

## The Limits of Naturalism and the Metaphysics of German Idealism

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‘In einem schwankenden Zeitalter scheut man alles Absolute und Selbständige; deshalb mögen wir denn auch weder ächten Spaß, noch ächten Ernst, weder ächte Tugend noch ächte Bosheit mehr leiden.’

– *Nachtwachen von Bonaventura*, Dritte Nachtwache

One issue above all forces itself on anyone attempting to make sense of the development of German idealism out of Kant. Is German idealism, in the full sense of the term, metaphysical? The wealth of new anglophone, chiefly North American writing on German idealism, particularly on Hegel – characterized by remarkable depth, rigour, and creativity – has put the perennial question of German idealism’s metaphysicity in a newly sharp light, and in much of this new scholarship a negative answer is returned to the question.

Recent interpretation of German idealism owes much to the broader philosophical environment in which it has proceeded. Over recent decades analytic philosophy has enlarged its view of the discipline’s scope and relaxed its conception of the methods appropriate to philosophical enquiry, and in parallel to this development analytically trained philosophers have returned to the history of philosophy, the study of which is now regarded by many as a legitimate and important (perhaps even necessary) form of philosophical enquiry. It remains the case, at the same time, that the kinds of philosophical positions most intensively worked on and argued about in non-historical, systematic analytic philosophy are predominantly naturalistic – and thus, on the face of it, not in any immediate and obvious sense receptive to the central ideas of German idealism. A primary impulse in recent work

on German idealism has been, however, to indicate the consonance, unobvious though it may be, between German idealism, or portions thereof, and some of the leading strands in major systematic positions explored and defended within analytic philosophy. Characteristic of interpretations of German idealism exhibiting this tendency are claims such as the following: that the apparent baroque speculative metaphysics of German idealism, correctly understood, amounts to a richness of conceptual explanatory apparatus that is altogether innocent of the postulation of supernatural entities; that the ontological commitments of German idealism are no different from those of many contemporary naturalistic positions, and perhaps even compatible with a robust physicalism; that the relation of German idealism to religious ways of thinking, superficial appearances to the contrary, is no more intimate than that of many analytic naturalisms; that one of the essential, defining insights and metaphilosophical principles of German idealism consists in the idea that normativity is irreducible and occupies a position of ultimate explanatory priority; that the fundamental motor of German idealism lies in the concern to validate and give adequate form to the modern conception of individual autonomy, a post-theocentric concern which is ours just as much as that of German thinkers in the 1790s and 1800s; that German idealism is to a great extent a radical deepening and extension of Kant's Copernican revolution (or 'epistemological turn'), the necessity of which (in some form) as a corrective to naive empiricism, is widely accepted in the later analytic tradition; that, in a similar way, German idealism pursues Kant's thesis of the primacy of practical reason, in a way that makes a crucial and favourable difference to the meaning of its apparently metaphysically formulated claims, and which forges a direct connection with the American pragmatist tradition; that in any case the contributions of German idealism to moral, political and social theory stand independently from its putative metaphysics; and so forth. The notion that in these ways and others German idealism can be shown to provide a significant historical resource for progressive, non-metaphysical contemporary philosophical developments has provided a powerful stimulus to the flowering of recent scholarship in that area.<sup>1</sup>

One task accordingly set is to measure the new interpretations of the German idealists at the level of historically informed close textual exegesis. My intention here is, instead, to attempt to put the new development in perspective, by taking a step back and offering a critical view of certain leading elements in our present philosophical situation, which has in turn, I will suggest, direct relevance for our understanding of German idealism. What I am supposing therefore for present purposes, in accordance with proponents of the new interpretations of German idealism themselves, is that what should be taken to count for us as the correct interpretation of German idealism is not something that need be determined altogether by the texts and historical data taken in independence from critical reflection on our present philosophical situation: in other words, that we should not seek to isolate the task of answering such questions as that of in what sense German idealism is metaphysical, from the task of determining what our present philosophical orientation should be, just as, conversely, German idealism (and all other historical resources) should contribute to forming that orientation.<sup>2</sup>

### **1. The end of idealism and the ascent of naturalism**

To begin, I want to engage in a brief historical exercise, to set our present philosophical situation in relief by drawing the contrast with the outlook that prevailed at the beginning of the twentieth century. To bring alive the historical fact of the extraordinary transformation in the philosophical landscape of the English-speaking world over the last hundred years, a now little read but highly pertinent paper by Norman Kemp Smith serves well.

In, 'The present situation in philosophy', his inaugural lecture at Edinburgh in 1919, Kemp Smith gives a universal typology of philosophical positions, and explains how, on his view, the balance of argument lies between them.

There are, on Kemp Smith's account, only three basic types of philosophical position: 'idealism', 'naturalism', and 'skepticism'. Naturalism he defines 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'.<sup>3</sup> Idealism by contrast treats man as a 'microcosm' of a larger reality and measures him 'against standards for which it [man's natural environment] cannot account'.<sup>4</sup> Its 'supreme concern is to show that the aesthetic and spiritual values have a more than merely human significance', and that 'intellectual and spiritual values' – where intellectual means: pertaining to theoretical reason – 'stand on the same plane of objectivity, and thereby justify parity of treatment'.<sup>5</sup> Idealism, he says, is 'probably the philosophy of the great majority of men',<sup>6</sup> and Kemp Smith considers that the overall tendency in the history of philosophy 'has been towards' it.<sup>7</sup> Skepticism – which Kemp Smith also calls 'agnosticism', and under which heading he includes also nineteenth-century positivism – is a kind of pseudo-position, not on a par with idealism and naturalism: it has, he says, no 'engine-power' and is 'at most, a kind of Greek chorus, commenting ironically on the course of the action'.<sup>8</sup> It has affinities with both naturalism and idealism – with the former because it leads smoothly into the view that '[t]hought is an instrument developed through natural processes for the practical purposes of adaptation',<sup>9</sup> and with the latter because it upholds a distinction of reality and appearance which opens the way to 'idealist teaching'. Skepticism thus resolves itself ultimately, according to Kemp Smith, into either naturalism or idealism.

So it is the great antagonism between idealism and naturalism that lies at the heart of all philosophy, and here there has been, Kemp Smith thinks, some change: whereas until recently idealism predominated, by virtue of its appeal to 'moral, social, religious' considerations, the nineteenth century (through the growth that it witnessed of the human sciences) has seen the development of a 'very greatly strengthened' naturalistic position that 'can now profess to meet idealism on more equal terms within its own field, that of our specifically human activities'.<sup>10</sup> This fortified naturalism is further strengthened by having shed its positivistic elements: it now 'claims to be realistic', 'dealing with reality' not in the manner of Mill or Huxley but 'as apprehending it face to face'.<sup>11</sup>

However, the opposition remains as sharp as ever: the naturalist holds that we are parts of the Universe which are simply ‘more complex’, ‘more completely unified than is the Universe as a whole’, while the idealist interprets the Universe as a whole in the light of this ‘part’.<sup>12</sup> And although the decision between naturalism and idealism has become marginally less easy to make, Kemp Smith considers that idealism retains its edge, for two reasons, both having to do with values. First, because naturalism must hold that our values *have* value ‘only by reference to the detailed contingencies of terrestrial existence’,<sup>13</sup> only idealism is compatible with the claim for their absoluteness. He writes: ‘Now since the only basis upon which idealism can rest this far-reaching conclusion’ – namely that man (purposive self-consciousness) is the model for grasping the Universe as a whole – ‘is the contention that spiritual no less than intellectual criteria have an absolute validity, idealism must stand or fall according to its success or failure in upholding this latter position, in face of the counter-arguments of the naturalistic philosophies.’<sup>14</sup> Second, Kemp Smith believes that the best that naturalism can achieve is a sideways-on view of values: the naturalists, he says, ‘keep their eyes off the human values’ in so far as they ‘approach them only through the study of our natural and economic setting, or through analogies derived from the study of animal behaviour’, with the result that ‘they do not study them at all’.<sup>15</sup> The two criticisms are of course connected: Kemp Smith believes that to take a non-sideways-on view of values, to look them in the face, *is* to view them as absolute, as beyond all natural contingency.

Kemp Smith’s outlook was in its day quite the opposite of idiosyncratic. The era which he represents was at the time of his lecture fast disintegrating – only three years later Roy Wood Sellars would write: ‘we are all naturalists now’<sup>16</sup> – but it had enjoyed a remarkable hegemony. As the philosophical journals of the period show very clearly, British and American philosophers had for several decades shared exactly Kemp Smith’s view of the philosophical geography.<sup>17</sup>

The nature of the historical change is therefore clear: once upon a time idealism seemed without doubt philosophically superior to naturalism, whereas we now think, more or less, the exact opposite.

Indeed, our conviction of the correctness of naturalism is so well entrenched that Kemp Smith's broad category of naturalism is no longer particularly meaningful for us: for us it does not pick out a unified philosophical outlook but merely points towards a wide variety of differentiated positions which, we would say, have it in common just that they reject supernaturalism and restrict metaphysics to explicating empirical theory of the natural order.<sup>18</sup> In order to give the term naturalism, or naturalization, a job to do, it has become common to use it much more narrowly than Kemp Smith, with the result that at least some of the arguments that now go on between self-described naturalists and anti-naturalists look, from Kemp Smith's point of view, like arguments within the naturalistic camp. Similarly, the term 'idealism' hardly serves any longer for us, as it did for Kemp Smith, to express a unified philosophical programme worth speaking of under one heading – we do not find it helpful to suppose that a single philosophical thought is working itself out in the history of philosophy from Plato through Berkeley to Kant and the German and British idealists.

