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# Prolegomenon to Any Future Critical Responses to Naturalism

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## Abstract:

In this paper, I propose a programme for future critical responses to naturalism. The paper is divided into two principal parts. In Part I, after providing a topography of contemporary critical approaches to the Placement Problem, which is the operational logic of naturalism, I provide an overview of a burgeoning critical response to naturalism, which, to date, may be predominantly individuated by hostility towards the Placement Problem in two interconnected manners: an epistemic concern and a political concern. Part II of the paper focuses on four areas of future research on critical responses to naturalism arising from themes identified in Part I: the first is a challenge set by Antonio Nunziante concerning the historical and political aspects of American humanism and naturalism; the second involves centring and combining decolonial and queer theoretic discursive formations to enhance critical theoretic responses to naturalism; the third emphasises the need to put Hegel and Otto Neurath in direct conversation about anti-foundationalism, pragmatism, and the (dis)unity of science, in part to dismantle the long-standing hostility between Hegelians and logical empiricists; the fourth is on the subject of developing a critique of sexology's scientific naturalist framework for making sense of sexual arousal.

**Keywords:** scientific naturalism, critical social theory, alienation, power, Placement Problem

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## Introduction: A Topography of Recent Critiques of the Placement Problem

The underlying conceptual framework of the Placement Problem<sup>1</sup> may be construed as the operational logic of naturalism. Naturalism is the thesis that *“the image of the world provided by the natural sciences as all there is to*

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<sup>1</sup> As Huw Price (2004) suggests, the Placement Problem can be expressed in the following way:  
1. All reality is ultimately natural reality. 2. Whatever one wishes to admit into natural reality

*the world*. Naturalism, therefore, has metaphysical and methodological dimensions: (i) at the most fundamental ontological level, reality is just what the natural sciences deem it to be; (ii) our ways of intelligibly articulating reality, the ways in which we make sense of things, are ultimately justifiable only by the methods and practices of the *Naturwissenschaften*. The conjunction of (i) and (ii) is often referred to as ‘scientific naturalism’.<sup>2</sup> I take ‘scientific naturalism’ to be interchangeable with ‘scientism’, which is a variety of naturalism committed to the in-principle reducibility and/or eliminability of intentionality, normativity, first-person vocabulary to natural scientific kinds and vocabularies.

Recent hostility towards the Placement Problem and *ex hypothesi* more conservative varieties of naturalism, such as scientism, has principally stemmed from philosophers of either (i) a Hegelian inclination,<sup>3</sup> who try to dissolve the Placement Problem by articulating how it rests on the non-dialectical framework of *Verstand* (as opposed to the dialectical framework of *Vernunft*); or (ii) a (neo-)Kantian inclination,<sup>4</sup> who try to dissolve the Placement Problem by showing how it is based on presuppositions that fail to underpin different forms of experience and (therefore) different ways of knowing; or (iii) a Husserlian inclination,<sup>5</sup> who try to dissolve the Placement Prob-

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must be placed in natural reality. 3. Modality, meaning, norms, intentionality, and so on do not seem admissible into natural reality. 4. Therefore, if they are to be placed in nature, they must be forced into a category that does not seem appropriate for their specific characters; and if they cannot be placed in nature, then they must be either dismissed as non-genuine phenomena or at best regarded as parasitic second-rate phenomena. Price, H., *Naturalism without Representationalism*. In: Caro, M. De – Macarthur, D. (eds.), *Naturalism in Question*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press 2004 (hereafter *Naturalism without Representationalism*).

- 2 Giladi, P., Introduction. In: Giladi, P. (ed.), *Responses to Naturalism: Critical Perspectives from Idealism and Pragmatism*. New York, Routledge 2019, p. 1 (hereafter Introduction).
- 3 See Giladi, P., *Liberal Naturalism: The Curious Case of Hegel*. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 22, 2014, No. 2, pp. 248–270; Giladi, P., *Ostrich Nominalism and Peacock Realism: A Hegelian Critique of Quine*. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 22, 2014, No. 5, pp. 734–751; Giladi, P., *The Placement Problem and the Threat of Voyeurism*. In: Giladi, P. (ed.), *Responses to Naturalism: Critical Perspectives from Idealism and Pragmatism*. New York, Routledge 2019.
- 4 See D’Oro, G., *The Touch of King Midas: Collingwood on why actions are not events*. *Philosophical Explorations*, 21, 2018, No. 1, pp. 1–10; D’Oro, G., *Between Ontological Hubris and Epistemic Humility: Collingwood, Kant and Transcendental Arguments*. *British Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 27, 2019, No. 2, pp. 336–357; Papazoglou, A., *The Idealist Challenge to Naturalism*. In: Giladi, P. (ed.), *Responses to Naturalism: Critical Perspectives from Idealism and Pragmatism*. New York, Routledge 2019.
- 5 See Moran, D., *Husserl’s Transcendental Philosophy and the Critique of Naturalism*. *Continental Philosophy Review*, 41, 2008, No. 4, pp. 401–425; Moran, D., *Husserl’s Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2012; Moran, D., *Let’s Look at It Objectively: Why Phenomenology Cannot be Naturalised*. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, 72, 2013, pp. 89–115; and Hanna, R., *Husserl’s Crisis and Our Crisis*. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 22, 2014, No. 5, pp. 752–770.

lem using the perspective of transcendental phenomenology; or (iv) a Wittgensteinian inclination,<sup>6</sup> who try to dissolve the Placement Problem by showing how it distorts the relationship between grammar and experience, conflating saying and showing; or (v) a left-wing Sellarsian inclination,<sup>7</sup> who try to dissolve the Placement Problem by maintaining that normative categories (such as persons) are logically irreducible (but causally reducible) to ideal scientific image kinds, because normative categories are not in the business of describing and explaining in the first place; or (vi) a broadly pluralist realist inclination,<sup>8</sup> who try to dissolve the Placement Problem by relaxing and ‘catholicising’ the notion of nature in such a way that removes the spectre of reduction or elimination; or (vii) a Rortian neopragmatist inclination,<sup>9</sup> who try to dissolve the Placement Problem by revealing how it is produced by representationalist, rather than expressivist orientations, namely the idea that semantics and our conceptual vocabulary involve a mirroring word-object relationship.

