

Hegel's naturalism
or Soul and body in the Encyclopaedia

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1. *A glocal question.* The relation between soul and body, understood as a problem that demands a response through a constructive philosophical theory - capable of accounting for the possibility of the relation itself - never received full and systematic treatment in Hegel's work. Even though he did dedicate a great deal of space in his writings to the notions of *Seele*, *Geist*, *Leib*, *Körper*, *Leiblichkeit* in the Jena writings on the philosophy of Nature and of Spirit, in the *Phenomenology*, and also in the various editions of the *Encyclopaedia*, apart from occasional references in the *Lessons on the History of Philosophy* in just one passage of the *Encyclopaedia* - precisely in the *Anmerkung* to § 389 - does Hegel come to grips with the problem - first posed, in his view, by modern philosophy - that calls into question the relation (*Verhältnis*) between soul (*Seele*) and body (*Körper*). For Hegel this question involves, fundamentally, two problems: a) the question of whether the soul is immaterial; b) the question of the "community of soul and body (*Gemeinschaft der Seele und des Körpers*)."¹ Hegel's response to these problems found, moreover, no particular echo in the Hegelian school - with the exception of Johann Eduard Erdmann² - or in the successive critical literature. Only recently has interest been taken in the importance of Hegel's position in relation to contemporary philosophy of mind and to its Aristotelian roots,³ leading, with Michael Wolff, to the first modern monograph on the theme - in the form of a commentary on § 389 of the *Encyclopaedia*.⁴ The minimal attention paid to Hegel's solution means neither that it was definitively comprehended by its interpreters nor that, within or outside Hegelian studies, prejudices reflecting a fundamental

misunderstanding of the essential features of Hegel's thought did not take hold. In some respects, as we shall show, an adequate comprehension of the solution of this *local* problem in the economy of the system is destined to shed light on the *global* meaning of Hegel's philosophy, particularly with regard to what is called Hegel's *Idealism*: that's why the problem of the relation between soul and body has at the very hand a *glocal* meaning.

2. *Redescription and epistemological strategy.* The marginal position that the modern soul-body question holds in the Hegelian texts is, moreover, neither fortuitous nor attributable to an oversight, but is due to the fact that it is not of systematic interest.⁵ This is because, for Hegel, it poses a false problem, the correct attitude to which does not consist in responding affirmatively or negatively to the dilemmas it implies (is the soul immaterial or material? is community of soul and body possible or impossible?) but rather in showing that the problem is only apparent and that not seeking a constructive response to it is, therefore, legitimate. Hegel's therapeutic-constructive attitude⁶ leads to a solution strategy that demands, first, a redescription of the problem, and then its transcription in the more general question of the relation between *Geist* (mind, spirit) and *Natur*. The primary reason for this lies within the systematic division of Hegel's philosophy, which in the *Encyclopaedia* is divided into three parts: *Logic*, *Nature* and *Spirit*. There is, however, also a substantial reason in favor of such transcription: only if we topologically locate the soul-body problem at the systematic point that regards the transition from *Nature* to *Spirit* can we grasp the epistemological and ontological misunderstandings that create the appearance of an unsolvable problem. For Hegel, questions of *epistemology*, as theory of knowledge, can find adequate treatment only within the framework of a philosophy of subjective Spirit - which constitutes the first section of the Philosophy of Spirit. Here "Spirit as *cognitive* (*Geist als Erkennend*)"⁷ is thematized from the standpoint of the cognitive

powers and dispositions available to a finite, natural individual capable of self-reference: which is to say, a living individual that is first of all a natural organism. Reconstruction of the genealogy of our cognitive powers develops through *Anthropology, Phenomenology and Psychology* - the sections into which subjective Spirit is divided: in the same way, Hegel reconstructs the formal architecture of the different levels of Spirit, each one of which is deposited by the previous development but at the same time manifests an organizational logic that cannot be reduced to that of the level from which it genetically derives. It is thus in the context of the philosophy of subjective Spirit that Hegel makes his epistemological position explicit: "Spirit, for us, has Nature as its *presupposition* (Der Geist hat für uns die Natur zu seiner Voraussetzung)."⁸ From the standpoint of the cognitive subject - the finite individual, endowed with cognitive powers - nature is given as presupposed. This position can be characterized as a form of *epistemological realism*:⁹ it describes the phenomenological perspective of the cognitive subject, confronted with a reality that manifests itself to his eyes as independent and objectively accessible.