In this way, the victory of what Kemp Smith means by naturalism has been followed by a kind of self-effacement: because naturalism in its own eyes contrasts with nothing philosophically significant, the designation ceases to express a credo and falls away. From Kemp Smith's point of view, however, this is a mistake: it is as if naturalism has sought to consummate its victory by concealing it, by dissolving the concepts needed to express what was at issue in its original struggle with idealism.

Recognition of the extraordinary contrast between how the philosophical world looked a hundred years ago and how it looks to us now raises the question of what it was exactly that came to persuade philosophers that idealism in fact possesses none of the strengths supposed by the generations for whom Kemp Smith speaks. There is no space to argue the point here, but I suggest that it is very plausible to conclude that idealism faded out of anglophone philosophy without having ever been expelled by force of argument: the new logical apparatus and method of conceptual analysis opened up possibilities that called to be explored, and this was felt to require a clean break with the existing

idealist establishment, which had become complacent and uncreative, but idealist philosophy was not *refuted* by logical discoveries or application of the method of analysis. A proper critique of idealism would have required a detailed reconstruction of idealist philosophy, which is just what no longer seemed worthy of attention.<sup>19</sup> This point, assuming it to be correct, should lead us to reconsider the perspective articulated Kemp Smith. Can we recapture the philosophical state of mind that gives idealism the authority it had for him?

## 2. The axiological problem of naturalism

A crucial component of Kemp Smith's outlook is his view of naturalism as incompatible with the claims of value. The subject of naturalism and value is of course very large, but for the purpose of retrieving the motivation for Kemp Smith's outlook it will suffice to concentrate on some relatively obvious historical points.

What should first be recalled is a basic historical fact about the experience of naturalism, namely that throughout the greater part of the modern period, naturalism was thought to present an immediate intellectual threat. Reconceiving ourselves as parts of the natural order, relating to ourselves in the way that we relate to natural objects, involves, it was felt, a profound self-devaluation. In the seventeenth century the term 'naturalist' was employed most frequently to signify a willingness to think the unthinkable. Nor was this just the view of theists. Proponents of naturalism *themselves* accepted that the basic *prima facie* axiological meaning of naturalization is negative: an acceptance of human devaluation is present in writings by naturalists all the way from la Mettrie and d'Holbach to Freud, who states that psychoanalysis administers to the human ego the third blow of humiliation, following those delivered by Copernicus and Darwin (and Darwin himself had said the same of his own discoveries).<sup>20</sup>

Standardly, in addition to emphasizing all of the compensating material and social goods to be delivered by a scientifically orientated culture, naturalists have sought to turn the devaluative impact of naturalism to their own advantage, suggesting that the blow to our self-esteem is not simply epistemically needful but also salutary, of moral benefit.<sup>21</sup> Thus la Mettrie argues that humbling ourselves through the doctrine that we are machines is a commendable, indeed a thoroughly Christian exercise of self-abnegation. Freud does something analogous, suggesting that the psychoanalytic naturalization of the human personality is a step out of narcissistic immaturity towards psychological *Aufklärung*. Nietzsche tells us that returning to the hard text of *homo natura* is a necessary first step towards the recovery of health. Even Hume, who is almost completely comfortable with the implications of naturalism for morality, acknowledges that there is a case to be answered, and his reply to the lover of virtue, Francis Hutcheson, is that the Humean account of morality in terms of sympathy at least shows morality's inescapability – Hume urges Hutcheson to exchange his sense of the dignity of value for an assurance of its psychologically binding motivational power.

In connection with this observation, I want to indicate two historical patterns which stand out when we consider in general terms the relation of naturalism to value.

The first is the increased *independence of theoretical reason* from practical reason in the account which is given of the justificatory basis of naturalism. In the case of the materialist *philosophes*, naturalism is presented in a *visionary* spirit – as heralding a new era, as the road to the Good. This dimension is regarded, furthermore, as *essential* to the appeal of naturalism – without this connection to the Good, it is not supposed that the argument against anti-naturalism, against religion, could be won. By the time we get to Freud, however, let alone Quine, naturalism is conceived as resting *exclusively* on theoretical reason and as *immune* to non-theoretical attack – it is assumed that nothing *could* be shown regarding the axiological implications of naturalism that would give us reason to reconsider our commitment to it: we have ceased to think that naturalism is essential for the



realization of our interest in value, and do not believe that it would be an option for us to reject naturalism even if it were to prove thoroughly inimical to our value-interests.<sup>22</sup>

The second pattern relates to a well-recognized difficulty which is encountered in the naturalistic explanation of value, especially moral value. Naturalism tends to do one of two things. *Either* value is resolved by the naturalist into something that has ready and immediate empirical intelligibility, typically pleasure or desire-satisfaction. This form of value-naturalism is associated with optimism regarding the prospect of human fulfilment. *Or* alternatively, and conversely associated with a pessimistic outlook, naturalism generates explanations of value that refer to complex psychological, social, biological-evolutionary, etc., causal processes, the discovery of which is dependent upon empirical theory, and which are remote from ordinary axiological understanding – as in Nietzschean, Freudian, and neo-Darwinian explanations of morality. Naturalism is thus constantly threatened with missing the mark in one of two opposite ways: either the naturalistic account of value is too shallow to be credible as a reconstruction of our pre-philosophical understanding of value, or its account of value is deep but in a way that is alien to and undermines our axiological self-understanding. The historical shift has been from the salience of the former case to that of the latter: whereas there is a strong association of earlier naturalism with utilitarianism, when contemporary naturalism makes itself felt in thinking about morality, it is in connection with theory-driven causal explanations of value which carry *prima facie* revisionary implications.

The second pattern is of course related closely to the first: as naturalism becomes increasingly the property of theoretical rather than practical reason, its non-attunement with ordinary views of value comes to the fore.

The next point to be made is that, it seems fair to say, we have ceased to be much preoccupied with the axiological character of naturalism *in general*: we argue about the cogency of particular attempts to naturalize moral and other species of value, but we do not pose the question of what naturalism *as such* implies regarding the very possibility of value *as such*.

This may be brought out by attending to Dewey, who began his philosophical career as a Hegelian and who shares with the earlier founders of American pragmatism a keen appreciation of the attractions of idealism. In an influential critique of contemporary idealism published in the *Philosophical Review* for 1906, 'Experience and objective idealism', Dewey accepts that the issue of value is paramount. Like Kemp Smith, Dewey recognizes idealism as a unified tradition which goes back to Plato yet receives its optimal formulation in modern neo-Hegelian idealism, and regards idealism's claim to be able to do justice to the existence of purpose and value in experience as one of its cornerstones. Dewey argues accordingly, not just that idealism fails in this regard (its a priori structures are, he claims, conceived incoherently), but that the 'thoroughgoing empiricism' which he recommends in its stead is able to show that the 'one constant trait of experience from its crudest to its most mature forms is that its contents undergo change of meaning, and of meaning in the sense of excellence, value'.<sup>23</sup>

This feature of Dewey's engagement with idealism makes his outlook remote from that of the present day, for Dewey *accepts* that the philosophical authority of naturalism is conditional upon what service it renders to our interest in inhabiting a world in which we can take value to be realized, and believes that our value-orientation is in fact what most gives us reason to be naturalistic. Dewey thus belongs to the tradition of humanistic, Enlightenment, value-grounded naturalism which holds, with d'Holbach and la Mettrie, that our value-interests *alone* make it rationally necessary to think of ourselves as natural through-and-through.<sup>24</sup> Our present view, by contrast, is that naturalism is a *fait accompli*, setting limits to what we can allow ourselves to think, the only question which remains being that of how much of the value-riddled 'manifest image' can be retained alongside or within the scientific image and on what sorts of terms – naturalism functions in present anglophone philosophy as a default and restraining presupposition.

The purpose of drawing attention to this historical change is to bring to light the deep alteration that has occurred in our view of what needs to be, and what can be, argued for in this context. One who

these days objects to moral naturalism is obliged to identify some feature of moral thinking that makes it conceptually resistant to naturalistic analysis, while on the earlier outlook, reflected in Kemp Smith's claim that values are 'absolute', it is taken as an immediate philosophical datum, virtually an axiom, that a deep axiological problem surrounds the *bare idea* that our metaphysical status is that of a natural object. On the earlier view, the notion that we are in essence of a kind with the objects that we experience as composing nature is held to be axiologically problematic quite apart from whatever more concrete, more technical problems may face particular forms of ethical, aesthetic, etc. naturalism. These latter, relatively shallower problems are ones that naturalists are prepared to countenance as *prima facie* challenges for their position, and they allow themselves to be argued about; the existence of the deeper axiological problem, by contrast, cannot be argued for from 'neutral' premises that the naturalist could accept.<sup>25</sup>

What I now wish to suggest is that, just as the replacement of idealism by naturalism is not a historical development underwritten by philosophical reason, the same is true, connectedly and in parallel, of the development whereby naturalism has come to be experienced as axiologically acceptable. On the view which naturalists themselves take, this process has been one of the continued adjustment of our ideas about ourselves to the facts that we discover about reality: the experience of naturalization is like that of waking from a dream, where the initial discomfort of confronting hard reality fades along with the dreams of the night and is rewarded eventually by the bright daylight of reason and reality. On the opposing view, that of Kemp Smith, the process appears rather as one of desensitization, a kind of forgetting, which may be supposed to operate at two levels. Outside philosophical reflection, it occurs through a sort of *dissociation* – we accept a high degree of naturalism in our official conceptual or *reflective* self-representation, while *living as* non-natural beings. (Thereby fulfilling a prediction of Nietzsche's, who suggested that we may evolve 'a double brain', 'one to experience science and one to experience nonscience'.<sup>26</sup>) Precisely because the non-naturalistic dimension of our self-experience is deeply buried in the fabric of unreflected life, it is easy for us to

overlook it in reflection. Second, on a philosophical plane, it occurs through the absence of any *determinate* conception of an alternative. Because the determinate forms of non-naturalistic conception suggested by the history of philosophy (early modern metaphysics, Cartesian dualism, Kantian noumenalism) appear at most a hair's breadth away from religious supernaturalism, non-naturalistic conception appears possible only in so far as it is *indeterminate*, and this indeterminacy then gets converted into a conviction of the *emptiness* of any non-naturalistic alternative. Once it is accepted in the theoretical sphere that naturalism must be true, it appears pointless to ask whether or not naturalism is axiologically possible at the deeper level which is of concern to Kemp Smith.