In what immediately follows, I would like to provide a brief thematic summary of a burgeoning critical response to naturalism, one which tries to weave together Hegelian, ‘post-analytical’, Frankfurt School critical theoretic, pragmatist, and quasi-decolonial conceptual frameworks. Once this has been provided, I then turn to the matter of detailing a programme for future critical responses to naturalism.

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- 6 See Beale, J. – Kidd, I. J. (eds.), *Wittgenstein and Scientism*. New York, Routledge 2017.
  - 7 See O’Shea, J. R., *Wilfrid Sellars: Naturalism with a Normative Turn*. Cambridge, Polity 2007; O’Shea, J. R., *On the Structure of Sellars’s Naturalism with a Normative Turn*. In: Vries, W. A. de (ed.), *Empiricism, Perceptual Knowledge, Normativity, and Realism: Essays on Wilfrid Sellars*. Oxford, Oxford University Press 2009.
  - 8 See McDowell, J., *Mind and World*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press 1994; Putnam, H., *Realism with a Human Face*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press 1990; Putnam, H., *Words and Life*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press 1994; Putnam, H., *Pragmatism: An Open Question*. Oxford, Blackwell 1995; Putnam, H., *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press 2002; Putnam, H., *The Content and Appeal of “Naturalism”*. In: Caro, M. De – Macarthur, D. (eds.), *Naturalism in Question*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press 2004; Putnam, H., *Philosophy in an Age of Science: Physics, Mathematics, and Scepticism*. Eds. M. De Caro – D. Macarthur. Cambridge, Harvard University Press 2012; Putnam, H., *Naturalism, Realism, and Normativity*. *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*, 1, 2015, No. 2, pp. 312–328; De Caro, M., *Realism, Common Sense, and Science*. *The Monist*, 98, 2015, No. 2, pp. 197–214; De Caro, M., *Common-sense and Naturalism*. In: Giladi, P. (ed.), *Responses to Naturalism: Critical Perspectives from Idealism and Pragmatism*. New York, Routledge 2019.
  - 9 See Rorty, R., *Naturalism and Quietism*. In: Caro, M. De – Macarthur, D. (eds.), *Naturalism and Normativity*. New York, Columbia University Press 2010; Price, H., *Naturalism without Representationalism*; Macarthur, D. – Price, H., *Pragmatism, Quasi-realism and the Global Challenge*. In: Misak, C. (ed.), *The New Pragmatists*. Oxford, Oxford University Press 2007; and Macarthur, D., *Pragmatism, Metaphysical Quietism, and the Problem of Normativity*. *Philosophical Topics*, 36, 2008, No. 1, pp. 193–209.

## 1. A Burgeoning Critical Response to Naturalism

A burgeoning type of hostility towards the Placement Problem has involved fusing (i) an epistemic concern about how scientific naturalism rests on a theoretically alienating conceptual framework which prevents inquirers from doing justice to the complexity of nature and normativity et al. with (ii) a political concern about the type of epistemic power relations governing scientific naturalism.

With regard to (i), a two-level Hegelian diagnosis of Ram Neta's worry about the logical viability of liberal naturalism has been proposed.<sup>10</sup> The first-level explanation is that because reductionism is conceptually articulated in such a way, so as to make it the focal point of dialectic and inquiry, anything that is opposed to reductionism is *ipso facto* understood as incoherent at best or having a penchant for the supernatural or the irrational at worst. The second-level explanation locates the source of the philosophical disquietude expressed by the Placement Problem in a linear and dualistic conceptual structure, one which grips the philosophic imagination with such force because sense-making is exclusively articulated in terms of the kind of inferential patterns definitive of analytical thinking, namely the kind of thinking symptomatic of *Verstand*. However, central to Hegelianism is a committed opposition to treating the nomothetic qualities of the model of rationality which *Verstand* instantiates most explicitly as exhaustive of critical thinking. This is because Hegel places significant emphasis on the dialectical function of *Vernunft*, which does not conceive of rational activity as a detached, voyeuristic critical reason. Why *Vernunft* is favoured here over analytical reflection is that *Verstand* fails to be completely illustrative of our *geistige Einstellung* phenomenology, our *Erlebnis*, and our sense of ourselves as self-interpreting rational agents engaging in multifaceted forms of inquiry. For Hegel, one must go beyond a particular kind of naturalism, namely a narrow naturalism which alienates us from ourselves.

Indeed, a helpful way of making sense of Hegel's position here may be provided by reflecting on Hegel's metaphilosophy in relation to the development of post-analytic philosophy. I take the expression 'post-analytic philosophy' to refer to the Anglo-American tradition's internal critique through its gradual *rapprochement* with its continental European cousin's traditions as well as through the revival of pragmatism. Post-analytic philosophy's self-image is no longer a conception of philosophy whose principal intellectual kinship lies with the *Naturwissenschaften*. Rather, the self-image is a Hegelian con-

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10 See Neta, R., Review of Naturalism in Question. *Philosophical Review*, 116, 2007, No. 4, pp. 657–662.

ception of philosophy as a *humanistic discipline*. The move to post-analytic philosophy is meant to expand the vocabulary currently available to inquirers, and thereby reconcile the manifest image (MI) with the scientific image (SI).

