

The Drama of the Dialectic: Hegel, Marx, and the Theory of Appropriation

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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This dissertation develops a *theory of appropriation* through an account of dialectical materialism as a *relational ontology*. Appropriation is argued as creative-aesthetic activity definitive of the human species-essence through which sociality metabolically transforms. In turn, the universality of appropriation becomes an analytic for designating historical change through the *mode of appropriation*, where the transhistorical and ontological dimension of appropriation take on a historically specific character.

I begin with a critical reconstruction of German Idealism through an account of FWJ Schelling's critique of GWF Hegel's *Science of Logic*. Schelling's criticism initiates a tendency to misrepresent Hegel's dialectical logic that extends into 20th century philosophy, a misrepresentation which also transposed itself onto the works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. I trace this lineage in Part I, critically responding to it.

Part II provides a materialist interpretation of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, focusing on essence, necessity, universality, telos, and reason. I demonstrate the relational and anti-representational character of Hegelian dialectics through a systematic account of these categories. Consequently, I draw on Hegel to provide the logico-theoretical structure of the concept of appropriation as constitutive of a dialectical relational ontology.

Part III develops appropriation and the mode of appropriation through an engagement with the works of Marx and Engels. I argue that their work is predicated on a dialectical relational ontology fundamental to their political, economic, and historical analysis. I show that the mode of appropriation is constituted by a triadic structure of changing labor-forms, property-forms, and belonging-forms that together elucidate socio-historical transformation.

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Table of Contents

[0] INTRODUCTION: TO BEAT THE DEVIL.....	9
[0.1] “A Jack of All Trades is a Master of None...”	12
[0.2] “...But oftentimes Better than a Master of One.”	18
<i>PART I: THE DRAMA OF THE DIALECTIC.....</i>	22
[1] Ruptures & Residues: Schelling contra Hegel	24
[1.1] A Ruthless Criticism of Everything Hegelian: Schelling’s Rupture.....	24
[1.2] In Defense of the ‘Dead Dog’: Hegel <i>contra</i> Schelling.....	32
[1.3] The Residues of a Schellingian Hegel, Part I: An Irrationalist Lineage	39
[1.4] The Residues of a Schellingian Hegel, Part II: Alexandre Kojève	48
[1.5] Concluding Remarks.....	57
[2] Diffused Residues & the Reverberations of Ruptures: Althusser & Poststructuralism ...	59
[2.1] <i>Hyppolite’s Recoil</i> : A Reaction to Rupture.....	60
[2.2] Postmodernism <i>as</i> Post-Marxism: The Anti-Historical, Anti-Materialist Reverberations of the Rupture	62
[2.3] Althusser’s Anti-Humanism and Structuralist Marxism: The Non-Teleological Process of History <i>sans</i> Subjectivity	67
[2.4] Deleuze and Foucault: Reverberations of the Rupture.....	75
[2.5] Concluding Remarks.....	84
<i>PART II: HEGEL’S DIALECTICAL RELATIONAL ONTOLOGY.....</i>	88
[3] Hegel’s Dialectical Relational Ontology & Anti-Representational Thought	90
[3.1] Contentious Divergences: Hegel, Hegelianism, and Marxism	91
[3.2] Contentious Divergences: Non-Metaphysical or Ontological Hegel.....	94
[3.3] The Problem of Representational Thought.....	96
[3.4] Dialectical Relationality as Anti-Representational Thought.....	98
[3.5] Subject-Object Relation; or, Ontological Transformation = Epistemological Transformation	100
[3.6] <i>Dialectics</i> not dualism: Analytic & Synthetic Cognition.....	105
[3.7] Objective Dialectics: Absolute Method & the Science of Spirit.....	112
[4] A ‘Sea of Subtle Distinctions:’ Hegel’s Dialectical Relational Ontology & Appropriation	123
[4.1] Objective Dialectics & Appropriation: A Preliminary Definition.....	126
[4.2] Lessons on Hegelian Becoming: Vanishing & Appropriation.....	129
[4.3] Objective Dialectics: Essence & Appropriation.....	135
[4.4] Objective Dialectics: Actuality, Necessity, & Appropriation	146
[4.5] Objective Dialectics: Universality, Teleology, & Appropriation	157

[4.6] Subjective Dialectics: Reason, Teleology, & Appropriation.....	173
[4.7] Concluding Remarks: The Hegel-Marx Relation & Hegel <i>contra</i> Hegel	184
PART III: MARX(ISM): APPROPRIATION & THE MODE OF APPROPRIATION	199
[5] Marx & Engels: Appropriation’s Materialist Ontological Basis	201
[5.1] <i>A Critical Prolegomena</i> : Value-form & The Necessity of a Historical Subject.....	204
[5.2] The Marxian Ontology of Appropriation: The Triadic Structure of ‘Nature-Sociality-History’	226
[5.3] The Dialectic of Appropriation: Appropriating & Becoming-Appropriated	239
[5.4] Concluding Remarks: Appropriation, Consciousness, & the Production of Sociality	253
[6] The Mode of Appropriation: Labor-form, Property-form, Belonging-form	260
[6.1] Mode of Production—Social Formation—Mode of Appropriation	262
[6.2] Mode of Appropriation: Labor-Form.....	272
[6.3] Mode of Appropriation: Property-Form.....	277
[6.4] Mode of Appropriation: Belonging-Form	281
[7] Concluding Remarks: <i>The Drama of the Dialectic</i>.....	286
[7.1] A Brief Overview	286
[7.2] What is to be done?	290
BIBLIOGRAPHY:	292

[0] INTRODUCTION: TO BEAT THE DEVIL

In a song titled *To Beat the Devil* (1970), Kris Kristofferson tells a story of a struggling musician. The musician walks into a ‘tavern’ and his humble existence is recognized by a stranger sitting at the bar. With some condescending discouragement, the stranger provides the struggling musician with some advice:

If you waste your time a talking / To the people who don't listen / Who do you thinks gonna hear? / And if you should die explaining how / The things that they complain about / Are things they could be changing / Who do you thinks gonna care? / ... There were other lonely singers / In a world turned deaf and blind / Who were crucified for what they tried to show / And their lives have been scattered by the swirling winds of time / 'Cause the truth remains that *no one wants to know*.

Indignant yet patient, the musician listens and recognizes the stranger as the *Devil*. The Devil here is not an entity but a disposition of *capitulation*—one might say, the expression of capitalist *reification*. ‘Give up on your proclamations of change’ the Devil exclaims; for it is not only that people are apathetic, but they do not *want* to know. The Devil, then, buys the musician a beer as a gesture of kindness, consolation even. The musician remarks to his listeners, “If you don’t want to join [the Devil] / You gotta beat him.” But his humility immediately returns kindled by a certain stubbornness: “I ain’t saying I beat the Devil / But I drank his beer for nothing / Then I stole his song.” Indeed, the musician drinks the offered beer, not for agreement but instead for demonstrating that he understands the Devil’s words quite immanently; and then of course he steals his song. Stealing is an interesting choice here. In the context of this work, I would say the musician *appropriates* the Devil’s song, makes it his own—arguably, *dialectically inverts the meaning of the Devil’s words, changing them in his own creative-aesthetic form*. The musician concludes:

And you still can hear me singing / To the people who don't listen / To the things that I am saying / Praying someone's gonna hear / And I guess I'll die explaining how / The things that they complain about / Are things they could be changing / Hoping someone's gonna care / I was born a lonely singer / And I'm bound to die the same / But I've gotta feed the hunger in my soul / And if I never have a nickel / I won't ever die ashamed / 'Cause *I don't believe that no one wants to know*.

In stealing the Devil’s song, the musician alters the meaning, the implications, and thus provides a *critical* response to it: whether people listen or not, the musician will say what he must and can only hope that someone will care. Against the reified capitulating disposition promulgated by the Devil, the musician *refuses* to succumb to the assumptions underlying the Devil’s implicit argument. People may not be listening, but that doesn’t impede the musician’s belief that they *could* listen. Whether it is a

youthful naiveté or a complex critical consciousness, the musician will not accept that *no one wants to know*.

There are several elements at work in this lyrical analysis that get to the heart of this project. One might suggest that the musician is hinting at a difference and unity between the transhistorical and the historically specific. That people ‘do not want to know’ about ‘things they could change’, as the Devil asserted, is taken as an indefinite and immutable quality of human beings: *they care only about themselves, individually*. Against this, the musician inscribes a dialectical inter-play: that people ‘do not want to know’ is simply a historical result, the character of a specific society which invokes, materially, an inward-turning consciousness, a consciousness concerned merely with itself. The musician *refuses* that this historically specific social consciousness is un-changing and immutable. ‘I don’t believe that no one wants to know’ is the identification of a subject capable of knowing, however difficult such knowing may be, capable, that is, of knowing that the ‘things they complain about’ could be ‘changed.’ We might suggest that the musician is identifying an ontological component of being human: the unique characteristic of the way in which humans retain the capacity to transform themselves.

This project concerns the identification of change as the ontological constitution of the human being, the human species-essence. Change, or self-transformation, is argued as the *transhistorical* and *ontological* ground of the human being, as its *mode of activity*. I call this ontological ground, this essence, a specific kind of activity: *appropriation*. Appropriation is here argued as the ontological condition through which the human being self-transforms and is defined as creative-aesthetic activity. This self-transformation, however, expresses itself in *historically specific ways*, in ways that express the diversity of human life as social life, as a manifold of the actualization of real possibilities in creative and aesthetic form. I contend that this kind of activity—appropriation as creative-aesthetic activity—is universal, i.e., positively reveals itself across time and space through *social processes* and their self-differentiating *forms*. The universality of appropriation, then, underlies the self-differentiating movement of sociality and, in so doing, discloses its *historical* character. As historical, social, and universal, this ontological basis is equally the basis of the *heterogeneity of sociality itself*. In this way, the ontological and essential character of *appropriation* gives way to, what I call, the *mode of appropriation*. The mode of appropriation, thereby, identifies the historically specific way in which appropriation is actualized according to the combination of various socially peculiar *forms*: the mutually constitutive combination of *labor-form*, *property-form*, and *belonging-form* which is generated from appropriation itself in its historically concrete actualization. Considering the mode of appropriation as a triadic structure (labor-form, property-form, and belonging-form) is the intended philosophical contribution of this work.

But, of course, all concepts have a history; and in this case the history is quite *dramatic*. For the purpose of order and clarity, I have divided this work into three distinct parts, each consisting of two chapters and under a certain theme. For the sake of ease for the reader, I have provided a brief, single-page outline at the beginning of each part.

Part I consists of a re-reading of the closure of German Idealism and traces its implications to debates in 20th-century philosophy. I begin the first chapter with FWJ Schelling's critique of GWF Hegel's *Science of Logic*, respond to it in defense of Hegel, and then show the residues and reverberations of this critique. Schelling's critique centers on the ahistorical and formalist character of Hegel's dialectical logic. I argue that this initial critique engendered a significant misreading of Hegel which transposed itself onto Marx, culminating in the work of Alexander Kojève. Kojève certainly made his mark and, as a result of his popularity and the extraordinary set of future philosophers that attended his seminars, solidified a very particular reading of both Hegel and Marx that became dominant in 'Western' philosophy—a reading that I insist is quite a *mis*-reading. In chapter two, I proceed to identify the consequences of Kojève's interpretation through the responses it elicited in the works of Louis Althusser, Gilles Deleuze, and Michel Foucault, and more specifically how they all rejected, in their own ways, the concepts of *essence, necessity, universality, telos, and reason*; and, that this rejection caused a general suspicion of both Hegel and Marx and the respective categories (which I find pertinent to their thought).

This leads us to Part II: a materialist reading of Hegel. As a result of the predominant misconceptions regarding the above-mentioned categories, I provide an alternative understanding of Hegel himself and argue that Hegel provides us with a 'dialectical relational ontology.' Chapter 3 situates my approach to Hegel as an anti-representational thinker through my own interpretation of his method as well as an overview of the secondary literature. Here, a disambiguation concerning the concepts of essence, necessity, universality, telos, and reason as described in the Part I takes place as what I take to be Hegel's anti-representational disposition. The conclusion to this chapter articulates my own view of Hegel's 'Absolute Method' as the 'Science of Spirit,' where nature and sociality are shown to be both united and distinct, but also how I read Hegel as different than the formal 'rationalist' he is often accused of being. This methodological conclusion, however, is particularly important for the following chapter. Chapter 4 consists in my own reading of Hegel's *Science of Logic* with a focus on *essence, necessity, universality, telos, and reason*. I read Hegel closely and demonstrate the complexity of his categories, how they shapeshift in their relation to one another, and through this analysis defend the *Logic* as a properly *dialectical relational ontology*. Moreover, I interpret these concepts

specifically in terms of the category of appropriation and the mode of appropriation. That is, though my reading is as immanent and thorough as I could manage, the point was to derive from Hegel the *logico-theoretical structure* from which appropriation and the mode of appropriation could be understood. The conclusion of this chapter provides an immanent critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of History* by demonstrating how it contradicts the complexity of the dialectical relational ontology I have teased out from the *Science of Logic*. Here, I argue is where the precise difference (and unity) with Karl Marx and Frederick Engels is to be found, namely in their approach to the *historical*.

