>22</sup>

So, it may turn out, both sides in this debate are partly right, but also partly wrong, so that each must make some concessions to the other: Gardner can keep a metaphysical reading of Hegel, but must move to a metaphysical reading that can build bridges with naturalism and hence analytic philosophy; Bernstein and his fellow 'deflationary' readers of Hegel must give up their non-metaphysical approach, but can retain their sense of optimism; and both sides are wrong regarding the view of value that Hegel wants to defend.

Let me say a little more regarding that view of value, as I understand it, where I think it can be seen most clearly in the third book of Hegel's *Logic*, and in his treatment of the Concept (Begriff), Judgement, and Syllogism. Here, Hegel essentially offers a hierarchy of forms of judgement and syllogism, based on how they see the relation between the conceptual 'moments' of universal, particular and individual. At the simplest and most basic level, judgements and syllogisms involve claims about individuals and their simple properties, such as 'This rose is red', or 'This rose is red; red is a colour; therefore this rose is coloured'. However, for reasons we cannot go into fully here, Hegel holds that it is not

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Michael Thompson, *Life and Action: Elementary Structures of Practice and Practical Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 12: "The project of an "analytic" or "analytical" Hegelianism or of an "analytical Marxism" (however well- or ill-advised such a thing might be) must see itself as aiming at a form of analytic Aristotelianism..."

possible to rest at merely this level of judgement and syllogism, where it is necessary to bring in more sophisticated forms of thought, which involve more complex conceptual structures. In particular, it is necessary to move to thinking of some individual objects as instantiating natural kinds which characterize their essential natures, and where this introduces a significant evaluative element. For, to understand a concept as representing a natural kind is to understand individuals falling under that kind in terms of certain characteristics, but where failing to possess those characteristics is then a fault in the individual qua member of the kind. So, for example, a rose that dies prematurely, or which fails to attract sufficient bees to be pollinated, or is odourless but belongs to a species with a scent, is a 'bad' rose – but where these norms are not based on mere statistical generalizations, but reflect claims about what it is for a rose of this species to be a proper exemplar of the kind of thing it is. Thus, taking this approach, it can be argued that for Hegel, value enters in as a consequence of his conception of the relation between individuals and their fundamental natures, where the question of their goodness or badness, and even of their 'truth' and 'finitude', for him seems to rest on this relation.

Here are two key passages to this effect, from different treatments of the *Logic*:

Here we have the *apodeictic* judgment (e.g., “*This* – the immediate singularity – *house* – the genus – *being constituted thus and so* – particularity – is good or bad”). – *All things* are a *genus* (which is their determination and purpose) in a *single* actuality with a *particular* constitution; and their finitude consists in the fact that what is their particular [way of being] may (or again may not) conform to the universal.<sup>23</sup>

The subject of the apodeictic judgement (the house constituted so and so is *good*, the action constituted so and so is *right*) has within it, first, the universal, what it *ought to be*, and secondly, its *constitution*; this latter contains the *ground* why a predicate of the Concept judgement applies or

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<sup>23</sup> G W F Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, translated by T F Geraets, W A Suchting and H S Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), §179, p. 256.

does not apply to the *whole subject*, that is, whether the subject corresponds to its concept or not. This judgement, then, is *truly* objective; or it is the *truth of the judgement* in general.<sup>24</sup>

As far as I know, these are the only passages in the main part of the *Logic*, Hegel's key text, in which issues of value of this kind are addressed and explained.<sup>25</sup>

Now, passages such as these may then be set alongside the views of contemporary neo-Aristotelian naturalists, such as Foot, Thompson, and Rosalind Hursthouse, where the similarities should be clear. Thus, for example, Foot states that her key conception of 'natural goodness' is 'intrinsic or "autonomous" goodness in that it depends directly on the relation of an individual to the "life form" of its species',<sup>26</sup> thereby relating the individual to its kind in an Hegelian manner; and she also emphasizes how this gives normative claims an objectivity that they would otherwise be lacking:

Thus, evaluation of an individual living thing in its own right, with no reference to our interests or desires, is possible where there is intersection of two types of propositions: on the one hand, Aristotelian categorials (life-form descriptions relating to the species), and on the other, propositions about particular individuals that are the subject of evaluations.<sup>27</sup>

A closely related view is taken by Thompson, who was a key influence on Foot in adopting her own:

If, though, we want to apply 'normative' categories to sub-rational nature, and apart from any relation to 'our interests', then the question inevitably arises, and not so unreasonably: Where does the standard come from? What supplies the measure? The system of natural-historical propositions with a given kind or form as subject supplies such a standard for

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<sup>24</sup> G W F Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, translated by A V Miller (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), 661-2 (translation modified).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Encyclopaedia Logic* §21, p. 52, for a related passage from the introductory material: 'When thinking is taken as active with regard to objects as the thinking over [Nachdenken] of something – then the universal, as the product of this activity – contains the value of the matter [Wert der Sache], what is essential [das Wesentliche], inner, true'.

<sup>26</sup> Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 27.

<sup>27</sup> Foot, *Natural Goodness*, 33.

members of that kind. We may implicitly define a certain very abstract category of ‘natural defect’ with the following simple-minded principle of inference: *from* ‘The S is F,’ *and*: ‘This S is not F,’ *to infer*: ‘This S is defective in that it is not F’. It is in *this* sense that natural-historical judgments are ‘normative’, and not by each proposition’s bearing some sort of secret normative infrastructure. The first application of concepts of good, bad, defect and pathology is to the individual, and it consists in a certain sort of reference of the thing to its form or kind and the natural history that pertains to it.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, Hursthouse has adopted a similar approach, also emphasizing the objectivity of this way of accounting for value:

First, the truth of such evaluations of living things does not depend in any way on my wants, interests, or values, nor indeed on ‘ours’. They are, in the most straightforward sense of the term, ‘objective’; indeed, given that botany, zoology, ethnology, etc. are scientific, they are scientific.<sup>29</sup>

Claims of this sort seem to echo Hegel’s own account of value, and give us a way of understanding it that is neither Gardner’s resolute anti-naturalism on the one hand, nor that of the ‘soft naturalism’ that he criticizes on the other.

Let me now try to say something about what I take to be distinctive of this sort of view, and also some potential problems with it, both in itself and as a reading of Hegel.

The following can be identified as key features of the view, as I would understand it. First, it counts as a broadly metaphysical reading, which gives us a realist account of value. It is metaphysical in that it relies on thinking of individuals as instances as kinds, and thus as having essential properties, where there is no suggestion that these kinds are ‘constructions’ of ours, which is why the claims about value they underpin (‘this is a good horse and that is a bad one’) are realist. Second, while this view may constitute a challenge to naturalism in

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<sup>28</sup> Thompson, *Life and Action*, 80-1.

<sup>29</sup> Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 202.

some reductive and anti-metaphysical forms, and so it is dialectically more stable than the 'soft naturalism' which Gardner rejects, it is also not as wholly opposed to it as the conception of idealism that Gardner proposes. Third, this is a form of eudaimonism, as there is meant to be a conceptual link between being a proper exemplar of the kind and doing well or flourishing as an individual, such that if we were to treat X as a member of a kind but find that doing so in accordance with norms of that kind leads X not to flourish, then we would have to change our account of the kind to which X belongs: so if I treat this plant as a house plant, but it wilts and dies, then I have clearly got my classification wrong, and so should try treating it as another kind of thing instead – perhaps as a hardy perennial. Fourth, Hegel's position brings out the links between individuals, kinds, and value in a transcendental way: that is, to have the concept of an individual, one must see the individual as exemplifying a kind; to see it as exemplifying a kind is to see as doing so well or badly, and thus to see it in normative terms; so one cannot understand an individual without bringing in axiological considerations, which makes them fundamental to the understanding of the world, including nature itself. Fifth, it is less 'historicized' than someone like Bernstein would expect for a reading of Hegel: as I understand Hegel's position, the claims he wants to make about our essential nature and its link to our well-being is not a historical construct that might vary over time, although of course our understanding of it can.