Interestingly, the post-analytic position can be reasonably challenged by arguing that, rather than *resolve* the clash between the MI and the SI through joining the ‘lifeworldly’ conceptual framework of persons to the SI for the purpose of enriching and completing the SI, what Wilfrid Sellars ought to have done is adopt an Adornian, negative dialectical ‘resolution’ of the clash between the images. This strategy invites one to dismantle the Placement Problem through the logic of ‘disintegration’. For all of Sellars’s emphasis on the rule-governed features of human language and action, the informal, flexible, and humanistic norm-constituting practices of persons, crucially, involve opposition and struggle, so much so that, the space of reasons is an arena invariably comprising opposition and struggle, contestation and challenge, disruption and disturbance. Significantly, for the Adornian, opposition and struggle, contestation and challenge, disruption and disturbance are the effects of the ineliminable presence of *non-identity* in the conceptual framework of persons: most importantly, this category *eo ipso* puts the brakes on the Sellarsian idea of “an ever-expanding range of homeostatic equilibrium”.<sup>11</sup> To achieve success in philosophy would be to ‘know one’s way around’ with respect to internal tension, rather than with respect to welding into one unified, coherent image. Putting Sellars and Adorno into conversation with one another enables one to grasp that our discursive forms of life require multiple images, multiple pictures, which are in conflict with one another, because conflict, rather than a transcending *Aufhebung*, is emblematic of cognitive life itself.

On the pragmatist side of things regarding the epistemic concern about the type of vocabulary available to inquirers, it is worth situating this part of our discussion around two different kinds of pragmatist: Huw Price and Jürgen Habermas. Price’s subject naturalism assumes that ‘the subject’ can be divorced from its broader context of surrounding objects (the experienced world) and studied separately – which assumes the subject to be a discrete individual, rather than, for instance, a node in a web of internal relations. The ensuing dualism and nominalism of Price subject’s naturalism invoke the natural world as a desert landscape devoid of non-anthropocentric intelligibility, and conceive of inquiry as involving a sparse conception of discourse

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11 Christias, D., The Non-Conceptual Dimension of Social Mediation: Towards a Materialist *Aufhebung* of Hegel. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 27, 2019, No. 2, pp. 448–473, esp. p. 465.

which seeks to limit the kinds of conversation one can have. Price's position is, therefore, a puzzling exercise in epistemic self-harm.

Habermas's pragmatism, by contrast, is not a puzzling exercise in epistemic self-harm. For Habermas, knowledge-constitutive interests (the steering drives of culture) are not the kind of phenomena that are candidates for re-description and translation into the vocabulary and grammar of the natural sciences. Crucially, recognising the irreducibility and ineliminability of knowledge-constitutive interests does not mean there is any ineffable mysteriousness to these 'quasi-transcendental' phenomena. Much in the same way that John McDowell's variety of liberal naturalism has argued there is no inherently anathematic connection between 'first nature' (natural scientific discourse) and 'second nature' (development of moral, socio-cultural, aesthetic sensibilities), Habermas should not be read as claiming that there is no room for thinking the heterogeneity of knowledge-constitutive interests is in square conflict with the claims of natural science. Insisting that knowledge-constitutive interests are conceptually irreducible to purely causal and descriptive kinds in no way disqualifies oneself from being scientific or from regarding the natural sciences as authoritative ways of making sense of things. Indeed, scientism, construed as part of the ideological tendency to establish formal technical interests as hegemonic over communicative interests, necessarily presupposes the grammar of the MI in an effort to excise it in favour of the SI.

The theme of ideological tendency is central to (ii), namely a political concern about the type of epistemic power relations governing scientific naturalism and its theoretically alienating conceptual framework. To this end, developing a Foucauldian critique of scientific naturalism, which argues that the levelling nature of nomothetic rationality and its conservative naturalistic vocabulary involves regulatory discourse, has been very recently put forward: anything that resists placeability/locatability is labelled 'odd'. By being thus visibly marked, 'odd' phenomena become 'queer' phenomena, which then become 'problematic' phenomena. They are, thereby, construed in need of discipline (and even punishment). Understood in this Foucauldian way, the most pressing problem with the disciplinary framework of scientific naturalism is that the erasure of the *sui generis* features of the normative space of reasons amounts to a debilitating variety of alienation in which humanity is estranged from its pluralist matrix of sense-making practices. Thus, scientific naturalist disciplinarity produces subjected and practised minds, 'docile' minds. While post-structuralists, by and large, have general worries about scientific naturalism, and one source of such worries would be a Foucauldian suspicion about the imbrication of power and knowledge so that the natural sciences cannot ever possibly be value-neutral in the first

place, it is well worth extending that suspicion to scientific naturalism as a philosophical project.