Part III is an exposition of Marx and Engels also centered around the concept of appropriation and the mode of appropriation. Here, I argue that Marx and Engels should also be considered *relational* ontologists and, in fact, that they inherit this relational system from Hegel himself. However, my point here is that they *materialize* the Hegelian method by means of a complex unification between the transhistorical and the historically specific. In chapter 5, I provide a critical response to Moishe Postone, through which I demonstrate the necessity of a historical subject in Marx and Engels. I then explore the dialectic internal to appropriation itself: between *appropriating* and *becoming-appropriated*. Here, the categories previously explored in Hegel are shown in their truly dialectical materialist form in terms of the triadic structure of Nature-Sociality-History as the necessary mediation comprising appropriation as the human species-essence. The following chapter consists of an articulation of *the mode of appropriation*, which is the form by which appropriation takes on a *historically* specific social character as the combination of *labor-form*, *property-form*, and *belonging-form*. Here, the mode of appropriation, as a category that mediates the mode of production and social formation, is disclosed as having significant analytical potential for elucidating the ways in which a given sociality reproduces itself.

Often philosophical works appear as quite separate or distant from one's personal set of experiences. Although I do not think philosophy is or should be primarily personal, I find that it may be helpful to provide a personal background, as a practical example, where the concepts with which I deal throughout this project can hopefully gain some degree of clarity. Drawing on my experiences training horses, I hope to start with a narrative that opens the door for the reader to approach all the thinking that follows.

[0.1] "A Jack of All Trades is a Master of None..."

In training horses professionally on two continents, I was exposed to a number of intersecting phenomena: race, gender, and class were not only present, but their tensions and contradictions explicit and rooted in a very specific kind of logic to its organization and development. It was, as

Gloria Anzaldua might say, a situation of being ‘in-between,’ a crossroad that represented a crystallization of the capitalist social form and a number of its implications. Most relevant here, the ‘in-between’ revealed not only intersecting identities, but also senses of belonging, labor, property, and the myriad *forms* in which they *take shape*.

One of the more interesting dimensions was the question of ownership and its implications. Trainers do not *own* the horses they train, they train them in exchange for a monetary equivalent corresponding to their repertoire, purported knowledge (‘horse-sense’), techniques, and purpose. Given that trainers are specialized, the *mode* of training is always oriented toward a specific equine sport. They, in no small degree, *master their trade*, master the modality of that sport and the training methods peculiar to it.

In specialized training of this kind, there are generally accepted, technical ‘do’s and don’ts’: always end a training session with a horse on a ‘good note’, never over-work the horse, etc. Despite these *universal* tendencies and the *necessary* requirements for their realization, they manifest in practice *contingently* such that, as a trainer, one has no choice but to *creatively* adapt to the particularity of the situation, of the horse, its own limitations, and the immanent problem at hand (‘*Zu den Sachen Selbst!*’, exclaimed Husserl). Even if some problems are common and their resolutions too, they nonetheless require, *necessitate*, a consciously directed practical determination in the moment itself, an activity that *transcends* the existing issue, the immanence at hand. Through experience, these moments get less complicated. One learns what to do in a specific situation through exposure to the repeated experience—even amongst the different situations which cannot but be different given that they inevitably contain an element of novelty (either a different horse, arena, combination of problems, etc.). The trainer adequately *abstracts* from their *immediacy*, considers the mediations involved, and directs such consideration toward their *subject-object*. In short, they develop the art of *technique*.

As a result of the internalization and habituation of solving these practical problems, the significance of the *creative* moment falls to the side. Slowly, it begins to no longer present itself as creative, but simply as part of the method of training itself. In my view, we do an injustice to our understanding both of ourselves and others when we fail to recognize the subtle persistence of creativity present in the mundane aspects of our quotidian existence. Against the ideological glorification of the ‘creative’ so promoted by capital, the point here is precisely that the simplicity of creativity ought to be recognized as constitutive of human life at a *mundane* level. The creative does not belong to entrepreneurs, CEOs, or political ideologues. On the contrary—and of relevance to the

entirety of this work—creativity belongs to *being human*, the active expression of the human *essence* in its relational situatedness.

In terms of horse training, there is another dimension to this creative moment. It is not pure creativity emerging from the individual will as its atomistic source. Rather, the materialization of the creative moment characterizes, simultaneously, the *aesthetic* extension of a determinate history, one comprised of previous labor and experimentation. It is not reducible to intuition, to thought, or to pure sensuousness alone: it is their *practical* combination. The *mode* of training—which has been learned, taught, and passed down in a long series of generational knowledge transmission or inheritance—transcends the limits of subjectivity and is materialized practically, objectively, and *aesthetically*. The peculiar ways in which the hands manipulate the reins, the legs distribute or alleviate pressure—the *contours and motion of the bodies in determinate relation*—marks the form by which the trainer *appropriates* the horse, which concomitantly is precisely a response to the form by which the horse too has *appropriated* the trainer. Transformation thereby ensues through an integration of determinate subject-object relations.

This unification of trainer and horse in a kind of interaction that far surpasses, and is in no way reducible to, any ‘discursive’ or purely ‘rational’ form of communication, bears the material implications of historical experience extending itself, *purposively* (*telos*), toward the future: the non-linearity and linearity of past, present, and future, *take shape*; both horse and trainer alike shaped by such extension. In this moment, the creative and the aesthetic also *combine*, are causally determinate, the effect only to be found in the future, in the *result*—‘truth is a result’, as Hegel knows all too well—out of which a new causal point emerges. The horse *learns* from, is itself adapting to, this moment. For this reason, all horse trainers, even within a specific equine sport and sharing some *universal* assumptions, develop unique techniques or ‘styles’: the horses they trained being the best representatives of their creative-aesthetic activity, carrying with them that *style* rhythmically. Yet, even among horses trained by the same trainer, there are subtle differences, since as organic beings they too retain a kind of *particularity* that cannot be stripped from them, no matter how subjected they are to any training method, nor how identical in pedigree. Dialectically speaking, the universal and the particular remain simultaneously inseparable and irreducible.

Beyond the formal aspects of training itself, mediations (theoretical and material) are part and parcel of the everyday *reproduction* of a training facility. Objects must be *appropriated* in order to ensure the maintenance of the material conditions. Horses need feeding and grooming, fences mending, tractors repairing, cows doctoring, tools and equipment require care and proper maintenance. In the

act of appropriating these various objects, one too *becomes appropriated*. Among a small group of contributors, working together with shared goals and expectations, tendencies and roles inevitably arise. One ‘gets along’ better with this or that horse—to be sure, horses too have their favorite people—one prefers this or that duty, this or that saddle, and so on. In *doing* one undergoes being *undone*, becomes attached to the affective element of qualitative distinctions while immersed in quantitative conditions. The doing and undoing characterizes the *metabolic* transformation of the individual *relationally* involved in determinate activities; that is, the individual as an *ensemble of activities in process*. Their activity *exceeds* them, returns to them, *reshapes* them. In so doing, the activities become attached to the person, *appropriates* them, and conditions their self-perception as well as the form by which others perceive them: ‘let him blanket the horses, he finds it relaxing;’ ‘no, *only I drive the tractor! You open the gates!*;’ ‘*I am an authentic cowboy, they are cosplayers!*’

Performing the functions of reproduction, then, is never *purely* functional, never simply a mechanical perpetuation even though, once inhabited, certain activities garner an unconsciously rhythmic quality. One *learns to belong* in determinate ways and differentiates forms of belonging between things both consciously and unconsciously on the basis of various habituated assumptions. Discrepancies arise, contradictions manifest. Training in the United States, such discrepancies were made vulgarly explicit: undocumented Latino labor does the work of maintenance, *not the training*. Women, primarily, are attached to care work, bandaging and healing horse wounds, beautifying the horses for sale or competition. Forms of belonging in terms of activities, and the ideological mediations that attach certain identity categories to certain kinds of performances, are taken for granted as legitimate, the *sine qua non* of the ‘proper’ form of organizing this specific community. Even amid certain exceptions, the general presuppositions of belonging remain a defining feature guiding the habits and expectations of the reproduction of daily life: *appropriating is necessarily a becoming-appropriated*, and, under ideological conditions, the mode by which this develops and perpetuates itself practically is implicitly justified by a theoretical assumption of *fixity* and *immutability* which establishes itself as the internal logic of development of this microcosmic setting.

Economically speaking, the training operation must engage in the production of surplus-value. Training for a specific sport means also participating in that sport competitively, selling the horse, promoting its offspring. Horse owners have a monetary interest in ensuring that the quality of training and its cost adequately corresponds to the increase in value of their horse. The trainer, on the other hand, has a professional interest in competition insofar as it accumulates a kind of reputation that secures future clientele. Here, the property relation mediates the work involved and the sense of

belonging present in the training operation itself, in the sense that how one understands property relations between things impacts the form by which notions of belonging arise; the opposite is also the case.

Indeed, the horse owner *owns* the horse, the trainer and their workers do not. Despite any moralistic sentiments, it is a rather awkward situation when the horse owner has such an abstracted conception of the very object of their ownership and even a distorted relationship to it. The horse is viewed as an object primarily, a subject secondarily. The expenses of care, pedigree, and training delineate the identity of the horse. Reduced to a monetary object as a result of the reified mediations involved, the horse's subjectivity is limited by their *value* determination.

Typically, the horse owner shows up to the training facility every other month or so (if that), briefly, to observe and evaluate the horse's development, the development of their *property*. As a trainer, or another member of the training apparatus (those who also work and care for the horse), this appearance creates an implicit, at times explicit, antagonism (arguably it is already predicated on a pre-existing antagonistic relation): "What do they know about the horse's progression!? They know nothing about training. Hell, they barely know their own horse!" Indeed, the abstract character of the horse owner and horse relationship raises a number of questions: *to whom does the horse really belong?* And, *in what sense do they belong at all?*

From the perspective of the horse, certainly the owner appears as rather arbitrary—at best a friendly image that provides a treat here and there. From the perspective of the laborers involved, the trainer and their assistants, the relationship to the horse is inevitably more personal: "I trained that horse...I *know* its 'ins and outs', its peculiarities." The horse too, must in one form or another, be somewhat aware of the immediacy involved, for it is responsive to the determinate and specific activities to which it is exposed on a daily basis. The horse has been *appropriated*, carries the imprints of the trainer's creative-aesthetic practical and purposive activity, their particular *labor-form*. It may not be as responsive to other 'styles' of training, be confused by other commands. Thus, the horse in some sense *belongs* to the trainer, as it belongs to their assistants: *in a determinate belonging-form, it takes shape as a different property-form, resulting from a specific labor-form*, revealing thereby a number of contradictions immanent to *this* social form. Similarly, they too belong to the horse, insofar as their activities are mediated by the needs of the same.

However, the formal, legal structure of capitalist property relations undoubtedly prevails, 'in the last instance,' as Althusser would remind us. The structure of the historically specific form of capital holds together *private property* as the central and *only* property-form. Despite the time dedicated,

labor expended, care devoted, the horse is arbitrarily sold to another, transferred to another trainer and so on. In the end, this process too solidifies itself as a dominant mediation: “don’t get too attached to that one, it’s gonna leave next week.” Operative as an unquestioned presupposition of this profession, the reification of things cannot but result in the further constitution and maintenance of an already existing alienation as a prerogative of social consciousness, of this specific belonging-form, property-form, and labor-form. The horse loses its subjectivity, its material life-form reduced to a *value-form*; the trainer and their assistants learn to ‘care’ in a qualified way *necessary* for the requirements of the profession: they too are appropriated, measured by their value-inducing qualities, their *labor-power*.

In the reproduction of daily life of a horse training operation, one inevitably becomes a *jack of all trades*, in varying degree both knowingly and unknowingly. The duties and activities contribute to how one is understood even beyond the confines of the specific space in question. With either disdain or fetishized regard, one becomes appropriated not only in relation to what one does, but through *how* what one does *relates*, determinately, to other activities, roles, identities, etc., in the society writ large. More precisely, *the very form by which they engaged in the materialization of determinate appropriating activity* can be said to also be the result of previous forms of becoming appropriated.

How do we understand the relationship between our own creative-aesthetic activity and the ways in which we belong socially? What are the elements that make it so difficult to re-conceptualize alternative forms of social being that overcome the limits of existing property-forms, belonging-forms, and labor-forms? How do we understand ourselves and each other in terms of these forms both historically and contemporarily? What are the consequences of thinking of these categories *as* forms, rather than representations of fixed meaning?

The above account serves heuristic purposes in situating the impetus of this project, namely, it invites us to recognize the importance of a coherent theoretical approach capable of analyzing transformation, change, and process—relational unfolding—without either remaining in a purely ontological realm nor ontologizing the historically specific elements of sociality and thereby sacrificing transformation itself.

Appropriation and the mode of appropriation hold together the relationship between the transhistorical and the historically specific by explicating *forms* through which social being operates and metabolically *shapeshifts* itself by means of continuities and discontinuities, ruptures and residues. In this way, the rigidity of categories and forms of life as unchanging and inalterable or as having progressively reached a pinnacle in the ‘end of history’ is undermined. Gone too are the postulates of

authenticity, of a return to an original, or search for a state of harmony—all of which implicitly reproduce the longing for a closure, a finality, redemption. At stake, however, is not a closure but a *mode*: the mode by which we appropriate our social world and how it appropriates us, a mode that has changed historically, politically, economically, socially, and continues to do so, at least potentially. Failure to understand the modal character of human sociality is a failure to understand the complexity of appropriation, its relational character, which grounds and pervades *sociality* as such. Insofar as sociality undergoes a becoming, it does so *objectively* and *modally* via relationally situated *subjectivity* and *praxis* constituted by myriad *forms of life*. The essence of sociality is, at one and the same time, ontological, insofar as to it belongs a process of becoming, a history, out of which it emerges, becomes itself, and becomes *other* than itself: this essence is *transformation*. Yet, transformation happens determinately not abstractly. It is neither pre-ordained nor mechanical; neither absolutely spontaneous nor arbitrary and metaphysically predetermined. Social transformation is a *seizure* emanating from social agents universally endowed, in particular forms, with conscious agency. What follows is an account of a concept capable of explicating the ground of the socially transformative and its *forms*.