I think this allows us to recapture the state of mind displayed by Kemp Smith when he refuses to countenance the idea that values might have a sufficient explanation in 'the detailed contingencies of terrestrial existence': we should regard his statement that our values are 'absolute' not as a contentious, metaphysically inflated claim, but simply as a reiteration of the longstanding negative view of the feasibility of naturalism from an axiological point of view.

It will be clear that nothing that has been said by way of elucidation of Kemp Smith's attitude counts in any sense as a *proof* that our value-interests extend beyond what any naturalism can satisfy – my intention has been only to indicate that a question-mark may be put over the assumption that they *can* be satisfied by naturalism. The naturalist may of course respond by drawing a distinction between *extravagant* and *moderate* demands in the sphere of value, insisting that once we have achieved maturity – once we have stopped asking for heaven on earth, once it has been realized that the death of God is a problem only in adolescence – we will be able to appreciate how moderate value-demands, at least, can be satisfied within naturalism. I believe this is a common view. My observation is just that it is deeply unclear how we should set about measuring our value-needs and determining whether the recommendation of moderation makes sense, and that the historical record supports the idea that there is a puzzle here which contemporary naturalism cannot really be said to have engaged with. Nevertheless, when all is said, it is true that the existence of the deeper axiological issue which

motivates Kemp Smith cannot be established conclusively, and for that reason, although it is imperative that we continue to remain aware of how deep the problem of value for naturalism may go, no account of our present interest in German idealism should rely directly or exclusively on it.

### 3. The limits of naturalism

Whether or not the deeper axiological problem is agreed to be genuine, there is in any case acceptance on the part of many within the naturalistic camp that at *some* level there is a problem to be faced regarding naturalism's implications for value. This brings us to an important distinction which has been conspicuously missing from the discussion so far. Up until now I have, following Kemp Smith's map of the terrain, left out of account of the various kinds of contemporary position which describe themselves as naturalistic whilst opposing themselves sharply to naturalism's reductionist, physicalist, scientific, scientific-realist forms.<sup>27</sup> What is called rich, non-reductive, or soft naturalism formulates itself in reaction against the presumption that nature consists in nothing but the hard physical bare-bones of things: it presents itself as correcting what it regards as an overly restrictive, unnecessarily austere conception of the natural order which other naturalists have, mistakenly, read off from natural science. By relaxing the boundaries of the natural it tries to show that, appearances to the contrary, there is nothing within naturalistic commitment *as such* that threatens the value-interests of natural consciousness. We can have 'symphonies as well as atoms', as one naturalist put it.<sup>28</sup> According to this outlook, given that we must be naturalists of some sort, our value-interests give us reason to be soft naturalists.

The issue of soft naturalism is potentially decisive for our attitude towards German idealism. If its prospects are good, then it is highly plausible that Kemp Smith and the other idealists of his generation were wrong to draw up the battle-lines in their exclusive, either-idealism-or-naturalism fashion, and at the same time, that the new interpreters of German idealism are right to downplay the

metaphysical commitments of German idealism and to propose German idealism as a resource for contemporary soft naturalists to draw upon.<sup>29</sup> Now the exploration and defence of soft naturalist possibilities is central to contemporary philosophical enquiry, and can hardly be said to be heading towards a negative conclusion. Nevertheless, I think that reasons can be given for thinking that there are limitations to what can be achieved in its sphere. To begin, two preliminary observations.

First, it is important to recognize that the originally negative or reactive character of soft naturalism, its formulation as a *correction* to hard naturalism, is not accidental to it. This will be seen to have implications for how the burden of argument is divided. Soft naturalism qualifies *as* naturalism because it rejects speculative metaphysics, and the ultimate historical source of this rejection can be nothing other than modern philosophy's incorporation of the great epistemological achievement of natural science. In this sense the starting point of soft naturalism, as much as that of hard naturalism, is the conception of nature that arises out of natural science, and it is safe to say that, ever since the disappearance of romantic *Naturphilosophie*, this conception can only be an austere one. Soft naturalism thus accepts the priority of at least the *appearance* that nature has as being intrinsically value-indifferent, and it takes its initial bearings from this apparently authoritative starting-point, even as it subsequently rejects it. This is not to say anything the soft naturalist will disagree with but merely to describe how soft naturalism comes to enter the field of philosophical debate. It means however that as a consequence of the primacy of hard naturalism, in the sense just explained, soft naturalism has its work cut out for it: what it needs to do is persuade us that it is not *merely* a negatively defined position, that it amounts to *more* than a mere statement of the *obstacles* to hard naturalism, which can claim to express the initial, default trajectory given to philosophy by natural science.

The second and related observation is that the distinction between soft and hard naturalism is for us well articulated, and that we are highly sensitized to the danger of fudging the issue by merely stipulating a harmony between the Lebenswelt and reality as disclosed by natural science. Dewey throws this feature of present-day philosophical consciousness into relief. Much in Dewey's statements

of his position initially seems to resonate with contemporary soft naturalism, but closer examination reveals that Dewey is not a good advertisement for its coherence. Dewey's claim is that it is in the very nature of experience to form ever higher 'unities', which, simply in virtue of being unities, possess *value*, in the strongest sense. Yet the ground of this tendency to unity and value is, on Dewey's account, baldly Darwinian – biological functions take the place of the idealists' a priori metaphysics. Dewey talks as if it is no surprise to discover in nature the very same kind of purposiveness that we claim for human activity. We think, however, that he ought to be surprised at this fact, if it is one.<sup>30</sup> This is why the generation of American naturalists to which Dewey belongs, and for whom Dewey was the leading figure, looks to us now a mere phase in the development of anglophone naturalism, in which the naturalistic impulse had announced but not yet clarified itself.

We can now ask how the two forms of naturalism compare with respect to basic philosophical plausibility, and what soft naturalism can say in criticism of hard naturalism or regarding its own advantages, in order that we should give it the preference.

To begin I want to consider briefly the argumentative resources available to soft naturalism. Standardly soft naturalism seeks to establish itself by means of anti-reductionist arguments, and this strategy raises several questions. In the first place, concerning the criteria for reducibility. If reducibility is what is to decide between soft and hard naturalism, then the two forms of naturalism need to agree what considerations count as relevant to determining whether or not a given phenomenon is reducible to the bald natural facts privileged by the hard naturalist. But if that is so, then it seems that the substantial, doctrinal disagreement between the two kinds of naturalism will inevitably show up methodologically, as an argument over criteria, over what does and does not count as relevant to determining reducibility. And if it is not possible to design criteria which will avoid begging questions, and yet also allow determinate conclusions to be reached, then anti-reductionist arguments will not suffice to establish soft naturalism securely. To the extent that the incumbent, default conception of nature is the austere one, this outcome is to the disadvantage of soft naturalism.

Second, there is the question of what exactly is, or would be, achieved in any case through a successful demonstration of irreducibility. The hard naturalist holds that the reality of phenomena in the Lebenswelt – those that do have genuine reality – derives from the hard natural facts to which they reduce, while these facts derive their reality in turn from the nature of the basic stuff or structure that exhausts reality. Hard naturalism thereby answers the metaphysical question concerning what gives the phenomena their reality and what this reality consists in. If, then, it is demonstrated successfully by the soft naturalist that such-and-such a phenomenon is not reducible to the natural facts austere-ly conceived, this conclusion is *not an end* of enquiry, but rather a *reaffirmation* of an explanandum, i.e. a restatement that the phenomenon stands in need of metaphysical explanation. Irreducibility arguments, if successful, yield *data* that do not interpret or explain themselves, but call for interpretation: the soft naturalist needs to say something on the subject of *why there should be, in general*, phenomena that have substantial reality, but do not owe it to the hard natural facts. Conclusions of irreducibility cannot stand without further, vindicatory interpretation, and the issue for soft naturalism is where this can come from.<sup>31</sup> The idealist has to hand an independently formed, positive and contentful concept of the status to be accorded to phenomena that have been shown to be irreducible to the hard natural facts, which can play this role.<sup>32</sup> The soft naturalist is not in the same position. And it should be plain that for the soft naturalist to answer here, that the reality of irreducibles ‘derives from the natural order broadly conceived’, would be to merely draw attention to the further difficulty facing soft naturalism, of specifying the principle of unity of this order.

Soft naturalists have a strategy which is relevant in response to these points, which I will come to in a moment, but if, as I will argue, it is ineffective, the limited force of anti-reductionist argumentation remains a serious problem for soft naturalism.