The epistemic concern about how scientific naturalism rests on a theoretically alienating conceptual framework, and the political concern about the type of epistemic power relations combine on the following matter: what is lost in the wake of scientific naturalism's imperialistic and colonising way of rendering life, nature, and cognition intelligible. As we have seen, the vocabulary of the ideal scientific image displays hegemonising tendencies, to the extent that there is a type of, what one may call, 'disciplinary double-consciousness' resulting from this type of cultural imperialism. Under the ideology of scientism, not only is the web of meanings of the humanities defined from a STEM perspective, but humanists invariably start to regard their own discursive formations and sense-making practices from the STEM gaze. The risk of this "depleted vocabulary"<sup>12</sup> is forgetting and losing the ability to think in imaginative humanist ways. If one is to eventually overcome scientific naturalism, it seems very reasonable to propose one must develop speculative sense-making practices, in which hermeneutic power can be rooted in the communicative power of discourse about sense-making. Debunking the one-sided and one-dimensional nomothetic framework in favour of a dialectical framework involves a quasi-decolonial practice of combatting and reversing the circulation of epistemic power. Such second-order modes of reflection necessarily presuppose the kind of self-conscious attitudes and intentional vocabulary of *Geist*.

Having articulated an overview of the burgeoning critical response to naturalism, I now wish to turn the discussion to four issues arising from this critical response that are currently underdeveloped. The first issue is a challenge set by Antonio Nunziante addressing the historical aspects of American humanism and naturalism, which directly bear on the political dimensions of the naturalism debate. This is important. The second issue concerns centring and combining decolonial and queer theoretic discursive formations to enhance critical theoretic responses to naturalism. Bringing in, with a view to centring, decolonial and queer theoretic logics will significantly deepen critical theoretic research on the interconnection between theoretically alienating vocabularies and epistemic power relations. This is important. The third issue concerns the need to put Hegel and Otto Neurath in direct conversation about anti-foundationalism, pragmatism, and the unity of science, in part to dismantle the long-standing hostility between Hegelians and logical empiricists with a view to think more deeply about the politics of naturalism and critical responses to naturalism. This is important. The

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12 Diamond, C., Losing Your Concepts. *Ethics*, 98, 1988, No. 2, pp. 255–277, esp. p. 263.



fourth issue concerns developing a critique of sexology's scientific naturalist framework for making sense of sexual arousal. Such a critique significantly deepens the interconnection between theoretically alienating vocabularies and epistemic power relations. This is important.

## 2.1 Nunziante's Challenge

Nunziante, in his review of *Responses to Naturalism: Critical Perspectives from Idealism and Pragmatism*, devotes some time to the contention that “[the ideal scientific image becomes] epistemically authoritarian and imperialistic by forcing other forms of inquiry to adopt the discursive recourses and grammars of formal disciplines that are different in various ways to the manifest image's web of meaning”.<sup>13</sup> He notes such a position “seems to be characterised by political as well as philosophical nuances”.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Nunziante is sympathetic to the political-cum-philosophical approach to scientific naturalism and the Placement Problem, writing that “[n]aturalism is more than a theoretical episode, rather it is a properly ideological discourse bound up with the institutional form of contemporary Western society”.<sup>15</sup> Nunziante then proposes that the analysis can and should be deepened by paying more attention to the history of naturalism, at least with respect to American humanism. For that matter, he draws attention to Arthur E. Murphy's 1945 review of *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*, which “denounced the authoritarian character of American naturalism”.<sup>16</sup> Quoting Murphy, “naturalists seem at times to be maintaining that no one can differ from them [...] without thereby showing himself to be at least a crypto-fascist and enemy of free Inquiry”.<sup>17</sup>

I think there is much to conceptually mine here. I agree with Nunziante's contention that “an analysis of the historical processes that in the 1940s caused the American naturalist debate to go beyond the form of a philosophical discourse to become embodied in academies, institutions and worldwide organisations”<sup>18</sup> is much-needed. On this very point, while there is forthcoming philosophical work that establishes a conceptual link between (a) the

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13 Giladi, P. (ed.), *Responses to Naturalism: Critical Perspectives from Idealism and Pragmatism*. New York, Routledge 2019, p. 85.

14 Nunziante, A., Review of *Responses to Naturalism: Critical Perspectives from Idealism and Pragmatism*. *Hegel Bulletin*, 42, 2021, pp. 152–156, esp. p. 153 (hereafter Review of *Responses to Naturalism*).

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Murphy, A. E., Review of *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*. *Journal of Philosophy*, 42, 1945, pp. 400–417, esp. p. 404.

18 Nunziante, A., Review of *Responses to Naturalism*, pp. 153–154.

colonisation of the lifeworld by the capitalist mode of production and (b) the colonisation of the space of reasons by nomothetic vocabulary,<sup>19</sup> where such a conceptual link might go some way to addressing the general aspects of what Nunziante has written, it would not be reasonable to claim that such work has done justice to the specifics of his challenge here.

Though obviously not ostensibly concerned with idealist, second-generation Frankfurt School, and post-structuralist vocabularies, Stephen Weldon's *The Scientific Spirit of American Humanism* (2020) does much to shed light on what Nunziante has called 'the civil agenda of naturalism'.<sup>20</sup> This monograph is an excellent example of what Nunziante has in mind regarding the specifics of his challenge. In this respect, then, I think one highly promising and needed future research project on critical responses to naturalism *qua* their political nuances would involve detailing the history of how scientific naturalism and American humanism became so intimately connected and politically framed: there is something fascinating about the specifically *American* attitude to naturalism. For, on the one hand, scientific naturalism had been modelled as the exact sort of epistemically, morally, and politically virtuous democratic experimentalist sensibility, one which is symptomatic of John Dewey's pragmatism and its approach to fixing both inquiry and the situation. Whereas on the other hand – and crucially, before Stanley Cavell and Richard Rorty respectively entered the conceptual field here – there were American theorists contending that Deweyan democracy and experimental educational *praxis* are stymied by the ascendancy of scientific naturalism. To this extent, then, any future critical response to naturalism would do very well to meet the details of Nunziante's challenge, build on Weldon's work, and elaborate the processes historically operative in the U.S.

