

Contributi/2

Why is Habit the Hardest Problem for Hegel?

Contradictions of Habit in Hegel's Anthropology

V. Metin Demir

Articolo sottoposto a doppia *blind peer review*. Inviato il 19/12/2020. Accettato il 19/03/2021

Despite Hegel himself drawing our attention to the habitual neglect of habit in the formation of the spirit, the concept of habit has remained generally unstudied in the Hegel scholarship. In this paper, I will present how the concept of habit holds several contradictory determinations in itself, and in so doing I will give an answer to the question of what motivates Hegel to cite habit as the hardest topic (*am schwersten*) to comprehend. By closely analyzing Hegel's account of habit in the *Anthropology* section of his *Encyclopedia*, I will reconstruct his account in thirteen contradictory pairs, which are the essential contradictions which make up Hegel's whole system. Specifically, Hegel defines habit as *second nature* which makes possible the transition from nature to *Geist*. The debate among Hegel commentators on the meaning of 'second nature' reveals that to situate habit and second nature in Hegel's system means to determine the very character of Hegelian philosophy.

Introduction

While the 408th article of the *Encyclopedia* deals with derangement (*Verrücktheit*), the 409th and 410th articles deal with the concept of habit (*die Gewohnheit*)¹. For Hegel, habit plays a role in overcoming the particularity of senses and feelings in the universality or wholeness of the body. However, this universality is not the concrete universal of thought, but the abstract universal

¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit: vol. 2 Anthropology* (from now on *PSS II*), Trans by J. M. Petry, Dodrecht 1978, § 410 Z, p. 399. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Subjektiven Geistes, Gesammelte Werke Band 25,2* (from now on *GW 25/2*), ed. by C. J. Bauer, Hamburg 2012, p. 1055.

of bodily existence². The role played by habit in Hegel's encyclopedic system, by and large, might thus be summarized and cast aside. Indeed, this has been the case. Although in recent years we have witnessed a growing interest in Hegel's idea of habit and the second nature³, these topics have traditionally never been seen as a major issue in Hegelian studies. While Hegelianism was shaped around problematic issues such as the master-slave dialectic, absolute spirit, dialectics, the end of history, and alienation, habit did not attract due attention. However, habit does not seem to be an ordinary subject at all. One might even go a step further, by claiming that habit is a central issue and even a key concept, not only for the philosophy of the subjective spirit but for the whole of Hegel's philosophy of spirit. This claim is not an interpretative inference in the broad sense of the word; instead, as Hegel says:

The form of habit includes all kinds and stages of spiritual activity. ... It is the same with *sight* and the other faculties: without mediation, concrete habit unifies the diverse determinations of sensation, consciousness, intuition, understanding etc. into a single simple act⁴.

A form of habit is involved in all the cognitive and psychological faculties. Hence, as the basis of all spiritual activities, habit deserves particular interest. Ironically, the forgetting of habit, in general, is also a part of its conceptual determination, because an act becomes habitual when it is already seen as familiar, when it becomes unnoticeable or effaces itself. Perhaps this characteristic of habit, the fact that it loves to hide, makes for its forgetting. That is why habit has concealed itself.

Ironically, Hegel himself drew attention to this point and said that there were not enough studies into habit. Even though, since the 2000s Hegelian scholars have become well aware of the role of habit and second nature in the formation of spirit, still today, 200 years after his life, the place of habit in Hegel's philosophy has also not been studied enough, through a quirk of fate. Nonetheless, Hegel himself repeatedly warns us about the difficulty and the centrality of habit:

² For the transition from derangement to habit in Hegel's Anthropology see Michael Lewis's article in this volume.

³ There is a considerable increase in the number of studies that discuss Hegel's concept of habit and second nature. I will review a large part of these works in the following pages. Moreover, an international conference specifically focusing on the issue of second nature in Hegel was organized by the Hegel Association, at Stuttgart, in 2017.

⁴ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410, p. 391. Hegel, *GW* 20, p. 418. «Die Form der Gewohnheit umfaßt alle Arten und Stufen der Tätigkeit des Geistes; ... Ebenso *Sehen* und so fort ist die konkrete Gewohnheit, welche *unmittelbar* die vielen Bestimmungen der Empfindung, des Bewußtseins, der Anschauung, des Verstandes usf. in einem einfachen Akt vereint».

In scientific studies of the soul and of spirit habit is usually passed over, sometimes simply because it is regarded as not worthy of consideration, but more frequently for the further reason that it is one of the most difficult of determinations⁵.

Although we are familiar with habit as a presentation (*die Vorstellung der Gewohnheit gewöhnt*), the determination of its Notion is a difficult matter (*derselben schwierig*)⁶.

Like memory, habit is a difficult point (*ein schwerer Punkt*) in the organization of spirit⁷.

Obviously, the overlooking of the subject of habit in the Hegelian literature is not because it is seen as a hard topic, but simply because it does not seem interesting enough. However, Hegel warns us that habit, at first sight, seems very simple since we are familiar with the idea of habit (*die Gewohnheit gewöhnt*), but actually, the conceptual comprehension of habit is very difficult⁸. Actually, for various philosophical concepts such as life, God, and Spirit, Hegel says these are difficult to grasp for the faculty of understanding, but he has a solution to all these issues: he offers speculative philosophy as a means to grasp them. However, this time Hegel is not saying that habit is hard to comprehend for the faculty of understanding, instead he says *the concept of habit itself* (*die Bestimmung des Begriffs derselben schwierig*) is hard to comprehend. Thus, why did habit so intimidate the great philosopher who had allegedly cut the Gordian knot of the course of history?

In this article, I claim that why Hegel sees habit as the hardest problem is that habit stands indifferently in the midst of many contradictions. One can say that Hegel is a philosopher of contradiction *par excellence*, so that contradictions cannot intimidate him. It is already known that throughout all his metaphysics and natural philosophy, he considers everything in terms of contradictions, and his system progresses with the sublation of these contradictions. Hence, what is the unique difficulty that is peculiar to habit, for Hegel?

The difficulty with habit comes from the fact that it contains not merely a single contradiction, but it embraces *almost* all the essential contradictions of the Hegelian system. What is more, habit happily sustains itself in all these contradictions. Normally, as in the case of unhappy consciousness, this contradiction is a source of unrest and leads a subject to do something to restore

⁵ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410, p. 397. Hegel, *GW* 20, p. 419. «In wissenschaftlichen Betrachtungen der Seele und des Geistes pflegt die Gewohnheit entweder als etwas Verächtliches übergangen zu werden oder vielmehr auch, weil sie zu den schwersten Bestimmungen gehört».