The point just made concerning the unity of nature raises a further issue of considerable importance. Hard naturalism converts the epistemological privilege of modern natural science into a philosophical position which is ‘as good as metaphysical’ in the sense of securing completeness of



explanation in principle; it enjoys the formal advantages of a monistic metaphysical system, exemplifying, as Hegel appreciated, the virtues of Spinozism.<sup>33</sup> In addition, hard naturalism gains through evolutionary theory the capacity to ground itself epistemologically, and may even claim to be in the Kantian sense a thoroughly ‘Critical’ philosophy.<sup>34</sup> There are several things that hard naturalism need not assume in order for it to be able to lay claim to these virtues, and these are all points commonly made by proponents of hard naturalism, in response to critics who charge it with implausibility. To rehearse some of the most important: Hard naturalism need not subscribe to any doctrine that presupposes a closed concept of the physical, nor take any particularly demanding view of the unity of science; it need not suppose that the different sciences will ever actually form an absolute unity, nor that, if this goal of ultimate completion is not achieved, we will be able to explain why we have not achieved it. Finite natural creatures need not expect to be able to nail down natural reality comprehensively. What is essential for hard naturalism is only the regulative or methodological thought that all of the sciences should be understood as converging on one and the same complete theory, conforming to the broad pattern of explaining bigger things in terms of smaller things, forming interfaces between theories and seeking integration in ways that will allow maximally continuous lines of explanation to run from the smallest things to the biggest things, and so on. No significant difference is made to the trajectory or standing of hard naturalism by the peculiarities of quantum mechanics or cosmological discoveries, nor by the complexities of the relation between the organic and inorganic realms.

The position of soft naturalism is very different. It seems both essential that it should provide some positive and contentful characterization of the natural order – of that which it identifies as the overarching unity containing both the objects of natural science and the objects which hard naturalism excludes: the genuine whole and order of things to which it says we belong – and at the same time very difficult to see how it can provide this. Without it, however, the hard naturalist will understandably object that soft naturalism appears to be a non-naturalistic position under a misleading name. The

overarching characterization will, furthermore, need to be accompanied with a explanation for why the unitary natural order should be such as to exhibit a split, between the entities that natural science can get a hold of and those that it cannot. Put slightly differently: to designate reality as nature creates *prima facie* the expectation that nature is to be understood as ‘tightly’ as possible, not directly on account of any metaphysical commitment such as to materialism, but because of the difficulty of seeing how the affirmation that something is gained for explanation by designating reality as nature can be combined with a denial that interests of explanation require nature to be conceived in hard naturalistic terms. Soft naturalism does not contest the intelligibility of a natural order conceived in the terms of hard naturalism: it does not deny that there could be such a thing as the physical order without human subjects to occupy it, rather it grants that the austere concept of nature comprises a totality complete in itself, and its departure from this picture consists in *adding* items not implied by the hard physical totality. This means that what it calls ‘nature’ cannot amount to a totality of the same, non-aggregative sort as the hard naturalist’s.<sup>35</sup> (Idealism, by contrast, is able to posit a complete totality, one that includes the items that the soft naturalist wishes to include in nature.) This leaves a tension between the monistic tendency which soft naturalism derives from its being a *naturalism*, and the pluralism needed to rationalize its merely aggregative conception of the totality of what it calls nature.

Soft naturalists are aware that they cannot hope to match the formal virtues of hard naturalism. Their response is to decline to compete on traditional grounds of systematic unity and completeness of explanation and to propose a different view of the demands of philosophical explanation, invoking metaphilosophical or methodological principles which allow philosophical explanation to legitimately call a halt at an earlier point than the hard naturalist supposes is permissible. Standardly appeal is made to a conception of philosophical enquiry as having a broadly descriptive or phenomenological goal, in relation to which, it is claimed, the entities excluded by hard naturalism qualify as real; or to allegedly inescapable necessities of representation, which are said to underpin our attribution of reality to the disputed phenomena and to override the explanatory considerations pressed by the hard naturalist. In

addition soft naturalists characteristically claim the adequacy of the modest, conservative, apologetic philosophical aim of defending our commonsensical convictions against objections.<sup>36</sup> All of these are essentially different formulations of a single idea, namely that philosophical vindication of the phenomena can be provided by something other than ontological grounding and which instead involves essential reference to the subject or to a ‘perspective’ relative to which internal, perspectival reality can be claimed for the phenomena.<sup>37</sup> In this way the soft naturalist hopes to persuade us that the point at which soft naturalist explanation ends, is one at which the demand for further explanation, whether it comes from the hard naturalist or from the supernaturalist, is ill-conceived, reflecting an illusion of unfilled explanatory space.<sup>38</sup> For this reason soft naturalists do not regard irreducibility arguments as limited in their significance in the way that, I suggested, the hard naturalist must view them as being.

The soft naturalist’s perspectival, explanation-circumscribing conception is exposed to several sorts of criticism. The first focuses on the tension created within soft naturalism by its weakening of the demands of philosophical explanation. The rationale of soft naturalism lies in its insistence on the reality of phenomena that it regards hard naturalism as putting in jeopardy, and this makes less sense if the conception of reality claimed by soft naturalism is weakened in the profound way implied by the repudiation of a need for ontological grounds. Thus while the original motivation of soft naturalism suggests that it accepts the traditional conception of the task of philosophy as furnishing sufficient legitimating grounds, the resort to perspective appears to withdraw from that conception, obscuring the intention of metaphysical vindication.

This can be seen more concretely by considering hard naturalist responses to the various ways in which the soft naturalist specifies the perspectival conception. If the reality claimed by soft naturalism for its objects bears the qualification ‘as determined by descriptive or phenomenological enquiry’, then what it offers an account *of* is ultimately, in relation to the harder reality claimed by hard naturalism for its natural-scientific ontology, mere *appearance*: the soft/hard naturalism opposition resolves itself, it will be claimed, into an appearance/reality contrast, and the argument is at an end,

with hard naturalism as the victor. Similarly, the soft naturalist idea of default to common sense involves, it will be objected, a misreading of how the debate stands: the hard naturalist has precisely raised a question mark over the identification of common sense rather than natural science *as* the default position, so the issue cannot be decided merely by reasserting common sense as the measure of reality. The hard naturalist, after all, does not allow common sense and science to merely contradict one another, but offers accounts of why common sense receives the appearances that it does: there will be a hard naturalist explanation for the manifest image of the world, which will subsume it under the scientific. Again, regarding any appeal by the soft naturalist to necessities of representation, it will need to be said what sort of ground these are envisaged as having, whether empirical or trans-empirical.<sup>39</sup> The latter seems immediately and unacceptably idealistic, but the former takes us back to the interpretation of soft naturalism as concerned with mere appearance and can again be accommodated by the hard naturalist.

More generally, a question-mark hangs over the soft naturalist's employment of the concept of perspective. When soft naturalism rationalizes itself in this way, it commits itself to endorsing, as coherent and valid, a form of explanation which is susceptible to a great deal of further development, which it of course receives in the hands of the idealist. In order to preserve its distance from idealism, soft naturalism must ensure that its employment of the concept of perspective is kept as metaphysically light as possible, and this creates a problem. Consider the following application of the perspective idea by P. F. Strawson, in the context of a discussion of the apparent conflict of the perspective of scientific determinism with that of human responsibility:

the error lies [...] in the attempt to force the choice between them. The question was: From which standpoint do we see things as they really are? and it carried the implication that the answer cannot be: from both. It is this implication that I want to dispute [...] the appearance of contradiction arises only if we assume the existence of some metaphysically absolute standpoint

[...] But there is no such superior standpoint – or none that we know of; it is the idea of such a standpoint that is the illusion [...] We can recognize, in our conception of the real, a reasonable relativity to standpoints that we do know and can occupy.<sup>40</sup>

Another philosopher working within the Strawsonian soft naturalist tradition, Jennifer Hornsby, defends the autonomy of personal level explanation by appealing to a conception of the philosophy of mind as an essentially *reflexive* form of enquiry, in contrast with the *non-reflexive* character of philosophy of *psychology*: answers to questions in the philosophy of mind, Hornsby says, ‘are meant to cast some light on ourselves (on persons), and on our place in the world’.<sup>41</sup>

The appeal to perspective or reflexivity, I suggest, in both cases cancels itself out. Strawson’s claim is of course not just that our powers of representation are conditioned differently in different contexts: the soft naturalist’s target is a claim about the reality of objects of representation and the metaphysical value of our powers of representation. So even though Strawson rejects ‘the existence of some metaphysically absolute standpoint’ as an illusion, he nevertheless adverts to a higher perspective, which, whether ‘metaphysically absolute’ or not, is what allows it to be seen that our existence has this dual-perspective structure (ordinary and scientific) and *from which* it can be affirmed that the objects of *both* perspectives are *equally* real. And this is essential for soft naturalism to offer itself as a rival form of naturalism: if the soft naturalist did not claim knowledge of ‘our place in the world’ – if he did not lay claim to a perspective on our perspectives, through which the latter are validated – then he would not be contradicting the hard naturalist. The reflexive move – the reference back of 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.

Exactly this point is made eloquently by Hume, in the different but analogous context of the argument from design. Hume objects that, without a prior assurance of our own supernatural status, for which deism would need to be presupposed, the deist's selection of *thought* as the basis or archetype of the cosmos' design is arbitrary and unjustified:

But allowing that we were to take the *operations* of one part of nature upon another for the foundation of our judgement concerning the *origin* of the whole [...], yet why select so minute, so weak, so bounded a principle as the reason and design of animals is found to be on this planet? What peculiar privilege has this little agitation of the brain which we call *thought*, that we must thus make it the model of the whole universe?<sup>42</sup>

The soft naturalist's attribution of metaphysical significance to our conceptual needs and practices parallels exactly the attribution of importance to thought by the deist; the soft naturalist is attempting, as it were, to run the argument from design on ourselves.

If this is correct, then soft naturalists are not entitled to appeal to perspective in order to support their affirmative view of the force of irreducibility arguments.