## 2.2 Decoloniality and Queer Theory

As previously mentioned, the second theme of the burgeoning critical responses to naturalism is oriented to discussing the power relations governing the Placement Problem that are logically connected with the exercise of nomothetic reason. On this subject, there is forthcoming work on decolonising the space of reasons. However, such work has only briefly touched on a *formal* (and certainly not material) parallel with Frantz Fanon's account of the colonial mentality, which elaborates the damaged subjectivity of those

19 See Giladi, P., *Scientism as Ideology; Speculative Naturalism as Qualified-Decoloniality*. In: Corti, L. – Schülein, J.-L. (eds.), *Life and Cognition: Understanding Nature between Classical German Philosophy and Contemporary Debates*. London, Springer 2021; forthcoming.

20 In personal correspondence with me.

subjected to colonisation. Additionally, such work has merely pointed to Walter Mignolo's contemporary approach to decoloniality, which differs from decolonisation in terms of political epistemic scope and ambition.<sup>21</sup>

Because decoloniality fuses epistemic and political concerns together, I think there is much to be gained from fully developing a critical response to naturalism that focuses on the *formal* aspects of the conceptual parallel between (a) the colonial mentality and 'docile' minds and (b) the kind of intellectual 'double-consciousness' humanists experience in higher education institutions, which now increasingly internalise neoliberal jargon and model their financial viability exclusively on STEM models. If one is serious about *this* direction of critical theoretic travel, one which exceeds the Habermasian framework of the clash between system-integrated patterns of reproducing ideologically-pathologised culture, personality, and society that is decidedly at odds with the background communicative discourses and grammars of forms of life, then I think one is increasingly obliged to centre Aníbal Quijano's notion of the colonality of power in future research.

For, if one accepts that the function of radical social critique of scientific naturalism is to identify and break unequal power relations, then the epistemology of this radical critical theory of society is likely to involve the kind of creatively subversive practices and *Weltanschauungen* associated with Mignolo's concept of epistemic disobedience (*desobediencia epistémica*) and Quijano's notion of de-linking (*desprendimiento*). Epistemic disobedience and de-linking are the logical motors of decoloniality. They are *creatively* subversive for at least two reasons. First, epistemic disobedience and de-linking design the relation between the architecture of epistemic power and the organisation of the logical space of reasons as no longer involving any kind of colonial feedback loop that not only privileges one grammar and vocabulary over others, but also seeks to subject and dominate other grammars and vocabularies. Second, the effort to radically re-design the architecture of power and the organisation of the space of reasons to ensure a virtuous feedback loop is a cathartic and convulsive act that goes beyond those progressive discourses that strive to 'make room for' or 'eke out novelty' in existing conceptual spaces. As Quijano and Mignolo respectively write,

[i]t is necessary to extricate oneself from all the linkages between rationality/modernity and coloniality, first of all, and definitely from all power which is not constituted by free decisions made by free people. It is the instrumentalisation of the reasons for power, of colonial power in the first

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21 See Moosavi (2020) for further on this. Moosavi, L., The Decolonial Bandwagon and the Dangers of Intellectual Decolonisation. *International Review of Sociology*, 30, 2020, No. 2, pp. 332–354.

place, which produced distorted paradigms of knowledge and spoiled the liberating promises of modernity. The alternative, then, is clear: the destruction of the coloniality of world power.<sup>22</sup>

Epistemic disobedience takes us to a different place... to spatial sites of struggles and building rather than to a new temporality within the same space (from Greece, to Rome, to Paris, to London, to Washington DC).<sup>23</sup>

The decolonial point about not focusing on finding space in existing modalities that allow or tolerate alternative vocabularies and sense-making frameworks is a deeply powerful revisionary metaphysical one. Indeed, I think there is scope to further enhance it by bringing in an ever-growing critical theoretic tradition, one which is typified by its dismantling of the still-dominant conservative/liberal paradigm frame: queer theory.

There seems to be no barrier, in principle, to thinking that, for example, conceptual features of Michael Warner's and Judith Butler's respective critiques of 'normalising' discourses and same-sex marriage<sup>24</sup> may be employed to turbo-boost left-wing Sellarsianism. More generally speaking, since the Placement Problem's (ideological) legitimacy rests on how it has weaponised the J. L. Mackie-inspired panic about queerness *simpliciter*, it seems to make conceptual, as well as, political sense to develop a queer theoretic dismantling of the Placement Problem and scientific naturalism itself. *Prima facie*, however, one would not be remiss for not immediately assenting to how, for instance, Butler's queering of kinship structures bears on left-wing Sellarsian concerns.

To clarify things, then, it is important to grasp the central logic of queer theory, namely the orientation towards a desire to (i) identify and disclose heteronormativity and 'normal' as ideological and (ii) debunk the still-dominant liberal paradigm. For Butler, the worry about the turn towards same-sex marriage is that homosexual couples, who historically have been outside the sexual norm, suddenly start to become assimilated into that norm through internalising the norms of heterosexual marriage. To put this differently, her concern is that this sexual minority desire the same kinship arrangements as heterosexuals, and that by conforming, 'normality' and heteronormativity still exert power over the way in which sexuality is officially

22 Quijano, A., Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality [1999]. *Cultural Studies*, 21, 2007, No. 2–3, pp. 168–178, esp. p. 177.

23 Mignolo, W., Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option: A Manifesto. *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, 1, 2011, No. 2, pp. 44–66, esp. p. 45.