[0.2] “...But oftentimes Better than a Master of One.”

This work aims to contribute to the Marxist tradition through articulating an original category that, in my view, serves clarificatory purposes concerning the Marxian taxonomy of categories, provides solutions to certain theoretical difficulties, and addresses a number of philosophical problems outside the tradition: the *mode of appropriation*. Though the category itself has been used often, surprisingly it has not been given a systematic and rigorous definition. As a result, the underlying philosophical presuppositions contained therein and its more specific philosophical implications have been absent from the literature. What has been explored, though in unsatisfactory manner, is ‘appropriation’ alone.

The complexity of appropriation resides in its simplicity. *Appropriation is the process by which one makes something one’s own*. This is the general meaning of appropriation: one *appropriates* an object, and in so doing makes the object one’s own. In making something one’s own, various relations are presupposed: a society, purposive knowledge, a certain understanding of property, notions of belonging, and presuppositions regarding labor. Indeed, what appears to be a rather straightforward concept is, in fact, an extremely complex one encompassing an array of presuppositions and considerations. Exploring these issues reveals that appropriation is always expressed in a mode: *the mode of appropriation*. The purpose of this work is to elucidate the relationship between these two concepts and develop a *theory of appropriation*.

In order to exemplify the logico-theoretical structure and relevance of the mode of appropriation, an investigation into appropriation itself becomes necessary. For the sake of specification, and thereby the ability to provide a more robust analysis, I limit myself to using Hegel as a point of departure for thinking through appropriation. My concern here is not an intervention into contemporary debates on Hegel, but rather providing a reading of Hegel against himself in a *positive* form through the category of appropriation. This serves a three-fold purpose: (1) to demonstrate how appropriation operates as part of a *relational ontology*, an ontology I find present in Hegel; (2) to provide a rigorous analysis of the category itself, its implications and relevance to other categories in the Hegelian system; and (3) to clarify both the continuities and discontinuities in the transition from Hegel to Marx, but also from appropriation to the mode of appropriation.

Appropriation, therefore, will be *teased* out of Hegel and its dialectical relational character made explicit through its relation to other Hegelian categories. A critical analysis of Hegel will lead towards a *materialist* relational ontology later on. Nonetheless, Hegel's remarkable insights certainly makes clear that even when Hegel is undeniably *wrong*, he is also *right* in an astonishingly powerful way.

Navigating Hegel's insights and misgivings will further contribute to understanding more profoundly his relation to Marx. Indeed, Marx *appropriates* Hegel masterfully and creatively, makes objectively *materialist* the objective idealist method. Yet, it would remain both simplistic and erroneous to reduce Hegel to a footnote in Marx and the Marxist tradition writ large. Contrary to the traditional view of reading Marx after Hegel, of returning to Marx after a proper analysis of Hegel, my approach poses it differently: what happens to Hegel after Marx? What happens if we give Hegelian logic and ontology a Marxian *resection*? In proper dialectical form, it will be shown that the Hegelian logico-theoretical structure returns vividly in a dialectical materialist way through Marx and Engels, especially when constructing a relational ontology with emphasis on appropriation. To be sure, *Hegel is to Marxism both its preface and appendix*.

Indeed, in Marx & Engels appropriation takes on a materialist character, though some materialist elements are already present with Hegel in embryonic form. These elements maintain themselves in the transition from Hegel to Marx, self-sublating from an objective idealism to a dialectical and historical materialism. The particular difference will be found in the theoretical move from ontology to social ontology. By reading the *Science of Logic* ontologically, appropriation will gain theoretical coherence through its relationship with essence, necessity, universality, telos, and reason. However, this ontological reading will complicate Hegel's more problematic political and historical assumptions in his *Philosophy of History*, a complication overcome in my analysis of Marx & Engels.

It is important to note the relevance of using appropriation as a guiding thread in my interpretation of Hegel with the categories of essence, necessity, universality, telos, and reason. It is my contention that the common-place dismissal of these categories represents a remarkable oversight of critical, philosophical thinking. Bastardized, such categories have been substituted, in undialectical fashion (at times, intentionally so), for their opposites in a reified form. Consequently, in my view, so too liberation, emancipation, and revolution have fallen asunder becoming utopianized, dematerialized, and reduced to a theoretical situation with a primarily discursive regard for *praxis*.

My analysis of Hegel with appropriation as the unifying thread thereby serves as a defense of the aforementioned categories. This defense becomes more acute and precise—more historically and politically *salient*—once we arrive at Marx & Engels. Inverting the theoretical de-coupling above described does not result in a defense of such categories *over-against* their opposites, so as to reject contingency, multiplicity, particularity, heterogeneity, etc., i.e., falling prey to the same oversimplicity in an antimonic pole. On the contrary, providing a sophisticated interpretation of essence, universality, necessity, telos, and reason attentive to the *minutiae* involved means nothing short of a comprehensive framework through which the theoretical value of their ‘opposites’ can be enriched; hence, the *positive* element of this systematic account.

Grounding appropriation ontologically within this framework of concepts permits a coherent and consistent transition to the *mode of appropriation* as part of a *social* ontology. Rendering the social component explicit engenders a mode of analysis capable of identifying socio-historical transformation with precision and clarity, while not succumbing to any kind of relativism nor to abstract homogenization which imposes a specific logic of development from an external point of view. Appropriation as ontological and the mode of appropriation as social and historical, necessitates a method capable of developing itself immanently while maintaining a certain kind of unity with transcendence. A method not predicated on *pure* fluidity, but on *determinate* fluidity, on accounting for *relational involvement* in processual transformation. Dialectical materialism, in my view, represents this method *decisively*.

It will be shown that dialectical materialism is far from dogmatic, vulgar, mechanistic, or economically reductionist. Indeed, through a careful analysis of Hegel, Marx, and Engels, the very opposite comes to the fore: dialectical materialism is revealed as an ontology of *process, motion, transformation, metabolic change*, and, fundamentally, *relational*. Emphasizing dynamism, open-endedness, and inter-affectivity, it has the potential, in my reading, of overcoming a number of philosophical problems, especially the problem of representational thought. Considering Marx and Engels as anti-

representational thinkers will hopefully contribute to the formulation of some novel insights emerging from their materialist analysis and method.

Characterized by a nuanced systematicity, dialectical materialism most appeals to me, in a methodological sense, in its explicit unification of the sub-disciplines of philosophy. It refuses to disavow the interwoven character of knowledge production and investigation. From this standpoint, all ontological claims have epistemological presuppositions, epistemological claims presuppose ontological foundations, political investigations have implicit ontological and epistemological commitments, economic analysis contain all the aforementioned, the neutrality of science in the face of political economy is an ideological illusion, and so on and so forth. This critically unifying approach nevertheless concerns itself with articulating a positive account of social transformation, grounded in a corresponding philosophical system, and not, as it is often assumed, with a self-enclosed, objectivist explanatory model.

Indeed, we ought be suspicious of the latter claim, since the attempt to maintain that forms of philosophical investigation remain in their separate spheres reflects a particularization of knowledge production specific to a *technical* division of labor in the academy itself peculiar to the capitalist social form and its logic. I do not, however, operate under the assumption that the present work contributes in equal form to all the sub-disciplines of philosophy, despite my inter-disciplinary proclivities. That is a life's work or, better yet, requires the work of *many lives*. The categories of appropriation and the mode of appropriation do not suffice to achieve such a task. However, I do contend that they are a solid point of departure for the fibers of a connective tissue to be enhanced by developments in dialectical materialism. Indeed, dialectical materialism, in my view, is the philosophical 'jack of all trades;' and, as the saying goes, 'a jack of all trades is a master of none, *but oftentimes better than a master of one.*'

PART I: THE DRAMA OF THE DIALECTIC

“It is possible that I shall make an ass of myself. But in that case one can always get out of it with a little dialectic. I have, of course, so worded my proposition as to be right either way.”

—Karl Marx, Letter to Engels, August 15, 1857, MECW Vol. 40. 152

Part I
The Drama of the Dialectic

Part I consists of two chapters outlining the philosophical history of Hegel's reception and dissemination across a range of scholars through Schelling's critical reading of Hegel's dialectical logic.

I invite the reader to think of this trajectory as a *dialectical drama*—a drama concerning the content of dialectics—beginning at the end of German Idealism's stronghold over the European philosophical scene. This drama is enacted by an illustrious cast, with some surprising appearances throughout. I will present the dialectical drama in two chapters, focusing on:

(1) Schelling's lectures on the *Philosophy of Revelation* in 1841-42, with emphasis on his critique of Hegel's *Logic*, which enormously impacted a number of rising philosophers, and its culmination in Alexandre Kojève's popularization of Hegel and Marx in France, which counted among its audience an array of influential thinkers.

(2) The reception and reaction to the Hegel and Marx emerging from Kojève and Jean Hyppolite which frames the relationship between Althusser and post-structuralism (specifically, Deleuze & Foucault). Here we see the long-lasting impact of Schelling's critique of Hegel and the forms by which it maintains an unfair suspicion (and misreading) of both Hegel and Marx.

The guiding thread in all sections of this dialectical drama is the characterization of dialectical logic and ontology—first in Hegel, then, in both Hegel and Marx—and the various hermeneutical/interpretive ambiguities and misrepresentations/injustices committed through these characterizations, specifically concerning the concepts of *reason*, *universality*, *essence*, *necessity*, and *telos*. While providing an original reading of the implications of German Idealism that seeks to move beyond the typical presentation of a singular battle between Hegel and Kant, this account also establishes the ground for the necessity of placing *appropriation* and the *mode of appropriation* within the framework of the above categories as part of a broader *relational ontology*: first in Hegel, then in Marx and Engels. *Part II* of this work will provide an interpretation of Hegel as a relational ontologist mediated through an original construction of the concept of *appropriation*. *Part III* will read Marx and Engels as relational ontologists and provide a dialectical materialist account of appropriation and the mode of appropriation in their works. What underlies the impetus of this work—and my desire to situate *appropriation* and the *mode of appropriation* as part of a relational ontology alongside the aforementioned categories—is the need to reconsider the question of social transformation, the need to develop a politics grounded in a consistent dialectical materialist framework.

[1] Ruptures & Residues: Schelling contra Hegel

This chapter provides the specific context within the history of philosophy from which the remainder of this work develops. Here, I do not seek to provide a detailed analysis of any given thinker. Instead, I trace the implications of a certain tendency—a suspicion of Hegel that is eventually transposed onto Marx—that bears significant consequences on contemporary philosophical discussions, beginning with Schelling’s critique of Hegel and developing through Kojève’s presentation in 1930’s France of Hegel and Marx. The articulation of this lineage explains the reason for my desire to situate appropriation, and the *mode of appropriation*, within Hegel’s¹ categories of *essence*, *universality*, *necessity*, *telos*, and *reason* prior to immersing myself in Marx & Engels and their respective tradition. Contextualizing my project in these terms enables the reader to better identify the specific ways it intervenes, not merely in terms of the Hegel and Marx relation, but in terms of broader philosophical investigations.

This chapter elucidates Schelling’s critique of Hegel in 1841-42—a significant moment in the history of philosophy, the consequences of which have been hitherto underestimated. Schelling’s rupture, as I term it, is premised on a characterization of Hegel’s dialectical logic as ahistorical, rationalist, and anticipatory (thus, progressively *linear*), with a special focus on the relationship between thought and intuition. We will investigate Schelling’s (mis)representation of Hegel and provide a counter-reading in defense of Hegel’s dialectical logic, clarifying Schelling’s misgivings. Nonetheless, Schelling’s critique proved influential in no small degree. Its impact will be traced across a number of thinkers, culminating in the Hegel presented by Alexandre Kojève, the most significant disseminator of Hegelian thought in the context of 1930’s France. Given Kojève’s Marxian bent, his reading of Hegel also served as the theoretical basis through which he interpreted Marx, but his interpretation of both, I will show, reproduced a Schellingian Hegel. Focusing on his analysis of Hegelian reason and negativity, I critically demonstrate the Schellingian influence presented in Kojèvean form, exposing the limits of both an over-emphasis on the *Phenomenology of Spirit* over-against the *Science of Logic*, in addition to the limits of Kojève’s conception of a dialectic of consciousness which abandons a dialectic of nature.

[1.1] A Ruthless Criticism of Everything Hegelian: Schelling’s Rupture

I let three disparately related, but equally influential thinkers, set the scene:

¹ This is also why I do not engage with ‘appropriation’ as it appears in Locke’s *Second Treatise* and reserve such analysis, for sake of brevity here, for a future work.

—“[Fichte’s] immediate successor Schelling (1775-1854) was more amiable, but no less subjective. He was closely associated with the German romantics; *philosophically, though famous in his day, he is not important.*”—Bertrand Russell²

—[Referring to Schelling:] “The treatise which shatters Hegel’s Logic before it was even published!”—Martin Heidegger³

—“Ask anybody in Berlin today on what field the battle for dominion over German public opinion in politics and religion, that is, over Germany itself, is being fought, and if he has any idea of the power of the mind over the world he will reply that this battlefield is the University, in particular Lecture-hall No. 6, where Schelling is giving his lectures on the philosophy of revelation.”—Frederick Engels⁴

Through a more cautious consideration, we might reassess, against Russell, the importance of Schelling’s role in the development of philosophy. It is not so much a matter of Schelling’s sophistication or lack thereof in the face of his numerous works; certainly, Schelling proved prolific and insightful in his own right.⁵ But, even if one was to consider his relationship with Hegel alone—initially friendly, later hostile—it would be at best disingenuous to claim that ‘he is not important.’ If one concedes that Hegel provided a formative contribution to philosophical thought (in myriad forms), then, Schelling, whose impact on Hegel goes without question, deserves greater recognition and more serious attention than Russell allows.

