

## NATURE AND SPIRIT IN TRIPLE-ASPECT MONISM

### NATUREZA E ESPÍRITO NO MONISMO DE TRIPLO-ASPECTO

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**Abstract:** Despite having philosophy been modernly addressed to mind rather than to brain (or to metaphysics rather than to physics), the field of neurophilosophy could represent the reoccurrence of the pretension to embrace totality. By overcoming the traditional opposition between undifferentiated monism and mind-brain dualism, Pereira Jr.'s Triple-Aspect Monism (TAM) would be more than just a conciliation or an insertion of dualism into a physicalist regard of biology. In this essay, TAM is, then, correlated to the Hegelian philosophy, in order to identify its elements as a means of reaction to mind-brain dualism, as Hegel opposed to dualism in modern philosophy. There are, thus, mainly four topics discussed in this essay that summarize the correlation between Hegelian dialectics and TAM: (1) The triadic structure of being, nothing and becoming, – also in the form of the universal, the particular and the singular – connected to the three layers of physiological, unconscious/informational and conscious processes; (2) the idea of morality and ethical life as a result from physical interactions, which include intentionality, exchange of information waves and physical-chemical-biological exchanges; (3) the forms of Aristotle incorporated in Hegel's idea of the Absolute's movement, which overcomes the modern opposition between nature and spirit as different entities; and (4) Hegel's considerations of the game of forces, compatible to TAM's contemporary scientific approach.

**Keywords:** Triple-Aspect Monism. Neurophilosophy. Hegel.

**Resumo:** Embora a filosofia tenha, na modernidade, destinado-se mais à mente do que ao cérebro (ou à metafísica mais que à física), a neurofilosofia pode representar a volta da pretensão de abordar totalidade. Superando a oposição tradicional entre monismo indiferenciado e dualismo mente-cérebro, o Monismo de Triplo-Aspecto de Pereira Jr. (TAM) seria mais que apenas uma conciliação ou uma inserção do dualismo em uma perspectiva fisicalista da biologia. Neste artigo, TAM é, então, correlacionado à filosofia hegeliana, a fim de identificar nela seus elementos, como uma forma de reagir ao dualismo mente-cérebro, da mesma maneira com que Hegel se opôs ao dualismo na filosofia moderna. Há, então, quatro tópicos principais discutidos neste artigo que resumem a correlação entre a dialética hegeliana e TAM: (1) a estrutura triádica do ser, nada e devir, - também na forma do universal, particular e singular – conectada aos três aspectos do fisiológico, inconsciente/informacional e processos conscientes; (2) a ideia de moralidade e eticidade enquanto resultados de interações físicas, que incluem intencionalidade, troca de ondas informacionais e intercâmbio físico-químico-biológico; (3) as formas de Aristóteles incorporadas na ideia hegeliana de movimento do Absoluto, o que supera a oposição moderna entre natureza e espírito como entidades diferentes; e (4) as considerações de Hegel sobre o jogo de forças, compatível com a abordagem científica contemporânea do Monismo de Triplo-Aspecto.

**Palavras-chave:** Monismo de Triplo-Aspecto. Neurofilosofia. Hegel.

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## **1. Introduction**

The medieval opposition of the physical from the metaphysical left, for the modern, a dualist legacy that still nowadays makes itself present in philosophical thought. Such heritage, if compared to the Greek origins of western philosophy, can seem strange, once it dissociates ontology, epistemology and ethics, one from the other. Could one know how to live without any ontological or epistemological commitment? Such question, whose affirmation is a contemporary imperative, would be unconceivable in the ancient past, and due to this philosophical turn, which abandons the pretension of embracing totality, Luft (2013) calls attention to what he names *the syndrome of the house taken over*. The physical-metaphysical dualism would be responsible for such disempowerment of philosophy, which, being classified into metaphysics, lost battle to the natural sciences – specific and empirical – that ‘took over the house’ of knowledge.

My concern in this essay is to show that, despite having philosophy been modernly addressed to mind rather than to brain (or to metaphysics rather than to physics), the field of neurophilosophy could represent the reoccurrence of the pretension to embrace totality. By overcoming the traditional opposition between undifferentiated monism and mind-brain dualism, Pereira Jr.’s Triple-Aspect Monism (TAM) would be more than just a conciliation or an insertion of dualism into a physicalist regard of biology. Contrariwise, TAM could mean the *aufheben* of the *dualist dispute* between physicalism/subjectivism and mind-brain dualism, more than just the presentation of a solution based on the supremacy of one over the other.

For the accomplishment of this argument, it will be necessary to appeal to contemporary works in neuroscience and philosophy of mind; yet, also, there will be the important requirement of resorting to the history of philosophy, especially to Hegel’s dialectic perspective, which can help fulfilling Pereira Jr.’s aim to contest reductionist views in the mind-brain discussion. Hegel’s dialectic monism<sup>2</sup> signified the disruption to the objectivity of physicalism, but also the interruption of the utmost subjectivity, which generically characterized German Idealism and its dualist conception so far. Hegel’s monism would, finally, re-access the unity of ontology, epistemology and ethics, and such regress to a perspective of totality could be extremely helpful, as

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Luft, 2013.