⁶ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410 Z, p. 397-398. Hegel, *GW* 25/2, p. 1053.

⁷ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410 p. 391. Hegel, *GW* 20, p. 416. «Die Gewohnheit ist wie das Gedächtnis ein schwerer Punkt in der Organisation des Geistes».

⁸ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410 Z, p. 399. Hegel, *GW* 25/2, p. 1054. «Wir sind die Vorstellung der Gewohnheit gewöhnt, dennoch ist die Bestimmung des Begriffs derselben schwierig».

balance⁹. However, Hegel describes habit as the «happy state of consciousness»¹⁰. In our habitual bodily states, a kind of embodied mind can fluidly operate irrespective of the contradiction inherent in it. Hegel confirms this idea when he says «custom is an activity without opposition»¹¹. What is so astonishing and hard to comprehend in habit is that it bears lots of contradictions, as well as the fact that one can still be happy in the midst of these contradictions. It is possible to illustrate this unusual position of habit by enumerating the array of contradictions that Hegel mentions in his texts when he deals with the topic of habit. Thus, although I will make a detailed analysis of the concept of habit in Hegel's *Anthropology*, my intention is not to give an in-depth examination of the concept of habit, but to show panoramically how habit is involved in *nearly* all the essential contradictions that Hegel dealt with.

Habit takes the stage in the Hegelian system as a lead actor twice. In *Anthropology*, it plays the role of a catalyzer in the process of the liberation of the self from biological constraints. It also reappears in *Objective Spirit*: when Hegel starts to analyze *Sittlichkeit*, he puts the stress on habit as second nature in order to bind material life to normative life¹². These two different roles have different characteristics. While the function of habit in the stage of *Sittlichkeit* is to bind material life with normative action, or the individual and collectivity, it functions in *Anthropology* as the liberation of the self from the organic body. Due to these different functions of habit, after demonstrating the significance of the concept of habit in terms of the whole Hegelian system, in the last part of this article, I will discuss how the account of habit in *Anthropology* provides a new insight so as to situate Hegel's position in respect of the debate on naturalism. Since most of the literature concentrates on second nature as *Sittlichkeit*, the debate leads us to infer whether Hegel was prone to naturalism or not. But when we look from the perspective of *Anthropology*, we would see that habit is not a tool for naturalizing freedom (naturalism) or a stage where we leave nature behind (non-naturalism); instead, habit has a plastic force that make possible the transformation of nature within itself. Hence, the problem of habit and how one handles it might determine what sort of contemporary Hegelianism we choose. Thus, in the following part of the article, I will enumerate the contradictory pairs that habit carries in its «happy state» and finally discuss its relevance to current debates on naturalism.

⁹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Trans. by A. V. Miller, Oxford 1997, § 207, p. 126. «This *unhappy, inwardly disrupted (unglückliche, in sich entzweite)* consciousness, since its essentially contradictory nature is for it a *single consciousness*».

¹⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 354, p. 214. When Hegel discusses the customs of a people (*Sitte*), he says “reason *must* withdraw from this happy state” (*Die Vernunft muß aus diesem Glücke heraustreten*), hence it is possible to infer that customs and habits are happy states of consciousness.

¹¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, Trans. by J. Sibree, Kitchener 2001, p. 91. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte, Werke in 20 Bänden*, Baden 1986, p. 100. «Die gewohnheit is ein gegensatzloses Tun».

¹² G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, Trans. by T. M. Knox, Oxford 1978, § 151, s. 108.

1. Between Particular, in-itself Corporality and Universal, for-itself Selfhood

The position of habit in Hegel's *Encyclopedia* is that it plays an intermediary role between corporality and the transcendental self, which refers to the universality that accompanies all particular bodily states. On the one hand, there is the Ego, which is the universality that stands against the particular states of the body; on the other hand, there is my body, here and now, which experiences certain sensations¹³. Hence, there is a tension between particular, in-itself selfhood and universal, for-itself selfhood. According to Hegel's account of the soul in his *Anthropology*, the «feeling soul» idealizes the body that exists here and now. With the help of habit, the presence of the body could be overcome, since the body is not only considered in its present state but the body is also evaluated along with the whole of its past. To put it differently, my present body becomes a body that belongs to me along with its past. Thus, the particularity of the body is sublated into a broader universal perspective.

Individuality has determinations, sensations, feelings; these are at first particular. In these I am immersed in a content; I do not keep or preserve myself as universal in these sensings. In contrast, in habit it is posited that these satisfactions are directly subordinate to the universal that at the same time transcends them, and that preserves itself in its simple self-relation¹⁴.

Transient feelings and sensations occurring in the body are sublated into the broader wholeness, by means of habit. The instantaneous effects in my body are mapped and idealized once again within the general integrity of the self¹⁵. Hence, thanks to habit, through the universality of the for-itself, Ego permeates into my body's particularity, so that the universality of Ego subdues the particularity of the body. Habit functions as a kind of *schema* between the spontaneous transcendental self and the empirical self¹⁶. Thus, habit serves as an unconscious mediator between the transcendental Ego and the body.

¹³ G. W. F. Hegel, *PSS* II, § 409 p. 387. Hegel, *GW* 20, p. 414.

¹⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827-8*, Trans. by R. R. Williams, Oxford 2007, p. 153.

¹⁵ Neuroscientist Gerald Edelman confirms this idea when he claims that, in the categorization of repeated sensations and the synthetization of those categories with the reward mechanisms of the brain, the mind does not immediately perceive the present moment, actual sensations are evaluated in broader categories that we have acquired through habits. We perceive the actual reality of the world here and now, as remembered present. See G. M. Edelman, *The Remembered Present: A Biological Theory of Consciousness*, New York 1990.

¹⁶ E. Magri, *The Place of Habit in Hegel's Psychology*, in S. Hermann-Sinai and L. Ziglioli (eds), *Hegel's Philosophical Psychology*, New York 2016, pp. 74-90, p. 80.

2. Between Real and Ideal

For Hegel, the soul means the idealization of the body. The first capacity of the soul, «sensation», refers to the recording of what happens in the parts of the body; the second capacity of the soul, «feeling», amounts to the idealization of the senses by re-mapping them in the integrity of the body. Habit, as a third capacity, is seen as the idealization of corporeal feelings within the broader whole of the personality. Hegel says:

This particular being of the soul is the moment of its *corporeity* (*Leiblichkeit*). Here it breaks with this corporeity, distinguishing itself from it as its *simple* being, and so constituting the ideal nature of its *subjective* substantiality¹⁷.