Though Schelling often lurks in the shadows of the magnitude of Hegel’s influence, I contend that the former’s impact has endured—however subtly and indirectly here, however explicitly and directly there—and remains relevant to understanding certain strands of Postmodernist⁶ (or post-structuralist), Postcolonial, Decolonial, Materialist, Feminist, and Marxist scholarship. Whether or not this influence is exerted through a correct reading of Schelling’s work by a given individual scholar, or the above-mentioned fields, is not of concern here. Rather, the point is to ascertain the specific way

² Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy and its connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*. Simon and Schuster, New York. 1945. 718. Emphasis is my own.

³ Heidegger, Martin. *Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*. Trans. By Joan Stambaugh. Ohio University Press. 1985. 97.

⁴ Engels, Frederick. “Schelling on Hegel” in *Marx-Engels Collected Works: Volume 2*. Lawrence & Wishart, 2010. 181

⁵ “For too long the importance of Schelling’s later work in particular was obscured by the demise of German Idealism, which led to him being seen as merely a precursor of Hegel.” Bowie, Andrew. *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: An Introduction*. Routledge, London & New York, 2001. 7

⁶ Andrew Bowie notes, “It is too often the case that versions of philosophy based on the new vogue for textuality depend for their biggest claims upon a caricature of Western philosophy, which assumes we have already finally understood Kant, Hegel and the rest, including the philosophers, such as Schelling, whom few people have even read. Many contemporary thinkers who are so willing to announce a new era of post-modern thinking are actually more violent in their understanding of philosophy than the metaphysicians they see as doing violence to ‘alterity’. In this they come to share the blindness of those analytical philosophers who think, even though they have little or no idea of what was actually said in the history of philosophy, that they have finished with that history and can get on with solving real problems.” Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy*, 12.

in which Schelling's thought is relevant to a number of controversies and polemics within and between these distinct, sometimes overlapping, fields of scholarship, most notably in terms of the reception or rejection of Hegel, his relation to Marx, and Marx himself, and, further, in regard to the understanding of a number of important philosophical categories. Here in broad strokes, I sketch Schelling's influence in the hope of outlining an original formulation of a philosophical history serving as a point of departure for my own work.

In providing this historical account I describe the consequences of Schelling's (mis)reading and consider its impact on subsequent thinkers. Expanding on Stephen Houlgate's claim that Schelling's critique of Hegel in 1841-42 is one of the 'most important sources' of the development of continental philosophy, I contend that Schelling's (mis)reading of Hegel is at the root of why – in stark contrast to the fervor over the *Phenomenology* - Hegel's *Logic* was so unceremoniously ignored in most 20th century debates.⁷ Disregard for the *Logic* had significant consequences, besides the obvious negligence of its substantive philosophical content. Indeed, it has resulted in a caricature of Hegel, an inherent suspicion of many of the categories in his work, and an unwillingness to undertake any immanent reading, particularly of the *Logic*. Hegel was fallaciously reduced to a 'pure' rationalist, his categories regarded as merely logical, the dialectic taken as linear and totalizing, unceasingly progressive, and the beginning as *presupposing* an already definitive end. Thus, an assessment of Schelling's (mis)characterization of Hegel's dialectical logic reveals both the lingering residues of Schelling's critique in a number of scholars as well as an opportunity to provide an alternative interpretation of Hegel's works.

The problem was compounded, as we shall see, when this misunderstanding of Hegel was accepted and defended by a contingent of Marxist scholars in the 1920-30s. This misrepresentation of Hegel would reverberate as the theoretical defense of a misrepresented Marx, a so-called Marx with *Hegelian characteristics* – characteristics that were in fact in themselves quite *un-Hegelian*. This led to a number of other issues, including not only an aversion to the Marxism of Marx/Marx(ism),⁸ but also some awkward tendencies in Western Marxism (and Critical Theory) that avoided the question of nature and science through the complete rejection of dialectical materialism, a rejection which implied that Marx did not have nor need any ontological foundation. The development of later scholarship

⁷ Houlgate agrees, "Schelling's interpretation of the *Logic* has been hugely influential, even on critics of Hegel who do not explicitly acknowledge their debt to Schelling." Houlgate, Stephen. "Schelling's Critique of Hegel's 'Science of Logic'". *The Review of Metaphysics*, Sep. 1999, Vol. 53, No. 1. 115.

⁸ That is, the strain of Marxism often labelled (or denigrated, depending on one's sympathies) Classical or Orthodox Marxism.

(as discussed above) relies on these caricatures of Hegel and Marx. In other words, though it is often claimed that Marx inverted Hegel, we will investigate another kind of inversion committed by Hegel's prodigious forerunner FWJ Schelling.

In the years 1841-42, ten years after Hegel's death (1831), the debate over dialectical logic becomes the 'battlefield', as Engels notes above, on which the struggle over the legitimacy of Hegel's method is waged. For Enrique Dussel,⁹ Andrew Bowie, Stephen Houlgate, and Andy Blunden, this marks a significant moment—though they understand it differently—where Schelling has the chance to reclaim his philosophical superiority over-against his friend-turned-foe in his lectures on the *Philosophy of Revelation*. Defenseless and long dead, Hegel was subjected to a 'ruthless criticism,' in which his own dialectical logic was deemed ahistorical and unacceptably rationalist at the cost of any account of the sensuous dimension of thinking. Schelling would finally proclaim his own philosophy as superior in scope and depth by means of critically undermining the *Science of Logic*, settling once and for all to whom German Idealism truly belonged. At sixty-five, Schelling seized the opportunity to be center stage, not only to beat the dead Hegel, but also to earnestly continue his own philosophical ruminations.

After Hegel's death, Hegelian insights transgressed the limits of academic insularity, inspiring a number of revolutionary thinkers—Feuerbach and the *Young Hegelians* among them—and soon enough radical politics was translated “into the language of Hegelian philosophy.”¹⁰ As a result, the revolutionary potential of Hegelian thought needed a remedy. Sufficiently well versed in idealism and socially and politically a 'conservative,'¹¹ Schelling, who in 1827-28 had already launched a critique of Hegel,¹² fit the interests of the aristocracy perfectly: a sophisticated thinker with the theoretical weapons and experience strong enough to, in the words of the time, “expunge the dragon's seed of Hegelian pantheism”¹³ and its “facile omniscience” from the ranks of radical German intelligentsia and the general political climate.¹⁴ The Prussian Minister of Culture insisted on Schelling's appointment and CJ Bunsen, the King's ambassador to Munich, who dealt with Schelling directly,

⁹ Dussel relies heavily on this event, which he mentions in a number of texts. Some include: Dussel, Enrique. *Método para una filosofía de la liberación: Superación de la dialéctica hegeliana*. Ediciones Sígueme. Salamanca, 1974; Dussel, Enrique. *Ethics of Liberation In the Age of Globalization and Exclusion*. Trans. by Eduardo Mendieta, Camilo Pérez Bustillo, Yolanda Angulo, and Nelson Maldonado-Torres. Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2013. 219;

¹⁰ Blunden, Andy. *Hegel, Marx and Vygotsky: Essays on Social Philosophy*. Brill, Lieden, 2022. 7.

¹¹ Blunden, *Hegel, Marx and Vygotsky*, 7

¹² See the “Translator's Introduction” in Schelling, FWJ. *On the History of Modern Philosophy*. Trans. by Andrew Bowie. Cambridge University Press, 1994. 23.

¹³ Bowie, *On The History of Modern Philosophy*, 23. Also see the “Translator's Introduction” in Schelling, F.W.J. *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*. Trans. by Bruce Matthews. State University of New York Press, 2007. 6

¹⁴As quoted by Bruce Matthews, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 6

proudly announced that the old philosopher “should not come as a common professor but as the philosopher chosen by God.”¹⁵ The excitement was not Schelling’s alone and his move to Berlin no purely pedagogical endeavor; indeed, Schelling would provide the “...official philosophy of the romanticizing Prussian reactionary groups clustered around Friedrich Wilhelm IV.”¹⁶ A ‘revelation’ was indeed provided.¹⁷

As a veritable world-historical event, present in ‘Lecture Hall no. 6’ were a number of major thinkers who would come to exert significant influence in 20th century philosophy and science. Among them were philosophers Friedrich Engels, Søren Kierkegaard, and Ludwig Feuerbach, political theorist Mikhail Bakunin, geographer Alexander von Humboldt, historian Friedrich Carl von Savigny, and several noted others.¹⁸ In this sense, Houlgate notes, Schelling’s critique of Hegel “is thus by no means merely of local interest to students of German idealism, but is of interest to all students of the continental tradition in post-Kantian philosophy for the simple reason that his critique is one of the *most important sources of that very tradition.*”¹⁹ On Houlgate’s account, it is rather eye-opening to see just how important Schelling’s critique has been for determining the course of Hegel’s reception of the development of Western philosophy.

Independent of Schelling’s critique, we can recognize, as Marx already did, that Hegel had ambiguous interpreters.²⁰ On the one hand, criticizing the Right-Hegelians, Marx writes that “[i]n its mystified form” Hegel’s work legitimized the present political situation, seeking to “glorify what exists.” On the other hand, “[i]n its rational form,” Marx tells us, it was a revolutionary weapon, “...an abomination to the bourgeoisie and its doctrinaire spokesmen.” Why? Marx points us to the heart of the matter: “...because it includes in its *positive* understanding of what exists a simultaneous recognition of its negation, its inevitable destruction; because it regards *every historically developed form as being in a fluid*

¹⁵As quoted by Bruce Matthews, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 6

¹⁶ Lukács, Georg. *The Destruction of Reason*. Translated by Peter Palmer. Verso, 2021.160.

¹⁷ I mention the political undertones not to suggest that Schelling’s critique of Hegel was reducible to a political concoction, but to make clear that we cannot discount the sociopolitical conditions either. In this regard, I find it curious that Dussel—who is particularly forthright and consistent throughout his *oeuvre* in identifying the geopolitical origins of thought, and even mentions these lectures on multiple occasions—fails to account for this context

¹⁸ Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 219; Blunden, Andy. *1841: The World-Historic Split in Western Philosophy*, available at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/help/1841.htm>.

¹⁹ Houlgate, *Schelling’s Critique*, 99.

²⁰ See Schlomo Avineri’s historical overview of the splits and debates that immediately followed Hegel’s death. Despite covering a number of reactions and interpretations, Avineri does not mention Schelling’s critique. Avineri, Schlomo. “Hegel Revisited”. In, *Hegel: A Collection of Essays*. Edited by Alasdair MacIntyre. Garden City: Doubleday, 1971. pp. 329-348.

state, in motion, and therefore grasps its transient aspect as well.”²¹ Despite his own critical reservations, Marx indicates that Hegel’s philosophical observations made apparent the volatility of the existing social order, an ontologically and politically powerful insight which expressed the inherent finitude of the historically specific order of things.

Later we will investigate Marx’s assertion that Hegel regards every historical form as ‘fluid,’ ‘in motion,’ and ‘transient,’ as they help to reveal the essence of a relational ontology à la Hegel. However, at this moment, I want to focus on a more subtle element of Marx’s remark, namely, that in Hegel we do in fact find a ‘*positive* understanding’, that Hegel’s negativity does not exhaust the positive element to be found in his system. The positive and the negative are two mutually interpenetrating sides of the same Hegelian coin in a dialectical—not *dualist*—sense, since the positive and negative are internally constituted and not externally independent elements that ‘encounter’ each other.

I highlight Marx’s remark because it stands in contrast to the Hegel presented by Schelling. Indeed, negative philosophy, Schelling claims, *cannot have a positive moment insofar as it grounds itself in thought alone*, in the negation of existence out of which speculative logic emerges. Thus, according to Schelling, Hegel’s negative, “[r]ational philosophy...is so independent of existence that it would be true even if nothing existed.”²² The positive, for Schelling, must precede the negative in order for a ground of thought to be established. However, in Schelling’s view precisely this remains unaccounted for in the Hegelian system. The anti-Hegelian maneuver that de-couples the negative from the positive is key for Schelling:

To express this distinction in the sharpest and most concise manner: the negative philosophy is a priori empiricism, it is the *Apriori* [Apriorismus] of what is empirical, but, for this very reason, it is not itself empirical. Conversely, the positive philosophy is an empirical *Apriori*, or it is the empiricism of what is a priori insofar as it proves that the *prius per posterius* exists as God.²³

In other words, Hegel’s thought is empirical only in the sense that it ignores the empirical: it is an abstracted speculative project indifferent to the ‘real.’ In this way, as a matter of its indifference and independence from its objective ground, Hegelian thought cannot but be “ahistorical.”²⁴ It must, of its own accord, remain in the realm of “pure thought.”²⁵

²¹ Postface to the Second Edition (1873) in Marx, Karl. *Capital, Vol. I*. Trans. by Ben Fowkes. Penguin Books, London. 103. My emphasis.

²²Schelling, F.W.J., *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*. Trans. by Bruce Matthews. State University of New York Press, 2007. 179-180.

²³ Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 181.

²⁴ Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 187.

²⁵ Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 194.