Pereira Jr.<sup>3</sup> himself observed, in the comprehension of TAM *vis-à-vis* contemporary theories in neurophilosophy. Thus, my intent in this essay is to show how Triple-Aspect Monism connects to the dialectic conception of the individual in Hegel's philosophy, in order to present TAM as a pertinent proposal to the mind-brain concern, as Hegel did it with his work concerning the issue of nature and spirit, in his time.

## **2. Will and Freedom in Modern Philosophy**

It is a fact that contemporary neurophilosophy has new means to make its own conclusions, due to advanced technology available from the previous decades. However, it would be erroneous to affirm that the issues this field embraces are original and differentiated from the past as well. Indeed, contemporaneity is still looking for answers to questions the modern had already established and, when it comes to human species, there is still a lot to uncover. My main goal in this section is to address the ways in which the idea of will has been stated in modern thought and the consequences it had when different conceptions of freedom were deduced from it.

According to Luft (2013), modernity faced a crisis of self-interpretation, where modern subjects emancipated themselves from the deterministic idea of being part of nature-machine, generating four models<sup>4</sup> of individuals: the first is dualism, which separates the subject from nature in independent spheres; the second is monism of nature, which naturalizes the subject, leading to physicalism; the third is monism of subjectivity, an inverse interpretation of monism of nature, which subjectivizes nature in order to help subjects understand themselves; and the fourth is dialectic monism, which establishes an influential relation between the subject and nature, without separating independently them both, or relating them through a determinist causation (LUFT, 2013).

Dualist conceptions about the world have been made since Plato and Aristotle, yet *dualism* concerning the separation of body and mind has characterized Descartes as the modern pioneer. This separation occurred as the first alternative in the pursuit of freedom from determinism within the subject, as Descartes placed the notion of will in the individual's mind (thinking substance), as an independent conception from the body

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Pereira Jr., 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Luft, 2013.

(extended substance)<sup>5</sup>. So, once volition would be ontologically detached from the bodily machine, it would not only be unlimited (not empirically compromised)<sup>6</sup>, but it would also be free (physically undetermined). This conception of free will would be essential in the liberation of subjects from determinism, once the dualist detachment of will from the body could make them, through the thinking substance, the authors of their actions<sup>7</sup>. In such regard, Kant would follow the same dualist path in the search for autonomy. His idea of transcendental reason could directly be used by individuals over empirical inclinations, as Descartes would have previously problematized. Yet, due to the fact that the noumenic conception of rational individuals would not tolerate the objectification of subjects in the phenomenal sense (LUFT, 2013), freedom would be ensured through the idea of the individual as ‘an end in itself’<sup>8</sup> – considering the same thinking substance Descartes had established in his dualist conception.

*Monism of nature*, differently, would have a different perception of will and freedom and also different consequences due to such comprehension. Spinoza and Hobbes, according to Luft, would fit in this category, and the inseparability of subject from nature would be responsible for a different conception of will and freedom, distinct from the one Descartes and Kant would base their philosophy on. If, for the dualist, will was opposed to empiric inclinations, thus providing freedom from natural causation, for the monist of nature, volition would be necessarily attached to experience and to the inclinations derived from it. As a result, freedom – or at least the illusion of it – would be fitting in nature, by understanding it, for Spinoza, or by the absence of physical impediments to achieve one’s intentions, for Hobbes. According to Damasio, “Spinoza’s notion implies that the living organism is constructed so as to maintain the coherence of its structures and functions against numerous life-threatening odds” (DAMASIO, 2003, p. 36). So, in this sense, will follows physical imperatives for

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<sup>5</sup> “We attribute to thinking substance: (1a) perception, volition and every specific kind of perceiving and of willing. We attribute to extended substance: (1b) size (i.e. extension in length, breadth and depth), shape, motion, position, divisibility of component parts and the like”. See Descartes (2008, p. 12).

<sup>6</sup> “The will, on the other hand, can be called ‘infinite’ in a certain sense. That is because we realize that we could will anything that anyone could will, even God with his immeasurable will”. See Descartes (2008, p. 9).

<sup>7</sup> “It’s a supreme perfection in man that he acts voluntarily, i.e. freely; this makes him in a special way the author of his actions and deserving of praise for what he does. We don’t praise automata for moving in exactly the way they were designed to move, because it’s necessary for them to do that. We do praise the designer for doing a good job, because in building the automata he was acting freely, not out of necessity”. See Descartes (2008, p. 9).

<sup>8</sup> “Thus God can only relate to humans (and all rational beings) as ends in themselves and never simply as means”. See Kant (2015, p. 115).

survival, and the accordance, or fitness, to such natural necessity would not only provide joy for the subject, but would also increase their power and freedom to act (DAMASIO, 2003). Such correlation of freedom and action appears in Hobbes' philosophy as well, as he defines freedom as "properly the absence of opposition (by opposition, I [Hobbes] mean the external impediments of motion); and may be applied no less to irrational and inanimate creatures than to rational" (HOBBS, 2005, p. 41). The equalization of subject with nature appears as Hobbes does not differentiate, for instance, individuals from irrational creatures, or even from inanimate ones. Freedom, here, is especially not attached to a separate thinking substance, as Descartes would notice, but conditioned by the power to act in accordance with volition (beyond matter and form, as the whole title of *Leviathan* suggests it). Here, rationality, in the mechanist sense, is not opposed to nature, but incorporated in it, to be instrumentally used toward the achievement of intentions against physical (natural) constraints<sup>9</sup>. Thought (rationality) and extension (physicality) are united as only one natural substance.