3. *Against ontological dualism.* Note that Hegel's *antidualistic ontological perspective* does not call epistemological realism into question - nor does his logical conception of objective thought. For Hegel reality is not the product of subjective categories at the disposal of individuals, however we may interpret his conception that reality is fundamentally comprehensible - both as Nature and as Spirit - solely as a manifestation of the structure of the Idea. The fact, brought to light by the *Philosophy of Spirit*, that for Hegel theoretical and practical self-consciousness, the family, right (*Rechts*) and civil society are all social phenomena co-constituted by the recognitive interactions of individuals - are, in some respects, ontologically subjective - in no way diminishes their epistemological objectivity. At the same time it is clear that Hegel, as we see in his celebrated criticism of Kant's thing in

itself - and even more paradigmatically in his criticism of Schulze's modern skepticism - was always averse to *metaphysical realism*: the fundamental objective of such aversion was not of itself the realism of knowledge - which, on the contrary, Hegel wishes to preserve - but, rather, its combination with a dualistic conception at the ontological level. This takes us directly back to the soul-body question itself: which, in fact, as Hegel tells us in the "Anthropology" section, is the poisoned fruit of the evil tree of ontological dualism. Hegel is particularly clear on the subject. The question of the immateriality of the soul and of its community with the body grows urgent only "if both are taken as *absolutely independent* of one another (wenn beide als *absolut Selbständige* gegeneinander vorausgesetzt werden)":¹⁰ if, that is, Spirit is taken as "a *thing* (ein *Ding*)" and matter as "something *true* (ein *Wahres*)" that is opposed to it. Hegel states his opposition to this ontological dualism that pits spirit against matter, soul against body, as two realities existing independently of one another, as follows:

here this *simplicity* of the soul is, primarily, to be determined as feeling, in which corporeity (*Leiblichkeit*) is contained. This determination must be upheld against the view that this corporeity, for consciousness and for the intellect, is a materiality whose parts are outside one another and outside the soul.¹¹

The ontological objectivity Hegel opposes is clearly that of metaphysical realism and does not concern the conception of objective thought. In particular, Hegel is combating here the dualism of substances implied by the soul-body problem: the idea, already sharply attacked by Kant with his critique of paralogisms¹², of the soul's being a thing, an *ens* having determinate properties (substantiality, simplicity, numerical identity, immateriality), with another type of being - material, corporeal substance - pitted against it. Once the soul, and Spirit in general (of which soul, in the Hegelian systematic topology, is a determination, a moment) is

posited as a thing separate from the body, it becomes necessary: a) to ask whether soul has material or immaterial nature; b) to ask how the community (*Gemeinschaft*) between soul and body is to be conceived. In fact, once the ontological dualism is posited, one ends up by conceiving the relation between soul and body as a form of causal interaction between two heterogeneous substances. In light of this approach the community between soul and body becomes a paradoxical fact for modern philosophical theories, which attempt (Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz) to account for it conceptually by introducing a *tertium* - God - as that which mediates and makes intelligible their otherwise impossible interaction, ending up, however, by declaring such communion to be an incomprehensible mystery:

a cognate question is that of the *community (Gemeinschaft) of soul and body*.

This community was assumed as a *fact (Faktum)*, and the only problem was how to *conceptually comprehend* it. The usual answer, perhaps, was to call it an *incomprehensible mystery (ein unbegreifliches Geheimnis)*.¹³

Hegel's strategy does not consist in giving a solution to the two questions but rather in maintaining that we have the right not to answer them, since we do not necessarily have to accept the categorial framework implied by the interrogation. Hence it is necessary to redescribe the situation on the basis of the genetic and topological relation between Nature and Spirit: for Hegel, it is precisely at this level that the structure of the ontological dualism that generates the apparent problem can be identified and criticized. Note, also, that Hegel's solution to the question of the relation between Nature and Spirit is thematized in terms that render it independent of the ways in which the general theory of the Idea comes to be interpreted: whether it be interpreted as a theory that liquidates ontology through a dialectic dissolution of its reified categories, or as a new type of second-degree

constructive ontology. In fact, even if we leave this question of interpretation in abeyance, it remains true that for Hegel soul and body are not things of a different kind but refer to the same object, namely, the living individual. They are to be conceived, then, as different categories under which we find the same object: the fact that we have descriptions that are not located at the same level does not mean that we are confronted with two types of beings. Michael Wolff defined this position as a *theory of identity* between soul and body, in a nonreductionist sense of the term.¹⁴ For Wolff, then, Hegel adopts neither a reductionist form of mentalist ontological monism (the only type of entity admissible, to which all others - including the material - are reduced, is the mental entity) nor a reductionist form of materialist ontological monism (the only type of reality admissible is material reality under a certain description of it: for example, the physicalist description).