24 See Warner, M., *The Trouble with Normal*. New York, The Free Press 1999; Butler, J., *Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?* *Differences*, 13, 2002, No. 1, pp. 14–44.

constituted. For queer theorists, then, the critique of same-sex marriage is based on the idea that homosexuals have started becoming obsessed with seeking recognition from the *status quo*, that they have become pathologically dependent on receiving recognition and legitimation from the state. Because marriage in and of itself is a conservative institution, marriage *eo ipso* is a barrier to progressive configurations of the multiplicity of kinship structures, many of which actively resist normalisation by marriage and which are operationalised and made distinct by how they are irreducible to normalisation. The claim to liberal progressiveness in the wake of the legalisation of same-sex marriage, then, seems to not just be premature, but also a disturbing form of coded ideology. For, not being married and not being legitimated by the state produces a debilitating doubt about the metaphysical legitimacy of one's non-marital relationship. This variety of doubt is hermeneutically crippling and deeply distressing. It prevents a healthy practical relation-to-one's-beloved. But, as fascinating as this is, how does it bear any conceptual relation to combating the subsumption of the manifest image in the ideal scientific image?

*Queering the manifest image* would involve a marked suspicion that the liberal discourses that seek to 'make room' and 'find a place' for conceptually recalcitrant phenomena, such as normativity, concede far too much ground to *any* naturalist, to the extent that one even seeks the naturalist's approval for one's making sense of conceptually recalcitrant phenomena in a way that does not disturb the discursive *status quo*. Just like many liberals often contend that a gay couple is a perfectly normal and acceptable kinship structure – i.e. the gay couple is just like the straight couple, but the only minor difference between the couples is the sexual orientation – liberal naturalists will insist that normativity et al. are nothing 'spooky'. Queering the manifest image puts significant pressure on this kind of discourse with a view to a wholesale revisionary metaphysics that is tantamount to an especially radical response to Sellars's own preference for smoothly integrating the manifest image with the scientific image *via* logical irreducibility-cum-causal reducibility.

Thinking from the queer theoretic perspective reveals the double-blind that needs to be overcome, where such transformative work can be realised through combining this critical perspective with the decolonial logics of Quijano and Mignolo: if one seeks legitimation from either conservative or liberal naturalists, one ends up narrowing the discursive field through internalising the norms of conservative or liberal naturalism that maintain hegemonic epistemic power *qua* setting the parameters of what is possibly articulable in logical space, as well as the specific and appropriate rules in playing the game of giving and asking for reasons here. On the flipside,

those who actively resist, challenge the discursive *status quo*, and aim to overcome the desire for this ideological recognition have their revisionary vocabulary at heightened risk of ‘derealisation’, to use Butler’s expression. In sum, the first horn of this dilemma is the cost of staying true to one’s alternative discursive formation, namely being vulnerable to the symbolic harms of hostility to the queering orientation, “the defamation of alternative modes of thought which contradict the established universe of discourse”.<sup>25</sup> The second horn of the dilemma is that in desiring the recognition of those in positions of established epistemic power, one forsakes the development of radical, creative, new, inclusive, polydimensional discourse, which in turn prevents the articulation of a conception of the manifest image and the space of reasons which is genuinely reflective of these queer phenomena and how they operate.

### 2.3 Psychoanalytic Presuppositions?

Returning to Foucault now, one of his most enduring contributions to the genealogy and archaeology of knowledge is his view that modern natural science emerges from the Inquisition’s model of investigation:

[i]n their historical formation, measure, inquiry, and examination were all means of exercising power and, at the same time, rules for establishing knowledge. Measure: a means of establishing or restoring order, the right order, in the combat of men or the elements; but also a matrix of mathematical and physical knowledge. The inquiry: a means of establishing or restoring facts, events, actions, properties, rights; but also a matrix of empirical knowledge and natural sciences. The examination: a means of setting or reinstating the standard, the rule, the distribution, the qualification, the exclusion.<sup>26</sup>

Invariably, it would not be a continental philosophical-leaning intellectual party without bringing in psychoanalysis into the conversation here, not least because Foucault’s archaeological model is psychoanalytically saturated. I confess, though, that my knowledge of psychoanalytic theory is restricted to elementary Freudian and Jungian frameworks. I have next to no familiarity with Lacanian psychoanalysis. However, despite my lack of detailed psychoanalytic knowledge, I would tentatively insist that Foucault’s

25 Marcuse, H., *One-Dimensional Man*. London–New York, Routledge 2002, p. 178.

26 Foucault, M., *Essential Works, Volume 1: Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth*. Ed. P. Rabinow. New York, New Press 1997, pp. 17–18.

position gives good reason to think that what might be legitimately termed the *nomothetic drive* is bound up with disciplinary drives. Talk of drives in this context has been previously touched on but not fully elaborated.<sup>27</sup>

It strikes me that developing this line of philosophical inquiry, which is part of a currently conceptually uncharted territory, is very much worth pursuing. For, assuming one is interested in questions of power and disclosing the underlying motivations of clashing *Weltanschauungen*, then clearly and rigorously incorporating psychoanalytic approaches and sense-making frameworks would be an engaging, complementary direction of travel for future research on naturalism *simpliciter*, as well as future research on *critical responses to various kinds of naturalism*. In principle at least, the activity of clearly and rigorously disclosing the psychoanalytic presuppositions of scientific naturalism, differing types of liberal naturalism, and near-naturalism, would signify an original contribution to the philosophical literature that fills a gap, not least because, as far as I am aware, neither mainstream Anglo-American nor heterodox/post-analytic approaches to naturalism have thus far engaged (positively or negatively) with psychoanalysis.