Whereas Marx identifies the positive, the negative, and, most importantly, *the historical* in Hegel through reading him in both ontological *and* logical terms, Schelling, in removing the positive content from Hegel, in creating a *dualist* relationship between thought and being, between logic and ontology, reads Hegel as purely negative, purely speculative, and purely *ahistorical*. Focusing on this element of Schelling's critique will assist in clarifying the dialectical and not dualist character of Hegel's approach. First, Schelling's claim that there is no 'positive' ground divorces nature from thought in Hegel's account: nature (the positive) stands as an object of indifference to thinking, and is nothing short of the *result* of thought itself.²⁶ The abandonment of nature, its absolute separation from thought, means that Hegel's rationalism cannot account for sensuousness, intuition, and feeling, because it fails to grasp the conditions of the emergence of thought.²⁷ In this way, such 'rationalism', Schelling claims, "...is capable of no *actual* knowledge."²⁸ Secondly, insofar as Hegel's 'rationalism' is seen in this light, rationality itself is posited as a sterile and ultimately empty exercise. Reason is thus emptied of any content, divorced from both nature and history.²⁹ Of course, on the basis of an encounter with this depiction of Hegelian reason, it is unsurprising that many would come to be suspicious of Hegel. However, the suspicion produced by Schelling's critique begs the question of whether Hegel can really be characterized in this way. In other words, is Schelling correct in claiming, in polar opposition to Marx and the *Young Hegelian's* views, that Hegelian reason is utterly incapable of accounting for nature and history? With nature severed and reason absolutized, what remains relevant in the Hegelian project?

According to Houlgate, however, there is still another issue at work in Schelling's critique, a methodological question concerning the movement between Hegel's categories; namely, that Hegel's categories in the *Logic* anticipate each other in the process of their development. Since it has had the most enduring effect, this is, in my view, the most severe of Schelling's indictments. In discussing Schelling's interpretation of the *Logic*—specifically, the transition from *being* and *nothing* toward

²⁶ "For it has become apparent that the negative philosophy must posit the positive, but by positing this it only makes itself into the consciousness of the positive, and is to this extent no longer outside the positive, but rather belongs to it itself, so that there is in fact but one philosophy." Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 196.

²⁷ "As a pure science of reason, as something extracted from its own resources, a creation of the human spirit woven out of its own material, it will always endure and maintain its independent worth." Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 196

²⁸ Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 196

²⁹ With flare and wit, Engels notes "But Schelling, who wants to make his way into an abstract and empty immanence of thinking, forgets that all his operations are obviously based on the existence of reason and makes the ridiculous demand that real reason should have unreal, merely logical results, that a real apple-tree should produce only logical, potential apples. Such an apple-tree is usually called barren; Schelling would say: the infinite power of an apple-tree." Engels, Frederick. "Schelling and Revelation: Critique of the Latest Attempt of Reaction Against the Free Philosophy", in *Marx-Engels Collected Works: Volume 2*. Lawrence & Wishart, 2010. 210.

becoming—Houlgate, quoting Schelling directly, summarizes the problem of *anticipation* through Schelling's insertion of the 'not yet':

The proposition "Pure being is nothing" is thus reread as saying that "Pure being is still (noch) nothing" or that "it is not yet (noch nicht) real being." By being recast as not yet real being in this way, pure being is understood not just as nothing but as harboring the possibility for real being, which is yet to be fulfilled, that is, as being in potentia. With the interpolation of the word yet (noch), Schelling maintains, pure being is thus understood as lacking, but also as promising, something which has yet to be. That is to say, pure being is thought as pointing beyond itself and as heralding real being which is to come. In this way, Schelling claims, the transition is made by the Hegelian philosopher from the thought of pure being to the thought of coming to be or becoming. One moves from pure being to becoming, therefore, not by understanding pure being as pure being, but by understanding it as *not yet* real being and so as pointing forward to the future coming of that real being itself. In Schelling's view, it is only "with the help of this yet (noch) [that] Hegel gets to becoming." Hegel's dialectic develops, therefore, because pure being is understood already to be the concept in its abstract form, though not yet the full concept to come.³⁰

Here, we see how Schelling inserts an *anticipatory moment* into the Hegelian system. In order for Hegel's categories to transition, to unfold, they must in Schelling's view contain an immanent quality of the *anticipatory*, i.e., they presuppose what is *not yet*. To put it in Heideggerian terms, the order of categories unfolds in the form of the 'always already': in pure *being*, *becoming* is presupposed, and so must be *spirit*, the *absolute*, and so on. In this formulation, the *Logic* is seen as a purely *linear* progression in which the end is already expected in the very beginning. Thus, Schelling claims, the *Logic* contains its own metaphysical *teleology*, immanent to the methodological transitions between its categories. The rejection of nature and formalization of reason as ahistorical further lead to a methodological criticism of a metaphysical *teleology* immanent to the very structure of the *Logic* itself.

Considering this methodological critique, Houlgate explains, "...Schelling objects to (what he takes to be) Hegel's assertion that every aspect of being as such and nature can be deduced and known wholly from within thought, because this is against the Schellingian claim that all existence...lies outside of thought." Thus, for Schelling, "...the problem with Hegel is...[his conflation of] existence with what is simply conceivable."³¹ In Schelling's critique, then, Hegel is presented as an idealist in a vulgar form because he merely deduces *being* and *nature* from *concepts*, that is, he undertakes a logical deduction wherein all existence is reducible to thought: what exists is what is possible in *thought*.

³⁰ Houlgate, *Schelling's Critique*, 114-115.

³¹ Houlgate, *Schelling's Critique*, 112.

Necessity, essence, universality, and telos are all said to be *nothing more than logical postulates of reason itself*, a purely speculative and ahistorical reason. They—like all Hegelian categories—do not refer to existence but only to concepts; more specifically, to the content of the concept, not the content of that to which a concept refers *qua* existing. Content is posited only through the concept, the latter too emerging as a groundless and pure *thought*. Therefore, *being* and *nature*, being outside of thought, are methodologically surpassed by Hegel and can only be logically deduced: thought is already presupposed in the very beginning of the deduction. Thus, Houlgate notes, “Hegel fails to think of this outside, according to Schelling, because he thinks that what is conceivable is all that there is.”³² For Schelling, this outside is nature, *real being*, without which the Hegelian thinker could not possibly initiate their own system because, for the Schellingian thinker, thought must begin with the pure positive, *pure being*.

At first, the claim that *being* must be situated outside of thought, that a thinking being thinks from *somewhere*, seems intuitive from a materialist standpoint—famously, for Marx, ‘*material conditions*’ cannot be a result of a thought deduction. Perhaps, then, we could say that Schelling, on the basis of the interpretation of Hegel given in his critique, was right. However, before arriving at this conclusion, we must ask: does Hegel really think this way? Is the Schellingian critique of Hegel rigorous, accurate, and correct? I contend that Schelling’s critique is insufficiently immanent and, additionally, self-undermining insofar as his affirmation of existence serves, ultimately, to obfuscate existence itself. Let us now investigate these points further.

[1.2] In Defense of the ‘Dead Dog’: Hegel *contra* Schelling

In my view, Schelling’s account misunderstands and misrepresents the Hegelian dialectic: there is no *absolute* outside of thought. Houlgate clarifies: “Now to the extent that thought is aware through itself that there is being, being cannot be absolutely other than thought and utterly exceed the reach of thought.”³³ That being is outside of thought does not, and cannot, in Hegel’s view, signify that it is inaccessible. Insofar as the thinking being remains tethered to a ground and is thinking about being(s), then, the very act of thought itself (*consciousness is always consciousness of something*) presupposes a unity and difference between itself and that to which it is externally related.³⁴ *Nota Bene*: that something is externally *related* does not imply an *absolute* externalization but a *mediated* relationality. As part of a whole and interconnected totality, the process of thought presupposes relational mediations that serve as

³² Houlgate, *Schelling’s Critique*, 116

³³ Houlgate, *Schelling’s Critique*, 118

³⁴ Since, as Hegel notes in the *Philosophy of Nature*: “...*externality* constitutes the specific character in which Nature, as Nature, exists.” Hegel, GWF. *Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature*. Trans. by AV Miller. Oxford University Press, 1970. 14.

both the content of thought, thought's object, and the conditions of its form. That a mediation is relational means that it is determinately co-constitutive of content and form, both affective and effective in terms of the activation and accentuation of the elements involved in thought itself. An external object, in differing degree of complexity, participates in the co-constitution of thinking *qua* process, interpenetrating the formation of thought itself. In this way, what appears as external nonetheless bears the quality of relatedness, an identity or even an identity of non-identity in Hegel's dialectical logic.³⁵

Further, Houlgate notes that for Hegel, "Nature is conceived as being outside of itself, not as being utterly outside of thought, [which] does not mean that nature is a mere posit of thought. Nature is independent of and prior to thought."³⁶ To be sure, the subject that initiates a process of thinking is the self-externalized result of the becoming of nature. In the concluding passage of the *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel writes, "*Spirit has thus proceeded from Nature.*"³⁷ In other words, spirit, as social being, indeed emerges from nature and therefore nature must *precede* the thinking subject, and any form of reason that follows assumes this precedence as premise. Nonetheless, that nature precedes the human thinking subject does not mean that it is *in absolute externality* to it. Instead, the human being is the result of nature's own self-externalization. Thought itself cannot be absolutely external to nature nor can nature be absolutely external to thought: they are inseparable yet irreducible.

In light of this, Schelling's account falls immediately short, but so too does his *positive* assertion; namely, that reality or nature is *absolutely* independent of thought. In other words, CJ Arthur explains that this independent existence is far from a materialist identification of a comprehensible reality standing outside of thought; instead, "...the reality that *reveals* itself to us in a non-rational mystical mode, and its 'explanation'...is that God reveals to us his power in this creation *ex nihilo*."³⁸ Revelation, then, comes to the fore. *Pure being*, which for Hegel, 'passes over into' *pure nothing* in their equivalent *emptiness*, is cast by Schelling as the un-rationalizable absolute of divine nature, beyond the grasp of dialectical logic. For Schelling, dialectical logic "...was by no means a *schema for producing knowledge*, but served as a means of describing it verbally, terminologically 'for others'...[thus,] [t]he process of producing knowledge was itself, in fact, done by the power of imagination...in the form of various

³⁵ In a review of Kojève's book on Hegel, Tran Duc Thao presciently notes, "True identity contains negation and difference as *identity of identity and non-identity*." Thao, Tran Duc. "The Phenomenology of Mind and Its Real Content". In, *Telos: Critical Theory of the Contemporary*, 1971 (8). 93

³⁶ Houlgate, *Schelling's Critique*, 118.

³⁷ Hegel, GWF. *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*. Trans. by AV Miller. Oxford University Press, 1970. 444.

³⁸ Arthur, Chris. Review of 'Towards an Unknown Marx: A Commentary on the Manuscripts of 1861-3' by Enrique Dussel in, *Historical Materialism*, 11(2), 2003. 254

‘intuitions’.³⁹ Logic, here, orients itself toward expanding a discursive field of intelligible communication, not the process of determination which indicates the existence of the *thing itself* – a *thing* which, under Schelling’s schema of *revelation*, cannot be grasped rationally, only sensed *intuitively*. Houlgate confirms: “[whereas] Hegel understands thought to be a form of intellectual intuition...Schelling understands thought to be primarily discursive.”⁴⁰ In this way, Houlgate continues, “For Schelling...[thought] can never bring before the mind the very thatness of existing,” it must simply “...posit existence as something outside itself.”⁴¹ As a result of this positing, existence can only “...be encountered *directly* not by thought itself but only by *Vorstellung* [representation].”⁴² Schelling, in this regard, deploys a quasi-Kantian critique of Hegel wherein an epistemological limit is established: the positivity of existence can only be *posited* through intuition but not made immanently intelligible

According to Schelling, logic primarily serves a discursive function⁴³ and the *positive*, that is, the affirmation of sensuous existence, is comprehended, not by thought, but through sensation and intuition. This form of experience *is* the creative and imaginative power of *revelation*: it is God manifesting as the reality which sensuously reveals itself to us in such a way as to simultaneously conceal the possibility of fundamentally comprehending the revelation itself. The incomprehensibility of a divine nature, of God, undermines the potential of power of thought. Moreover, this intuitive moment is encountered *directly*: it is *unmediated immediacy*, or a form of onto-theological empirico-mysticism in which the comprehensible sensuous experience of reality is itself the incomprehensible revelation of God. Thought, therefore, must both presuppose the immediacy and subjugate itself to the intuitive and unconscious, since it is precisely the lack of mediation that characterizes that which exceeds thought. Thus, although we can experience reality, we cannot truly know how or why we experience reality; in other words, although God reveals himself to us, we can never understand how or why. In Schelling’s view, this is because the divine nature of God, being inherently incomprehensible to human reason, undermines our attempts to apply the power of reason to the fundamental ontological conditions and motion of reality itself.

³⁹ Ilyenkov, EV. *Dialectical Logic: Essays on its History and Theory*. Trans. by, H. Campbell Creighton. Aakar Books, India, 2019. 161.

⁴⁰Houlgate, *Schelling’s Critique*, 119.

⁴¹ Houlgate, *Schelling’s Critique*, 120.

⁴² Houlgate, *Schelling’s Critique*, 120.