4. *Hegel's naturalism.* In our opinion, Wolff's reading is unsatisfactory insofar as it fails to illuminate the background that renders this conception of soul-body identity thinkable. In fact, the local problem of the soul-body relation can be grasped only against the global background of the relation between Nature and Spirit. In this perspective one must combat any conception that sees Spirit in its various degrees - Subjective, Objective, Absolute - as a type of being other than the natural, which subsists prior to and independently of the natural or which is added to it from outside. By contrast, Spirit for Hegel is "return out of Nature (Zurückkommen aus der Natur)," which is to say, Nature that returns to itself and awakens from its sleep.¹⁵ Spirit, accordingly, far from constituting another type of thing, is for Hegel nothing other than a determinate constellation of relations of Nature itself as the one single reality. This thesis could be called *Hegel's naturalism*: the idea that there is one single reality - living reality - and different levels of description of it. For that matter, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, especially in the chapter on "Observing Reason," Hegel had already maintained that

every dualism between reason and nature, and in particular between reason and corporeal nature, must be combated. Hence his criticism of those philosophical theories that wish to obtain the independence of reason while prescind from its fundamental dependence on embodiment:¹⁶ on the contrary, the dialectic of dependence and independence, which Hegel begins to construct in the "Self-consciousness" section of the *Phenomenology*, requires that the autonomy of reason be obtained only on the basis of the recognition of its spheres of dependence. If, then, we concentrate on the conception of the genetic and topological relation between Nature and Spirit that emerges at the level of the System, we can affirm that here Hegel posits the need for a broad conception of Nature. On one hand, spiritual activities must be conceived in such a way that they do not prove to be something other than and independent of human natural being. On the other, there is need for a conception of Nature that is not restricted: a conception that accounts for the fact that the space of Reason does not necessarily have to be conceived on the basis of a sort of dualism between itself and the space of nature.¹⁷ But this requires a broad conception of Nature, thought as something not reducible to the level of physicalist description to which modern materialist metaphysics wishes to reduce every legitimate description of reality.¹⁸

In this light we can see why for Hegel the question concerning the materiality or immateriality of the soul is badly put: any answer ends up by assuming ontological dualism, just as this assumption is inevitable for every reductionist conception that intends to reduce the mental to the material or the material to the mental. The question, rather, in conformity to the Hegelian strategy of redescription, has to be transcribed at the meta-level of the relation between Nature and Spirit. In this perspective we can grasp the meaning of Hegel's statement that

the soul is not for itself immaterial, but is the universal immateriality of Nature, its simple ideal life (Die Seele ist nicht für sich immateriell, sondern die allgemeine Immaterialität der Natur, deren einfaches ideelles Leben).¹⁹

However, beneath the false problem concerning the soul's immateriality lies the more fundamental theme of the immateriality of Nature. But here Hegel by no means intends to affirm that natural beings are not made of matter, neither does he intend to deny that the activities of the soul and of Spirit in general are constituted by material conditions, emerge from such conditions, and always remain connected with them. The question, rather, is whether or not - to conceive Nature in its organization adequately, and thus also Spirit as Nature that returns to itself - every form of description, and every categorial apparatus, has to be reduced to the one we utilize to describe the material properties of bodies - a *first-natural naturalism*, for example under a physicalist description. Hegel's answer is, in that case, "no," since his analysis is, at bottom, dictated by the need to arrive at a broader concept of Nature, capable of embracing the totality of living realities - a broad or liberal naturalism capable of embracing the various levels of organization of living beings, including those phenomena of their social organization that we can also consider as spiritual second nature.

5. *The soul as form of the body.* In this context we can now grasp the meaning of Hegel's affirmations in § 389 that the soul is: a) "the *substance* (die *Substanz*)" of the body; later, however, we will also have to account for the affirmation that the soul is: b) the substance of Spirit.²⁰ But to do so we must first determine the specific meaning of the notions of "Seele" and "Geist" more precisely than we have up to now. The doctrine of the soul is, in fact, part of the treatment of *subjective Spirit* and, specifically, of its first part, "Anthropology," which examines immediate subjective Spirit: a type of self-relation that Hegel calls "*soul or natural spirit* (*Seele*