One important dimension of the disadvantage at which soft naturalism finds itself in the argument with hard naturalism concerns the handling of axiological considerations. The original motive for soft naturalism, as I introduced it, was axiological, but if the soft naturalist does appeal to axiological motives in the argument with hard naturalism, then it will be necessary to clarify how these are to be taken as operating: Is the reason for taking axiological motives as a ground for favouring soft over hard naturalism, that there actually *are* axiological facts in the natural world, or does it lie just in

our *interest* in reality's being such as to contain such facts? The hard naturalist will be moved by neither claim: the first begs the question, while the second is philosophically irrelevant (it concerns merely the wishes of a piece of organized matter). So it seems that, although soft naturalism is axiologically motivated, it cannot represent itself *as* being so motivated in its engagement with hard naturalism. Again this goes back to its originally reactive character: the soft naturalist began with a conception of the natural order shaped by natural science, and then tried to *expand* it to include value; he did not work *from* a prior, rich conception of nature, *to* the reality of value. The idealist, by contrast, is able to legitimate the axiological motivation of his position by affirming at the outset that there are sources of philosophical rationality independent of the form of theoretical reason that yields naturalism.

In conclusion, I think the correct view of the balance of argument between the hard and the soft naturalist is that soft naturalism is unable to make significant argumentative headway against hard naturalism or to give us convincing reason for preferring it over hard naturalism. Suppose, however, we take the more generous view that soft naturalism does succeed in at least holding its own, such that the argument between the two positions ends in a stand-off. Another question then opens up: namely whether, even if soft naturalism can sustain itself on the *one* side against hard naturalism, it can in so doing sustain itself also on its *other* flank, i.e. against *idealism*. At many points in the preceding discussion it has transpired that the trajectory which soft naturalism is forced to take due to the pressure exerted by hard naturalism is proto-idealist, and that idealism is able to meet hard naturalism on its own terms in exactly the way soft naturalism cannot: idealism can meet the traditional demand to conceive complete totality, offer a theory of subjectivity and objectivity that explains why perspective bestows 'real' reality on its objects, translate axiological motives into philosophical reasons, and so on. Hence, it may be suggested, when idealism is added to the picture, soft naturalism ceases to look like the median-point between scientism and supernaturalism that it represents itself as being, and appears instead a merely provisional position that expresses either a moment's hesitation before proceeding

down the road of hard naturalism, or the moment of drawing back in the face of hard naturalism that leads us to reverse direction altogether.

#### **4. The interest and interpretation of German idealism**

I have argued that a question-mark hangs over the form of naturalism which appears best equipped to satisfy our value-interests – soft naturalism either loses the argument with hard naturalism or converts itself into idealism – and that the limitations of naturalism can be seen to correspond to strengths of idealism, which can justifiably claim to overcome the axiological limitations of hard naturalism while avoiding the structural weakness of soft naturalism. Kemp Smith's assessment of the 'present situation of philosophy' is to that extent borne out.

Now I want to return to the question with which I started, of German idealism's metaphysicality and its new non-metaphysical mode of interpretation. The questions that would need to be addressed in any comprehensive discussion of the metaphysical *vs.* deflationary issue are multiple and highly complex, and what follows is restricted to pursuing in the context of German idealism issues which emerged above in the context of assessing soft naturalism, my overall contention being that deflationary interpretations of German idealism reveal themselves to be structurally problematic in the same way as soft naturalist positions. The argument divides into three stages.

1. If what was argued in the previous section is correct, it follows in the first place that soft naturalistic positions should not be taken – as, I affirmed, there would be a case for doing, if such positions proved robust and coherent – as 'models' to which it would be desirable to discover that German idealism approximates, and in the direction of which German idealism should be nudged.

From this alone it does not follow that German idealism should be interpreted in a metaphysical manner. There are nonetheless considerations deriving from the preceding discussion which cast doubt



on the cogency of the non-metaphysical, deflationary approach. These emerge if we attend to two ideas which have been particularly prominent in the new interpretations of German idealism.

The first is that German idealism's conceptual and theoretical richness can be understood in terms of a commitment to irreducible concepts, schemes of explanation, principles of reasoning, patterns of justification, etc., to which no matching ontology corresponds, allowing the ontological facts to be conceived as austere as the naturalist wishes.<sup>43</sup>

The problem which this approach presents is the same as that presented by the soft naturalist's appeal to perspective. If the import of the claims of idealism is qualified as non-ontological, then inevitably it must seem that this is due to a recognition of their essentially reflexive and thus *subjective* significance. The question is then what reply can be made to the hard naturalist's objection that German idealism has been reduced to at best a mere, non-vindicatory *expression of perspective*, which leaves the field free for an ontologically committed non-idealist account which will explain (away) this perspective as a function of ontological facts which falls outside the limited purview of subjectivity. In order to meet this threat, it appears necessary for the idealist to reassert a correlation between the ontological and the conceptual/explanatory orders: the ontological order cannot be allowed to be indifferent to what we think, and the conceptual richness of idealism must be regarded as echoed in it. While this of course does nothing to refute the naturalistic view, it does something else, of crucial importance, to meet the naturalist's challenge: it meets the demand that a reason be given for thinking that things in the ontological domain are *not* as the naturalistic explanation says they are. The requisite internal connection and parallelism of thought and being may be regarded as a core principle defining the idealist position, or secured by way of a claim about our *metaphysical status* as thinkers and explainers, from which it will follow that whatever counts for us as a correct explanation, necessary conceptualization, etc., must, on account of what we as cognizers are metaphysically, carry ontological significance. Either way, we are brought back to what can only be described as a metaphysical understanding of idealism.

The naturalistically irreducible conceptual schemes of German idealism, the new interpretations have highlighted, are pervasively concerned with the status of the normative. Accordingly, the second idea prominent in recent interpretation is that it is one of the deepest and most important insights of German idealism that we should hold fast to the distinction of normativity from nature, affirming that normativity ‘comes out of’ nature in some highly restricted, causal but not constitutive sense – viz., we are natural beings *before* we are normative beings; nature is required to set the stage, to provide a platform for our normativity – but denying that its emergence can be grasped from the natural side of the distinction. What we should think instead, it is proposed, is not that our normativity emerges out of nature in a ‘metaphysical’ manner, on the basis of any ontological grounds, but that it comes forth as a historical, normative-developmental achievement – this achievement being, again, no alteration in the ontological fabric of the universe, but a matter internal to our thinking. As Terry Pinkard puts it, defending a non-metaphysical interpretation of Hegel: ‘we establish or *institute* our freedom from nature by virtue of a complex historical process in which we have come to see nature as inadequate to agency’s (that is, *Geist*’s) interests’; previously we took nature as our norm (we ‘made nature normative for ourselves’), but we came to see this norm as inadequate and thereupon grasped the true character of normativity as *autonomy*; it is Hegel’s insight that *Geist*, normativity aware of itself as such, is ‘a *self-instituted liberation* from nature’.<sup>44</sup>

The problem here lies not directly in the fact that the ‘emergence’ of normativity is left unexplained from the side of nature, since the claim is precisely that there is no explanation to be got from that quarter, nor in the apparent paradoxicality involved in speaking of a ‘self-instituted emergence’. Rather it has to do, again, with the further consequences that ensue in the context of the argument with naturalism. The hard naturalist will claim, once again, that 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 will 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, that 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; the paradox of self-instituted emergence is thus resolved, in a way that acknowledges the appearances.

2. So, I have suggested, there is a difficulty for the deflationary view which results from its non-ontological construal of idealist explanation and the sort of account which it gives (and, by virtue of its repudiation of extra-naturalistic ontological grounds, is bound to give) of the emergence of *Geist*/normativity. However, since the difficulty as just presented emerges only when idealism is set in confrontation with naturalism, it may be thought that the non-metaphysical Hegelian, perhaps less impressed by hard naturalism than I have suggested is appropriate, may choose to leave his position exposed in this way. Be that as it may – I will return shortly to the question of whether, even with this concession made, all is well with the deflationary interpretation – it should be noted next that Hegel himself has an explanation for the emergence of *Geist*/normativity, which supplies exactly what is needed to block the naturalist’s objection, and which appears so clearly ontological as to make his idealism unequivocally metaphysical. In the final section of the Encyclopaedia’s *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel affirms that nature as such has a telos, aim, goal, namely Spirit: ‘The goal of Nature [Ziel der Natur] is to destroy itself and to break through [...] Nature has become an other to itself in order to recognize itself as Idea and to reconcile itself with itself [...] Spirit, just because it is the goal of Nature [...]’ And Hegel insists with complete clarity that this should be understood to mean *not just* that Spirit emerges from nature (nor just that when it does so Spirit will *represent* itself as the goal of nature) but that it does so because and only because Spirit was, in addition, *there all along*:

Spirit has thus proceeded from Nature [...] But it is one-sided to regard spirit in this way as having only *become* an actual existence after being merely a potentiality [Aber es ist einseitig,

den Geist so als *Werden* aus dem Ansich nur zum Fürsichsein kommen zu lassen]. True, Nature is the immediate – but even so, as the other of spirit, its existence is a relativity [...] spirit is no less *before* than *after* Nature, it is not merely the metaphysical Idea of it [er ist ebenso vor als nach der Natur, nicht bloß die metaphysische Idee derselben]. Spirit, just because it is the goal of Nature, is *prior* to it, Nature has proceeded from spirit: not empirically, however, but in such a manner that spirit is already from the very first implicitly present in Nature which is spirit's own presupposition [Als der Zweck der Natur ist er eben darum *vor* ihr, sie ist aus ihm hervorgegangen, jedoch nicht empirisch, sondern so, daß er in ihr, die er sich voraussetzt, immer schon enthalten ist]. But spirit in its infinite freedom gives Nature a free existence and the Idea is active in Nature as an inner necessity; just as a free man of the world is sure that his action is the world's activity. Spirit [...] wills to achieve its own liberation by fashioning Nature out of itself [will sich selbst befreien, als die Natur aus sich herausbildend].<sup>45</sup>

This passage amplifies a claim made in the Introduction to the *Philosophy of Nature*:

Nature is the first in point of time, but the absolute *prius* is the Idea; this absolute *prius* is the last, the true beginning, Alpha is Omega [Die Natur ist in der Zeit das Erste, aber das absolute Prius ist die Idee; dieses absolute Prius ist das Letzte, der wahre Anfang, das *A* ist das  $\Omega$ ].<sup>46</sup>

This, on the face of it, goes flatly against the deflationary view, which does, in emphasizing the temporal-historical order as the ground of normativity, regard Spirit 'as having only *become* an actual existence after being merely a potentiality', and thus, in Hegel's terms, one-sidedly fails to see that 'spirit is no less *before* than *after* Nature'.