However, of course, views of this broadly Aristotelian sort have been subjected to many sorts of criticism, and I do not have the time to consider them all here. But I want to consider those criticisms that relate most closely (it seems to me) to the naturalism/idealism debate that concerns Kemp Smith and Gardner, to see if it can be argued that in the end, naturalism even of this Aristotelian sort is as unstable as 'soft naturalism' and must either collapse into idealism or hard naturalism; where it then could be argued that as Hegel would have rejected the latter, we should think that it is plausible he would have adopted the former, thus re-instituting the divide that Gardner insists upon between Hegelian idealism and naturalistic analytic philosophy.

The criticisms of Aristotelian naturalism that I have in mind are as follows:

- (1) Aristotelian naturalism is implausibly biologicistic, but to make it less so is to move from naturalism to idealism
- (2) Aristotelian naturalism's conception of nature is incompatible with the modern conception of nature, particularly in this naturalism's commitment to teleological notions, and to save those notions it must move from naturalism to idealism
- (3) Aristotelian naturalism will involve a degree of relativism when it comes to our moral practices, which is incompatible with the absoluteness of moral value and norms that then requires idealism for its defense

The thought here is that each of these criticisms shows that Kemp Smith and Gardner can argue that Aristotelian naturalism needs to give way to idealism, and that Hegel and the other idealists saw this, and hence should no more be interpreted as Aristotelian naturalists than they should be interpreted as 'soft naturalists'.

Let me consider each point in turn:

The first objection is that Aristotelian naturalism is committed to an implausibly biologicistic view of us as agents, as if as 'life forms' we could be understood in terms of purely biological imperatives such as reproduction, and the norms that arise from that.<sup>30</sup> More radically, it can be argued that even if Aristotelian naturalism worked for animals, we are a special case, as human beings can always transcend their biology and indeed any essentialist claims altogether: our existence precedes our essence, as Sartre said.<sup>31</sup> So, it could be

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<sup>30</sup> Foot herself put this worry as follows: 'The questions remains, however, as to whether once we have made the transition from sub-rational to rational beings we may not need a new theory of evaluation. Surely, my critics will say, it must be so.... For such an evaluation [of sub-rational beings] is based on the general relation of this kind of feature to the pattern of life that is the *good of* creatures of this species. But how can we possibly see human good in the same terms? The life cycle of a plant or animal ultimately has to do with what is involved in development, self-sustenance, and reproduction. Are we really going to suggest that human strengths and weaknesses, and even virtues and vices, are to be identified by reference to such "biological" cycles?' (Foot, *Natural Goodness*, 41).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Foot, *Natural Goodness*, 37: 'There will surely be objection to the idea that a natural form of life characteristic of humankind could determine what you or I *ought* to do. What does it matter to me *what species* I belong to? Should we not protest on behalf of individuality and creativity against bringing in the human species when asking what I myself – this particular person – should do?'

argued, we cannot use this account when thinking about how value applies to us; rather, we create value through our own processes of self-creation, as the soft naturalist argues – or if we don't, value rests on spirit as something outside nature, as the idealist claims.