Habit is a state of ideality, in which the immediacy of corporeal stimuli can be overcome. For example, a person living in Istanbul, which is a highly over-crowded city, would constantly be exposed to traffic and noise. Although his body feels incessantly the *real* influence of these stimuli, after a brief time of exposure, his body would not sense all the stimuli that come to its ears, so that the body would unconsciously put the stimuli in order by disregarding most of them. In other words, the real stimulus coming to the body is extracted from its immediacy by idealizing them in accordance with the substantiality of the body. *In-itself*, immediate corporality is sublated into the *for-itself*, idealized form. Thus, thanks to habit, even if the body remains in its *corporeal* form, it begins to transform into an *ideal* subjectivity. Furthermore, the idealization process is accomplished by the body itself. The physiological effects on the material body are recorded entirely within the ideality of the body (*in ihre Idealität so vollständig aufgenommen*) and the ideal is completely at home in the material body. Thus, «Idealness resides (*eingewohnt*) in materiality or ideality and moves freely within materiality»¹⁸. With the help of habit, the immediacy of the body is overcome by the body itself, thus, the body is posited as ideal.

Habit is something posited by me. Through this self-positing, habits are distinguished from natural qualities to which I have contributed nothing. Sleep and waking occur in me without my agency. ... but it is posited by me and made my own. Habit is a quality I have posited in myself as simple totality¹⁹.

In habit, *real* and *ideal* or matter and mind inseparably stay together. The ideal self resides in its material body, but the soul does not leave the body to itself, it idealizes the body by positing it.

¹⁷ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 409 p. 387.

¹⁸ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410 Z, p. 401. Hegel, *GW* 25/2, p. 1056.

¹⁹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827-8*, p. 153.

3. Between Thought and Being

Hegel calls habit «the mechanism of the self (*der Mechanismus des Selbstgefühls*)»²⁰, which practically manages to synthesize the spontaneity of thought and the external being of the body.

It is the same with *thought* which is free (*ganz frei Denken*), active within its own pure element, for it is constantly in need of habit and familiarity, the form of *immediacy* which makes it the unhindered and permeated possession of *my single self*. It is through this habit that I first *exist* for myself as a thinking being (*Erst durch diese Gewohnheit existiere Ich als denkendes für mich*). Even this immediacy of thinking self-communion (*denkenden Beisichseins*) involves corporeity, for whereas sustained thinking will give rise to a headache when one is out of the habit, habit will diminish this sensation by turning the natural determination into an immediacy of the soul²¹.

Quite interestingly, Hegel, who prioritizes the spontaneous and free character of thought writes that «thought is in need of habit». If free thought in its activity is the absolute itself, then it is possible to infer that even the absolute itself needs habit²². Since the Absolute cannot be in need of anything, the dependence of thought on habit seems again to be a contradiction. However, for Hegel, the first direct relationship between pure thought and being is accomplished by habit, which invalidates a sharp dualism between the realm of being and the realm of the reflexive, thinking self. What is more interesting, Hegel says that thought applies pressure on the being (since sustained thinking gives rise to a headache). Nevertheless, this painful relationship between thought and the body might be alleviated by habit.

4. Between Normativity and Materiality

If habit serves to posit ideality of the self within the corporeality of the body, through which the corporeal body becomes a posited being (*gesetztes sein*), then the opposition between the normative act of positing and the factual physical body stands together in habitual actions.

we have to consider not a general inwardness indeterminately separated from an encountered world, but the way in which this corporeity becomes subject to the rule of the soul (*die Herrschaft der Seele*). The freeing of the soul, its achievement of objective consciousness, depends upon this mastering (*Bemächtigung*) of corporeity. . . . In that I am alive, I have an organic body which is not *alien* to me, but which pertains to my idea, is the immediate external determinate being of my *Notion*²³.

²⁰ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410, p. 391. Hegel, *GW* 20, p. 416.

²¹ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410, s. 397. Hegel, *GW* 20, p. 418.

²² Malabou even asserts the dialectical process of the absolute knowledge can be describe as «speculative habit». C. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic*, Trans. by Lisabeth Doring, London 2005, p. 146.

²³ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410 Z, p. 404. Hegel, *GW* 25/2, p. 1056.

For Hegel, with the help of habit, spirit takes control of the body within the body itself. The contradiction between the order of normative realm and the order of physical bodies, which is the essential problem of Kantian practical philosophy, is overcome here, without putting it in a form of an unbridgeable abyss. Since, when I form a habit, I make use of my body. I live in this organic body, but this organic body no longer remains alien to me, it becomes a body that is shaped by my actions and that bears my traces. The body becomes *my* body, it becomes *mine*. Through habit, the given, physical body begins to come under the domination of the spirit. This domination is not an external normative authority that commands the body by giving imperatives like you « ought to do this », but a *soft power* that changes the body by operating within the body. This soft power is a strategy of gradually obtaining power (*Bemächtigung*). Habit can be seen as a way of applying freedom to the body, or applying the space of reasons to the space of nature. Thus, the eternal rivalry between freedom and bodily existence, as we can see in Kantian *moralische Weltanschauung*²⁴, is diminished by means of habit.

Mere sensation is a matter of chance (*zufällig*), ... the soul is *immersed* or *lost* in its content, unaware of its concrete self. In habit on the contrary, man relates not to a *single, chance* sensation, presentation, desire etc., but *to himself* to a *general manner* of acting which he himself has posited and which has become his *own* (*zu einer seine Individualität ausmachenden*), and through which he therefore displays his *freedom*²⁵.

Obviously, habit leaves freedom's mark on the body and bodily states by transforming them, which are naturally given, and chance dependent. Acting habitually, with repeated exercises, I impose my own *style*, my own rule on the body. As Hegel says: «the soul introduces into its expressions a *general manner* of acting which may also be transmitted to others, – a *rule (eine Regel)*»²⁶.

Hegel's materialism here is striking. Since Hegel denounces the monkish life, in which the individual struggles to leave the body in order to obtain absolute spirituality²⁷, he never accepts such a spiritualist understanding of freedom. He insists that freedom should be attained through material conditions, by saying that «my soul is however free within its body if I conduct myself in accordance with the laws of my bodily organism»²⁸. Freedom of the spirit is not opposed to the material, natural body, instead «habit is a liberation in and from nature (*Freiheit vom und im Natürlichen*)»²⁹. Therefore, even if habit is not equal to

²⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 612, p. 372.