Now the deflationary Hegelian may object that to take Hegel's way of expressing himself in this passage in traditional metaphysical terms is not to gain anything on the argumentative front, since

the metaphysical account requires us to accept the possibility of Spirit's ontological productivity, a metaphysical 'explanation' which works only if we are willing to saddle Hegel with the sort of crazy platonism that exposed his system to understandable ridicule. Why prefer, the deflationary Hegelian asks, the supernaturalistic extravagance of a Spirit that quasi-theistically creates nature, to the perhaps awkward but considerably more modest and much less incredible notion of normativity's self-institution?

To take up this question fully would be to embark on a whole new discussion – of whether (and if so, how) Hegel can be thought to have offered any metaphysics in the wake of Kant's critique, of the relation between Hegel's 'speculative' philosophical propositions and the statements of traditional metaphysics, of the relation between the metaphysical and the transcendental, and so on. Within the narrower confines of the discussion that I have been pursuing, the following two points may however be made.

In the first instance, there is at least one immediate reason why one might choose the metaphysical over the deflationary interpretation of Hegel's account of the relation of *Geist* to nature. On the metaphysical reading of Hegel's story, the *explanans* lies *outside* and *prior to* nature, such that at the point where nature is posited into existence, there is nothing which the positing ground, *Geist*, can be thought to *contrast* with – nothing in this pure philosophical space to *interfere* with its intelligibility (in a way similar to the first and second principles of Fichte's 1794 *Grundlage*). The deflationary reading, by contrast, asks us to think of the self-positing of normativity as conceptually original while situating the 'event' of normativity's self-origination *in a pre-existent context* – that of nature, which has a character of its own, one which is alien if not *opposed* to normativity. In this formal sense at least – quite aside from the matter of its vulnerability to the naturalistic claim to be able in principle to explain (away) the appearance of *Geist*'s autonomous self-institution – the allegedly more 'straightforward' deflationist explanation is in fact the more demanding.<sup>47</sup>

The second point is broader. Whether it is true that what the metaphysical account requires us to accept is something which is ‘incredible’ from a point of view which should be regarded in the context at hand as philosophically authoritative – this is a claim which a proponent of the metaphysical account should be keen to contest. In appealing to the inherent craziness of any broadly ‘platonistic’ option, the deflationist is asking us to endorse a measure of philosophical credibility which has no doubt become instinctive for us, but which, I have tried to suggest, historical reflection allows us to take our distance from, and which, if left to its own devices, can be seen to lead to the impasse of either axiologically unacceptable hard naturalism or inherently problematic soft naturalism. It is also of high relevance to recall that the German idealists themselves emphasized the necessity with which their positions would appear to ordinary, naturalistic consciousness as an ‘inversion’ of common sense, an ‘inverted world’;<sup>48</sup> so, it may be suggested, to take at face value the *appearance* which German idealism gives of ‘incredible’ metaphysicality is to endorse as adequate the limited standpoint of the *gemeinen Verstand* which German idealism specifically argued needs to be overcome.

3. Now I want to return to the question of whether, even when the threat of naturalism is held aside, and the Hegel-exegesis-associated issues raised above are bracketed, the non-metaphysical position is stable.

A crucial idea found in deflationary interpretation, intimated earlier but not spelled out, is that the distinction between the normative and the natural/non-normative should be regarded as *itself a normative distinction*.<sup>49</sup> This is a corollary of the claim that *Geist*/normativity is self-instituting. Its importance for the non-metaphysical view lies in its implication that normativity presents no *explanandum* from the point of view of nature and hence leaves no explanatory gap from that angle.

It needs to be considered what is involved in the claim that the nature/normativity distinction is ‘itself normative’. What is meant by this is not of course just that the drawing and employment of the distinction – ‘thinking in terms of a nature/normativity opposition’ – is a conceptual act of ours and thus has a normative character, for this is trivial. Nor is it simply being pointed out that the nature/*Geist*

distinction holds for us normative beings and not for nature, to which distinctions apply but *for* which no distinctions hold in the relevant sense. Rather the intention is to claim normativity as the *root explanation* for *why there is* (and not merely: *why we think in terms of*) a distinction of nature from normativity. It is because the existence of the distinction is self-explained from the side of normativity, that the emergence of normativity can be regarded as not unexplained from the side of nature, and the naturalist's objection that, in the absence of sufficient efficient causal conditions, a miracle has been invoked, can be regarded as met: to think that an explanation from the side of nature is needed, it can be retorted, is to be looking for explanation in the wrong place, to misunderstand the nature/norm distinction and the concept of *Geist*. Yet, at the same time as it is insisted that this account does no violence to natural law or the integrity of nature, equally there is no intention to suggest that the naturalist is right after all, i.e. to concede that all of the facts are natural facts: the non-metaphysical account continues to maintain that the existence of *Geist*/normativity is *real* and its distinction from nature a distinction within reality, not merely a congenial representation of our situation, a tale that we tell ourselves.

Clearly this is a complex combination of claims, and it is at this point, I suggest, that the deflationary account appears – as suggested previously, but now in a different argumentative context and in a deeper respect – to reproduce the difficulties of soft naturalism.

As has been seen, the concept of perspective or point of view is essential to the articulation of the deflationary position, which operates with a picture composed of two sides, nature and normativity, the point of view of only one of which, that of normativity, it says we must take up (we 'take it up' in so far as we come to the realization that we must already occupy the point of view of normativity in order to entertain the picture at all). In saying this, however, to amplify the point made a moment ago, the deflationary theorist does not mean to suggest any *relativization* to points of view – which would (among other things) make Hegel's *Geist*/nature duality into a *dualism* of the (for Hegel) untenable Kantian sort. The idea is thus not that 'normativity exists from its own point of view but not from that

of nature'. Rather it is that, if we are to grasp things correctly – if we are to make *unrelativized* sense of the two-sided picture – the point of view which is properly to be assumed is the normative and not the natural one. This point corresponds therefore to that at which, it was seen earlier, Strawson's appeal to perspective, in his defence of human responsibility, is seen to require a higher perspective sanctioning our dual-perspective outlook.

But if this is correct, then the deflationary Hegelian must be understood as maintaining a deep and important, non-trivial sense in which normativity has (and, again, not merely: is *represented* by us as having) *primacy over nature* – not a temporal, but a logical or conceptual primacy. Normativity has primacy in so far as the nature/normativity distinction is one not given by nature but determined by normativity, so that normativity encompasses nature by virtue of distinguishing itself from nature and nature from itself, whereas nature does not, symmetrically, encompass normativity. It follows that there is a sense in which, on the deflationary account, there is a *normative explanation of nature*, which is in a good sense its *real* explanation: nature *is*, in reality, that which stands under and answers to the *normatively self-instituted* distinction of nature and norm.

Now the naturalist and the metaphysical Hegelian will insist in unison that to think this *just is* to think of *Geist*/normativity as something that has reality apart from nature and so it *just is* to say that *Geist*/normativity 'has always been' ('platonistically') distinct from nature, meaning that the 'historical achievement' emphasized by the deflationary Hegelian can only be the *epistemic* one of our having *come to recognize* normativity's (trans-epistemic, metaphysical) distinctness from and priority over nature. This, the naturalist and metaphysical Hegelian may further suggest, was effectively implicit in the original formulation that normativity is self-instituting: to think that normativity can *rightfully* claim to be self-authorizing, that it is *capable* of being its own real ground, that it is *able* to constitute or construct itself *into reality*, is necessarily to accord it a metaphysical reality beyond that which is attributed to 'our concepts' in the sense of mere representations.



The deflationary Hegelian may retort that all of this is a gross misconstrual, which trades on a confusion of different senses of ‘primacy’, because the only sense in which, on the deflationary view, normativity has primacy over nature does not stretch to nature’s *existence*: this restriction, it will be insisted, distinguishes firmly deflationary primacy from primacy in the platonistic metaphysical sense.

Now there are two observations to be made at a general level about the deflationist’s use of the distinction of ontological from non-ontological matters.

The first is that it is unclear what rationalizes the restriction of *Geist*’s primacy to non-ontological respects. If *Geist*/normativity has primacy over nature in all conceptual, explanatory, etc., dimensions, and the claim that the distinction of nature from norm is normatively generated does more than merely report our representational dispositions, then it is fair to ask why it should be denied that nature exists for normative reasons, i.e. because it *should* exist, as Hegel maintains. The formal properties of *Geist*/normativity appear to cast nature into the shade as an inferior, non-autonomous kind of thing, a mere dependent correlate, and this contrast seems to demand conversion into an ontological relation. Why not accordingly take *Geist*’s explanatory, etc. primacy as a reason for regarding it as being in consequence *vor der Natur*? In virtue of what is *Geist* not ontologically prior? What *makes it true* that its primacy is non-ontological? How indeed can it be *known* that it does not enjoy ontological primacy?