The third model proposed by Luft is *monism of subjectivity*, which can be characterized by Berkeley and Fichte – one an immaterialist, and the other an idealist. The common aspect of both philosophers, however, is the contestation of what is took as objective, once the externality of the world could be understood as ideas of things<sup>10</sup> or the construction of nature through self-projection<sup>11</sup>. If Berkeley questioned the world's objectivity, Fichte would represent the edge of subjectivity, as nature would be, in his perspective, "entirely developed as a necessary moment in the process of self-determination of the subject seeking full self-knowledge and full freedom" (LUFT, 2013, p. 298). Yet, nature, despite being a projection of the self, is still conflicting to freedom, as the 'pure subject' aims to achieve moral oughtness, regardless of natural elements – even though subjectivized. On one hand, this monistic perspective deals with the same issue Kant and Descartes had dealt with, yet without splitting them into two ontologically distinct entities – Fichte sought to oppose moral from nature, but intra-subjectively, as an ideal construction of the self; on the other hand, monism of subjectivity – despite being monism – is distinct from physicalism in the Spinozian and

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<sup>9</sup> "The power of a man, to take it universally, is his present means to obtain some future apparent good, and is either original or instrumental" (HOBBS, 2005, p. 73).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Warburton, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Luft, 2013.

Hobbesian perspective, which has an objective background. Thus, freedom, for Fichte, is much closer to Kant's idea than to Hobbes'.

Lastly, *dialectic monism*, the one I'd like to give more attention to, is the alternative Schelling and Hegel had developed, which according to Luft, represents the most radical solution for the modern crisis of self-interpretation. In this model, the opposition of poles of subject and nature is overcome, as, dialectically, one could not understand nature without the subject, yet one could not understand the subject apart from nature. Luft exposes Schelling's contribution to Hegel's philosophy, as "the sphere of objectivity (nature) and the sphere of subjectivity (spirit/culture) are understood as moments of a universal reason, differentiated only according to the degree of realization of one and the same logical structure" (LUFT, 2013, p. 298). As one can see, the difference in such type of monism compared to other kinds of it and to dualism is the rejection of a foundationalist comprehension of the relation between mind and body. If rationalism and/or empiricism would prevail in the previous interpretations of the relation of the subject with nature, Hegel's Concept, after all, will dialectically comprehend the stages of mechanicism, teleology, self-organization and self-determination (LUFT, 2013). Hence, dialectic monism will comprehend a coherentist perspective over the relation of subject and nature, rather than a foundationalist one. Here, subject and nature are different stages of development within the Concept<sup>12</sup>, yet, freedom would not be achieved from subject to nature, or from nature to subject. Subject and nature are parts of a developing bigger totality and, consequently, freedom is dialectically revealed through time.

Accordingly, when regarded will in Hegel's philosophy, we could not conceive it statically and immediately, as the dualist or the other monist philosophers had done. For instance, Kant's reason is transcendental, so its access cannot and must not be done empirically – its content transcends beyond space-time, thus it is invariable. When

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<sup>12</sup> Despite proximities between TAM and Hegel's philosophical triadic structure, it is a fact Pereira Jr. (2016) departs from Hegel's ontology of the Concept, as he substitutes it by the elementary forms of energy, as an ontology to embrace the triadic matter, feeling of information and consciousness. As he states, "the elementary forms of energy (FE), which constitute reality's space of states, are conceived as eternal, remaining subjacent to every actualization happening through time. Actualizations, which correspond to dynamic combinations of forms of energy, situate in physical space-time, yet contain properties not reducible to physical properties. Such combinations occur in three phases, here called aspects" (PEREIRA JR., 2016, p. 26, free translation). This represents the twist TAM gives to Hegel's ideal-actual relation, "an inversion of order regarding the two first aspects of the triad, from Mind-Nature to Nature-Mind" (PEREIRA JR., 2013, p.329), as the author resorts to Marx's materialism as an alternative to Hegel's metaphysical ontology.

concerned Kant's morality, what is right is right and what is wrong is wrong, the contradictions will always be the same when we formally understand reason. Such dualist perception will never allow us to know the noumenic content of freedom<sup>13</sup>, or of justice, but even if it did, we would fall into Cartesian apriorism, which is based on a rationalist foundationalism. On the other hand, when monism of nature is analyzed, the problem of immediacy remains as nature dictates will. Physicalism will, obviously, base itself in the laws of physics (in Hobbes' case, Newtonian), which is empirically static as well. Volition will be determined by passions – conatus, for Spinoza – and reason, being an instrument, will serve as a means for achieving the goals volition naturally had established.