However, while it is true that Hegel moves beyond a purely biological conception of human flourishing,<sup>32</sup> it may still be that he is committed to Aristotelian naturalism more broadly conceived:<sup>33</sup> For Hegel arguably moves from thinking of us as *human beings* in a biological sense to thinking of us as *persons* or *rational agents*, precisely because we are more than just merely biological beings. However, as I think *The Philosophy of Right* makes clear, it is still the case that the notion of a person or agent brings with it its own kind of normativity when it comes to assessments of our behaviour, capacities and actions: for, persons are then understood by Hegel in terms of a kind of freedom that he takes to be distinctive of the human will.<sup>34</sup> Thus, to put his position very briefly, Hegel sees the will as a balance of competing elements, of particularism on the one side (roughly, your distinctive interests and concerns) and universality on the other side (roughly, your ability to step back from those interests and concerns and put them in question), where we can oscillate from one side to the other, so that if we take each side in isolation, the other will come back to bite us: so, if I try to focus on just what is of interest to me, the universal side of my will leads me to feel I am wasting my time; on the other hand, if I try to act in a purely universal way, for the 'good in general', I will find it impossible to act, as action requires willing something in particular. I thus need to find forms of action that will successfully balance both sides – and this, Hegel thinks,

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<sup>32</sup> This has been argued by Sebastian Rand in his article 'What Is Wrong With Rex? Hegel on Animal Defect and Individuality', *European Journal of Philosophy*, forthcoming (available online doi: 10.1111/ejop.12029).

<sup>33</sup> In her discussion, Hursthouse makes biology central to the naturalist view, and hence resists talk of 'persons' or 'rational beings', so to this extent her form of naturalism would be opposed to Hegel's: 'But "ethical naturalism" is usually thought of as not only basing ethics in some way on considerations of human nature, but also as taking human beings to be part of the natural, biological order of living things. Its standard first premise is that what human beings *are* is a species of rational, social animals and thereby a species of living things – which unlike "persons" or "rational beings", have a particular biological make-up and a natural life cycle' (*On Virtue Ethics*, p. 206)

<sup>34</sup> Cf. G W F Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §§5-7.

can only happen in a well ordered state, where on the one hand my interests are given a place, but where on the other my actions also have some relation to the good of other individuals within the social whole. There is thus a conception of what it is for an individual to properly function as an agent, as the kinds of beings we are, even though that is not something that biology alone can tell us, as with other creatures. This also explains why I think Hegel would reject a radical kind of Sartrean anti-essentialism, even for us, though it is an essentialism that takes us beyond our purely biological natures.

A second worry concerns the extent to which Aristotelian naturalism is committed to forms of teleological understanding of nature that themselves only make sense given some kind of underlying theistic idealism. Thus, Foot and Thompson have been criticized by 'hard naturalists' for blithely accepting the kind of teleology that Aristotelian naturalism seems to require, without seeing how this is at odds with the post-Darwinian conception of nature.<sup>35</sup> Of course, the idealist might be able to re-inject this teleological framework into nature, but this leaves Aristotelian naturalism on its own looking unstable.<sup>36</sup>

Now, at a purely interpretative level, this may not look like such a worry when it comes to Hegel; for of course Hegel was writing before Darwinian ideas had taken hold, so *he* might have been a kind of Aristotelian naturalist and not felt any pressure towards idealism, simply because he was innocent of this kind of concern. However, this response is arguably too simple, for even if pre-Darwin, Hegel was still post-Newton, and as the example of Kant reminds us, teleology was already a fraught issue; so in this context, some of Hegel's easy acceptance of Aristotelian naturalism might be attributed precisely to the idealistic framework that makes the Aristotelian framework retain some plausibility in the modern world.

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. James Lenman, 'The Saucer of Mud, the Kudzu Vine, and the Uxorious Cheetah: Against Neo-Aristotelian Naturalism in Meta-Ethics', *European Journal of Analytic Philosophy*, 1 (2005), 47.

<sup>36</sup> As Foot herself puts the worry: 'Philosophers are sometimes afraid of recognizing teleological language, thinking it must be left over from a world-view in which all nature was seen as reflecting the will of the deity' (Foot, *Natural Goodness* 32).