Granted, the claims of explanatory and ontological primacy are logically distinct, but the question is what can be thought to hold us back from moving from the former to the latter, from taking the step that Hegel takes. It seems that what alone would give reason for doing so is some notion that the ontological and conceptual orders are positively dislocated from one another, but it is hard to see how this idea can be supposed to find a home in the context of German idealism, or how invoking it could avoid rendering the whole explanatory apparatus of German idealism merely subjective.

It must be emphasized also in this context that, at the point where normative grounds are held to be in any real sense prior to natural states of affairs, we are already just about as remote from

naturalistic common sense and philosophical naturalism as it is possible to get: the autonomous, spontaneous normative grounds of the deflationary Hegelian are from the commonsensical standpoint every bit as strange, as ‘metaphysical’, as the platonistic grounds from which deflationary interpretations wish to distance Hegel. So while it should be left open that there may perhaps be internal interpretative reasons for identifying *Geist* with some sort of non-ontological grounding – e.g., perhaps it can be argued that it is a requirement of post-Kantian transcendental explanation, a part of its logic, that philosophical explanation be ontologically neutral – it is highly doubtful that there is anything to be gained by doing so from the point of view of accommodating realistic common sense or the naturalistic orientation of contemporary philosophy.

The first observation leads to the second, which is that it is in any case not clear what has become of the ontological/non-ontological distinction in the present context. The previous objection accepts at face value the deflationist’s description of his position as non-ontological. But should we do so? The deflationary view, while seeking to respect the absoluteness of German idealism which the metaphysical interpretation so clearly conserves, but without ontologizing it, insists on a distinction between the conceptual and the ontological which, if it is not to render its idealism ‘one-sided’ and non-absolute, involves an escalated claim for the status of ‘the conceptual’. And plausibly, the deflationist’s idealism becomes hard to distinguish from that of the metaphysical interpretation to the degree that it empowers the conceptual order: if the so-called conceptual order has ultimate, fundamental, comprehensive explanatory position, then plausibly it is no longer conceptual *as opposed to* ontological.<sup>50</sup> So while again there is, of course, no strict logical necessity forcing the deflationist to identify the conceptual order with the ontological, it seems that what cannot be claimed is at least that the non-ontologicality of *Geist*/normativity is of the same plain, familiar, everyday kind as we have in mind when we talk ordinarily of such and such as being a ‘mere epistemic’ or ‘merely conceptual’ matter. In those ordinary contexts, our grasp of what makes the relation in question *merely* epistemic or conceptual is underpinned by a picture that we have of our situation in which a secure distinction is

drawn between things on the one hand and their representations in mundane subjects on the other. At the limit point where this very picture is first introduced or ‘set up’ for us, however, the contrast of ontological and conceptual matters is not yet available; which makes it hard to see what makes it right to describe the order of *Geist* as ‘non-ontological’.

This last point suggests an explanation for how it may come to seem as if the deflationary view is entitled to claim an unproblematic ontological innocence. Matters will appear thus if there is a confusion of transcendental and empirical distinctions of nature from norm. It can seem, if we follow Pinkard’s presentation of the nature/normativity distinction as the ‘product’ of a historical development, as if the nature/norm distinction is *just another* distinction drawn in thought. To think that the *transcendental* self-institution of normativity as such out of nature can be regarded as metaphysically innocuous in the manner of, or intelligible in the same way as, the instituting of some *particular* nature-involving norm – as when, for example, it is decided that a certain metal will count as ‘money’ and a distinction is thereby instituted between the stuff’s natural being and its social exchange value – would however surely be a mistake. The latter, empirical-level sort of distinction does not impinge on our conception of the natural world and the realm of concepts as two distinct orders, but it is hard to grasp how the former can be thought not to do so, i.e., how the ordinary conception of an independently existing nature or ontological order counterposed to a distinct normative conceptual order can be supposed to remain unaltered, once it has been claimed that there is a real, non-trivial sense in which the latter encompasses the former. It is consequently rather as if, in drawing its distinction between the normative/conceptual and the natural/ontological orders, with a view to immunizing idealism from ontological commitment and thereby distinguishing itself from the metaphysical view, the deflationist wishes to treat the distinction of Thought and Being as merely a further distinction drawn within Thought, something which, Kant and the German idealists are clear, it cannot be.

I have argued that the considerations which can be argued to give idealism its definite philosophical advantage over naturalism are at the same time considerations which support its metaphysical rather than deflationary interpretation. We should prefer the metaphysical to the deflationary interpretation if we wish to ensure that the liberation of *Geist* from nature is true and complete, that normativity does not end up being reabsorbed into nature, and because the deflationary interpretation in any case reveals itself to be less stable than (to the extent that it holds itself distinct from) metaphysical idealism – it stands in relation to the metaphysical interpretation in the same relation as soft naturalism stands to hard naturalism. My suggestion in sum is that it is a mistake to locate German idealism on the ‘post-metaphysical’ side of the fence conceived and erected by naturalism and that the answer to the question with which I began – irrespective and in advance of whatever more particular conclusions we may come to regarding the ontological status of the absolute *Ich*, *Geist*, the Absolute, etc. – should be that German idealism is ‘in the full sense’ metaphysical: not to make this ‘admission’ is to agree to play the game by rules which obscure the interest that German idealism presently holds for us.<sup>51</sup>

If this is correct then, in line with Kemp Smith’s view, the ‘extremes’ – *either* hard naturalism, *or* metaphysically construed idealism – are all that remain.

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<sup>1</sup> Although I have talked here (and for brevity’s sake will continue to do so) of ‘German idealism’ as if it were a single uniform quantity, it is of course above all mainly Hegel and Fichte who are in question, with Schelling serving often as a foil, as showing what German idealism would be, were it metaphysical. If the eventual conclusion of this paper is correct, however, this contrast is not accurate.

<sup>2</sup> Thus what I am concerned with here is the species of interpretation of German idealism which is intended to count as a (systematic, analytical) ‘reconstruction’, in which considerations of contemporary philosophical interest are to the fore and an interest is declared in ‘salvaging’ the parts of philosophical systems deemed ‘worth saving’. What conditions apply to interpretation in the more

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strictly historical sense, and how the line is to be drawn between ‘reconstructive’ and historical interpretation, are matters about which I here remain neutral. For historically minded criticism of one (Klaus Hartmann’s) non-metaphysical interpretation, see Frederick C. Beiser, ‘Hegel, a non-metaphysician? A polemic’, *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* no. 32, 1995, 1-13; the issues of ‘reconstructive and/or historical’ raised there are pursued in Terry Pinkard, ‘What is the non-metaphysical reading of Hegel? A reply to Frederic Beiser’, *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* no. 34, 1996, 13-20, and Beiser, ‘Reply to Pinkard’, *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* no. 34, 1996, 21-6.

<sup>3</sup> Norman Kemp Smith, ‘The present situation of philosophy’, *Philosophical Review* 29, 1920, 1–26: p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Op. cit., pp. 10–11.

<sup>10</sup> Op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> Op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>12</sup> Op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>13</sup> Op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>14</sup> Op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> Op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>16</sup> Roy Wood Sellars, *Evolutionary Naturalism*, Chicago: Open Court, 1922, p. i.

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<sup>17</sup> See the St Louis Hegelians' *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, and *Mind* and the *Philosophical Review* up until about 1910.

<sup>18</sup> Important for this is the distancing of naturalism from a dogmatic materialism, and a shift of emphasis from metaphysical claims to methodological claims.

<sup>19</sup> When charges of ground-level logical fallaciousness and conceptual confusion were levelled against the idealists, as they were by Moore, Russell, Cook Wilson and others, the analytical machinery that was appealed to, or the interpretation of its philosophical significance directing its application, came laden with assumptions that begged the major questions against idealism. See Peter Hylton, *Russell, Idealism, and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1990. Nor was the target adequately specified: much of what was rejected in the *name* of idealism consisted in an identification of idealism with a Berkeleyan subjectivism that the whole tradition from Kant onwards had strained to refute.

<sup>20</sup> The period from Rousseau to romanticism, in which man's naturalization had the wholly positive, elevated significance of a spiritual rehabilitation or re-enthronement through joining with or rejoining Nature (for an excellent account of which, see Alexander Gode-von Aesch, *Natural Science in German Romanticism*, New York: AMS Press, 1966, esp. ch. 4), is however no counter-instance to this generalization, since the Nature of romanticism was itself supernaturalized: the aesthetic and *naturphilosophisch* conceptions which were needed to maintain the axiologically positive interpretation of naturalization were historically revealed to be not 'genuinely naturalistic' after all.

<sup>21</sup> In Spinoza's theological variant, naturalization of the world vindicates itself by the intellectual love of God that it makes possible: naturalization purifies our vision and thus makes God accessible.

Schopenhauer's system has a similar structure.

<sup>22</sup> Thus in the case of soft naturalism, discussed below, the situation is not that it is held that our value-orientation gives us reason to be *naturalists*, but that it gives us reason – given that we *can only* be naturalists – to be *soft* naturalists.

<sup>23</sup> John Dewey, ‘Experience and objective idealism’, *Philosophical Review* 15, 1906, 465–81: p. 479.

<sup>24</sup> See for example Dewey’s polemical essay ‘Antinaturalism *in extremis*’, in Yervant Hovhannes Krikorian ed., *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1945, pp. 1–16, in which naturalism is claimed to be *necessary* for the realization of value, and a hefty portion of the evils suffered by humanity are attributed to anti-naturalism.