Differently from these approaches, which establish a presupposed conception of volition, Hegel's notion of will is socially, thus historically, constructed, as it rests on a system of intersubjective dependence. This concept of volition claims to find a solution for the opposition between the subjectivity present in dualism and monism of subjectivity, and the physical determinism of monism of nature. As Thompson (2001) argues, for Hegel, will is determined both by the pursuance of its needs, [as in monism of nature], but also by the ability of abstraction from any definite context [as in dualism]. However, despite different, these two entities are not separate one from the other, once families and its members are not materially self-sufficient, and also due to the fact that these families already presume a socially conditioned existence. Hegel, thus, introduces the term 'refinement' (*Verfeinerung*) in the Philosophy of Right, which denotes the "process to distinguish among needs as they are naturally given, what can be called natural necessities (e.g., food, clothing, shelter, etc.), and among the means required to fulfill them" (THOMPSON, 2001, p. 53), but complements it with 'purification' (*Reinigung*), which allows a structure of autonomy, by suiting these needs in a social context of possibilities for achieving them. Such contextualization allows the appearance of 'spiritual needs'<sup>14</sup> which are conventional and governed by intrinsic

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<sup>13</sup> "If we find that on the assumption that our cognition from experience conforms to the objects as things in themselves, the unconditioned cannot be thought at all without contradiction, but that on the contrary, if we assume that our representation of things as they are in themselves, but rather that these objects as appearances conform to our way of representing, then the contradiction disappears" (KrV, B XX).

<sup>14</sup> "Since in social needs, as the conjunction of immediate or natural needs with mental needs arising from ideas, it is needs of the latter type which because of their universality make themselves preponderant, this social moment has in it the aspect of liberation, i.e. the strict natural necessity of need is obscured and man is concerned with his own opinion, indeed with an opinion which is universal, and with a necessity of his own making alone, instead of with an external necessity, an inner contingency, and mere caprice" (PR, §194).

relations (THOMPSON, 2001). So, as will is confronted by both natural and social needs, intersubjectivity becomes responsible for the institutionalization of social customs, which are caused by similar needs among society. As Thompson (2001) puts it,

Hegel therefore concludes that by engaging in these practices and thereby conforming one's desires and inclinations to the standards implicitly set therein, each individual family head is recognized and conceived by the other members of society in terms of the most universal traits of societal membership (THOMPSON, 2001, p. 55).

Due to these implicit standards, one cannot admit will in Hegel's monism as static or unmediated. Will, for Hegel, depends on societies' intersubjective movement, as it is society who dictates the possibilities for fulfilling natural needs; this institutes different elements in the constitution of subjective will.

However, these needs from nature still make themselves present, and that differentiates dialectic monism from dualist oppositions between nature and spirit: Hegel's dialectics, contrarily, embrace a concept of unity, in which, concerning natural needs, the spiritual context and subjective consciousness, results in the reestablishment of the connection of an universal reason with cognition and the ethical life. By embracing the absolute, Hegel's claim turns against both the abstractness of transcendental reason and the concreteness of physical determinism, as not sufficient for solving the problem of human freedom. These elements, yet, are all parts of human liberation (*Befreiung*), which, not in coincidence, is the conformation to social conventions (THOMPSON, 2001).

### **3. Natur- and *geisteswissenschaften*<sup>15</sup> in Neurophilosophy**

In *The syndrome of the house taken over* (2013), Luft attempted to the fact that modernity has brought dualism as a central philosophical comprehension; however, it would be a mistake to understand such perspective as a synonym for the mind-brain dualism. In fact, the dualist approach over the mind-brain opposition is only one of the reactions to such structural standpoint, as previously shown. Modernly, even generic monism would fit under the dualist comprehension of the separation between nature and

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<sup>15</sup> *Naturwissenschaften*: from the German, natural sciences; *Geisteswissenschaften*: humanities.

spirit<sup>16</sup>. So, when contemporary discussions on neurophilosophy were brought up to discussion, it would be also a mistake to reduce monism, as a naturalist take in opposition to a dualist conception of normativity<sup>17</sup>. In fact, Oliveira's (2013) essay on the naturalism-normativity debate progressively shows how naturalist perspectives lean toward normative consequences and how normative conceptions base themselves over naturalist phenomena.

For instance, as Oliveira (2013) points out, in defense of naturalism, Putnam contests the understanding of ethics as simply facts, as an attempt of separating naturalism from deterministic physicalism in rejecting descriptivism. Churchland, as well, brings socialization as a cerebral process, establishing ethics and moral as psychological practices, which comprehends caring, recognition, problem-solving and social practices in general. Prinz would correlate types of naturalism with different types of normativity, to avoid falling into physicalism – by adopting transformation naturalism as a solution for natural theories of the world; and Roskies would condition free-will, for instance, inside the ethics of neurosciences, which could, through technology, alter psychological conditions, dispositions and memories, leading the 'mind' to different normative consequences (OLIVEIRA, 2013).

On the other hand, normativity is not argued as a substitute for naturalism; yet it is better put as a solution for the insufficiency of naturalist perspectives on the brain. Korsgaard accuses the unsatisfaction of both Darwin's sentimentalism, and neo-empiricist variables (as Putnam's, Prinz's and Churchland's), to explain normative self-government and intellectual motivation to act; ethical normativity would lean on behavior practices, based on duty, rather than solely on emotional instrumentality. In accordance with Korsgaard, Oliveira (2013) follows higher levels of normativity, such as legal, linguistic (Quine), economic (Sen), and epistemic (Sosa, Alchourron, Bulygin), in order to defend that even at the end of the normativity scale, there is still a demand for an explanation – where absolute normativity, divine providence, and even nature alone, do not fit without being self-defeating (OLIVEIRA, 2013).

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<sup>16</sup>“The fact that modern ‘monisms’ themselves, either when they emphasize only one of the opposites that are in conflict and thus renege their paradoxical complement (monisms of subjectivity or of nature), or when they force a possible conciliation of what cannot be conciliated (modern dialectical monisms), actually operate within the conceptual framework of the dualism they wish to overcome” (LUFT, 2013, p. 299).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Oliveira, 2013.