Focusing for the moment solely on Alex Rosenberg's contemporary variety of scientism, it intuitively strikes me that a psychoanalytic approach here may profess that some kind of Apollonian fetish and fear of being at home with complexity in nature are jointly operating in the background of Rosenberg's position and *Weltanschauung*:

What is the world really like? It's fermions and bosons, and everything that can be made up of them, and nothing that can't be made up of them. All the facts about fermions and bosons determine or 'fix' all the other facts about reality and what exists in this universe or any other if, as physics may end up showing, there are other ones. Another way of expressing this fact-fixing by physics is to say that all the other facts—the chemical, biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural facts super-vene on the physical facts and are ultimately explained by them. And if physics can't in principle fix a putative fact, it is no fact after all.<sup>28</sup>

27 See Giladi, P., Introduction. Indeed, the Foucault-inspired contention that the nomothetic drive is bound up with disciplinary drives also resonates with (a) Weber's sociological analysis of the sub-processes of rationalisation *qua* disenchantment, (b) Adorno & Horkheimer's view of the Enlightenment as constitutively obsessed with violence and domination in the manner of de Sade's Juliette, and (c) Habermas's account of the knowledge-constitutive interest of nomothetic inquiry.

28 Rosenberg, A., Disenchanted Naturalism. In: Bashour, B. – Muller, H. D. (eds.), *Contemporary Philosophical Naturalism and Its Implications*. New York–London, Routledge 2014, p. 9.

## 2.4 Putting Hegel and Neurath in Conversation

Rosenberg is perhaps the leading contemporary devout follower of an unqualified, imperialistic, hierarchical Unity of Science Thesis (UIHUST).<sup>29</sup> Such a position contends that every phenomenon explicable by special sciences, such as biology and psychology, is in principle reductively explicable by fundamental physics. Suffice to say that UIHUST is naïve, ‘greedy’ (in Daniel Dennett’s sense), and, above all, an *easily* refutable Comtean positivist position, so much so that UIHUST is not taken especially seriously in contemporary philosophy of science.<sup>30</sup> Having said that, even though pragmatic realism in philosophy of science does not entail – and in fact, strictly speaking, undermines – UIHUST, the following pertinent question arises: ‘why, from a diagnostic perspective, does scientism still persist?’ Scientism is, therefore, peculiar, because it persists despite resting on implausible grounds, since “the omnipresent neo-Pythagoreanism of contemporary science is surely not adequately justified by its empirical successes”.<sup>31</sup>

Crucially, on the point about positivism, Nancy Cartwright et al. (1996) have convincingly argued that UIHUST is *not* attributable to Otto Neurath and his variety of logical positivism, especially considering his anti-foundationalism, anti-pyramidism, and articulation of an ‘encyclopaedia-model’. This is because Neurath’s very nuanced conception of the Unity of Science involves mapping out the relationship between philosophy, the exact sciences, and the special sciences as involving multiple vocabularies interacting with each other as a discursive constellation of ‘mosaics’ involving ‘systematisation from below’. It should, therefore, come as no surprise why Neurath was the leading figure on the Vienna Circle’s left-wing.

However, what should come as a surprise, given the above characterisation of Neurath’s position, is the paucity of research on establishing a productive conversation between Neurath and Hegel on *these* philosophical issues.<sup>32</sup> For,

29 Nagel, E., *The Structure of Science*. New York, Harcourt, Brace and World 1961; and Oppenheim, P. – Putnam, H., *The Unity of Science as a Working Hypothesis*. In: Feigl, H. – et al. (eds.), *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 2. Minneapolis, Minnesota University Press 1958.

30 Pragmatic realism in philosophy of science does not entail – and in fact, strictly speaking, undermines – UIHUST. Given this, the following pertinent question arises: ‘why, from a diagnostic perspective, does scientism still persist?’ Scientism is, therefore, peculiar, because it persists despite resting on implausible grounds, since “the omnipresent neo-Pythagoreanism of contemporary science is surely not adequately justified by its empirical successes”. Dupré, J., *The Disorder of Things: Metaphysical Foundations of the Disunity of Science*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press 1995, p. 224.

31 Ibid.

32 Rockmore (1989) is the only paper that I am aware of that puts between Hegel and logical empiricists (principally Rudolf Carnap) directly in touch with one another on the subject of the



Neurath's fondness for heterogeneity and pluralism means that an engaging discussion is to be had between his encyclopaedia-model and Hegel's metaphilosophy, his philosophy of nature, and his construal of *Geist* as discursive amphibians.<sup>33</sup> The principal intellectual advantage of starting a serious and much-welcomed conversation between Hegel and Neurath, something which has never been attempted, is that it opens conceptual space for rich constructive disagreement about, for example, the logical structure of the sciences and their interrelations, the place of metaphysics, and the nature of inquiry itself. Because rich constructive disagreement between idealists and positivists is properly communicative and devoid of the regrettable tendency endemic in both camps to grossly mischaracterise one another, rich constructive disagreement would bring about a much needed and welcomed *rapprochement* between idealists and positivists. This would be evidenced by the structure of the dialectic, which would involve (i) a *suasive* interplay between Hegelian speculative naturalists and Neurathian pragmatist positivists on the subject of metaphysics, and (ii) a debate between Hegelian speculative naturalists and Neurathian pragmatist positivists concerning *explanatory* arguments for a nuanced naturalism and a nuanced unity of science, anti-foundationalism, anti-pyramidism, and anti-reductionism.