However, as some recent commentators have argued,<sup>37</sup> while Hegel did seem to feel more comfortable with teleology than Kant, this is arguably for reasons to do with explanatory concerns over mechanism, and thus on a broadly naturalistic basis; so Hegel's position might be compared to the kind of contemporary biologist who, even post-Darwin, defends the meaningfulness of a teleological conception of nature, rather than an idealist who feels the need to go beyond naturalism altogether to defend the place of teleology in our understanding.

A third and final objection may be put in terms of a comment made by Kemp Smith when he observes that 'Naturalism can now profess to meet idealism on more equal terms within its [idealism's] own field, that of our specifically human activities', because it can 'trace more distinctions to social conventions adopted for their beneficial consequences in forwarding the secular welfare of the individual and of society'.<sup>38</sup> Thus, for example, Foot speaks of promising as a 'tool invented by humans for the better conduct of their lives',<sup>39</sup> much as hunting in packs improves the lives of wolves, or 'waggle dancing' improves the lives of bees by informing each other about sources of nectar, and thus that in the light of these practices, beings who fail to abide by them are bad or defective. However, it is clear from Kemp Smith's article that he thinks this naturalistic account of various practices such as promise making cannot achieve what the idealist is after, as it still leaves the values concerned too 'terrestrial' and relativistic, as presumably different creatures could have different needs or ways of going on, such that promising for them on this account would no longer be a norm, and lying no longer wrong; and one suspects Gardner might have similar misgivings. Thus, for example, Kemp Smith writes: 'the supreme concern of idealism is to show that the aesthetic and spiritual values have a *more than merely human significance*';<sup>40</sup> and 'Naturalism has to treat human values as

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. James Kreines, 'The Logic of Life: Hegel's Philosophical Defense of Teleological Explanation of Living Beings', in Frederick C Beiser (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 344-378, and *Reason in the World: Hegel's Metaphysics and Its Philosophical Appeal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>38</sup> Kemp Smith, 'The Present Situation in Philosophy', 6.

<sup>39</sup> Foot, *Natural Goodness*, 51.

<sup>40</sup> Kemp Smith, 'The Present Situation in Philosophy', 15 (my emphasis).

merely relative; idealism interprets them as disclosing a richer and more comprehensive Universe than can be identified in scientific terms'; thus 'though man can, indeed, be studied only in his natural setting, for an understanding of his nature and destiny idealism refers to that wider reality which is depicted in poetry and the arts, and worshipped in religion, and which, though not yet scientifically known, can be philosophically discerned as conferring upon human life its standards and values'.<sup>41</sup> So, Kemp Smith argues, on the one hand the naturalist treats 'the aesthetic, spiritual, and social criteria' as 'so inextricably bound up with the civilization of our planet, that upon them no judgments having wider jurisdiction can legitimately be based',<sup>42</sup> while on the other hand for the idealist 'the human spirit [can] rise above its natural conditions' so that it 'finds its salvation not in independence of its animal conditions but in using them as instruments for the expression of desires and meanings that genuinely transcend them'.<sup>43</sup> Thus, for Kemp Smith, according to the idealist in contradistinction to the naturalist, '[man's] true self-knowledge is made possible by value and standards that constitute his humanity in distinction from the animals; and it is by their absoluteness that they deliver him from the limitations of strictly animal existence'.<sup>44</sup> For Kemp Smith, then, Foot's conception of 'natural goodness' is a contradiction in terms, to the extent that we are talking about the genuine moral goodness of promising, justice, benevolence and so on, which (Kemp Smith argues) must be more than tools for living flourishing lives as a species; rather, in becoming aware of these practices as value, we precisely looking beyond our natures into a more absolute realm of normativity that only idealism can account for in a proper manner.

Now, where does Hegel stand on this debate? I would like to suggest, based on the conception of flourishing of the person briefly mentioned previously, than in fact his account of ethical life in the *Philosophy of Right* can be understood in naturalistic terms, as precisely setting out a form of life and its associated practices that are best designed to realize the human good,

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<sup>41</sup> Op. cit. 18.