Oliveira's point goes beyond naturalism vs. normativity, as he argues that "usually naturalist takes on scientific matters tend to be opposed to value-laden, interpretative takes on normative issues, as if the natural-versus-human sciences were an inevitable dichotomy following the modern opposition between *Natur-* and *Geisteswissenschaften*" (OLIVEIRA, 2013, p. 83-84). Here lie the four alternatives to the problem of dualism in modernity (LUFT, 2013), as they reappear in the contemporary context of neurophilosophy (OLIVEIRA, 2013), which, to some extent, seeks to surpass the opposition between *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften*, as we may visit.

Firstly, we should consider, as Luft (2013) mentioned, that, beyond mind-brain dualism, even 'monisms' place themselves in a dualist logic of separation between nature and spirit – monism of nature, for instance, rejects the spiritual perspective, and monism of subjectivity, on the other hand, focuses entirely on the spirit, separating it from objective nature. And secondly, we must also consider dialectic monism as it escapes dualism (mind and brain) and undifferentiated monism (mind or brain): this would be "the more daring of alternatives to the crisis of modernity, since it requires the reconceptualization of both poles, namely, the elaboration of a new theory of nature associated with a new theory of subjectivity"<sup>18</sup> (LUFT, 2013, p. 306).

Such overcoming of the opposition of *Natur-* and *Geisteswissenschaften* is what Oliveira (2013) claims through Prinz's and Damasio's mitigated social constructionism, as they reformulate cognition in "embodied, embedded, extended, enactive and affective terms" (Oliveira, 2013, p. 86), in a way there is a "co-constitutive role played by emotions, selfhood and consciousness" (OLIVEIRA, 2013, p. 86). Damasio can seem as a good candidate for being an alternative to the opposition between 'nature' and 'humanities'; however, it is not quite clear that these elements of 'emotions, selfhood and consciousness' are in fact not founded on one of the two entities of modernity. In *Looking for Spinoza*, the reputed neuroscientist brings evidence against dualism, by showing how conscious feelings are necessarily connected to the emotions our body produce. Nevertheless, Damasio is not able to provide a comprehension that entirely surmounts the separation of mind and body – and even if he did, he would fall into the undifferentiated monism of a bodily dualism.

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<sup>18</sup> Regards concerning the necessary or contingent character of the Concept, in Hegel, are not central in the main argument in this essay. See Weber (1993).

When observed Damasio's tree of emotions, for instance, one can understand the body as a system of homeostatic regulation, which, by integrating the most simple to the most complex mechanisms, would deliver a monist structure of metabolic regulation, basic reflexes, immune responses, behaviors, pain and pleasure, drivers and motivations, background, primary and social emotions and, furthermore, feelings. Up to emotions, Damasio can afford unity, but when it comes to feelings, dualism comes back to the table, once consciousness, as 'body maps', operates almost as if from outside the body. In his own words: "a feeling is the perception of a certain state of the body along with the perception of a certain mode of thinking and of thoughts with certain themes" (DAMASIO, 2003, p. 86). So, after all, even when 'in' the brain, feelings don't belong to the body; instead, they would be an 'external' result from bodily mechanisms, being such separation the reason why feelings can analyze the body through a map.

My concern, however, does not mean to invalidate Damasio's theory of feelings, but to reject it as being the best candidate for an alternative to the duality of *Natur-* and *Geisteswissenschaften*. The theory of consciousness, in *Looking for Spinoza*, still rests on natural – not to say physical – explanations for mental phenomena, despite including interpretative and representational elements into feelings. This argument can be better understood if we once more take the tree of emotions into consideration: we will be led into a deterministic account of feelings based on the nature of the body. Taking the dual structure of 'body and body-map (mind?)' into account, it comes that feelings are submissive to the information sent by the bodily mechanisms of survival, and, due to that, consciousness becomes as a 'hostage' from natural phenomena. So, in this regard, despite dually, Damasio finds Spinoza's monism of nature, as we can only feel how adjusted our bodies are to their natural ought-to-be<sup>19</sup>.

The attention given to memory in the book also illustrates how dependent mind is to body. According to Damasio, the connection our consciousness has to the world is actually an interpretation of homeostatic reactions to external facts. So, if something happens to my body, say I am hit by an object, my body will catch such information, through sight and tact, and the representation of such fact will be stored in memory,

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Spinoza: "PROP. VI. Everything, in so far as it is in itself, endeavours to persist in its own being. Proof. — Individual things are modes whereby the attributes of God are expressed in a given determinate manner (I. xxv. Coroll.); that is, (I. xxxiv.), they are things which express in a given determinate manner the power of God, whereby God is and acts; now no thing contains in itself anything whereby it can be destroyed, or which can take away its existence (III. iv.); but contrariwise it is opposed to all that could take away its existence (III. v.). Therefore, in so far as it can, and in so far as it is in itself, it endeavours to persist in its own being. Q.E.D." (SPINOZA, 2014, s/p).

which, when activated, will affect feelings in the same way as if my body was hit by an object once more<sup>20</sup>. Thus, even external facts will only access consciousness through bodily codification of events – that’s all the mind will have access to. How, then, could we be emancipated from physical determinism? We could not, given that Damasio’s consciousness literally means being conscious of the events that occur to our body; and, even if unconsciously, we would respond to these memories through emotions. The only freedom we could have in this model is based on the interpretation of facts occurring to the body, but still, Damasio does not expose how this could be disconnected from nature – his explanation can only identify issues in homeostatic processes – from the most basic ones to neurological disorders regarding emotions and feelings.