²⁵ Hegel, *PSS II*, § 410 Z, p. 401. Hegel, *GW 25/2*, p. 1055.

²⁶ Hegel, *PSS II*, § 410 Z, p. 407. Hegel, *GW 25/2*, p. 1058.

²⁷ Hegel, *PSS II*, § 410 Z, p. 403. Hegel, *GW 25/2*, p. 1055.

²⁸ Hegel, *PSS II*, § 410 Z, p. 405. Hegel, *GW 25/2*, p. 1057. «Verhalte ich mich dagegen den Gesetzen meines leiblichen Organismus gemäß, so ist meine Seele in ihrem Körper frei».

²⁹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827-8*, p. 154. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesung über die Philosophie des Subjektiven Geistes, Berlin 1827/1828. Nachgeschrieben von Johann Eduard Erdmann und Ferdinand Walter*, ed. by F. Hesse, B. Tuschling, Hamburg 1991, p. 19.

freedom *per se*, it is a practice of *liberation*³⁰.

5. Between Necessity and Freedom

Another remarkable feature of habit is the coexistence of freedom and necessity. Hegel writes:

In that habit is a mode of natural existence, a person of habit is not free. He is free however in so far as habit reduces the natural determinateness of sensation to his mere being and he is no longer in a state of differentiation in respect of it i.e. interested in, occupied with and dependent upon it³¹.

Habit does not literally mean freedom, since it is a mode of natural existence. Like our naturally given body, we find habit a limitation, a constraint on our freedom. Looking from the perspective of free will, habit appears as an obstacle, a compulsion, or a necessity. However, we can also overcome constraints on our body, thanks to habits. In order to point out this ambivalent position, Hegel mentions habit as «a necessity in relation to freedom»³². For Hegel, the essential character of habit is to be indifferent to the affections of the body, so, it is a *liberation (die Befreiung)*³³.

Hegel counts three dimensions of this liberation: indifference to sensation (*Abhärtung*), indifference to satisfaction (*Abstumpfung*) and having dexterity (*Geschicklichkeit*)³⁴. Thanks to habit, a person can become indifferent to immediate feelings and might be indifferent to the demands of the body. Moreover, through habit, a person can be blunted against the satisfaction of immediate instincts and desires. Thus, one can distance oneself from the instincts and passions that constantly throw you around, which can be counted as a liberation. Additionally, the body is taken under control by the skills we acquire through habit, so that mind and body function in a completely fluid manner. Acquiring dexterity by means of habits, «makes effective a subjective purpose within corporeity (*ein subjektiver Zweck in der Leiblichkeit*)»³⁵.

Looking from the perspective of these three dimensions, the detachment from naturalness can be seen as a liberation, since we become free from obsession with bodily sensations and feelings, and we show our freedom through our body. Here, again one can see how habit carries contradictory concepts. Habit means on the one hand liberation, on the other hand enslavement. For example, when

³⁰ C. Menke, *Hegel's Theory of Second Nature: the Lapse of Spirit*, Trans by. G. Jackson, «Symposium», 17, 2013 (1), pp. 31-50.

³¹ Hegel, *PSS II*, § 410, p. 393. Hegel, *GW 20*, p. 416.

³² G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827-8*, p. 154.

³³ Hegel, *PSS II*, § 410, p. 393. Hegel, *GW 20*, p. 416. «Die wesentliche Bestimmung ist die *Befreiung*, die der Mensch von den Empfindungen, indem er von ihnen affiziert ist, durch die Gewohnheit gewinnt».

³⁴ Hegel, *PSS II*, § 410, p. 393. Hegel, *GW 20*, p. 417.

³⁵ Hegel, *PSS II*, § 410, p. 395. Hegel, *GW 20*, p. 417.

our body gets used to flexible working conditions, after a while we may have gained strength against fatigue and exhaustion, but this empowerment also prevents us from detecting how disastrous these working conditions are, and how these conditions enslave us. By pointing out this contradictory relationship between subjection and liberation, Hegel states: «Consequently, while on the one hand man is freed by habit, he is also *enslaved* by it»³⁶.

6. Between Possibility and Necessity

The tension of freedom and necessity on the ethical level also extends to the tension between the modes of possibility and necessity on the logical level. Because on the one hand, while getting used to something or not is *possible*, it becomes necessary for the subject, once one gets used to it. For this reason, Hegel calls habit a «subjective necessity»³⁷. Normally, the body is the substance for the mind, but with the arrival of habit, mind becomes the substance for the body, and the body becomes an accident for the mind. Habit brings about a kind of inversion of the logical relationship between the body and mind. Hegel says: «...so to transform it [the body] that it [the soul] relates to *itself* within it, its body becoming an accident brought into harmony with its substance, which is freedom»³⁸. As it turns out, habit plays a special role in the ontological transformation of the natural body into a state of freedom. Once I get used to something, then I become someone who acts necessarily in that way; at first habituation appears a matter of chance, then it becomes an obligation when I get used to it. Thus, my habits constitute my substance, they determine who I am. Hegel says, «habit is there not only as a particular, momentary satisfaction; rather I am this habit. It is my universal mode of being – what I am is the totality of my habits. I can do nothing else, I am this»³⁹.

While what I get used to depends primarily on what I do, my acts become my habits, then my habits become my fate, so that I cannot act otherwise, these habits having become an obligation for me to act just in that way. Hegel gives an interesting example here: man's upright standing posture is not a natural feature, s/he was not originally erect, but this is a characteristic that he has acquired through evolutionary struggle⁴⁰. While standing upright was at first a possibility for human beings, for *homo sapiens* standing upright became its substantial characteristic. Thus, habit is an ontological transformer that renders

³⁶ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410 Z, p. 401. Hegel, *GW* 25/2, p. 1056. «Obgleich daher der Mensch durch die Gewohnheit einerseits frei wird, so macht ihn dieselbe doch andererseits zu ihrem *Sklaven*».

³⁷ G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art: The Hotho Transcript of the 1823 Berlin Lectures*, Trans. by R. F. Brown, Oxford 2014, p. 230.

³⁸ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410 Z, p. 405. Hegel, *GW* 25/2, p. 1057. «...ihn so umgestalten, daß sie in ihm sich auf sich *selber* bezieht, daß er zu einem mit ihrer Substanz, der Freiheit, in Einklang gebrachten *Accidens* wird».

