

## The Concept of Teleology in Kant, Hegel, and Marx

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**Abstract.** Breaking with Aristotle's *Physics*, Kant effects a theoretical reconception of teleology. It is this paper's contention that the truth of the Kantian conception of teleology as 'a purposiveness of nature in behalf of our faculty for cognizing it' is not that of being a solution to Hume's problem of induction or the condition for the possibility of subjective cognition of the empirical, but that it is a theoretical means of the subjective domination over the objective. A materialist reading of Hegel's criticism of Kant's antinomy of teleological judgment in the *Science of Logic* is then proposed. Finally, the non-teleological nature of capital is demonstrated.

**Keywords:** Capital, Hegel, Kant, Marx, Metaphysics, Teleology.

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Teleology, as a science, thus does not belong to any doctrine at all...  
-Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*

### I. The Kantian Reconception of Teleology

For Aristotle, in the *Physics*, the philosophical field we anachronistically call teleology was no more than the classification of the various explanations for an object's properties: 'That, then, is how many species of cause there are' (195a22).<sup>2</sup> With Kant however, the concept of teleology undergoes a theoretical change, becoming teleology as we conceive of it today. Teleology is no longer the logic that concerns itself with the question of why an object is the way that it is, but rather that concerns itself with proving how an object might be purposeful for the subject: 'The judgment about the objective purposiveness of nature is called teleological'.<sup>3</sup> From this shift in its conception, the terminological equivocation of *telos* as the cause of an object being thus, *telos* as the supposed purpose of an object, and *telos* understood in a merely chronological sense as a temporal conclusion comes about.<sup>4</sup>

With Aristotle, the given empirical representation –bronze, silver, a ratio, a father, etc.– is brought under, subsumed, under one of the philosophical concepts.<sup>5</sup> Were Kant to have kept to Aristotle's conception of teleology, no more than determining judgments would have been possible: 'The power of judgment can be regarded either as a mere faculty for reflecting on a given representation, in accordance with a certain principle, for the sake of a concept that is thereby made possible, or as a faculty for determining an underlying concept through a given empirical representation. In the first case it is the reflecting, in the second case the determining power of judgment'.<sup>6</sup>

The fact then that Kant's teleological system would prove reflective teleological judgments proves its non-Aristotelianism and the reconception of teleology. In this reconception, the Aristotelian *causa finalis* is brought out over and above the others: 'And again, a thing may be a cause as the end. That is what something is for, as health might be what a walk is for' (195a22).<sup>7</sup> If this is so, it is itself purposeful. For the *causa finalis* is the only

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<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Physics: Books I and II* (Oxford University Press, 2006) 30.

<sup>3</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) 24.

<sup>4</sup> Throughout this paper, due to its various inflections of teleology, teleological, etc., I will use the Latin translation, rather than the Greek *aitia*.

<sup>5</sup> Aristotle, 28-9.

<sup>6</sup> Kant, *ibid.*, 15.

<sup>7</sup> Aristotle, 29.

cause in which it is possible that the subject determine its own self: bronze and silver, as objects, cannot self-determine; ratios, as objects, cannot self-determine; the father and the child, as subjects, can self-determine, however this is not a relation of the subject to itself; the man who takes a walk for his health, however, is a possible case of subjective self-determination. The emphasis on the *causa finalis* is, therefore, a means of promoting the idea of a self-determined subject over and against the objective. With Kant, teleology ceases to be, as it was for Aristotle, an investigation into the object as such and becomes rather a theoretical means to the subjective domination over the objective.