Hence, what can be seen in Damasio’s model is an imbalance concerning nature and spirit, as the latter is filled only with the content of physical events occurring to the body. Consciousness, or feelings, for Damasio, has only the might to adjust our bodies to how they should be, according to nature (if there is something wrong, our feelings will indicate it; if things are right, our feelings will be in agreement to this, as well). Damasio’s conception of ‘mind’, or of consciousness, or of feelings, has no power to affect the body, as Descartes’s or Kant’s dualism would conceive it. Yet, his dual-aspect monism would not correspond to Spinoza’s physicalism as well, for whom there might not even be an account of consciousness. Damasio’s mind would be more than just nature, but not enough to be transcendent, being opposed to it; there is a consequential relation from the body to the mind, but the opposite way is not admitted, leaving the door closed for the type of mental freedom libertarianism works with, for instance<sup>21</sup>, where intentions are not necessarily linked to body signals, being, then, capable of interfering in natural ‘determinations’. Furthermore, Damasio does not present any regards concerning to mental phenomena affecting the body, which still leaves a gap for a theory of mind that could surpass a relation between body and mind, which is not of opposition, neither is of foundation of one on the other. It is based on such regard that Triple-Aspect Monism could be presented *vis-à-vis* these other contemporary dualist propositions, in the same way Hegel’s perspective on a ‘universal reason’ overcame the

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Damasio: “For example, the actual near-accident that frightened you years ago can be recalled from memory and cause you to be frightened anew. Whether actually present, as a freshly minted image, or as a reconstructed image recalled from memory, the kind of effect is the same” (DAMASIO, 2003, p. 57).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Swinburne, 2015.

separation of *Natur-* from *Geisteswissenschaften*, as dimensions with different logical structures (LUFT, 2013). Triple Aspect Monism, cognate to Hegel's dialectic monism, can overcome and try to present an alternative to the dualist issue Damasio, through Spinoza, cannot seem to solve.

#### **4. Physicality, unconsciousness and consciousness**

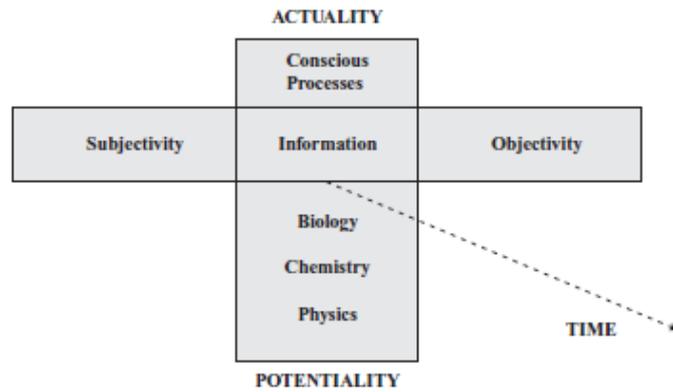
As a configuration for the embracement of a conception of totality, dialectics have been central in Hegel's philosophy, as they appear once again in Triple-Aspect Monism, through the relation between physicality, unconsciousness and consciousness. This ontologically-layered three-level structure of living individuals precisely exceeds the fact that on dual-aspect models – such as Damasio's –, individuals own the properties of physicality and consciousness, yet they cannot operate both at the same time<sup>22</sup>: whether one deals with the body, or one deals with the 'mapping of such body' (namely, consciousness). Even when one is related to the other, we could only understand how the former affects the latter, in dual-aspect monism.

TAM, differently, operates more complexly, as it supports the three aspects of physicality, unconsciousness and consciousness, whose "participation [...] in a continuous and complementary fashion" are required by "conscious experience" (PEREIRA JR., 2014, p. 204)<sup>23</sup>. Yet, TAM's highest value for this essay's concern is the rejection of a foundationalist perspective attached to the physical aspect of existence. Contrarily, there is an order of actualization, from the physical to the unconscious and to the conscious, but by no means there is a static determination from the physical; the physical, in TAM, can only offer possibilities. Pereira Jr.'s (2013) tree of TAM illustrates how the process works:

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Pereira Jr., 2014.

<sup>23</sup> Pereira Jr. includes the three aspects inside what he calls "nature's box". However, such term could be replaced by what Hegel had called 'universal reason', as it represents the totality of logical coherent relations, not necessarily meaning nature as in physicalism or in Cartesian and Kantian dualism.