oder *Naturgeist*).²¹ The different images Hegel uses to speak of the soul - natural Spirit, the sleep of Spirit, Spirit immersed in Nature - fundamentally express the idea that we are dealing here with a "*natural determinateness* (*Naturbestimmtheit*)."²² The "Anthropology," as a doctrine of the soul, is thus concerned with the natural form of self-relation: the singularity of a natural individual that immediately refers to itself. Secondly, we note that the doctrine of soul, although defined here as "natural spirit," is not yet a fully integral part of the doctrine of Spirit: referring to this level of development Hegel writes that "it is not yet Spirit, but *soul*."²³ Hence the "Anthropology" has to do with a genealogy of Spirit based on its natural conditions. Furthermore, it is important to recall that the soul considered here, following the Aristotelian approach of the *De Anima* - for Hegel the most important treatise of all time on this topic²⁴ - is understood as a being in the domain of *physis*, and thus as one of those beings that, having the principle of its movement in itself, are included in the manifestative horizon of nature. Clearly, Hegel's doctrine of soul has nothing to do with a religious doctrine or with any sort of "spiritualist" conception. It must also be kept in mind that the Hegelian doctrine is tripartite - *natural soul, feeling soul, actual soul* - and that fundamentally, while systematically located in the "Anthropology," the first two forms taken into consideration are not specifically human - again, a reference to Aristotle - but are proper more in general to living and animal nature, with only the third form constituting a clear transition toward intrinsically human powers. From this standpoint the doctrine of soul takes, fundamentally, a *naturalistic approach*: not only is the soul not understood as a type of entity other than the living and embodied natural individual, but even the different organizational forms of soul correspond to different organizational levels - and thus to different concepts - of nature (first nature as regards the first two forms, second nature for the third).

In this framework the soul is conceived as the substance of animal corporeity. In this first sense, however, soul is not a certain type of substance along with others -

a relapse into ontological dualism - but rather "the *Substance (Die Substanz)*":²⁵ the sole substance of life. It is therefore substance as form of the body, which is to say as substantial form:²⁶ organizational form of the living body. We find this sense of the substantiality of soul in the passages where Hegel maintains that

in the corporeal, then, the soul is a simple *omnipresent* unity (Sie ist darum in dem Leiblichem einfache *allgegenwärtige* Einheit).²⁷

The soul is the ideal, subjective substantiality of corporeity.²⁸

If the soul is to be understood as the simple unity of the body - its internal finality - then the question whether it is material or immaterial loses all meaning: the soul, here, is not a thing separate from the body - neither separate nor separable, contrary to certain interpretations of Aristotle's - but rather its intrinsic organizational structure. Hence maintaining that the soul is life, body, does not mean that it is reducible to material components or to states of excitation of the body itself: it is, rather, the substantial form of the body itself, the organizational structure that endures in its dynamism beyond any replacement of the individual's matter. In this respect the soul is the true "immateriality of nature." This, however, does not keep it from having the body's states of excitation as its material condition, but only means that its form is not reducible to them. As form of the body the soul cannot, then, be understood as "a thing," a certain type of entity distinct from a corporeal being, but rather as an "*activity (Tätigkeit)*" of the body itself. In the "Anthropology" the activities of the soul analyzed by Hegel are, principally, "sensibility (Empfindung)" - in reference to the natural animal; "feeling (Gefühl)" and "self-feeling (Selbstgefühl)" - in reference to the "feeling soul (fühlende Seele)" ; and "habit (Gewohnheit)" - which regards the transition from the feeling soul to the actual soul. These activities are considered proper to the

animal organism; moreover, as regards the natural and feeling soul, they are not seen as intentional activities, having propositional structure and contents. They are, nevertheless, activities that manifest a form of pre-reflexive self-reference, giving rise to a certain self-relation of the living being: in the feeling soul - which, we recall, is not specifically human - this pre-reflexive self-reference can be described as a form of the living-being's self-feeling.

6. *Habit and the genealogy of Spirit.* In general "Anthropology," along with "Phenomenology" and "Psychology," the other sections into which the philosophy of subjective Spirit is divided, respond to a naturalistic epistemological strategy, aimed at refuting the premises that generate the dualistic opposition between knowledge as the exercise of capacities proper to our natural being and knowledge as the exercise of rational activities. Hegel's effort is to redescribe our cognitive powers as manifestations of activities of the body: indeed, the specific aim of the "Anthropology" itself, as doctrine of the soul, is to delineate the genesis of these cognitive powers - and of the higher ones in particular, the spiritual powers, involving thought, judgment, linguistic normativity - on the basis of the sentient inferior powers. The program of the genealogical reconstruction of Spirit is expressed by Hegel with a strong Aristotelian echo:

*Everything is in sensation (Empfindung); if you will, everything that emerges in spiritual consciousness and in reason has its source (Quelle) and origin (Ursprung) in sensation.*²⁹