The claim of ‘the concept of a purposiveness of nature in behalf of our faculty for cognizing it’ serves to make nature an accessory to the transcendental subject and this is effected by means of teleology.<sup>8</sup> This subjective (theoretical) domination is however only the reflection of the objective (practical) domination over the objective that was then occurring: namely, the domination over nature in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries by industrial capitalism. As a theoretical means of subjective domination over the objective, the Kantian concept of transcendental freedom and the Kantian reconception of teleology share a common motive.<sup>9</sup> Not only in the concept of transcendental freedom can nature, as causality but also as objective determination, be summarily dismissed, but too, by means of the concept of teleology, all of nature becomes subordinated to man: ‘and only in the human being, although in him only as a subject of morality, is the unconditional legislation with regard to ends to be found, which therefore makes him alone capable of being a final end, to which the whole of nature is teleologically subordinated’.<sup>10</sup> The truth of Kant’s assertion of ‘a purposiveness of nature in behalf of our faculty for cognizing it’ is thus that it is a theoretical means to the subjective domination over the objective, and not that it is a solution to Hume’s problem of induction or the condition for the possibility of subjective cognition of the empirical.<sup>11</sup>

This is evinced still more forcefully in the ‘Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History’: ‘The fourth and last step which reason took, thereby raising man completely above animal society, was his (albeit obscure) realisation that he is the true *end of nature*, and that nothing which lives on earth can compete with him in this respect [...] and he now no longer regarded them as fellow creatures, but as means and instruments to be used at will for the attainment of whatever ends he pleased’.<sup>12</sup>

The initial premiss is that of the ‘final end *a priori* [...] be[ing] nothing other than the human being (each rational being in the world) under moral laws’: ‘the existence of rational beings under moral laws, can alone be conceived of as the final end of the existence of a world’.<sup>13</sup> It is this teleological final end that then subsequently possibilizes relative external teleological judgments. For, in Kant, the power of judgment is always already determined by the practical: ‘the final end of morality (which alone makes possible the concept of an end)’.<sup>14</sup> The teleological final end must first be assumed in order to subsequently prove the validity of relative external teleological judgments. Aesthetic teleological judgments are grounded in morality and, circularly, morality must be able to adduce aesthetic teleological judgments.

This is because the Kantian system of morality requires proof of nature as teleological. It is not that aesthetic judgments are morally teleological, but that they must be made to be morally teleological: ‘Both [the beautiful and the sublime], as explanations of aesthetically universally valid judging are related to subjective grounds, namely on the one hand to those of sensibility, as it is purposive in behalf on the contemplative understanding, on the other in opposition to those, as purposive for the ends of practical reason, and yet both, united in the same subject, are purposive in relation to the moral feeling. The beautiful prepares us to love something, even nature, without interest; the sublime, to esteem it, even contrary to our (sensible) interest’.<sup>15</sup>

The truth Kant recognizes when he says that his reconception of teleology allows him to break free of natural necessity directly becomes falsified as soon as he claims its independence from his moral system: ‘That which presupposes this *a priori* and without regard to the practical, namely, the power of judgment, provides the mediating concept between the concept of nature and the concept of freedom, which makes possible the transition from the purely theoretical to the purely practical, from lawfulness in accordance with the former to the final end in accordance with the latter, in the concept of a purposiveness of nature’.<sup>16</sup> In the Kantian system, the concept of teleology is the nexus between aesthetics and morality. This central essentiality of the reconception of teleology to Kant’s moral system is further proved in the fact that it is never a question of

<sup>8</sup> Kant, *ibid.*, 8.

<sup>9</sup> For reasons of space and time, and because others have already done exceptional work on the subject, I will not enter into here Kant’s claims concerning the ‘internal purposiveness in organized beings’ and the critiques it subsequently exposes itself to from Darwinism. Kant, *ibid.*, 247.

<sup>10</sup> Kant, *ibid.*, 302-3.

<sup>11</sup> Kant, *ibid.*, 8.

<sup>12</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings* (Cambridge University Press, 1991) 225.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 314-5.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 319. On the distinction between the *Endzweck* and the *letzter Zweck*, see, for example, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*: ‘In order, however, to discover where in the human being we are at least to posit that ultimate end of nature, we must seek out that which nature is capable of doing in order to prepare him for what he must himself do in order to be a final end, and separate this from all those ends the possibility of which depends upon conditions which can be expected only from nature’. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 298, et alia.