**Graph:** The TAM Tree.  
**Source:** PEREIRA JR., 2013, p. 312.

In the vertical axis, there is a scale from potentiality to actuality, “as stages in an evolutionary process, by which elementary potential states eternally existing in nature are progressively combined and actualized” (PEREIRA JR., 2013, p. 312). From the bottom, there is first the physical-chemical-biological aspect, or just ‘physiological’, which covers “structures and functions that involve matter and/or energy, including metabolism, catabolism, [etc.]” (PEREIRA JR., 2014, p. 202). The second, in the middle, is the informational aspect, of unconsciousness, “composed of dynamical patterns [...] embodied in neural activity and transmitted between brain systems, forming cognitive and emotional unconscious processes” (PEREIRA JR., 2014, p. 202). And the third, at the top, is the conscious aspect, which consists in “feelings and related cognitive processes experienced in the first-person perspective, and indirectly accessible to the scientific researcher by means of verbal or non-verbal reports” (PEREIRA JR., 2014, p. 202). From bottom to top, the continuous line from potentiality to actuality differentiates TAM from other models of monism in neurophilosophy, once, here, there is contingency in the actualization of consciousness, conditioned by different physiological possibilities and also by different possible informational contexts of insertion. So, after all, feelings are “informational feedbacks to physiological processes” (PEREIRA JR., 2014, p. 205), and my argument is that they could be translated into Hegelian terms, as one could admit consciousness and feelings as the ‘becoming’ (3<sup>rd</sup> aspect) of the interaction between the natural (1<sup>st</sup> aspect) and the spiritual (2<sup>nd</sup> aspect).

Such scale from potentiality to actuality delivers Hegel’s triadic structure of universality, particularity and singularity, inserted in a contextual *milieu* that balances subjectivity with objectivity. TAM could satisfy this dialectical ontology, once the universality of physics-biology-chemistry, inserted into a particular informational

context, generates singular consciousness. This spectrum from bodily functions up to consciousness takes us back to Thompson's (2001) remarks on Hegel's normative conception of purification (*Reinigung*), as from all contingent possibilities, the actual determination of will, will be given contextually, based on actuality – but also being capable of altering actuality. In the sense of the possibility to alter actuality, information is a pendulum between subjectivity and objectivity, showed in Pereira Jr.'s horizontal axis, as it feeds the physiological aspect toward consciousness (interpretative aspect of feelings), at the same time that it composes morality, which, objectively, will be developed into the ethical life<sup>24</sup>. Pereira Jr. (2014) does not deduce ethics from TAM, yet he identifies morality as the subjective result of the objective contextual informational chain; and moral behavior, as a consequence, will be the responsible for individuals reproducing information through time (subject to new, different inputs within context). The idea of morality as an empirical result from context and historical development could be dissected in contemporary science, as Pereira Jr. (2014) attributes feelings not only to bodily emotions, but also to information waves that result from biosocial interactions, which, contextually, may interfere in the quality of emotions that are actualized through feelings. This leaves space for contingency, as, in the same way emotions can be interfered by external information, the reproduction of information to other people, in the form of intentionality, can affect them as well, influencing emotions in social relations, thus, influencing consciousness, when taken to further consequences.

Pereira Jr.'s (2014) idea of unity of three distinct aspects presents a coherentist form, whose conceptual origins can be found in Aristotle. Aristotelian 'causal forms' have influence over TAM, as the separation of matter from this conception of forms allows information to acquire states beyond determined materiality. These forms will make themselves present both in potential and in actual states, as "parents transmit their form (the species to which they belong and morphological traits) to their children; a sculptor transmits the form he has in his mind to a material (e.g., bronze) in the making of a statue" (Pereira Jr., 2013, p. 317)<sup>25</sup>. Aware of these forms, Hegel, as well, brought

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Pereira Jr. (2014): "Feeling habits constructed during a person's life history constitute his/her personal identity that contains a value system that serves as a basis for ethical behavior. When a person has a purely reactive attitude, reproducing habits already established in culture, his/she action is not property ethical, but just a morally framed one. An ethical attitude includes more than morality, since the person may decide not follow well-established habits, and alternatively do what he/she considers to be an ethical duty" (Pereira Jr., 2014, p. 215).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Pereira Jr. (2014): "the form of a statue is probably conscious for the sculptor, but in the contemporary technological context the same kind of process can be instantiated in machines without

Aristotle to his time as a way to reintroduce totality in a fragmented modernity. It is in these terms that the dialectics of Logic are superior to the ones of Nature, of Spirit and of the Phenomenology of Spirit (consciousness), as these three are Logic's moments of appearance (Forster, 2014). As Gadamer (1994) puts it, Hegel "seeks to have fluidized, through dialectics, the rigid categories of understanding, whose opposition modern thought remains prisoner of. Dialectics must achieve the overcoming of the distinction between subject and substance" (GADAMER, 1994, p. 25, free translation)<sup>26</sup>.

Gadamer's (1994) interpretation of Hegel's relation to the Greek can be useful when TAM is analyzed, especially when the matter of information waves is regarded as a distinct, but connected, process in the physiological aspect. The philosopher himself had already affirmed that Hegel's dialectics rest upon forces of physics and chemistry, as the conscious perception of 'things and their properties' are, in fact, the properties themselves – a game of forces:

It should be noticed that the decomposition of a thing into many things, or, in other words, the point of view of atomistic, which results when one approaches with the means of the modern chemical analysis to what a thing is, or to what are its properties, is not enough to understand what reality properly is, where things and their properties exist. The notice doesn't know how to penetrate further from the exterior. It notices properties and things with their properties, taken for granted. But are the chemical structure of things and its whole and true reality perceived? There is no better remedy than to recognize that, behind properties, there are, actually, forces which exercise among themselves a reciprocal action. A constitutional chemical formula states the constitution of a substance. However, what this really is, as confirms the modern development and transformation of chemistry into physics, is a game of forces (GADAMER, 1994, pp. 52-53, free translation)<sup>27</sup>.