To be sure, this affirmation is offset by a critique of sensualism or sensationism understood as a reductionist theory that admits just one level of description to which all the other levels are referred. But, then again, Hegel does accept at least these theses of sensualism: a) Spirit has its origin in sentient nature; b) even at its

higher levels of development Spirit continues to have sentient nature as its condition, and therefore does not exist independently of it. Both theses are closely connected with the theory of "habit (Gewohnheit)" that Hegel introduces first in his treatment of the feeling soul - at a level, then, that is not yet specifically human - but that in other respects will then concern the full extent of the theory of Spirit.³⁰ In fact, for Hegel, habit is "the most essential thing for the *existence* of all spirituality in the individual subject, enabling the subject to be a *concrete* immediacy."³¹ Even more significantly, Hegel adds that

the form of habit embraces all the kinds and all the grades of the activity of Spirit.³²

Thus all spiritual activities in the proper sense of the word, endowed with intentional structure and propositional content - that is, our higher faculties, and particularly those proper to humans, having the structure of consciousness and of self-consciousness - not only presuppose the corporeal constitution of certain abilities (the habits produced through repetition and practice as corporeal mechanisms of self-feeling) but are always accompanied by these abilities at every level. Even the reflexive activities of Spirit, propositionally structured, accompanied by self-consciousness and expressible linguistically, must become habitual if they are to be exercised; that is, they must be embodied, to assume natural immediacy, and thus be exercised nonreflexively.

7. *Second-natural naturalism.* Habit is thus described in § 409 as a mode of natural existence.³³ It is natural because proper to the first-natural beings studied by the "Anthropology." Furthermore, it is natural since it possesses nonreflexive immediacy, the spontaneity of the natural soul. Then again, the naturalness of habit is the product of an activity through which the corporeal dispositions are modified

and shaped, through repetition and practice, until they form abilities not already given of themselves. In this respect for Hegel habit is a "second nature (zweite Natur)"³⁴; that is, a natural immediacy posited and produced through the mediation of other activities.³⁵ If he had not introduced a notion of "second nature" connected with the development of corporeal habits, Hegel could have accounted neither for the genesis nor, even, for the form of all the spiritual activities - from the upright posture to the self-conscious thought of self that modern philosophy has posited as proper to human being. Habit, as such, is not definable independently of corporeity - which, however, does not imply an objectified conception of the body, but rather an experience of a body proper (as *Leib*, then, rather than as *Körper*), subjectified: a body that, as ability shaped through practice, becomes an *expressive sign*. This is of particular interest for the question of the relation between soul and body. For Hegel the question of the community between soul and body is badly put insofar as the very idea of community, taken as a fact to be explained theoretically, assumes that soul and body be two separate entities whose relation must be thought in terms of a causal interaction - like the type of reciprocal action and reaction that can take place between two distinct physical bodies. The relation between soul and body is, by contrast, an expressive relation.³⁶ Furthermore, since the relation regards not two distinct entities but rather different descriptions of the same living individual, it can, rather, be considered as an expressive self-relation: especially since every expressive relation has a structurally self-referential form. This is the meaning of Hegel's idea that corporeity ought to be understood as "*Sign (Zeichen)*," "expression (Ausdruck)" and "artwork (Kunstwerk)" of the soul.³⁷ It is precisely this idea that signals the transition from the "*feeling soul (die fühlende Seele)*" to the third form of soul, namely "*the actual soul (die wirkliche Seele)*," which prepares the transition to the structure of "consciousness" - which will be taken up in the next section, the "Phenomenology" - and thus to the distinction

between the "I," the body proper, and the external world. It is precisely at this crucial point that Hegel writes:

Thinking, too, however free and active in its own pure element it becomes, no less requires habit and familiarity (this impromptuity or form of immediacy), by which it is the property of my single self where I can freely and in all directions range. It is through this habit that I come to realize my *existence* as a thinking being. Even here, in this spontaneity of self-centered thought, there is corporeity (hence, want of habit and too-long-continued thinking cause headache); habit diminishes this feeling, by making the natural function an immediacy of the soul.³⁸

Thus Hegel, in the clearest way possible, affirms the idea that all spiritual activities, while having a specific form of their own, remain linked to corporeity as their natural condition and as that which constantly accompanies their exercise. The *cogito* itself implies the body and the formation of corporeal habits: even the *cogito*, then, is a form of second nature. At this point we can clarify the meaning, left in abeyance earlier, of Hegel's affirmation that the soul is the "substance" of Spirit:

Soul is the *substance* or fundamental basis of every particularization and individualization of Spirit, so that *Spirit*, in the soul, has all the material (Stoff) of its determination, and the soul remains the identical and pervading ideality of such determination.³⁹

Here the notion of substance is used in a sense different from the passages in which Hegel speaks of soul as the substance of body. While in this second case it signifies "substantial form," in the first case, according to Michael Wolff's

interpretation, Hegel utilizes the sense of substance as substrate.⁴⁰ Here, substance clearly indicates the *Grundlage*, the material basis to which the higher forms of spiritual determinations relate as to the substantial form with respect to matter. The idea that the natural soul is the substance of Spirit is thus essentially in agreement with what we said regarding the natural genealogy of spiritual activities:⁴¹ the fact that Spirit cannot be conceived independently of "embodiment (Verleiblichung)" regards its genesis, its contents and, even, the very form of the activity in which these contents present themselves.

8. *Embodiment and Philosophy of Mind.* Now that we have shed some light on the nature of the relation between soul and body we may wonder what Hegel's position is on the problem of "mind" - which, as we shall see, does not coincide with "soul" - and of its relationship with body. *Geist* is the German term still utilized to translate the English word "mind": in fact "Philosophy of Mind" (in English), in the sense it is used today, is still rendered in German as "Philosophie des Geistes." Wallace and Miller, in their translation from the German, in fact gave Hegel's "Philosophie des Geistes" the English title "Hegel's Philosophy of Mind." Nevertheless, the Hegelian notion of "Geist" is broader than the common notion of mind - not because it speaks of something entirely different, but rather because it implies a conception that is broader than the mental. This, first of all, is because the Hegelian analysis of Spirit includes the soul, which, properly speaking, is not yet fully Spirit, and which is understood as natural, sentient and feeling activity, which is not intrinsically intentional. The doctrine of soul thus regards the cognitive activities of animal individuals and that type of proto-intentionality - *Selbstgefühl* - ascribable to such activities from outside but that cannot be self-ascribed. We are thus in the presence of what today might be called a natural theory of mind. Then, we must note that the further levels of subjective Spirit, involving the structures of the consciousness of objects and of self-consciousness, regard, rather,

propositionally structured individual intentional mind. Nevertheless, in Hegel the domain of the mental extends also to the spheres of *objective Spirit* and of *absolute Spirit*. In the first case we have already to do with relations and activities that, while essentially involving individuals, and not being able to prescind from them, are nonetheless not methodologically and ontologically reducible to individuals. The holistic properties of individuals, and the social institutions themselves - family, law, civil society, State - thus express a form of spiritual activity that cannot be described as the mere aggregate of individual intentional activities. This poses the problem of the existence of a form of mental activity and of common, shared and collective intentionality, whose properties cannot be explained solely on the basis of the properties of individual minds. If the Hegelian philosophy of Spirit reflects such an approach - some form of methodological and ontological holism - then we cannot claim to have dealt with the mind-body question adequately if we have concentrated exclusively on subjective Spirit. But this also presents us with a question of social ontology: what type of existence should we grant to this type of shared or collective spiritual activities? Are we perhaps confronted with a new type of incorporeal entities, distinct from such other entities as embodied individuals? And if this were the case, would we not end up by relapsing into some form of ontological dualism? Hegel had been aware of the problem ever since the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In the sections on "Reason" and then on "Spirit" he did his best to avoid all dualism not only between reason and nature but also between reason, social reality and nature. But, then, the problem of *Verleiblichung* is posed anew at this level as well: and an adequate response will have to be one that does not lead to a dualistic approach. Social space, then, in its historical development, has to be conceived as space that is adequate to express Reason, understood as a form of manifestation of spiritual activities. But, then again, social reality must not be understood as a type of entity other than natural reality - on pain of relapsing into some form of dualism - but rather as a determinate configuration of the

expressive relations of living individuals as parts of a people. If habit is the universal form of Spirit, then also these spiritual expressive relations will have, in their turn, to be embodied. But, then again, the type of expressive embodiment required here differs from the one dealt with in the analysis of subjective Spirit, since now we find ourselves not in the presence of physico-organic bodies but rather of social and institutional bodies regarding which it is problematic whether they can in some sense be considered as natural and living bodies.