<sup>15</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 150-1.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 81-2.

rejecting teleology as such, nor even merely of calling teleology into question, but only ever of which teleology to throw one's weight behind: 'Moral teleology, by contrast, which is no less firmly grounded than physical teleology, but rather deserves preference because it rests *a priori* on principles that are inseparable from our reason'.<sup>17</sup> If moral teleology is to be preferred to a physical teleology, this is only because the concept of teleology cannot then be disproved by any experiential intuition.

The shortcoming of the empirical is that it does not objectively prove its external purposiveness for the subject. It is only in relation to this that merely determining judgements do not suffice, and, therefore, 'the power of judgment requires a special and at the same time transcendental principle for its reflection, and one cannot refer it in turn to already known empirical concepts'.<sup>18</sup> Reflective judgments thus are the reflection in thought of the absolute difference between the subjective and the objective in the Kantian system. Not only does the counterfactuality of the 'as if' betray either, at best, an ignorance or, at worst, a willful misrepresentation of that which is the case: 'thus the concept of the purposiveness of nature in its products is a concept that is necessary for the human power of judgment in regard to nature but does not pertain to the determination of the objects themselves, thus a subjective principle of reason for the power of judgment which, as regulative (not constitutive), is just as necessarily valid for our human power of judgment as if it were an objective principle'.<sup>19</sup> More importantly, whether one takes the principle subjectively or objectively, it matters not at all with regard to practical effects. In either case, the function of such a principle is to allow the subject to subsume the objective to his own ends. This is to say, even if one were to allow that such thought experiments are able to be borne in the mind of the subject without betraying any reflection whatsoever in the objective, the fact remains that the 'as if' is already a subjective manipulation of nature in thought.

Causality, as natural necessity, is that which proves that determinateness does not require the presupposition of a free subject. This is causality's great offense: that it renders the concept of a free subject superfluous. As the claim that natural necessity is for the subject as 'the true *end of nature*', and by so doing would subordinate the objective to the subjective, the Kantian concept of teleology tacks on the free subject at and as the end.<sup>20</sup> This is why Kantian philosophy is obliged to prove that the objective is purposeful for the transcendental subject. Teleology becomes the ideological defense that subjective reason erects between itself and nature. However, that an object can, or even does, serve a purpose for the transcendental subject does not prove that the object was produced in order to serve a purpose for this subject. Its being purposeful may be entirely contingent.

Kant's famous distinction concerning teleological judgments runs thus: 'To say that the generation of certain things in nature or even of nature as a whole is possible only through a cause that is determined to act in accordance with intentions is quite different from saying that because of the peculiar constitution of my cognitive faculties I cannot judge about the possibility of those things and their generation except by thinking of a cause for these that acts in accordance with intentions, and thus by thinking of a being that is productive in accordance with the analogy with the causality of an understanding'<sup>21</sup>; this is to say, it is a distinction between 'an objective fundamental principle for the determining [power of judgment]' and 'a subjective fundamental principle merely for the reflective power of judgment, hence a maxim that reason prescribes to it'.<sup>22</sup> Hegel résumés this distinction thus: 'that on the one hand *I* am always to *reflect* on all natural events according to the principle of natural mechanism alone, but that this does not prevent me, *when occasion demands it*, from *investigating* certain natural forms in accordance with *another maxim*, namely, on the principle of final causes'.<sup>23</sup>

The minor problem is that Kant provides no principle for determining when the peculiar constitution of my cognitive faculties can judge about the possibility of a certain thing in nature without needing to posit what Hegel calls 'an *extramundane* intelligence' and when it cannot.<sup>24</sup> That the transcendental subject's understanding does not account for an object does not necessarily mean that it cannot account for it. No principle for judgment is provided and this is because such a principle, *sensu stricto*, cannot be known by reason, and this Kant himself has shown us. In the first *Critique*, Kant demonstrated that one cannot infer from those phenomena which are given to intuition the possibility of another (intuitive) understanding: 'However, that another series of appearances in thoroughgoing connection with that which is given to me in perception, thus more than a single all-encompassing experience, is possible, cannot be inferred from that which is given' (A232).<sup>25</sup> All such judgments upon the possibility or impossibility of an object's generation according to purely natural causality are thus entirely contingent, or subjective in the derogatory sense.