<sup>42</sup> Op. cit. 20.

<sup>43</sup> Op. cit. 23.

<sup>44</sup> Op. cit. 25.

understood in terms of the free will.<sup>45</sup> Whereas the standpoint of morality tends to think there is something distinctive and special in the moral, once we get to ethical life we see that our moral norms are simply part of a system of practices of ordering our lives together in a way that is conducive to collective human flourishing or self-realization, much as Foot argues concerning promising and our systems of rights, for example. Thus, just as the 'lone wolf' is defective qua member of his species and thus bad as a result, so too is the individual who fails to play their part in ethical life:

Like the animals, we do things that will benefit others rather than ourselves: there is no good case for assessing the goodness of human action by reference only to good that each person brings to himself... And it will surely not be denied that there is something wrong with a free-riding wolf that feeds but does not take part in the hunt, as with a member of the species of dancing bees who finds a source of nectar but whose behaviour does not let other bees know of its location. These free-riding individuals of a species whose members work together are just as *defective* as those who have defective hearing, sight, or powers of locomotion.<sup>46</sup>

Taken in this way, Hegel's account of ethical life can be made compatible with Aristotelian naturalism.

However, the idealist like Kemp Smith, and perhaps also Gardner, might argue that this kind of account is still inadequate unless it introduces Geist at a higher level, in some quasi-theistic form. An argument of this sort is proposed by Cottingham, against the view the Aristotelian view that 'goodness is like health: the criteria for its attribution to objects and actions have to do entirely with the presence or absence of certain broadly natural features, such as the tendency to

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Axel Honneth, *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom: Hegel's Social Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 27: 'Hegel starts with the self-realization of the individual and derives the task of a modern legal system from these conditions of self-realization; the fact that in his case the communicative spheres come to the fore is due to the specific way in which he defines the structure of the freedom of the "free will"'.

<sup>46</sup> Foot, *Natural Goodness*, 16.

alleviate suffering, the promotion of sympathy and fellow feeling, respectful treatment, and the like'. Cottingham objects to this view as follows:

But the normative status of the obligations connected with such types of behaviour is, as Kant famously pointed out, not simply instrumental, or hypothetical: we ought to do these things not just because we have contingently evolved to have certain inclinations, not because our society happens contingently to put a premium on certain goods, but rather because such behaviour is categorically right. Such behaviour is indeed, in the currently fashionable terminology, behaviour we have conclusive reason to pursue. And ultimately, for the theist, such conclusive reasons, riding free from the contingencies of our human development, will be interpreted in a way that makes reference to the moral teleology that permeates the whole cosmos.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, for Cottingham, as for Kemp Smith, unless our conception of the good is based on a theological conception, it is too relativistic and hypothetical to serve as the basis for a genuinely moral conception of value.

Now, this is a large issue which cannot be really settled here, but it seems to me that there are two responses the Aristotelian naturalist can give to Cottingham's challenge. First, to claim that conceptions of value relate to how well or badly the individual performs in relation to the life form of their species is not subjectivist or relativist in the sense it is just up to the individual or the group to decide on this how they like, but is tied to objective considerations, much as is the case for health or illness. Secondly, and relatedly, this makes the reasons to act categorical and not hypothetical, for the reasons for the wolf to hunt in a pack or for me to keep my promises are independent of our desires in such cases, and thus are categorical: the fact that as a wolf I don't *want* to hunt in a pack, or as a person that I don't *want* to keep my promises doesn't entail on the Aristotelian view that qua wolf or person I no longer now have a reason to do these things. The questions of relativity and hypotheticality seem to be red-herrings, therefore.

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<sup>47</sup> John Cottingham, *The Spiritual Dimension: Religion, Philosophy and Human Value* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 56-7.