³⁹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827-8*, cit., p. 153.

⁴⁰ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410 Z, p. 415.

the necessary possible (by converting natural traits into accidental features), and the possible necessary (by rendering upright posture a substantial characteristic).

7. Between Possessing (*Aneignen*) and Releasing (*Verlassen*)

Through habit, I can possess my actions and my body, but at the same time I can stop being interested in the business of my body and actions, since actions occur automatically. I become « this person » by having habits, while I also become « another person » by acquiring new habits. Thus, paradoxically, habit is both a formative and transformative force at the same time. What I possess is my habits, but what I will possess is my upcoming habits. I can transform myself by adopting new habits, so I begin to transform into an-other. I can open myself up to being someone else by taking on a different habit. Ethical questions like, «Who am I? What can I do?» become plastic problems that can always be in the process of shaping and re-shaping. Hegel says:

Our consciousness is *present* and *interested* in the business, but at the same time *absent* from and *indifferent* to it; our self *appropriates* (*aneignet*) the business while to an equal extent *withdrawing* from it (*zurückzieht*); and while on the one hand the soul *enters* (*eindringt*) entirely *into* its expressions, it also *abandons* them (*dieselben verläßt*), shaping them into something *mechanical*, into a merely *natural effect*⁴¹.

Unlike feelings, habit enables me to put some distance between *my* body and *myself*. Due to the indifference and blunting that come with habit, on the one hand, I can distance myself and withdraw from my bodily sensations, whereas on the other hand, by doing this, I can demonstrate that I myself have control over my body. With this ability to feel indifference to sensations, I am able to prove that my self is not just open to every external influence; instead, all the sensations which affect my body are registered in the historicity of my experiences. Habit opens up the interval or distance that gives way to spirit and history to seep into the body. This spacing has the character of *pharmakon*, which includes both the meaning of opening to otherness and the meaning of inclusion of otherness into the self. The mind, with the ability of manifesting both indifference and blunting, is able to say «I cannot be someone else»; at the same time, through this same act of appropriation, the mind can say «I am not the body given to me, I can distance myself from it, I can be someone else». Hegel notices:

... [the soul] is free of these [sensual] determinations in so far as it is neither interested in nor occupied with them. At the same time, in that it exists with these forms as with its possession (*als ihrem Besitze existiert*), it is open (*offen*) to the further activity and occupation of sensation and conscious spirit⁴².

⁴¹ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410 Z, p. 409. Hegel, *GW* 25/2, p. 1058.

⁴² Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410, p. 391. Hegel, *GW* 20, p. 416.

Habit, contradictorily, has both the characteristics of possession and withdrawal, or appropriation and abandonment. Neurobiological imaging records of habituation also reveal results in line with these considerations (Figure 1)⁴³.

Epistemological correlates of this double movement of possession and withdrawal are the concepts of remembering and forgetting. Habit means both forgetting and remembering. When we act habitually, we act without thinking about it, we forget what we are doing, and we have even forgotten the moment when we got used to it. It is not possible to give a date to habit. One cannot remember exactly at what time s/he acquired a habit. Having a habit is literally the capacity to forget, to release the information retained in working memory. But habituation also means remembering, since habitual know-how or procedural memory is one of the most epistemologically enduring types of knowledge⁴⁴.

8. Between Consciousness and Unconscious – or *Unconscious Spontaneity*

According to Hegel's *Anthropology*, habit is a state of the soul, in which the intentional conscious Ego has not yet come onto the scene, yet it refers to an awareness of the body. What is contradictory here is that, while habit shows the intentional qualities of consciousness with features such as the conversion of diverse sensations into the perspective of a single self, directing the actions and affections of the body, activating a kind of self in the body, habit's actual mode of operation is unconscious. For Hegel, this unconscious mode is the basis of consciousness.

This abstract being-for-self of the soul in its corporeity is not yet ego (*noch nicht Ich*), ... It is corporeity, which pertains to the soul as such on account of its being set back to its pure ideality....in that the particularity of corporeity, immediate corporeity as such, is sublated within it, is the basis of consciousness (*das ganz reine bewußtlose Anschauen, aber die Grundlage des Bewußtseins*)⁴⁵.

In habitual states of consciousness, we will not be totally immersed in sensations and feelings, but we unconsciously have these sensations (*bewußtlos an ihr hat*), like the conscious self that has mastery over sensations. Hegel designates habit

⁴³ B. Baars, N. M. Gage, *Fundamentals of Cognitive Neuroscience: A Beginner's Guide*, Oxford 2013, p. 44.

⁴⁴ There is also a new research field in psychology, called dual-process in mind theory proposing that the human mind have two distinct processes, one is reflective, fast and conscious, and the other is automatic, slow and conscious. Hegelian theory of habit can be integrated with this contemporary theory, since it shows that habit can synthesize both processes of the human mind. For the history and the definition of dual-process theory see: K. Frankish, J. Evans, *The duality of mind: An historical perspective*, in K. Frankish, J. Evans (eds.), *In two minds: Dual processes and beyond*, Oxford 2009, pp. 1-29.

⁴⁵ Hegel, PSS II, § 409, p. 389. Hegel, GW 20, p. 415.

as a kind of «unconscious will (*bewußtlos will*)»⁴⁶. Even one of the most basic determinations of man, standing upright, could have been acquired through this kind of unconscious will. Habit bridges the Kantian gap between free, conscious will and unconscious, natural movement. This idea of «unconscious will» can be seen as scandalous for the Cartesian or Kantian tradition. Since the freedom of will and conscious awareness belong to the spontaneity of the mind, talking about an unconscious will or, to put it in Bourdieu's words, «a spontaneity without will or consciousness»⁴⁷ seems contradictory. However, habit continues to operate inexorably amid the contradiction between the freedom of spontaneity and the necessity of matter. Habit unconsciously circumvents the essential problem of the Kantian system that desperately attempts to synthesize the spontaneity of the mind and the outside world.

9. Between Difference and Repetition

According to the capacity of understanding, difference and identity are mutually exclusive concepts. If something is repeated, it must remain the same way it was. We know that even if there is a slight difference in the repeating process, the result cannot be seen as a repetition. In the early ages of philosophy, Heraclitus pointed out this paradox and said «you cannot wash twice in the same river», that is, if there is a difference, there will be no repetition. However, the organic form, which lies in the center of Hegel's whole philosophy, means that an organic being can add this difference to its identity. This feature of an organic creature that can constantly change while remaining the same, is clearly expressed in habit. Hegel writes:

This formulation (*Sich einbilden*) of the particular or corporeal aspect of the determinations of feeling within the *being* of the soul (in *das Sein der Seele*), appears as a *repetition* (*wiederholung*) of these determinations, while the engendering of habit appears as *practice* (*die Erzeugung der Gewohnheit als eine Übung*)⁴⁸.