The major problem however is that natural causality as a concept does not have any necessary inherent relation to morality. This is the dialectical truth of Kant's transcendent postulate of a God who keeps tally, as

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 343.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 274.

<sup>20</sup> Kant, *Political Writings*, 225.

<sup>21</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 268.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 269.

<sup>23</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic* (Humanity Books, 1969) 738.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 735.

<sup>25</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge University Press, 1998) 331.

a sort of divine Pacioli: 'Morality in itself constitutes a system, but happiness does not, except insofar as it is distributed precisely in accordance with morality. This, however, is possible only in the intelligible world, under a wise author and regent' (A812/B840).<sup>26</sup> In bourgeois thought, the conception of God is no more than that of a glorified double-entry bookkeeper.

The theoretical priority given to the *causa finalis* in Kantian philosophy is the absolutization by means of the concept of causality of the subject, making this latter cause, means, and end. However, as Kant himself shows us in the third antinomy, that this self-determination has not been determined by another, prior cause and is thus a true instance of transcendental freedom cannot be decided by reason: 'if no determining ground of the will other than that universal lawgiving form can serve as a law for it, such a will must be thought as altogether independent of the natural law of appearances in their relations to one another, namely the law of causality. But such independence is called *freedom*, in the strictest, that is, in the transcendental, sense'.<sup>27</sup> The phenomenal representation that the subject gives to itself that it has determined itself cannot prove transcendental freedom. However, that this act takes place within space and time as the transcendental aesthetic according to the laws of causality is observable. Teleological self-determination is not proof of the transcendental freedom of the subject, but only still more proof of causality.

## II. The Science of Logic

This is why, for Hegel, teleological end does not stand opposed to mechanism, as in Kant, but stands within it as its essential moment. Hegel distills the concept of teleology still further, distinguishing it from causality as natural necessity: 'Teleology is especially contrasted with *mechanism*, in which the determinateness posited in the object, being external, is essentially one in which no *self-determination* is manifested'.<sup>28</sup> This distinction is analogous to the one Hegel later makes between 'the concept of a mechanical cause and of end'.<sup>29</sup> End, or *telos*, for Hegel comes to mean precisely 'the Concept itself in its existence'.<sup>30</sup>

Immediate subjectivity is the subjective individuality of the capitalist. 'Conversely, in contrast to the subjective end, the means, as *immediate objectivity*, has a *universality of existence* that the subjective individuality of the end still lacks'.<sup>31</sup> For the subjective end that does not reach universality, remaining within and adhering to its own abstract immediacy, is precisely that of the accumulation of capital. In positing the immediate objectivity of the proletariat as labor capital, the capitalist does not see his own subjectivity reflected in that of the proletariat as subject. Subjectivity is not allowed its own self-differentiation, and therefore cannot be mediated from the side of the subject.

This is the first proof that, as objective mediation of the subjective individuality of the capitalist, 'the means' can only be comprehended as the proletariat. Secondly, this is because no object as object can 'spontaneously conform to the unity of the Concept'.<sup>32</sup> The only way out of such absolute Idealism which, positing the identical subject-object, would claim that the hammer 'spontaneously conform[s]' to the building of the house, is to apprehend that the object is a subject, that is, that the object is such by means of a dialectical process of objectification of that which was not object. In order to spontaneously conform, the object would need consciousness, would need to be a self: the object would need to be a subject.

Famously, Lukacs closes the second part of 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat' with the pronouncement that the proletariat is 'the identical subject-object' of history.<sup>33</sup> If we are to bring out the truth of this problematic claim, what Lukacs is perhaps referring to here is the fact that, logically, as means, the proletariat is the 'unifying element [and] must itself be the totality of the end'.<sup>34</sup> However, '[c]oncept and objectivity are [...] only externally combined in the means, which is accordingly a merely mechanical object'.<sup>35</sup> It is this externality, meaning the fact that the determining concept (i.e., the immediate subjectivity of the capitalist) remains outside of the object (as proletariat as labor capital), which prevents this concept (as simple subjectivity) from being 'the Concept itself in its existence'.<sup>36</sup> Concept and objectivity must be combined internally: the concept must have sublated the moment of its objectivity.