The real remaining issue then seems to be whether being just linked to the *human* good is enough to make such categorical reasons *strong enough* to be compelling or overriding, unless a link to some divine or higher spiritual source is forged, a link that is lost in Aristotelian naturalism. But how might the appeal to God (or a Geist in some quasi-theistic form) help here? This is Cottingham's answer:

To spell it out more explicitly, if the pattern after which we are shaped, whether we like it or not, is one that allows us true fulfilment only if the love that is deep in our nature wells up and overflows towards our fellow-creatures, only then have we the highest and most compelling reasons to live in accordance with that love.<sup>48</sup>

But what is striking about this response is how close it comes to Aristotelian naturalism: for the Aristotelian naturalist will equally claim that our self-realization as individuals is directly tied in with the moral life, and thus this seems something the naturalist can claim as much as the theist. And certainly, as many Hegelians have stressed, Hegel himself seems to have wanted to make this kind of connection, in a way that again draws him close to Aristotelian naturalism.<sup>49</sup>

But, of course, there is also a fundamental difference, which is that Cottingham holds that it is only within a *created* order that this good can *really* matter: we have to think that our pattern is something that has been 'shaped', by something that has a 'higher' value itself, where he quotes Tennyson: 'God [is] love indeed/and love Creation's final law'.<sup>50</sup> The challenge for the secular Aristotelian naturalist, therefore, is whether there can be value in a nature that is not viewed in theological terms, as created.

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<sup>48</sup> Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion* 86.

<sup>49</sup> 'The rational state is an end in itself only because the highest stage of *individual* self-actualization consists in participating in the state and recognizing it as such an end. This means that Hegel's ethical theory is after all founded on a conception of individual human beings and their self-actualization' (Allen W Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 21).

<sup>50</sup> Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion* 85. For a related attempt to move naturalism about value in a theistic direction, see Fiona Ellis, *God, Value, and Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Now, of course, this again is hardly something that can be settled here, while it is indeed true that Hegel (like virtually everyone in his time) would have assumed nature *was* created in some sense, and thus this may be taken as a background assumption to any of conceptions of value he may have had. But the question is whether Hegel gave this idea any work to do in his axiology, of the sort Cottingham thinks is required, and which the Aristotelian naturalist thinks is not. For myself, I see no argument in Hegel that mirrors Cottingham's (though of course some might, perhaps including Kemp Smith and Gardner). But either way, if this is a central issue to which naturalism tends, Hegel is a figure to place at the heart of such debates, rather than on their periphery, thus making Hegel part of philosophy now.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper, I have tried to argue for a cautious optimism in response to the question 'why Hegel now?': namely, that current philosophers are right to think that they will find in Hegel a position that answers to their concerns in a way that they can recognize. However, in order to do so, I have argued, they need to go beyond the picture of Hegel presented by Bernstein and others, while also being able to avoid the picture of him presented by Gardner. And the structure of my response concerning value would seem to mirror the structure of broader current debates on how we should read Hegel, where three main options are often played out across a range of issues: Namely, is Hegel a non-metaphysical thinker who offers us a sophisticated form of Kantian anti-realism; or a metaphysical thinker committed to a spiritualistic idealism; or a metaphysical thinker who offers us a kind of Aristotelian realism. When it comes to value, Gardner may be seen as rejecting the first option and so taking the second, where I have been urging the virtues of the third, as the best way to both read Hegel's position, and to explain how he should be taken up now, even if Bernstein is right that until recently it was in the more non-metaphysical approach that his relevance had seemed to lie.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> I am grateful to those who responded to this paper when it was delivered as a lecture, and those who read it in draft form, particularly Joe Saunders. Related ideas are discussed in my forthcoming papers 'Does Hegelian Ethics Rest on a

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Mistake?', in Italo Testa and Luigi Ruggiu (eds), *I That Is We, We That is I: Contemporary Perspectives on Hegel* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), and 'Freedom, Norms and Nature in Hegel: Self-Legislation or Self-Realization?', in James Kreines and Rachel Zuckert (eds), *Hegel on Philosophy, History, and Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).