The final area for future research on critical responses to naturalism I have in mind is one which involves an idiosyncratic critical theoretic take on the theme of alienation, discursive impoverishment, and negative socio-cultural affect. However, what individuates this direction of research travel *qua* the concern about conceptual loss is not only how the proposed subject-matter is bound up with various psychoanalytic presuppositions which need unpacking, but also how the worry about conceptual loss in the context of the proposed subject-matter provides a way of enabling the literature on critical responses to naturalism and the ever-increasing literature on critical social epistemology bear on another.

## 2.5 Flattened Affectivity: Naturalisation as Injury to Erotic Dignity

The proposed subject-matter concerns sexual arousal.<sup>34</sup> In one sense, this would not be a domain of inquiry one would intuitively deem as evocative of responses to naturalism, considering how more technical issues concerning normativity, intentionality, personhood, 'second nature', meaning, (dis)unity

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unity of science. Rockmore, T., Hegel and the Unity of Science Programme. *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 6, 1989, No. 1, pp. 331–346.

33 See LA I:53–55.

34 This is not to be conflated with sexual desire.

of science, and so on are omnipresent in historical and contemporary Anglo-American discourses on naturalism. However, in another sense, the subject of sexual arousal is perhaps one of the most philosophically appropriate to address when responding to naturalism, particularly if one is interested in power relations and socio-cultural affect.

Despite important research on women's sexual response cycle by, for example, Helen Singer Kaplan (1974) and Rosemary Basson (2000, 2002), and despite the DSM-5's (2013) attempted re-conceptualisation of women's sexual arousal, which displays welcome sensitivity to the phenomenological complexities of women's experiences of arousal in the wake of the known low concordance between subjective reports of arousal and genital response in women, much contemporary sexology is still wedded to the underlying physiological-centric framework of Masters & Johnson (1966). Indeed, some sexologists wish to double-down on the Masters & Johnson discourse and sense-making paradigm here, writing that "[w]ith the development of ambulatory psychophysiological equipment, more naturalistic assessments of women's sexual concordance will be possible".<sup>35</sup> To this end, then, some sexologists insist that sex will be good again tomorrow only if the erotic is naturalised. It should, therefore, come to not surprise that the Masters & Johnson framework ideologically maintains its epistemic power on the back of the legitimacy of scientific naturalism. To this end, if one wishes to dismantle the Masters & Johnson paradigm, this requires dismantling scientific naturalism itself. To my mind at least, there are two principal issues with the scientific naturalist framework which are serious enough to merit abandoning the scientific naturalist framework.

First, the naturalisation of the erotic lifeworld constitutes a specific type of symbolic injury to erotic agents, where the injury in question concerns suffering from, following Alasdair MacIntyre, conceptual amnesia, as opposed to thinking, talking, speaking, and writing *as if* one inhabited a world from which phenomenologico-hermeneutic terms for communicating about the erotic had withered away. The idea of reducing sexual arousal to ostensible physiological markers, such as vasocongestion, tumescence, and vaginal and clitoral lubrication, 'tames' the erotic through a naturalising simplification, thereby making the erotic placeable/locatable and consequently easier to discursively (and politically) manage, epistemically (and politically) organise, and render intelligible. This taming of the erotic strikes me as a type of coercive de-sexualisation, to the extent that what started out (and

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35 Chivers, M. L. – Seto, M. C. – Lalumiere, M. L. – Laan, E. – Grimbos, T., Agreement of self-reported and genital measures of sexual arousal in men and women: A meta-analysis. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 39, 2010, No. 1, pp. 5–56, esp. p. 50.

is) deeply personal and life-affirming mutates into ‘flattened affectivity’, to use Audré Lorde’s expression. Indeed, the constant search for physiological markers of women’s sexual arousal, especially in the light of the *low* concordance between subjective reports and genital response, ironically reveals that such inquiry is deeply ignorant of embodiment and hostile to women’s testimonial competencies.

This leads me to the second point here. The dominant scientific naturalist discourses about sexual arousal, rather than contribute to the pro-sex idea of women’s liberation *via* sexual liberation, contribute to disciplining women. The vocabulary of these discourses forms, what may be termed, an ‘ideological feedback loop’ with the erotically oppressive controlling image of female sexual arousal constitutive of the pornography industry. The alienating regulatory force of this controlling image, at the epistemic level, involves, what Kristie Dotson has termed, ‘testimonial smothering’. This is because women, under such increasing pressure, have to modify their own self-reflections of sexual arousal into a language that renders their sexual arousal more intelligible to men (at the cost of being fully expressive of women’s sexual agency and their non-androcentrally-steered erotic subjectivities). So, instead of ensuring sex will be good again tomorrow, the naturalisation of the erotic makes sex worse.

### 3. Conclusion

Having first provided a topography of contemporary critical approaches to the Placement Problem, and then provided a brief thematic summary of a burgeoning critical response to naturalism, one which tries to weave together Hegelian, ‘post-analytical’, Frankfurt School critical theoretic, pragmatist, and quasi-decolonial conceptual frameworks, what I hope to have achieved in this paper is to map out a promising programme for future research on critical responses to naturalism. The task is to “keep conversation going”,<sup>36</sup> by meeting Nunziante’s challenge, by centring and combining decolonial and queer theoretic discursive formations to enhance critical theoretic responses to naturalism, by putting Hegel and Neurath in direct conversation, and by developing a critique of sexology’s scientific naturalist framework for making sense of sexual arousal.

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36 Rorty, R., *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton, Princeton University Press 1979, p. 377.

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