9. *Hegel's social naturalism*. But at this point has not the very possibility of characterizing Hegel's position as a form of naturalism faded, even if expressed in terms of a second-natural naturalism? The situation is more complex than may appear at first blush. In the first instance we must recall that the Aristotelian thesis that sees man as a naturally social animal is implicit in Hegel's philosophy. Sociality itself, as an expressive configuration of Spirit, has a natural genesis for Hegel, insofar as it emerges from the natural determinations of living being; moreover, the social structures of Spirit themselves have the natural soul as their substance. In the second place, the thesis of natural sociality is, in the strong sense, grounded by Hegel also through the theory of the recognitive constitution of theoretical and practical self-consciousness that had already been formulated in the Jena writings and was taken up again in the major works. Nevertheless, if self-consciousness constitutes itself as such in recognitive interaction and thus has an intersubjective and social genesis and structure, then the spiritual activity that manifests itself in it will necessarily have to be embodied not only in the individual physical body but also in the social body of the forms of shared ethical life and of institutions. This means, moreover, that it is possible to ascribe some form of naturalness also to the social body of immediate and institutionalized ethical life. In fact, for Hegel institutions – as he argues in §§ 4 and 151 of the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* – can be understood as a form of social second nature, and in this respect

can be analyzed also in terms of habit. The social body and its institutions in one respect manifest a form of activity and of organization that is not reducible to the activity of individuals and that therefore presents a self-moving character.

Furthermore, as Hegel argues in § 146 of the Elements, the social body and its institutions present themselves to the individual as having a form of natural immediacy also insofar as they manifest an objectivity and a blind necessity - as far as the ends of individual intentional agents are concerned - analogous to that presented by the first-natural domain of physical nature. Appearing to the individual as an extraneous mechanism, the institutionalized social body manifests anew the structure of habit - defined as a mechanism of self-feeling. As connected to habits sedimented in social practices, the naturalness of the social body is not in its turn independent of corporeity. Even though we may seem to be dealing with a nonmaterial body, this does not preclude the sense of living naturalness, given the thesis of the universal immateriality of nature. Neither can it be taken for granted that the social body must be understood as something that prescind from the corporeity of living organisms: the soul nevertheless remains the substance of Spirit, and Spirit, in its social articulation, is embodied exactly in the habits through which individual living bodies are socialized through education. Thus the hypothesis remains open that the second-natural social body is not to be understood as some other type of entity than living beings: it is, rather, an expressive configuration constituted through recognitive interactions and embodied in the habits of living individuals.

It is difficult, then, to characterize the philosophy of Hegel as a form of Idealism. By no means does it express the conviction that everything there is can in the final analysis be reduced to ideal or mental entities. Hegel's opposition to reductionist materialism does not give rise to some type of spiritualism or reductionist mentalism: this outcome would be nothing other than the reversal of the previous position and would end up by suffering from the same basic dualism. The

opposition to ontological dualism gives rise, rather, as De Vries and Wolff rightly maintained, to a philosophy that is hylomorphic⁴². It is unquestionable that Hegel pits himself against naturalistic approaches of a physicalist, reductionist or eliminativist type. Nevertheless, in our opinion Hegel's hylomorphism cannot be adequately conceived if one posits a dualism between organic natural reality and social reality: the form most adequate to characterize Hegel's comprehensive position is perhaps that of *social naturalism*, on the basis of which the institutions of social life are extensions and objectifications of human nature and of individual mind. This, at bottom, is the combined meaning of the Hegelian theses that soul is the substance of Spirit, and habit its universal form.

¹ See G.W.F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1827), ed. W. Bonsiepen and H.-C. Lucas, *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 19 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1989), trans. W. Wallace and A. V. Miller, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971) [The translation has been modified throughout], § 389 Anm.

² See J.E. Erdmann, *Abhandlung über Leib und Seele. Eine Vorschule zu Hegel's Philosophie des Geistes* (1837), new edition ed. G.J.P. Bolland (Leiden, 1902).

³ See C. Elder, *Appropriating Hegel* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1980); W.A. De Vries, *Hegel's Theory of Mental Activity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

⁴ See M. Wolff, *Das Körper-Seele-Problem. Kommentar zu Hegel, Enzyklopädie (1830)*, § 389 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992).

⁵ See Wolff, *Das Körper-Seele-Problem*, pp. 11-15.

⁶ On the different meanings of philosophical therapy see M. Quante, "Spekulative Philosophie als Therapie", in *Hegels Erbe*, ed. Ch. Halbig, M. Quante and L. Siep (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), pp. 329-333.

⁷ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 387.

⁸ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 381.