This is finally the reason why it must be the proletariat who achieves the 'end of history'. The capitalist cannot achieve this for so long as he remains a capitalist, that is, for so long as he sets for himself the accumulation of capital, as this is proof of his merely immediate subjectivity, subjective individuality over and against the

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 680.

<sup>27</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (Cambridge University Press, 2015) 26.

<sup>28</sup> Hegel, 734.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Throughout the translation of *Begriff* has been altered from 'notion' to 'concept'.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 735, 737, et alia.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 744.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 746.

<sup>33</sup> Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (MIT Press, 1972) 149.

<sup>34</sup> Hegel, 744.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 735, 737, et alia.

objective, whose end has no universality. The ‘end of history’ means, not any such unphilosophical nonsense of some sort of chronological collapse of the historical, such that we might be living in a ‘post-historical’ age. As long as man is still not materially free, all talk of the post-historical is reactionary, serving to keep him in a state of unfreedom. For the concept of ‘the end of history’ must be understood immanently, as end in the teleological sense Hegel gives the term: the *telos* as ‘the Concept itself in its existence’.<sup>37</sup>

### III. The Non-Teleological Nature of Capital

If a historico-materialist reading of Hegel’s *Logic* is here insisted upon, this is because capital itself demands it. Remaining within its abstract immediacy, capital does not allow itself to be negated. It is not like ‘the stones and beams, or wheels and axles, and so on, which [...] fulfill their destiny only by being used and worn away and [which] correspond to what they are supposed to be only through their negation’.<sup>38</sup> By not allowing its own self-negation, capital thereby impossibilizes its sublation.

For, as Marx shows, the distinction between capital and money is teleological: ‘The repetition or renewal of the act of selling in order to buy finds its measure and its goal (as does the process itself) in a final purpose which lies outside it, namely consumption, the satisfaction of definite needs. But in buying in order to sell, on the contrary, the end and the beginning are the same, money or exchange-value and this very fact makes the movement an endless one’.<sup>39</sup> The circulation of money is teleological: the ‘final goal which lies outside circulation’, as external, finitizes this circulation.<sup>40</sup> It is this teleological nature determined by use-value that makes it money as such. The circulation of capital, on the contrary, refuses any and all teleology: ‘As against this, the circulation of money as capital is an end in itself, for the valorization of value takes place only within this constantly renewed movement. The movement of capital is therefore limitless’.<sup>41</sup>

The classical distinction between money and capital is of course found in Part II of Chapter III of the first volume of *Capital*: ‘The direct form of the circulation of commodities is C-M-C, the transformation of commodities into money and the re-conversion of money into commodities: selling in order to buy. But alongside this form we find another form, which is quite distinct from the first: M-C-M, the transformation of money into commodities, and the re-conversion of commodities into money: having in order to sell. Money which describes the latter course in its movement is transformed into capital, becomes capital, and, from the point of view of its function, already is capital’.<sup>42</sup> To be more precise, the formula for money would be:  $C_1-M-C_2$ , where the initial commodity is objectively qualitatively different from the second. The laborer produces a pair of shoes, which he sells for money, in order to buy bread. On the other hand, the more precise formula for capital would be:  $M_x-C-M_{x+y}$ , where  $x$  is the initial quantity of capital, the ‘investment’, used to buy the commodity, for example, a block of apartments, and  $y$  is the profit, the ‘return’ on the investment, i.e., surplus-value: ‘This increment or excess over the original value I call ‘surplus-value’’.<sup>43</sup>