⁴³ Houlgate makes the contrast clear: “Hegel does not accept that thought’s primary or proper function is to judge or form propositions,” and that “for Hegel thought in its proper functioning is not primarily judgment or predication, but is the thought of being, the thought or consciousness that there is.” Houlgate, *Schelling’s Critique*, 120

Upon closer inspection, however, the boundaries of thought set out by Schelling's work on revelation appear less as a critique of Hegel, and rather a reversion to Kant. Schelling ultimately succumbs to what I call the *Kantian forfeiture*; namely, establishing an extreme limitation on the scope of reason's potential by renouncing its ability to know the *thing-in-itself* (*Das Ding-an-sich*). In proper Kantian form, Schelling affirms the submission of human knowledge to the overarching grandeur of a mystical thing-in-itself only to be experienced but never cognized in intelligible terms. Conceiving of dialectical logic in purely discursive terms results in a circular representation of the movement of thought. Unable to retain both the unity and difference with that which is external, Schellingian dialectical logic *forfeits* its analytical capacity to distinguish the determination of being and thought, their mutual relations, and thus makes it impossible to recognize the dialectical relation between immediacy and mediation. Consequently, thought turns inward upon itself and intuition is directed outward with the caveat that this intuition is in its very essence indefinitely epistemologically constrained. At the closing of one of the most important periods in Western philosophical history, and with its longest surviving, truly organic representative, we find that German Idealism – inaugurated with Kant's separation of phenomena and noumena and concluding with Schelling's "most unsatisfactory dualism" in which the world "is boarded up to reason" – has, in effect, come full circle.⁴⁴ We shall soon discover the prevalence of the *Kantian forfeiture* in contemporary scholarship.

The solution to the problem of the limit of knowledge can be found in Hegel himself, but only if Schelling's misrepresentation of Hegelian 'reason' is corrected. Indeed, *contra* Schelling, Houlgate notes, "...from Hegel's point of view, the initial concept of pure being in the *Logic* is not originally the thought of nothing at all. It is originally the thought or intuition of being."⁴⁵ In this account thought and intuition are *a part* of the same 'moment,' wherein questioning *enacts* itself by means of the sublation of intuition through thinking. That both thought and intuition belong to the same moment does not imply their collapse, since they are not *identical*; yet neither are they absolutely *distinct*. For Hegel, they are *interpenetrating affective elements* of the process of thinking itself. Thinking must contain the *intuitive* without remaining in the realm of pure intuition. Otherwise, thought would amount to a circular *stasis* and forfeit knowledge acquisition by means of its inability to subsume the intuitive. Thought *deals with* intuition, confronts it, is in some way beholden to it, however, thought retains the potential of *transcending intuition*, overcoming the impediments of immediacy to which intuition remains bound. Such overcoming characterizes the essence of thought, its self-sublating power. Describing

⁴⁴ Engels, Frederick. "Schelling and Revelation" in *Marx-Engels Collected Works: Volume 2*. Lawrence & Wishart, 2010. 207

⁴⁵ Houlgate, *Schelling's Critique*, 122.

the relationship between sensuousness and thinking, Hegel writes “[t]he sublation exhibits its truly doubled meaning...it is now a *negating* and the same time a *preserving*.”⁴⁶ In its dialectical covalence with intuition, intuition is thought: thought *becomes itself* through intuition, and therefore intuition and thought remain in a necessary *unity*. Thought orients itself processually through a relational-material setting navigating its situated immediacy combined with the mediations that condition its movement, its content and form. The metabolic dynamic of thought—the motion internal to consciousness and self-consciousness alongside their struggle with external objects—actualizes the cognitive disjunction between itself and intuition, and thereby *negates* intuition. This is the moment in which difference is determined, where mediations become acknowledged and internalized in thought’s formative, as well as *positive*, development. Thought’s negation of intuition, however, is at the same time the preservation of a changing intuition. Thus, both thought and intuition are reconstituted, re-shaped, breaking with the original relation toward a newly formed unity between an altered intuition and an altered consciousness, which, in turn, characterizes a newly determined difference from the previously acquired knowledge. Indeed, in thought’s further development, intuition returns to thought in a sublated form, remaining *residual* within it, albeit in a constantly transformative motion.

The collaborative unfolding of thought and intuition signifies that Hegel’s categories are *not* anticipatory as Schelling thinks. Schelling misrepresents Hegel by assuming that the categories of being, nothing, and becoming, presuppose one another in a stadial manner. Thus, being anticipates nothing, and both anticipate becoming. Rather than understanding the immanence of Hegel’s investigation into each respective category, wherein their internal limits mark the form by which they bear an identity relation with each other and thereby retain a transgressive quality, Schelling reads Hegel’s categories as purely *logical* determinations of a particular formulaic order. Read in vulgarly linear fashion, then, Schelling imputes the notion of anticipation as inherent to each category. He takes Hegel’s beginning as a deductive logical schema already certain of its end, erroneously presupposing a determination inherent to each category only through assuming their anticipatory character. In fact, Hegel begins the *Science of Logic* with ‘pure being’ precisely to show that the concept itself is absent of all determinacy: in its *purity* being *is not*, i.e., *is nothing*. In this purity devoid of determination, pure being lacks even the anticipation of its own sublation. For the sublation to occur, what is needed is not an anticipatory moment, but the *objectivity of an immanent relation with its other, an internally constituted relation which auto-poetically undermines itself*. Pure being, therefore, vanishes *as a result* of its own indeterminacy

⁴⁶ Hegel, GWF. *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. and Ed. by Terry Pinkard. Cambridge University Press, 2018. 69.

and not, as Schelling contends, because of “...the promise of real being to come.”⁴⁷ Lacking even the anticipatory, the indeterminacy of pure being leads to an experiential moment of the intuition of the intellect: “Pure being turns out to be becoming because it is *experienced* by thought as immediately vanishing through its utter indeterminacy.”⁴⁸ One cannot *deal with* pure being in thought because the sheer lack of determination means precisely that there is *nothing for thought to deal with*. In attempting to grasp pure being, thought experiences only the vanishing of the concept through its indeterminacy into an equally indeterminate pure nothing: pure being is revealed to be as empty as pure nothing. Thus, we find that thought *deals with* pure being by pushing through the inherent indeterminacy. In the movement of *pushing through* pure being *vanishes*.

Advancing his dialectical logic, Hegel contends with the indeterminacy of pure nothing in the same form. In approaching pure nothing, thought is confronted with a contradictory appearance of a concept which in fact should not be a concept at all, for the purity involved in ‘pure nothing’ to maintain its ‘purity’ would require it to resist even the determination of its own indeterminacy. That is, the fact that thought can conjure up the concept of pure nothing brings forth an immediate determination, which—as nothing—contradicts both its purity and the abstractly empty category of the nothingness in question. At this moment, precisely because of this immediate determination immanent to pure nothing, the category itself *vanishes*. Consequently, we find that thought’s attempts to *deal with* pure nothing *violates* its abstract purity, transforming it in such a way as to *ground its necessary relation to its opposite*, wherein a self-collapsing must take place. An immanent and necessary relation is revealed in the immanent self-collapsing, *vanishing*, of each category: their limits and inter-affective determinations thereby engender a *metabolic relationality* through which *determinate being* and *determinate nothing* appear and, thus, *becoming* erupts, as Hegel writes: “[the truth of being and nothing] is therefore this *movement* of the immediate vanishing of the one into the other: *becoming*, a movement in which the two are distinguished, but by a distinction which has just as immediately dissolved itself.”⁴⁹

In the beginning of the *Logic*, Hegel shows that in intellectual intuition’s attempt to stand with the concept of pure being, the concept itself gives way to another, self-sublates through its own limit and grounds a fundamental movement of thought: pure being and pure nothing come to be identified as the same. Yet the inherent difference of being and nothing signifies an immanent contradiction between the identity and difference of the concepts out of which *becoming* emerges through the

⁴⁷ Houlgate, *Schelling’s Critique*, 123.

⁴⁸ Houlgate, *Schelling’s Critique*, 123.

⁴⁹ Hegel, GWF. *The Science of Logic*. Trans. by George di Giovanni. Cambridge University Press, 2015. 60

movement of a mutual *vanishing*—transcending the limits of the initially *indeterminate*, empty category. Thus, “Pace Schelling, the *Logic* does not obviously have a goal that it is striving towards, and is not obviously trying to get anywhere,” that is, the concepts are not anticipatory.⁵⁰ On the contrary, the concepts *metabolically transform* as a result of thought’s investigation into their limits, the limits of their *content*. Already in the limitations of pure being and pure nothing – that is, the points at which they vanish into each other - there is a qualitative dimension indicating change as a result of a unity predicated on irreducibility: in other words, *becoming* is the result of the identity of being and nothing established through their mutual self-sublation and the simultaneous recognition of the *impossibility* of this identity. Transitions, therefore, are not *anticipatory* but *immanent*; as such, it is in Hegel alone among the German Idealists that we find a truly “profound, restless dialectic.”⁵¹

Importantly, *becoming* itself is not merely conceptual. The becoming of thought, *thought’s becoming*, is only possible as a result of its immersion within, recognition, and consideration of the ontological becoming of objects themselves (*since the subject of thought is itself a becoming-object, an objective becoming-subject*). Exploring this point, Rocío Zambrana explains that in Hegel “[w]e cannot speak of either the real or the ideal without thinking through their inseparability.”⁵² Not only are the concepts immanent (i.e., not anticipatory) on their own account, they are immanent to their object, to the thing itself and its respective *becoming*. Thought does not *anticipate* becoming: thought *becomes* through its encounter and internalization of the becoming of the real. The real and ideal are *inseparable* yet *irreducible*. Thought moves along-with, because it is immersed within and proceeding from, the *ontologically constituted motion of real, relationally situated, subject-objects*. Thus, Hegelian thought—*dialectical logic*—is neither, despite Schelling’s accusations, in absolute exteriority to nature (nor sociality) nor anticipating a what is to come. The dialectics of nature and sociality are united by their respective forms of relational transformation: *the dialectic does not merely progress linearly, it spirally unfolds*. Reading the *Science of Logic* as a relational ontology allows us the insight of a layered understanding, a topology, of the dialectical structure of the totality of objective reality. The objective and ontological dialectic of nature immanently unfolds, having as its result the *objectivity* of a *subjective dialectics of sociality*. The latter remains tethered to its ontological ground while simultaneously bearing an agential element through which it self-transforms—a spirality instead of linear and conclusive finality. Considering the inseparability of the ideal and the real, then, affords us the ability to understand the whole of Hegel’s

⁵⁰ Houlgate, *Schelling’s Critique*, 123.

⁵¹ Engels, *Schelling and Revelation*, 199

⁵² Zambrana, Rocío. “Hegel’s Logic of Finitude”. In, *Continental Philosophy Review*. 2012, 45. 216-217

system—from the *Phenomenology, Science of Logic, and Philosophy of Nature*—and thus ascertain its relational qualities. I initiate this project in my chapter on Hegel appearing later in this work.

The preceding discussion serves to make clear Schelling's misreading of Hegel on some key issues: (a) the ahistorical and abstract formalism of Hegelian reason; (b) Hegel's inability to account for the 'outside' of thought (nature, beings as they are); and, in my view the most significant, (c), that inherent to Hegel's approach is the element of *anticipation*, a metaphysical teleology, where a *linear* development is *a priori* assumed. These dimensions are also inseparable from the problem of the subject-object relationship and the issue of representation, problems which Schelling had been trying to overcome.⁵³ An ahistorical reason presupposes an ahistorical subject which expresses to itself in purely logical form a *representation* of the object. Thus, the object loses its own *thatness*, which is reduced to a logical structure, its beingness, so to speak, is not understood as its own but only through a thought representation. Though it is possible that Hegel can be read in this way, it is safe to suggest that it is not as easily defensible as Schelling depicted, and upon a more rigorous consideration these indictments remain insufficient on their own. Nonetheless, Schelling's critique proves influential in terms of the reception and dissemination of Hegel's works. I now investigate the enduring residuals of Schelling's critique.

[1.3] The Residues of a Schellingian Hegel, Part I: An Irrationalist Lineage

Schelling's critique of Hegel, premised on a questionable depiction of Hegel's *Logic*, proved a significant influence on the development of 20th century philosophy. Indeed, both the critique and his own positive conception of a philosophy of nature premised on intuition go hand in hand. Schelling appears to have demolished the philosophical system of his last remaining serious rival (albeit, a rival who could not retort) and at the same time to have provided an alternative and superior system and philosophy of nature in his *Revelation*. The conclusion of the Hegel-Schelling affair has, in no small degree, been one of the most significant and important defining events underlying and determining the development of philosophical thought throughout the 20th century.

First, let it be clear that Schelling was not alone responsible for *all* conundrums concerning the relation of thought and being, nor to a suspicion of Hegel. In the German tradition, Arthur Schopenhauer, it is well known, already had quite the disdain for Hegel, famously writing *Will as Representation & Idea* in 1819 as a criticism of Hegel. Though, it is not incidental that Schopenhauer's

⁵³ Bowie, Andrew. *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: An Introduction*. Routledge, London & New York, 2001. 61.

work only gained widespread readership *after* 1844.⁵⁴ Similarly, Ludwig Feuerbach had published his *Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy* in 1839. In France and Britain, forms of positivism which stood in direct contrast to the Hegelian method, were being simultaneously developed by thinkers like Auguste Comte and John Stuart Mill. What is relevant here for our purposes is the fact that the early strands of positivism were ignorant of Hegel's criticism of Kant. As such, their own development consisted, in France, of an engagement with Kant primarily and, in Britain, with Hume (and Berkeley⁵⁵). Positivism, in turn, reappears in the late 19th and early 20th century in the form of a sociological Neo-Kantianism which did in fact develop itself through a confrontation with Hegel.⁵⁶

Hegel, as is well known, engages significantly and critically with Kant, proceeding with a systematic ordering of the movement of thought and being by means of the experience undergone by 'natural consciousness'.⁵⁷ The central point, against Kant, is the possibility of knowing the thing-in-itself. Kant recognized that cognition has an *immediate* relation to reality, yet it only has a *mediated* access: Being is a mystery that *exceeds* knowing.⁵⁸ For Hegel, the unknowability of the "thing-in-itself" (*Das Ding-an-sich*) represents an untenable impediment to the development of thinking, an invitation to skepticism.⁵⁹ Herein lies the problem with Kant's framing of the issue: he establishes an unnecessary

⁵⁴Blunden, Andy. *The Historical Fate of Hegel's Doctrine: The Expurgation of Hegelianism*. Available at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/help/eh.htm>.