Habit means repetition in two senses. In the first sense, habit reduplicates sensations by repeating the senses *in the presence of the mind*, namely, imprinting the mind's seal on the senses means reliving them with a change of perspective. In the second and more literal sense, habit basically means repeating, since it depends on doing the same movement again and again. But what is repeated is no longer a mechanical uniformity; instead, it is a *practice*, in which every repetition follows a developmental line in respect to the earlier one. In practice, both the actor and the action gradually change. In other words, in habitual actions, the person is not repeated, or his repetition always makes a difference. For example, even though a mechanical music box plays a song thousands of

⁴⁶ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410, p. 397. Hegel, *GW* 20, p. 418.

⁴⁷ P. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, Trans. by Richard Nice, Stanford 1990, p. 56.

⁴⁸ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410, p. 391. Hegel, *GW* 20, p. 416.

times, it remains exactly the same, but an organic being might differ when it does something repeatedly. Hence, habit operates happily, right in the midst of the eternal conflict between transformation (*metamorphosis*) and staying identical. Hegel refers to this magical operation as follows:

Frequent *repetition* will make the bodily activities to be carried out in the service of spirit (*deinste des Geistes*) conform to it to an ever higher degree, for by constantly increasing its familiarity (*vertrautheit*) with all the circumstances to be considered, the soul finds itself at *home* in its *expressions* to an ever greater extent (die Seele... in ihren *Äußerungen* somit immer *heimischer* wird), ... It is therefore continually appropriating more of the body (*sonach den Leib immer mehr zu ihrem Eigentum*), transforming it into the instrument of its use, and it is thus that there occurs the *magical* relationship of the body's succumbing to the immediate effect of spirit (so daß dadurch ein *magisches* Verhältnis ein unmittelbares Einwirken des Geistes auf den Leib entsteht)⁴⁹.

Hegel feels obliged to call repetition a magical form of relationship because repetition has an incredible effect on organic creatures. When someone is displaying a quantitative difference through repetition, a qualitative difference comes out. Hegel's incessant usage of words that express degrees (*immer mehr, immer größere, immer höhere*) in the passage implies that repetition is essentially a quantitative grading. However, this gradual quantitative repetition, which is not felt by the subject, abruptly creates a magical relationship, then the body surrenders to the soul. Through constant repetition, the body finds itself under the influence of the spirit (*einwirken*), the body suddenly finds itself to be a *tool* (*werkzeug*) of the spirit. The *sameness* of a mechanical repetition creates a transformative and constitutive *difference*. Thus, habit is this mysterious (*magische*) power that transforms repetition into difference.

10. Between Organism and Mechanism or *Physis* and *Techne*

Classical metaphysics positions the organism and the mechanism at opposite poles. Habit, again with a deconstructive movement, inserts the mechanism in the organism. It renders natural actions mechanical, and as well, replaces organism with mechanism. Through constant repetition, the spirit renders the body a mechanical tool (*werkzeug*). Habit, simultaneously, both instrumentalizes the mind, and non-mental mechanical repetitive action becomes part of mental life. Hence, Hegel calls habit «the mechanism of the self (*der Mechanismus des Selbstgefühls*)»⁵⁰. The dead mechanism and living teleology do not stand as contradictory concepts in Hegel's account of habit, since the teleology of the spirit can take over the mechanism when it operates.

⁴⁹ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410 Z, s. 407. Hegel, *GW* 25/2, p. 1058.

⁵⁰ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410, p. 391. Hegel, *GW* 20, p. 416.

In order to correspond to its Notion, the soul has to change its identity with its body into one that is *posited* or mediated by spirit, to take *possession* of its body, make it the *tractable* and *serviceable instrument* of its activity (*gefügigen und geschickten Werkzeug*), so to transform it that it relates to *itself* within it, its body becoming an accident brought into harmony with its substance, which is freedom⁵¹.

With the help of habit, while the mind instrumentalizes the body and takes it under its control, at the same time the mind instrumentalizes itself by acting mechanically. Since habit is the dead mechanism that resides in the middle of the free activity of the living being, the antagonism between organic integrity and mechanical instrumentality, or between life and machine starts to become blurred here. Habit creates the technique that ensures the dominance of the spirit over the body, as well as mechanizing the vitality of the spirit. Habit, which operates between the dead mechanism and the free, living being, both makes life sustainable and also incorporates death into life.

11. Between Life and Death

The sharpest dilemma of habit, as well as its greatest achievement, is the capacity to incorporate death into life. Acquiring habits means learning how to die without annihilating life, being able to shoot some small doses of the vaccine of death into life, because the two basic characteristics of habit are an indifference to the senses (*abhartung*) and the hardening to satisfaction (*abstumpfung*) of the features of a corpse, not a living being. Thus, becoming indifferent to life's stimuli that constantly touch the body can be seen as a kind of killing yourself, or self-sacrifice. However, we only sustain ourselves in life with the help of habits. It is through the dialectical movement by which we survive in them as we are withdrawing from life that we can have a mastery over the body, as we withdraw from the body⁵². By means of habit, the radical otherness of death disappears and death is injected into life. What we have when we form a habit is not the phenomenological experience of Being-towards-death (*Sein zum Tode*); instead, it is an anthropological experience that provides us with the wherewithal to live with death within life. Thus, habitual life is a way of dying, but also every aspect of life is imbued with habits. Hegel points out this sharp contradiction as follows:

Habit is often spoken of disparagingly, and regarded as lifeless, contingent and particular. The form of habit, like any other, is certainly open to complete contingency of content. It is moreover the habit of living which brings on death (*es ist die Gewohnheit des Lebens, welche den Tod herbeiführt*), and which, when completely abstract, constitutes death itself (*der Tod selbst ist*). At the same time however, habit is what is most essential

⁵¹ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410 Z, p. 405. Hegel, *GW* 25/2, p. 1057.

⁵² Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410 Z., s. 403. Hegel, *GW* 25/2, p. 1056.

to the *existence* of all spirituality (der *Existenz* aller Geistigkeit) within the individual subject⁵³.