⁹ On Hegel's epistemological realism, from a perspective that combines pragmatism and moderate ontological holism, see K.R. Westphal, *Hegel's Epistemological Realism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), pp. 140-148; K.R. Westphal, "Force, understanding and ontology", *The Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*, 57/58 (2008), forthcoming. For a different, more traditional perspective - oriented towards ontological monism - on Hegel's epistemological realism, see Ch. Halbig, *Objektives Denken. Erkenntnistheorie und Philosophy of Mind in Hegels System* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 2002); Ch. Halbig, "Das >Erkennen als solches<. Überlegungen zur Grundstruktur von Hegels Epistemologie", in *Hegels Erbe*, pp. 138-163. W. Jaeschke maintains, moreover, that this epistemological realism necessarily presupposes a form of (nondualistic) ontological realism compatible with identity philosophy: see W. Jaeschke, "Zum Begriff des Idealismus", in *Hegels Erbe*, pp. 164-183, pp. 180-182.

¹⁰ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 389 Anm.

¹¹ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 403 Anm.

¹² see Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 321.

¹³ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 389 Anm.

¹⁴ See Wolff, *Das Körper-Seele-Problem*, p. 100.

¹⁵ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 381.

¹⁶ On the theme of embodiment see J. Russon, *The Self and Its Body in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1994), p. 14.

¹⁷ For a critique of this dualism see J. McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994; second edition 1996).

¹⁸ On the question of "broad or liberal naturalism" see, *Naturalism in Question*, ed. M. De Caro and D. McArthur (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).

¹⁹ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 389. In the *Anmerkung* to the same section Hegel then writes that "the question of the immateriality of the soul has no interest,

except where, on the one hand, matter is regarded as something *true*, and, on the other, spirit conceived as a *thing*" [Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 389 Anm.].

²⁰ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 389.

²¹ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 387.

²² See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 390.

²³ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 388.

²⁴ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 378.

²⁵ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 389.

²⁶ See Wolff, *Das Körper-Seele-Problem*, p. 140.

²⁷ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 403 Anm.

²⁸ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 409.

²⁹ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, 400 Anm.

³⁰ On the importance, and on the ambivalence, of the theme of habit also in the other sections of "Subjective Spirit" see B. Merker, "Jenseits des Hirns. Zur Aktualität von Hegels Philosophie des subjektiven Geistes", in *Subjektivität und Anerkennung. Festschrift für Ludwig Siep*, ed. B. Merker, G. Mohr and M. Quante (Paderborn : Mentis, 2003), pp. 157-184. On the relation between habit and language see Th.A. Lewis, "Speaking of Habits: The Role of Language in Moving from Habit to Freedom", *The Owl of Minerva* (forthcoming). A. Ferrarin, in his remarkable essay on *Hegel and Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) reads the Hegelian theory of habit within an interpretation that postulates a clear-cut discontinuity between nature and spirit: the process through which spirit returns to itself from the exteriority of nature is, for him, nothing other than a movement of idealization in which nature must be negated and die if it is to be able to give life to spirit (Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle*, pp. 237-238). In this light Ferrarin sees the formation of habits as a unilateral process of rupture with the corporeity in which nature ceases to be an external given and becomes an ideal possession of spirit (Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle*, p. 278 ff.). It must, however, be noted that the process of idealization in Hegel is always accompanied - as, indeed, the theory of habit attests - by a complementary movement of embodiment: in this respect, habit is not just the activity that "produces spontaneity in receptivity" (Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle*, p. 280), but is also the moment in which spontaneous activities are embodied in second-nature receptivity. The dualistic (and idealistic) readings of the relation between nature and spirit in Hegel spring, in my opinion, precisely from the tendency to neglect this second aspect and to accentuate unilaterally - in the idealist-subjective sense - the moment of idealization.

³¹ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 410 Anm.

³² See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 410 Anm.

³³ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 409.

³⁴ On second nature in Hegel and in contemporary philosophy see I. Testa, "Selbstbewusstsein und zweite Natur", in *Hegels Phaenomenologie des Geistes*, ed. K. Vieweg and W. Welsch (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2008), pp. 286-307; I. Testa, "Criticism from within nature. The dialectic from first to second nature between McDowell and Adorno", *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 33, 3 (2007): pp. 473-497.

³⁵ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 410 Anm.

³⁶ On the critique of soul-body dualism in the *Phenomenology* see P. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Philosophie des Selbstbewußtseins. Hegels System als Formanalyse von Wissen und Autonomie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), 2005, pp. 412-419.

³⁷ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 411.

³⁸ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 410 Anm.

³⁹ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 389.

⁴⁰ See Wolff, *Das Körper-Seele-Problem*, p. 126 ff.

⁴¹ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 392.

⁴² See De Vries, *Hegel's Theory of Mental Activity*, p. 45; Wolff, *Das Körper-Seele-Problem*, pp. 14 and 154.