In  $C_1-M-C_2$ , that is, with money, we find the self-differentiation of objectivity as such. The pair of shoes the laborer sells is not as the same object as the bread he will eat. This is to say, in order for money to circulate, objectivity must concretely determined. This is assuredly not the case with capital. Firstly, in  $M_x-C-M_{x+y}$ , the initial element,  $x$  as the initial quantity of capital, is not negated; it is preserved in the resulting sum of  $x+y$ : ‘In the inverted form M-C-M, on the contrary, the buyer lays out money in order that, as a seller, he may recover money. By the purchase of his commodity he throws money into circulation, in order to withdraw it again by the sale of the same commodity. He releases the money, but only with the cunning intention of getting it back again. The money therefore is not spent, it is merely advanced’.<sup>44</sup> Secondly, capital is an abstraction; it possesses no concretely determined objectivity. The initial quantity of capital the capitalist invests is not qualitatively different from the final sum: ‘One sum of money is distinguishable from another only by its amount. The process M-C-M does not therefore owe its content to any qualitative difference between its extremes, for they are both money, but solely to quantitative change’.<sup>45</sup> Capital is indifferent to objective form: it may take on the semblance of gold, money, check, or computer algorithm precisely because it is an abstraction. The capitalist may buy a block of apartments, a business, software, etc. Because he does not have

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 750.

<sup>39</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Vol. 1* (Penguin Books, 1990) 252.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. Incidentally, the non-teleological nature of capital is the truth of Wagner’s *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Not only, as described by Adorno, is its form cyclical –*Der Ring* as the set of four operas– but too, its content itself is the non-teleological nature of capital; that is, the ring itself is capital: it enters into circulation only in order to be withdrawn from circulation and, after having spoilt nature and undone the social contract, returned to its owner: ‘The circular, inescapable nature of the conception of the tetralogy –already indicated by the word *ring* in the title’. T. W. Adorno, ‘Wagner’s Relevance for Today’, *Grand Street* (No. 44, 1993) 55.

<sup>42</sup> Marx, 247-8.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 251.

need of it, what he buys is immaterial and his decision is purely contingent. In capital, objectivity possesses no being for itself; it is merely a means for the reproduction of capital. Remaining indifferent to the sphere of objectivity, capital thus impossibilizes its own self-negation. Capital, as the simple immediacy of the concept, cannot therefore be ‘the Concept itself in its existence’.<sup>46</sup> In the Hegelian sense therefore, the nature of capital is strictly non-teleological. This means that capital cannot create a free world, ‘for the free is the Concept in its Existence’.<sup>47</sup>

#### IV. Conclusion

Capitalist ideology disavows teleology. This is because teleology refuses the immediate givenness of the objective. The condition for the realization of the teleological end is the comprehension by the subject that the objective is a determinateness of the subject, the comprehension by the subject that the objective is the mediation by which the subject is returned to itself, what Hegel calls ‘the Concept itself in its existence’.<sup>48</sup> Such a subjective comprehension that objective society is a determinateness of the subject, and therefore determinable by the subject, would only be prejudicial to capitalist society. For such a subjective comprehension would grasp that the objective social conditions can be transformed by the subject. If the objective were comprehended as a determinateness of the subjective, if the objective were comprehended as the mediation by which the subject is returned to itself, then it would be evident that capitalist society has with the accumulation of capital in fact ‘set[] up for something absolute what is trivial and even contemptible in its content, in which the more universal thought can only find itself infinitely cramped and even feel disgusted’.<sup>49</sup>

Capitalist ideology instead prefers natural necessity. In order to justify its social totality, capitalist ideology avails itself of the idea of an ‘infinite progress’: because events take place in a seemingly forward movement through space and time, a presupposition the cause and then effect order of causality would confirm, the present state must be the most advanced.<sup>50</sup> However, from the fact that phenomenal appearances take place within the transcendental aesthetic, a transcendent moral teleology cannot be inferred. The fact that a past infinite causal chain of natural necessity has determined the present moment, what Kant calls in the third antinomy an ‘infinite descent’ (A451/B479)<sup>51</sup>, is directly falsified in thought as soon as it is made proof of a moral progression of man into the future: ‘the destiny of his species, which consists quite simply in progress towards perfection’.<sup>52</sup>

Capitalist ideology seeks to make the subject the mechanical object as ‘indifferent to its being determined, and on the other hand [...] equally indifferent to being a determinant’.<sup>53</sup> If the capitalist can be indifferent to being the determinant of the proletariat, this is because the subject under capitalism is only a mechanical object. If the proletariat can be indifferent to its being determined by the capitalist, this is because the subject under capitalism is only a mechanical object. The reification of the determining social relation is what dialectically makes such an objectification possible.