All aspects of the spiritual life depend on habit. However, at the same time, habit is death itself in the most abstract sense. For example, Hegel equates habit and death when he writes that an elderly person's life «closely resembles the processless habit ... It is precursive of *death*»⁵⁴. Hegel says «this mere *customary life* (*Gewohnheit*) is that which brings on natural death»⁵⁵. Despite this equation of habit with death, habit is also an indispensable condition for the spiritual life. If the spirit refers to incorporating death into life, then habitual action is the very core of spiritual activities. The essence of spiritual life that goes beyond biological survival lies in habit. Habitual life is the happy state of consciousness that stealthily incorporates death into life, without bringing with it the anxiety of being-towards-death.

12. Between Nature and Culture: *Second Nature*

According to Hegel, habit does not belong entirely to nature, even though natural creatures are able to have habits. On the other hand, since conscious Ego has not emerged at this stage of the Hegelian system, habit does not belong entirely to the domain of culture. Hegel invokes the concept of *second nature* to conceptualize this ambivalent position.

Habit has quite rightly been said to be second nature (*eine zweite Natur*) for it is *nature* in that it is an immediate being of the soul, and a *second nature* in that the soul *posits* it as an immediacy, in that it consists of an inner formulation and transforming of corporeity pertaining *to* both the determinations of feeling as such and to embodied (*als verleblichten*) presentations and volitions⁵⁶.

In another passage, he again describes habit as second nature:

Habit is certainly not an *immediacy*, a *first nature* dominated by the singularity of sensations, but it is a *second nature*, *posited* by the soul. And it is never anything but a *nature*, for it is something *posited* which takes the shape of an *immediacy*, and although it is an *ideality* of that which is, it is itself still burdened with the form of *being*. It is therefore something which does not correspond to the freedom of spirit, something merely *anthropological*⁵⁷.

As can be seen in these remarkable passages, habit neither belongs to nature nor belongs to the realm of *Geist* that is made up of conscious actions;

⁵³ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410, p. 397. Hegel, *GW* 20, p. 418.

⁵⁴ Hegel, *PSS*, II, § 396 Z, p. 125.

⁵⁵ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, p. 91. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, cit., p. 100.

⁵⁶ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410, p. 391-392. Hegel, *GW* 20, p. 416.

⁵⁷ Hegel, *PSS* II, § 410 Z, p. 401. Hegel, *GW* 25/2, p. 1056.

it is rather a moment of transition that belongs to the realm of *Natur-Geist*. In part, habit belongs to nature, because it is immediate, says Hegel, that is, it is something that is given to us, not intentionally produced, but suddenly attached to our body in the form of being (noch mit der Form des *Seins*). Nonetheless, habit does not purely belong to nature, because it is not a natural endowment (*Anlage*), instead it is something we acquire through our own activity. That is why Hegel resorts to a concept which has tacitly continued to exist in the history of philosophy: *second nature*⁵⁸.

When Hegel is saying that habit is second nature, he operationalizes a concept that has vaguely subsisted in the philosophical tradition before him. However, each philosopher in history tends to use this concept in different contexts and with different meanings. For this very reason, the meaning and function of the concept of second nature has been a subject of discussion. Everybody accepts that it functions as a bridge between nature and culture, or nature and freedom. However, the dispute revolves around the issue as to whether the conflict between nature and freedom is resolved in favor of nature or in favor of freedom. To put the question more clearly, does arguing that human nature is second nature come to mean to *naturalizing freedom* or *liberation from nature*? Hence, the question becomes one of deciding a naturalist or non-naturalist reading of the whole Hegelian philosophy⁵⁹. Indeed, the polarization among Hegelian scholars since the 1970s can be seen through this question.

The main axis of the debate among commentators begins with John McDowell, one of the pioneering philosophers who aroused interest in German Idealism in analytical philosophy, by presenting the concept of “second nature” as a proposal to reconcile Kant’s idea of the autonomy of reason with the naturalism of natural sciences⁶⁰. According to McDowell, by turning back to the Aristotelian second nature, we can naturalize rationality and defend a naturalism of second nature (a more liberal, encompassing naturalism)⁶¹. Therefore, for McDowell, the concept of second nature enables us to adopt a broader naturalism that can embrace the spiritual realm. Following this reasoning, contemporary

⁵⁸ For the history of the concept of second nature, see: G. Funke, N. Rath, *Natur Zweite*, «Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie online» 6, (Çevrimiçi), ed. by J. Ritter, Basel 1984, pp. 484-489. Kant uses the concept of second nature both in *Critique of Judgement* (§ 105, p. 275) and in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1974, p. 4) he also refers to habit as second nature. Moreover, F. W. J. Schelling, *The System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), Trans. by Peter Heath, Charlottesville 1978, p. 159. «...from the second act, that of the free self-determination, a second nature will come forth, whose derivation is the entire topic of the inquiry that follows».

⁵⁹ C. J. Bauer, *Eine Degradierung der Anthropologie? Zur Begründung der Herabsetzung der Anthropologie zu einem Moment des subjektiven Geistes bei Hegel*, «Hegel-Studien», 43, 2008, pp. 13-35.

⁶⁰ For the discussion of McDowell’s idea of second nature see Lanzirotti’s article in this volume.

⁶¹ J. McDowell, *Mind and World*, Cambridge 1994, pp. 85-86.

Hegel commentators like Italo Testa⁶², Guido Seddone⁶³ and Heikki Ikäheimo⁶⁴ use this concept to support a naturalistic reading. Willem deVries, regardless of McDowell's interpretation, also claims that Hegel was a naturalist, when he makes use of the concept of second nature⁶⁵.

However, contrary to this naturalist interpretation, a series of objections have been raised. John McCumber argues that the ethical meaning of second nature is sharply different from Aristotle's, and the idea of second nature must not be seen as a naturalizing force, but as a leverage that enables us to acquire liberation from nature⁶⁶. Agreeing with McCumber, many commentators think that second nature should not be considered in the natural realm. Particularly, Terry Pinkard⁶⁷, Robert Pippin⁶⁸, and Allen Wood⁶⁹ consider second nature as a part of the realm of practical reason, that is, as a normative faculty that depends on social interactions and mutual recognition. For them, second nature means leaving behind the naturalness by participating in institutionalized structures and normative practices. For this left-Hegelian interpretation, the concept of second nature is relevant to the practical-institutional rationality that emerges as a result of the social and historical agency of humankind. There is no ontological or metaphysical difference between nature and culture; instead, the difference is practical and normative⁷⁰. In this line of interpretation, scholars such as Simon Lumsden⁷¹, David Forman⁷², Julia Peters⁷³, and Christoph Menke⁷⁴ agree, against McDowell's naturalist reading, in defending that second nature brings about a practical and normative transformation, if not an ontological and metaphysical one.