<sup>25</sup> Articulations of the deeper, ‘nihilistic’ axiological problem in naturalism may be found in Jacobi, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. Schopenhauer’s metaphysics of purposeless purposiveness is, as it were, a representation in the language of metaphysics of the axiological situation which follows from naturalism. Nietzsche’s view in *The Genealogy of Morals* (I argue in ‘Nietzsche, the self, and the disunity of philosophical reason’, in *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy*, ed. Ken Gemes and Simon May, Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming) is that our inability to resolve ourselves successfully back into nature in Enlightenment fashion leaves us high and dry in a position of reflexive unintelligibility. A very early and eloquent criticism of (Hutcheson’s sentimentalist) naturalism in moral theory is John Balguy, *The Foundation of Moral Goodness: or, A Fuller Inquiry into the Original of our Idea of Virtue*, Part I, 4th edn., in *A Collection of Tracts Moral and Theological*, London: Pemberton, 1734, pp. 39–103, esp. pp. 45–6, 57–8. Balguy probes the contingency which issues from naturalistic foundations, and suggests that while naturalized morality may retain practical force, it sacrifices our reflective sense of its purposiveness: naturalism inevitably deprecates the ‘Honour’ and ‘Dignity’ of morality.

<sup>26</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits* (1878), trans. Marion Faber, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996, vol. I, §251, p. 154.

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<sup>27</sup> Though Kemp Smith has an inkling of the distinction, indicated by his account of a newly ‘strengthened’ naturalism.

<sup>28</sup> John Herman Randall, Jr., ‘Epilogue: the nature of naturalism’, in Yervant Hovhannes Krikorian ed., *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1945, pp. 354–82: p. 369.

<sup>29</sup> What might be held to interfere with this conclusion is, as I have indicated, the deeper axiological problem, which it may be maintained, even soft naturalism is unable to resolve, but for the reasons given above, I hold this aside.

<sup>30</sup> Dewey is not unconscious of the possibility that the programme of naturalism contains two potentially conflicting vectors, but his confidence that it will not split is unsupported. The reason why soft naturalism looks easier to Dewey than it really is, lies in his historical proximity to idealism: idealism is the position he thinks he needs to dislodge, and austere reductive naturalism – having challenged idealism earlier in the nineteenth century but, Dewey believes, lost the argument – is not on his horizon. Consequently, though he sets himself the goal of differentiating naturalism from idealism, he lacks a clear view of what this requires.

<sup>31</sup> Soft naturalism is liable to interpret the challenge posed to the internal perspective of natural consciousness by the austere conception of nature as if what were at issue were *only* the question of reduction. But establishing relations of logical equivalence is not the hard naturalist’s ultimate target, and the challenge is not met but merely deferred by a demonstration of irreducibility. The real task for soft naturalism is to *ground* its irreducibles. To stop at conclusions of irreducibility is to substitute for the metaphysical question of the unity and constitution of reality, the much more limited, parochial question of the inter-relations of elements within that order according to our presently existing concepts of them.

<sup>32</sup> Conclusions of irreducibility may be taken up by the idealist as *confirming* metaphysical conceptions which have been formed independently of whatever premises have been employed in the demonstration



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of irreducibility: for the idealist, it is no surprise to (re)discover, by way of the sorts of arguments offered by soft naturalists, that intentionality, normativity, etc., are irreducible.

<sup>33</sup> See Hegel's remarks on d'Holbach's materialism, defending it (as speculative, an attempt to express subject-object identity) against Reinhold's dismissal, in *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy* (1801), ed. H. S. Harris and Walter Cerf, Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1977, pp. 114 and 177 [*Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie*, in *Werke. Auf der Grundlage der Werke von 1832–1845 neu edierte Ausgabe*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979 (Theorie-Werkausgabe), vol. 2, pp. 46 and 118]; and Hegel's critical but appreciative discussion of the *philosophes* in *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, *Medieval and Modern Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simpson, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995, p. 382 [*Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, in *Werke*, vol. 20, pp. 288–9].

<sup>34</sup> See Vittorio Hösle and Christian Illies, 'Der Darwinismus als Metaphysik', in *Die Philosophie und die Wissenschaften*, Munich: Beck, 1999, pp. 46–73.

<sup>35</sup> The point, note, is not that soft naturalism lacks a concept of nature from which the non-austere elements can be *deduced*, but that it lacks a contentful concept that can *unify* the 'parts' of what it calls 'nature'.

<sup>36</sup> Philosophical defence of common sense on this view requires only negative philosophical work, the exposure of mistakes made by those whose picture of reality departs from common sense.

<sup>37</sup> For reasons of space I cannot provide these attributions with the extensive illustration which could be supplied, but I assume they will be familiar to readers of the literature in philosophy of mind.

<sup>38</sup> P. F. Strawson, *Skepticism and Naturalism: Some Varieties. The Woodbridge Lectures 1983*, London: Methuen, 1985, pp. 39 ff.; 'The non-reductive naturalist's point is that there can only be a *lack* where there is a *need*' (p. 41).

<sup>39</sup> Regarding this distinction, see Mark Sacks, *Objectivity and Insight*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, ch. 6.

<sup>40</sup> Strawson, *Skepticism and Naturalism*, pp. 37–8.

<sup>41</sup> Jennifer Hornsby, ‘Personal and sub-personal: a defence of Dennett’s early distinction’, *Philosophical Explorations* 3, 2000, 6–24: p. 15. See also, e.g., Richard Moran, *Authority and Authority and Estrangement: An Essay on Self-Knowledge*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001, pp. 34–5.

<sup>42</sup> David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779), ed. Henry D. Aitken, New York: Hafner, 1948, pt. II, pp. 21–2.

<sup>43</sup> See Robert Pippin, ‘Naturalness and mindedness: Hegel’s compatibilism’, *European Journal of Philosophy* 7, 1999, 194–212.

<sup>44</sup> Terry Pinkard, ‘Speculative *Naturphilosophie* and the development of the empirical sciences: Hegel’s perspective’, in Gary Gutting ed., *Continental Philosophy of Science*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2005, pp. 19–34: pp. 23, 30. See also Pinkard’s ‘Response to Stern and Snow’, *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* nos. 49/50, 2004, 25–40, where nature’s otherness to the normative order is said to be a matter of our having made it so (p. 31), the ‘distinction of the normative and the non-normative’ being ‘itself a *normatively* established distinction’ (p. 34). See, again, Pippin, ‘Naturalness and mindedness’, and also *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 292.

<sup>45</sup> *Philosophy of Nature (Part Two of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences, 1830)*, trans. A. V. Miller, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970, §376 Zusatz, p. 444 [*Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse. Zweiter Teil: Die Naturphilosophie*, in *Werke*, vol. 9, pp. 537–8].

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, §248 Zusatz, p. 19 [p. 29].

<sup>47</sup> In this connection, see Christoph Halbig's comment in 'Das "Erkennen als solches": Überlegungen zur Grundstruktur von Hegels Epistemologie', in *Hegels Erbe*, ed. Christoph Halbig, Michael Quante and Ludwig Siep, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004, pp. 183–63: p. 160 n23.

<sup>48</sup> See for example Fichte, '[First] Introduction to the *Wissenschaftslehre*', in *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings (1797-1800)*, trans. and ed. Daniel Breazeale, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994, pp. 2-35: p. 5 ['Erste Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre', in *Johann Gottlieb Fichtes sämtliche Werke*, ed. Immanuel Hermann Fichte, 8 vols (Berlin: Veit & Comp., 1845-46), vol. 1, p. 421]; and Hegel and Schelling, 'The Critical Journal, Introduction: On the essence of philosophical criticism generally, and its relationship to the present state of philosophy', trans. H. S. Harris, in George di Giovanni and H. S. Harris, eds., *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000, pp. 272-310: p. 283 ['Einleitung. Über das Wesen der philosophischen Kritik überhaupt und ihr Verhältnis zum gegenwärtigen Zustand der Philosophie insbesondere', *Schellings Werke. Nach der Originalausgabe in neuer Anordnung*, ed. Manfred Schröter (München: Beck, 1927-), vol. 3, p. 521].

<sup>49</sup> See Robert Brandom, 'Freedom and constraint by norms', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16, 1979, 187-96, esp. p. 193: 'the difference between the social and the objective is a difference in how they are treated by some community (by *us*) rather than an objective matter about which we could be right or wrong [... it is] itself a social difference'.

<sup>50</sup> I argue for a view of Fichte's metaphysicality parallel to the view proposed here regarding Hegel in 'The status of the *Wissenschaftslehre*: transcendental and ontological grounds in Fichte', *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus* 5 (forthcoming).

<sup>51</sup> Some clarifications and caveats are in order. First: I have not offered an account of how 'metaphysical in the full sense' should be understood, since I have intended the phrase simply to carry the meaning standardly intended by the deflationary theorist. As I envisage matters, we have *first* to get

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clear about whether we intend to follow the deflationary programme, that is, what we think of its principled self-opposition *ab initio* to what it calls ‘metaphysical interpretation’ of German idealism; the question of what (certainly complex and very different) understandings and senses of ‘metaphysics’ are actually in play in Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, belongs to a later stage of enquiry, which I have not embarked upon. Second: What I have called ‘the deflationary interpretation’ is, of course, arguably just one version thereof, but I have tried to focus on elements that I suppose will be shared by all or at least many of its instances. It goes without saying also that my discussion bears on the positions of non-metaphysical Hegelians only on a single front, and that I have not begun to attempt to engage with the subtle and complex arguments with which those views are supported. Third: Although I have, following Kemp Smith, emphasized the role of axiological considerations, which must surely figure in any plausible interpretation of German idealism, what I have not intended to suggest, and would not wish to argue, is that the axiological is the *only* angle from which the present-day philosophical interest of German idealism can be demonstrated. See Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781–1801*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002, and Paul Franks, *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005.

I am grateful to audiences at the Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, the University of London, and the University of Essex for comments on earlier drafts of what developed into the present paper, and to the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Philosophy Department of University College London for research leave that enabled its completion.