⁵⁵ Schelling's Kantian forfeiture is not unrelated to Berkeley's subjective idealism, which lays the ground for Ernst Mach's philosophy of sensation, the reduction world to bundles of sensation, a relativistic empiricism of immediacy which influenced some components of pragmatism, especially William James. It is this approach to sensations that Lenin so adequately undermines in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (Vol. 14 of his *Collected Works*).

⁵⁶ Gary Gutting notes, "The neo-Kantians had persistently rejected Hegel's philosophy on the grounds that its ultimate telos in Absolute Spirit's all-encompassing self-knowledge was incompatible with the irreducible reality of finite human freedom." See, Gutting, Gary. "French Hegelianism and anti-Hegelianism in the 1960's". In, *The Impact of Idealism: The Legacy of Post-Kantian German Thought, Volume I, Philosophy and Natural Sciences*. Edited by Nicholas Boyle, Liz Disley, Karl Ameriks. Cambridge University Press, 2013. 246

⁵⁷ This, of course, is the goal of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: to take to task naïve consciousness, to expose it by putting it to work. Adorno explains further: "[i]f you would like...a simple explication of the central concept of Hegelian philosophy which distinguishes this philosophy from that of Kant, namely the concept of speculation, then we may say that speculative consciousness, in contrast to simple or simply reflective consciousness, is one where this moment of self-reflecting consciousness has become thematic, has come to self-consciousness." See, Adorno, Theodor. *An Introduction to Dialectics*. Polity Press, 2017. 64.

⁵⁸ Engels, however, emphasizes the importance of Kant's contributions: "The Kantian theory of the origin of all existing celestial bodies from rotating nebular masses was the greatest advance made by astronomy since Copernicus. For the first time the conception that nature had no history in time began to be shaken" (See, MECW, Vol. 25. 53). Further, Engels notes, "For Kant's discovery contained the point of departure for all further progress. If the earth was something that had come into being, then its present geological, geographical, and climatic state, and its plants and animals likewise, must be something that had come into being; it must have had a history not only of coexistence in space but also of succession in time" (Ibid. 324). The mechanical materialists of his time had rendered nature as entirely spatial, ridding the temporal element of history within Nature's development. Temporality and its relation to nature as such was, for Engels, a form of arguing against both mechanical materialists and Neo-Kantians (Duhring one of them). For Engels, nature has a history that precedes human history and therefore is historico-temporal as much as it is empirico-spatial.

⁵⁹ As Rocio Zambrana writes: "In the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel famously argues that everything hinges on understanding substance as subject. To be is to be intelligible, according to Hegel. Hegel gives the commitment

limit of the relationship between human cognition and the objects it seeks to know. Certainly, social subjects *philosophize, do philosophy*, an activity limited and determined (though not absolutely) through historically specific conditions. The problem for Hegel, in this regard, was the distinction between mind and world as though they were separate from each other, i.e., Kant had setup a barrier against Spirit's actualization.⁶⁰ Hegel, therefore, argues against this submission to the unknown,⁶¹ to actualize the potential of consciousness and its object, since for him, consciousness does not belong to a self-standing subjectivity and instead belongs to a sociality,⁶² a collective consciousness with the potential to move from 'understanding' to 'reason': that is to say, there is no 'I' without a 'we' from which thinking furthers itself. Thus, Spirit (*qua* sociality) constitutes an objective subjectivity in its unfolding continuity within and through a socio-historical ground. The objective subjectivity of Spirit, then, remains capable of knowing its object within the confines of its ground, through the theoretical tools at its disposal. Hegel's dialectical logic seeks to overcome Kant's epistemological limit, the *Kantian forfeiture*, through a systematic presentation of the motion of consciousness and its object; an ontological commitment that gives way to novel epistemological formulations.

This criticism of Kant retrospectively applies in equal force to Schelling, who, as demonstrated above, posits an *absolute differentiation* between thought and being and thereby succumbs to the same unknowability, the result being that "...Schelling leaves philosophy behind for a theology of mystery."⁶³ The crucial difference between Kant and Schelling is that for the latter this unknowability is *intuited*. Though positivism had its roots elsewhere, its further development was indeed linked to Schelling's criticism of Hegel and his assertion of the necessity of the mystical form in which nature appears as the absolute other of thought. It is this tendency toward the mystical form that Georg

to intelligibility a distinctively post-Kantian twist. He moves away from Kant's insistence on the first-person perspective for an account of knowledge, truth, and moral worth. He argues that intelligibility is the result of historically specific practices of rendering intelligible—what he calls Geist (spirit). Geist is a notion that privileges history for understanding the nature of intelligibility. *What is, then, is always already historically mediated*. Zambrana, Rocio. "Logics of Power, Logics of Violence (According to Hegel)". In, *CR: The New Centennial Review*, Vol. 14, No. 2, Law and Violence, Fall 2014. 13-14.

⁶⁰ For a more nuanced understanding of Hegel's relationship to Kant see chapter 2 and chapter 5 in Sparby, Terje. *Hegel's Concept of Determinate Negation*. Koninklijke Brill, 2015.

⁶¹ Rocio Zambrana writes, "As the unity of theoretical and the practical, the absolute idea shifts the structure of binding distinctive of Kantian autonomy and central to Kant's critical idealism from the first-person standpoint of an epistemic or moral individual to the determinacy of die Sache Selbst—the thing itself, the matter at hand, matters themselves." See, Zambrana, Rocio. *Hegel's Theory of Intelligibility*. University of Chicago Press, 2015. 6

⁶² Drawing on the *Logic*, Ilyenkov writes: "Thinking as a specifically human capacity consists in the *social human being's* ability to carry out his activity in agreement with the objective forms and laws of existence and development of that objective reality, and carry out any activity regardless of the material in which it is realized, including activity in the sphere of language, in the material of signs, terms, and words." See, Ilyenkov, Evald. *Intelligent Materialism: Essays on Hegel and Dialectics*. Edited and translated by Evgeni V. Pavlov. Brill, 2018. 25. My emphasis.

⁶³ Groves, Christopher. "Ecstasy of Reason, Crisis of Reason: Schelling and Absolute Difference." In, *Pli*. Vol. 8, 1999. 38

Lukács deems 'irrationalism' in his seminal work *The Destruction of Reason*, since it is the theoretical destruction of the possibility of successfully applying reason to develop an understanding of the world, that is, the triumph and exaltation of unknowability.

Justly recognizing the complexity of Schelling, Lukács acknowledges, on the one hand, his formulation of a dialectics which supersedes that of Kant and Fichte, yet notes, on the other, that Schelling's "...intuition implies an irrationalist flinching in the face of the immense perspectives and logical difficulties inseparably linked with an advance beyond merely sensible thinking to rationality and rigorous dialectics."⁶⁴ Taking recourse to the sensible, while contending with a poorly caricatured version of Hegel, Schelling de-couples the ontological connection inherent to epistemological investigation. After this separation, they become problems of two different orders. In one pole resides the possibility of knowledge as discursive, as adequate descriptions, the epistemological sphere. In the other, there is the ontological which cannot be understood in this 'rational' form: *existence*, and nature, stand *outside of thought*. Thus, Lukács asserts: "...Schellingian existence was an abyss of nothingness, again laying grandiloquent claims to a higher, divine rationality."⁶⁵

Perhaps the most important implication of Schelling's severing of thought and being (existence) is that this distinction, in turn, becomes the grounds for a dismissal of universality. If, according to Schelling, Hegelian reason is both ahistorical and without a subject, then existence reveals itself not through the universally endowed potential of reason peculiar to the human species, but only through *individuals*. In Schelling's own words:

"It has therefore been shown how the Ego's need for a God outside rationality... arises in a thoroughly practical fashion...If man is restricted...to gauging his relationship to other individuals according to their relationship in the world of ideas, only the universal, the rationality in him can be satisfied, not the individual man. The individual for himself can demand nothing but blessedness."⁶⁶

For Lukács, this "...confirms an individualism" found again later in Kierkegaard and throughout 20th century existentialism.⁶⁷ The individual in their own attunement, in Heideggerian terminology, or through their mood, as Kierkegaard⁶⁸ would say, experiences the disclosure of the limits of knowledge

⁶⁴ Lukács, Georg. *The Destruction of Reason*. Trans. by Peter Palmer. Verso, 2021. 143.

⁶⁵ Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason*, 186.

⁶⁶ As quoted in Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason*, 188. The quote originates from Part II, Vol. I, p. 497 of Schelling's *Collected Works*.

⁶⁷ Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason*, 188

⁶⁸ Kate Soper notes how Kierkegaard exemplifies what I call the *Kantian Forfeiture*: "...the Kierkegaardian pole of existentialism thus denies the very possibility of a 'philosophy of existence', on the grounds that life is untheorizably unique." Soper, Kate. *Humanism and Anti-humanism*. Hutchinson and Co., London, 1986. 48.

through existence itself. Existence *reveals* itself to us in its truth *qua* sensation—the incomprehensibility of the divine, present in nature/existence, is *intuited* by the individual as its own absolute other. The limitation of knowledge ends in the affirmation of an unknowability of others too, the other is rendered unintelligible, beyond the confines of reason; thus, Schelling writes, “Man and his doings are therefore far removed from rendering the world comprehensible; man himself is the most incomprehensible thing of all...”⁶⁹ Individual consciousness, *self-consciousness*, is limited then not only in terms of understanding the becoming of existence⁷⁰ but also the becoming of social life, at both the individual and collective level.

In a particularly revealing passage, Edward Conze identifies the central problem of the mysticism propagated by Schelling through his removal of ‘man and his doings’ from the sphere of comprehensibility:

“Let me briefly indicate how mysticism should be understood: The aim of mysticism is the unification with the One, with God. Only if that soul is one with God, that is liberated from all that is non-divine...then the emptying, the cleansing of the soul of all that is not God will be the only way to God. The soul has become *empty* of all acts and contents, that soul already *is* God. At the core of the soul, God conceals himself. He only needs to be uncovered. *The release from things implies a release from dealing with things. Only in dealing with them are we attached to things. The cessation of any doing with respect to things is the fundamental demand of mysticism. Its aim is a deedless consciousness, which becomes an entirely passive indifference toward things...it becomes the tranquility with which one lets things be.*”⁷¹

In this sense, human productive and practical activity (appropriation) are precluded from having an effect on the comprehensibility of the world, of causal relations, and of understanding natural and social processes. Thus, our social ‘doings’ are relegated to a sphere of unreason and divorced from their inter-affective relationship with natural processes: ‘a release,’ as Conze notes, ‘from dealing with things’. Schelling’s individualism is confirmed in the stipulation that ‘man and his doings’ are irrelevant to comprehension; one need not concern oneself with the relationship between humans and their activity, but with intuiting the divinity of nature as it reveals itself to discrete individuals. As a result, a subject’s other, an *other* subject, remains incomprehensible, and their activities must then appear as

⁶⁹ Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason*, 176. The quote originates from Part II, Vol. III, p. 7 of Schelling’s *Collected Works*.

⁷⁰ Schelling writes, “For our self-consciousness *is* by no means consciousness of that nature which has traversed everything, it is just *our* consciousness and by no means encompasses a knowledge of all becoming; this universal becoming remains as alien and impenetrable to us as if it never had any relation to us.” Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason*, 176. The quote originates from Part II, Vol. III, p. 6 of Schelling’s *Collected Works*.

⁷¹ Conze, Edward. *The Principle of Contradiction: On the Theory of Dialectical Materialism*. Lexington Books, 2016. 12-13

purely contingent and without reason. The issue is not merely that there is a difficulty in self-consciousness understanding itself, but that it is made *a priori* impossible. Neither humans nor nature can be understood and both must reveal themselves only intuitively. This means precisely that we *ought* not be concerned with a project of reason at all and accept uncertainty as fate through a ‘passive indifference toward things.’ Such an assertion, particularly from a thinker of Schelling’s stature, has significant political and economic implications, such as, for example, the provision of a conception of freedom in purely individual terms which naturalizes contingency as divorced from any concept of necessity, and therefore foreshadowing Hayek’s theoretical formulation of the market as identical to natural law.

Throughout *The Destruction of Reason* Lukács traces the influence of this ‘irrationalism’, as initiated by Schelling, through its impact on seminal thinkers like Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Bergson and Heidegger, and its culmination in the philosophical undercurrents of fascist thought. Although it is an important area of study that demands a great deal of close and careful attention, I am less concerned here with the political implications of Schelling’s thought in the 20th century and retracing the moments of Lukács’ great work, and much more so with a particular theoretical tendency of this Schellingian irrationalism as it pertains to an historically entrenched misrepresentation of Hegel and a subsequent, and perhaps more ideologically motivated, misrepresentation of Marx.