⁶² I. Testa, *Hegel's Naturalism or Soul and Body* in the *Encyclopedia*, in David S. Stern (ed.), *Essays on Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, Albany 2013, pp. 19-35.

⁶³ G. Seddone, *The Conception of Habit as a Stage of Hegel's Naturalistic Theory of Mind*, «Open Information Science», 2, 2018 (1), pp. 75-82.

⁶⁴ H. Ikäheimo, *Nature in Spirit: A New Direction for Hegel-studies and Hegelian Philosophy*, «Critical Horizons», 13, 2012 (2), pp. 149-153.

⁶⁵ W. deVries, *Hegel's Theory of Mental Activity*, Ithaca 1987, p. 48.

⁶⁶ J. McCumber, *Hegel on Habit*, «The Owl of Minerva», 21, 1990 (2), pp. 155-165.

⁶⁷ T. Pinkard, *Hegel's Naturalism: Mind, Nature, and the Final Ends of Life*, Oxford 2012, p. 7.

⁶⁸ R. Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*, Cambridge 2008, p. 27.

⁶⁹ A. Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, Cambridge 1990, p. 198.

⁷⁰ R. Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*, p. 61, 180.

⁷¹ S. Lumsden, *Between Nature and Spirit: Hegel's Account of Habit*, in David S. Stern (ed.) *Essays on Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, Albany 2013, pp. 121-137. Id., *Habit, Sittlichkeit and Second Nature*, «Critical Horizons», 13, 2012 (2), pp. 220-243.

⁷² D. Forman, *Autonomy as Second Nature: On McDowell's Aristotelian Naturalism*, «Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy», 51, 2008, pp. 563-580.

⁷³ J. Peters, *On Naturalism in Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit*, «British Journal for the History of Philosophy», 24, 2006 (1), pp. 111-131.

⁷⁴ C. Menke, *Autonomie und Befreiung: Studien zu Hegel*, Berlin 2018, p. 43, 49.

A third group of commentators such as Elisa Magri⁷⁵, Fillippo Ranchio⁷⁶, Slavoj Žižek⁷⁷, Karen Ng⁷⁸, Thomas Lewis⁷⁹, Andreja Novakovic⁸⁰ Rocío Zambrana⁸¹ consider the concept of second nature, on the one hand, like McDowell, as a moment that blurs the bold ontological distinction between nature and culture, but on the other hand, like left-Hegelians, they oppose the attempts at the naturalization of the second nature. According to this line of interpretation, the transition from nature to second nature is not limited to a change of perspective within the same reality, it also includes an ontological transformation. Second nature does not function as an apparatus for naturalizing human existence; rather, it functions as an ontologically transformative force that enables us to live a free, spiritual life in a natural manner.

In this article, I argue that the general philosophical strategy of Hegel is to reconcile Kant with Aristotle. In congruence with this claim, I think that Hegel regards the idea of second nature in quite a different sense than Aristotle, since the Aristotelian concept of second nature conceives of habituation as a form of self-fulfilling or human flourishing in accordance with a pre-determined natural *telos*. However, a post-Kantian philosopher like Hegel would conceive of second nature as a product of self-creation. The post-Enlightenment version modern concept of second nature does not refer to it flourishing in a pre-established order, but perhaps applies it to liberation and autonomy, as opposed to order. Hence, Hegel conceives of the concept in the frame of Kantian notions of autonomy and freedom⁸². However, these considerations would lead us to the second group of scholars that we call left-Hegelians. What seems to me problematic in this post-metaphysical reading is that they overlook the anthropological point of view, while reading Hegel's second concept of nature predominantly through the lens of *Philosophie des Rechts*. When we look from the perspective of the *Objective Spirit*, second nature appears as free praxis that is historically instituted by means of intersubjective interactions and mutual recognitions on the grounds of legitimacy. Hence, for them, second nature must not be seen as a natural concept, but as a result of social and historical praxis. Indeed, this is the case when we grasp the issue from the *Objective Spirit's* perspective, yet when we look from the dimension of anthropological plasticity, what we discern in the concept

⁷⁵ E. Magri, *The Place of Habit in Hegel's Psychology*, cit.

⁷⁶ F. Ranchio, *Dimensionen der Zweiten Natur: Hegels Praktische Philosophie, Hegel Studien Beiheft 64*, Hamburg 2016.

⁷⁷ M. Gabriel, S. Žižek, *Mythology, Madness, and Laughter Subjectivity in German Idealism*, London 2009, p. 117.

⁷⁸ K. Ng, *Life and Mind in Hegel's Logic and Subjective Spirit*, «Hegel Bulletin», 39, 2018 (1), pp. 23-44.

⁷⁹ T. A. Lewis, *Speaking of Habits: The Role of Language in Moving from Habit to Freedom*, «The Owl of Minerva», 39, 2007 (1-2), pp. 25-53: 39.

⁸⁰ A. Novakovic, *Hegel on Second Nature in Ethical Life*, Cambridge 2017, p. 16.

⁸¹ R. Zambrana, *Bad Habits: Habit, Idleness, and Race in Hegel*, «Hegel Bulletin», 42, 2021, pp. 1-18.

⁸² F. Ranchio, *Dimensionen der Zweiten Natur*, cit., p. 51.

of second nature is not a struggle of socio-historical liberation, but a genealogy of ontological transformation from biology to history.

Thus, close to the third line of interpretation, I suggest that the Hegelian concept of second nature should neither be regarded in a naturalist way nor in a non-naturalist style. The stage in which second nature turns into the mechanism of autonomy that goes beyond nature is the dimension of the *Objective Spirit*. However, within the scope of the anthropological, *Subjective Spirit*, second nature points to an ontological transformation in which either the body or nature transforms itself. Second nature in *Anthropology* is a plastic moment, in which nature and spirit mutually give form to and take form from each other, by both naturalizing the spirit and spiritualizing nature. So, there are different references and tasks of habit and second nature at the level of anthropological, psychological and social-historical-objective spirit. Despite these different functions that habit plays in all the levels of spiritual life, «habit is what is most essential to the existence of all spirituality within the individual subject».

V. Metin Demir, Bursa
Uludag University
✉ vmetindemir@uludag.edu.tr