As is known from the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, reification, *Verdinglichung*, is the transformation in thought of social relations into thing-like relations. Social relation can mean nothing other than a relation in which subjectivity mediates itself, whereas thing-like can only refer to objective immediacy. Reification is thus the disavowal of subjective mediation as such. The transformation of the relation does not merely transform the relation itself, but, more importantly, the transformation of the relation thereby dialectically transforms the elements that this relation mediates. Reification is certainly the transformation in thought of social relations, but it is too, by means of its disavowal of subjective mediation, an ideological means towards the objectification of the subject. Given the total reification of society, the only possible subjectivity becomes is that of the immediate subjectivity of the I. This is why it became the transcendental principle of post-Kantian philosophy, meaning philosophy under capitalism.

Freedom would only be possible in a society in which the lie is given to the ideology which presupposes the givenness of the objective, which means, dialectically, the ideology which allows only for immediate subjectivity: ‘From this side end is *finite*, although in respect of its form it is infinite subjectivity. Secondly, because its determinateness has the form of objective indifference, it has the shape of a *presupposition*, and from this side its finitude consists in its being confronted by an *objective*, mechanical and chemical *world* to which its activity relates itself as to something *already there*’.<sup>54</sup> By presupposing the already-thereness of the

<sup>46</sup> Hegel, 735, 737, et alia.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 734.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 735, 737, et alia.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 736.

<sup>50</sup> That this seemingly forward movement and the possible reversibility thereof remain problematic issues within theoretical physics is obviously ignored by such arguments.

<sup>51</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 487.

<sup>52</sup> Kant, *Political Writings*, 226-7.

<sup>53</sup> Hegel, 740.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 742.

objective, not only is the infinite subjectivity thereby finitized in the objective's being over and against the subjective, but, more importantly, the objective becomes something fixed and immutable. If Hegel insists that such a presupposition must be sublated, this is because, in order for actual freedom to exist, the external world must be transformed.

This is too the reason why the ideology of a 'higher being in general, as an *intelligence* that *externally* determines the multiplicity of objects *by a unity that exists in and for itself*' must be negated.<sup>55</sup> It is of no matter whether this higher being is taken for, as in Kant, God, or taken for, as Hegel criticizes post-Kantianism, the immediate infinite subjectivity of the I. For, in either case, the opposition between the higher being as a unity that exists in and for itself and an objectivity external to it still holds. The presupposed opposition between subjectivity and objectivity has still not been sublated.

The *a priori* concept of purposiveness cannot lead to actual freedom. This is because that which is purposeful is always only purposeful within a particular operating framework. This is to say, the purposeful is always only purposeful given a particular and determinate historico-material situation: the totality of historico-material conditions determines the purposefulness of an object. The purposive presupposes this framework and perpetuates it. If thought insists on the *a priori* purposiveness of an object, it is in order to preserve a given historico-material situation. Thought that insists on the *a priori* purposiveness of an object thereby betrays its own conservatism.

If the 'end is the Concept itself in its Existence'<sup>56</sup> and 'the free is the Concept in its Existence'<sup>57</sup>, the end of human reason is to make the world teleological. Such a teleological world would be an objective totality in which subjectivity is able to recognize itself reflected at each and every point, an objective totality in which each and every moment can be and is comprehended as the mediation by which the subjective is returned to itself. It would be a free society, which is to say, a society in which not only is immediate subjectivity infinite, but, what is more, infinite mediated subjectivity has been realized.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 736.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 735, 737, et alia.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 734.