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consciousness, as e.g., the transfer of Beethoven's 5th symphony from a vinyl record to the hard disk of a computer, and then to a pen-drive, or the performance of mathematical operations by a computer" (PEREIRA JR., 2014, p. 205).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Gadamer (1994): "Él pretende haber fluidificado, mediante la dialéctica, las rígidas categorías del entendimiento, en cuya oposición queda prisionero el pensamiento moderno. La dialéctica debe lograr la superación de la distinción entre sujeto y sustancia" (GADAMER, 1994, p. 25).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Gadamer (1994): "Debe advertirse que la descomposición de una cosa en muchas cosas, o, dicho de otra manera, el punto de vista de la atomística, que resulta cuando uno se aproxima con los medios del moderno análisis químico a lo que una cosa sea, o a lo que sean sus propiedades, no es suficiente para entender qué sea propiamente la realidad, en la que se dan las cosas con sus propiedades. El percibir no sabe penetrar más allá de lo exterior. Percibe propiedades y cosas que tienen propiedades, y las da por ciertas. Pero ¿es lo así percibido, la estructura química de las cosas, su entera y verdadera realidad? No hay más remedio que reconocer que por detrás de estas propiedades hay, en verdad, fuerzas que ejercen entre sí una acción recíproca. Una fórmula constitucional de la química enuncia la constitución de una sustancia. Pero lo que ésta sea en verdad, tal y como lo confirma el moderno desarrollo y transformación de la química en física, es un juego de fuerzas" (GADAMER, 1994, pp. 52-53).

In the same way, Pereira Jr. (2013) works physical, unconscious and conscious relations as a game of forces that result consciousness from the reformulation of physical, chemical and biological properties in information waves. These waves will not only flow in the vertical axis of the graph – from potentiality to actuality – as they will also flow horizontally, among individuals in society, which, through intersubjectivity, will transform subjective information into objectivity. The main sophistication of this process is that, despite being the physical the basis of individuals, there is not a reductionist relation, but rather, there's supervenience. It is in such regard that Pereira Jr. (2013) considers the biosocial context, where physics, spirit, and consciousness will fully compose the big box of unity he calls 'nature' (but could be also classified as universal reason).

Finally, it must be exposed that, despite having been these similarities between Triple Aspect-Monism and Hegel's dialectics shown, there are still many perspectives from other philosophers that can be identified in Pereira Jr.'s (2013; 2014) model of consciousness, as himself claimed and introduced. However, this cannot be done in this essay. To make a balance, there are mainly four topics discussed in this section that summarize the correlation between Hegelian dialectics and TAM:

- (1) The triadic structure of being, nothing and becoming, – also in the form of the universal, the particular and the singular – connected to the three layers of physiological, unconscious/informational and conscious processes;
- (2) The idea of morality and ethical life as a result from physical interactions, which include intentionality, exchange of information waves and physical-chemical-biological exchanges;
- (3) The forms of Aristotle incorporated in Hegel's idea of the Absolute's movement, which overcomes the modern opposition between nature and spirit as different entities;
- (4) Hegel's considerations of the game of forces, compatible to TAM's contemporary scientific approach.

## **5. Conclusion**

In this essay, I accessed four main topics that helped support the main argument of the coherence between Triple Aspect-Monism and the Hegelian philosophy: firstly,

the modern crisis of self-interpretation result in four alternatives – dualism, monism of nature, monism of subjectivity and dialectic monism; secondly, it was pointed that, despite variations, dualism permeated these alternatives as the opposition of *Natur-* and *Geisteswissenschaften* remained by the rejection of subjectivity or by the rejection of the objectivity of nature, which led to the dialectical conception of the Hegelian philosophy as an attempt against such separation, by conceiving nature and spirit as moments of the universal reason. Thirdly, there was the rejection of Damasio's dual-aspect monism as a candidate for being an alternative for dualism in the narrow sense, as there still can be found in his model a foundationalist relation between body and consciousness; and, lastly, it was exposed how the coherent interaction of Triple-Aspect Monism with Hegelian dialectics could be presented as a neurophilosophic alternative to the modern issue that still makes itself present in contemporaneity.

Concerning such goal, there are four considerations that qualify this claim. 1) the categories of being, nothing and becoming, in the form of universality, particularity and singularity could be identified within the entities of physicality, unconsciousness and consciousness; 2) the association between physical-chemical-biological interactions with the flow of information waves, resulting in the supervenience of consciousness, which conducted towards morality, remounts the connection of ontology, epistemology and ethics, which Pereira Jr. calls The Unity of Mind, Brain and World, and Hegel would have called universal reason; 3) the appropriation of Aristotelian forms as a logical coherence, within the big box of what Pereira Jr. called 'nature', had attributed the same conception of totality which considered the different aspects, or moments of realization, of universal reason: be it nature/spirit/phenomenology, for Hegel, or be it physicality/feeling of information/consciousness, for Pereira Jr.; and 4) Hegel's considerations of the game of forces, compatible to TAM's contemporary scientific approach, represented, already, an embryo of the contemporary scientific approach Pereira Jr. incorporates, as he rests his theory on a dialectic conception of the relations among physical-chemical-biological properties.

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