Despite claims about the ‘vulgarity’ of Lukács’ account, he is not the only one to identify the political implications of Schelling’s thought on the 20th century, and his tracing is certainly not reducible to his Marxist impetus.⁷² In fact, thinkers Stephen Houlgate, Enrique Dussel, and Andrew Bowie all discuss the explicit influence of the later Schelling’s irrationalist philosophical tendencies and his critique of Hegel.⁷³ While they differ in terms of respective levels of sympathy with Schelling’s account, they all agree that its influence is deep and far-reaching. Emphasizing the historico-philosophical importance of Schelling’s critique, Houlgate, a renowned Hegelian scholar, claims that

⁷² It is strange that a work of this magnitude can be so easily dismissed, characterized as ‘Stalinist’ (despite his multiple criticisms of Stalin in the same book), and its scholarship so easily ignored. Enzo Traverso’s introduction to the Verso edition, unfortunately, seems to villainize Lukács’ scholarship in this reductive way. Fortunately, Lukács’ *Destruction of Reason* has seen a recent revival and defense. See, for example, Foster, John Bellamy. “The New Irrationalism.” *Monthly Review* 74, No. 9 (February, 2023), <https://monthlyreview.org/2023/02/01/the-new-irrationalism/>; and, Tutt, Daniel. “The Question of Worldview and Class Struggle in Philosophy: On the Relevance of Lukács’s Worldview Marxism and The Destruction of Reason.” *Cosmonaut*. Feb. 12, 2022. <https://cosmonautmag.com/2022/02/the-question-of-worldview-and-class-struggle-in-philosophy-on-the-relevance-of-lukacss-worldview-marxism-and-the-destruction-of-reason/>

⁷³ Additionally, see: Gare, Arran. “The Roots of Postmodernism: Schelling, Process Philosophy and Poststructuralism”. In, *Process and Difference: Between Cosmological and Poststructuralist Postmodernisms*. Eds., Catherine Keller and Anne Daniell. SUNY Press, New York, 2002. 37-38.

“...Schelling’s legacy to subsequent philosophers—from Kierkegaard to Heidegger to Deleuze—[rests on] the main question against Hegel and in so doing distorts the latter’s ideas.”⁷⁴ In Houlgate’s view, the main issues Schelling’s critique of Hegel takes up are anticipation and exteriority, which he explains as follows:

“...it is often assumed that Hegelian thought is thought which progresses by already knowing where it is headed and by drawing whatever it encounters into a systematic development which it can already foresee [and that] Hegel is often accused of failing to think a certain outside which is the very condition of his own speculative thought because he absorbs all exteriority into the interiority of what can be thought.”⁷⁵

Let us begin by considering the relation of some of those thinkers influenced by Schelling’s critique of Hegel. This brief overview will lead us to Alexandre Kojève’s interpretation of Hegel which unconsciously reproduces the Schellingian reading. Additionally, through an analysis of Kojève’s reconstruction of Hegel, we will extend Houlgate’s claim of a misunderstood Hegel to how such misunderstanding leads to a problematic interpretation of Marx.

In the case of Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, who functions here as something of a transitional figure from 19th to 20th century thought, Michelle Kosch remarks that “Kierkegaard’s critique of Hegel does, indeed, owe both its general form and many of its particular tactics to the critique Schelling presented...”⁷⁶ Kierkegaard’s inheritance of a Schellingian Hegel reproduces “...the idea that Hegel abstracts from existence—existence which he must nevertheless presuppose.”⁷⁷ Following the anti-Hegelian move and exemplifying this point, Dussel sympathetically explains how Kierkegaard is able to formulate the individual as “[b]eyond the universal, and beyond totality and being, [where] one encounters the Other, the one in whom it is possible to believe.”⁷⁸ Dussel, then, affirms the Schellingian (mis)reading as the introduction to a leap of faith, as it were, toward an encounter of the Other—who cannot be understood, but must be *believed*, i.e., intuited and sensed.

Dussel here invokes a Levinasian moment, present throughout the entirety of his *oeuvre*, as a critical affirmation of the Other over-against a (Schellingian) Hegel who reduces this Other to the totality, subsuming the outside—in this case the Other—into thought. To restate Schelling’s position: insofar as the Hegelian system recognizes no exteriority, it is also *totalizing* in that the progression of thought is linear, teleological, and rationalistic, wherein the beginning already presupposes the end. In

⁷⁴ Houlgate, *Schelling’s Critique*, 100

⁷⁵ Houlgate, *Schelling’s Critique*, 127.

⁷⁶ Kosch, Michelle. *Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling, and Kierkegaard*. Oxford University Press, 2006. 122

⁷⁷ Houlgate, *Schelling’s Critique*, 115.

⁷⁸ Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 221.

this way, the incapability of Hegelian reason to recognize exteriority is itself the result of an abstract and ahistorical logical system that is inherently metaphysically teleological: beginning with pure thought it ends in pure knowledge, which is the ‘goal’ of pure thought itself; and since the initial thought is, in Schelling’s view, *pure* and anticipatory, all that follows is already contained in the beginning. Reproducing this version of a caricaturized Hegel, Dussel then correctly makes the connection to Levinas, who, as Houlgate notes, also reproduces “[t]he idea that Hegel acknowledges no genuine other or outside of thought.”⁷⁹ In this sense, Dussel carries on, via Kierkegaard and Levinas, the mischaracterization of Hegel⁸⁰ as constructed by Schelling, further defending the element of exteriority as articulated by Schelling and claiming it as the theoretical origin of Marx’s concept of living labor.⁸¹

How exactly, then, do these very different thinkers reproduce this bastardized version of Hegel? From where does the residue of Schelling’s rupture with Hegel appear in their work? How does Schelling’s misreading of Hegel serve to legitimize and justify their claims?

Part of the historical answer to these questions is that Kierkegaard was, of course, influential in his own right and that, together with Schopenhauer,⁸² whose (famously personal) hatred for Hegel was quite fervid, they proved a significant influence on the development of Nietzsche’s thought.⁸³ Nietzsche, in turn outshining the other two, would go on to endlessly propound and perpetuate that form of irrationalism initiated by Schelling.⁸⁴ While this avenue of investigation would no doubt prove fruitful, we must leave Nietzsche here and turn to another, equally as important if not more influential thinker, Martin Heidegger.

⁷⁹ Houlgate, *Schelling’s Critique*, 115. See, Levinas, Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Trans. by, Alphonso Lingis. Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, 1969. 289.

⁸⁰ For a critical account of Dussel’s interpretation of Hegel, see: Gogol, Eugene. *The Concept of Other in Latin American Liberation: Fusing Emancipatory Philosophic Thought and Social Revolt*. Lexington Books. 2002. 75-79.

⁸¹ See ‘Appendix 2’ in Dussel, Enrique. *Towards an Unknown Marx: A commentary on the Manuscripts of 1861-63*. Trans. by Yolanda Angulo. Ed. by Fred Moseley. Routledge, New York. 2001. Also, see: Dussel, Enrique. “Marx, Schelling and Surplus Value.” In, *International Studies of Philosophy*, Vol. 38/4.

⁸² Lukács notes, “Schopenhauer, like Schelling previously, presents us with two diametrically opposite modes of comprehending reality: an inessential reality (objective reality as really given) and a genuine, essential one (that of mystical irrationalism). Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason*, 220.

⁸³ Nietzsche too was influenced directly by Schelling. See, Gare, *The Roots of Postmodernism: Schelling, Process Philosophy and Poststructuralism*, 33.

⁸⁴ “[i]n Heidegger’s reading of Schelling, Schelling is considered Nietzsche’s predecessor.” Hühn, Lore. “A Philosophical Dialogue between Heidegger and Schelling.” In, *Comparative & Continental Philosophy*. Vol. 6, No. 1, May, 2014. 17

The lineage of Schelling's irrationalism leads, unquestionably, to Heidegger—whose indebtedness to Schelling,⁸⁵ Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard is well established—and it is primarily with him that the mischaracterization of Hegel⁸⁶ gains a truly solidified acceptance and scholarly character in the 20th century, despite reproducing exactly the charge Houlgate described above. To be clear, I am not concerned here with outlining Heidegger's connection to Nazism, as did Lukács,⁸⁷ nor with his encounter with Schelling,⁸⁸ and even less with his own reading of Hegel.⁸⁹ Instead, Heidegger serves as the crucial entry point for understanding and describing how Schelling's mischaracterization spread,⁹⁰ especially given, on the one hand, Heidegger's attraction to Schelling's philosophical works,⁹¹ and, on the other, the inescapability of Heidegger's thought and influence in the 20th and 21st centuries, especially in its adamant anti-modernism,⁹² which is part of the background of post-structuralism's own disavowal of modernity. To this end, one of Heidegger's most successful students, Hans-Georg

⁸⁵ “Schelling's...notion of the Absolute...is a forerunner of Heidegger's treatment of a non-rational, primordial ‘openness’ to Being.” See, Groves, Christopher. “Ecstasy of Reason, Crisis of Reason: Schelling and Absolute Difference.” In, *Pli*. Vol. 8, 1999. 26.

⁸⁶ Miguel Rossi writes “Heidegger asume una postura fuertemente romántica. Un romanticismo que termina considerando el terreno de lo racional y conceptual desde la nebulosa de lo demoníaco,” exactly in terms of Schelling's rejection of Hegelian reason. Further, Rossi also identifies a central problem with Heidegger's misconstruction of Hegel: “Como expresión de deseo y asumiendo una posición hegeliana, en una suerte de confesión particular, no podría dejar de decir, contra Heidegger y la postmodernidad, que necesitamos de la razón hegeliana para volver a producir en el encuentro entre la vida y las instituciones. Por último, lejos de interpretarse al sujeto hegeliano como un sujeto absoluto -claro está en términos de totalitarismo-; el sujeto hegeliano se constituye a partir de una dialéctica con el ethos social del que forma parte. En términos más sencillos, subyace la idea de que el hombre constituye a la sociedad pero, a su vez, es constituido, también, por aquella. Incluso, desde un constante dinamismo. La relevancia de explicitar dicha observación, nos salva del error, o mejor dicho el horror, de interpretar a la dialéctica como tesis, antítesis y síntesis.” See, Boron, Atilio (Ed). *Filosofía Política Contemporánea Controversias Sobre Civilización, Imperio Y Ciudadanía*. CLACSO, 2003. 353-356.

⁸⁷ See, Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason*.

⁸⁸For a detailed analysis of Heidegger's engagement with Schelling, see, Hühn, Lore. “A Philosophical Dialogue between Heidegger and Schelling.” In, *Comparative & Continental Philosophy*. Vol. 6, No. 1, May, 2014. 16-34

⁸⁹ Though, it can be seen that he reproduces precisely the problem that Houlgate noted. For example Heidegger writes that Hegel's thought develops “in accordance with a predetermined idea of being” (See, Heidegger, Martin. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. by Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1988. 82). Similarly, he reproduces the erroneous conception of dialectics as thesis-antithesis-synthesis, see, Heidegger, Martin. “Hegel and the Greeks”. In, *Pathmarks*. 326.

⁹⁰ Hühn also notes: “There is no doubt about the fact that the academic reception and continuing influence of Schelling's historical motif in the work of Martin Heidegger has far-flung consequences, mediated in particular by the “philosophical triumvirate” of Gunther Anders, Hannah Arendt and Hans Jonas—consequences which have remained extremely relevant all the way up to the contemporary critical debates about modernity.” Hühn, *A Philosophical Dialogue between Heidegger and Schelling*, 30.

⁹¹ According to Peter Trawny: “In the context of the being-historical lecture courses Heidegger now allows Schelling a special meaning. In the Schelling-lecture course (summer 1936), Schelling has freed himself of his dependency on Hegel. He is now the “real creative and farthest-reaching thinker of this whole era of German philosophy,” that is, of German Idealism. He is this thinker “to such an extent that he drives German Idealism from within right past its own fundamental position” (GA 42, 6).” See, Peter Trawny. “Heidegger and German Idealism”. In, *The Bloomsbury Companion to Heidegger*. Edited by Raffoul, Francois and Eric Nelson. Bloomsbury, 2013. 117.

⁹² See, Domenico Losurdo. *Heidegger and the Ideology of War: Community, Death, and the West*. New York: Humanity Books, 2001

Gadamer, accounts for the pivotal historical moment in which, following the upshot of Neo-Kantian positivist philosophy and sociology discussed above, Hegel began to attract some, although primarily contemptuous, interest in the form of a conservative neo-Hegelianism.⁹³ “But,” Gadamer tells us, “that was changed in Germany by the impulse coming from Martin Heidegger and, after that, by the interest of French social scientists in Hegel which was awakened above all by the lectures of Alexander Kojève.” Hegel was re-awakened from an almost century long slumber through Heidegger and, in turn, through Alexander Kojève. However, Hegel’s resurrection—of course mediated through Heidegger’s Schellingian reading—limited itself to a particular analysis. Gadamer explains: “Both of these initiatives aroused a rather one-sided philosophic interest in Hegel’s first great work, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The *Logic*, in contrast, remained till today very much in the background.”⁹⁴ As we shall see, the one-sidedness of these initiatives would be of defining importance for the development of 20th-century thought.

[1.4] The Residues of a Schellingian Hegel, Part II: Alexandre Kojève

Indeed, in the context of Hegel’s re-introduction to philosophical debates in France,⁹⁵ mediated as they were by the instruction of Heidegger, the *Phenomenology* was of sole importance, the *Logic* relegated to a mere afterthought. Even more than this, however, as Ethan Kleinberg attests, “Alexandre Kojève introduced the work of Hegel to the generation of 1933 *in a specifically Heideggerian framework*.”⁹⁶ Limited by such a myopic focus on the *Phenomenology*, a Schelling-derived Heideggerian reading of Hegel made itself apparent in 20th-century French theory in terms of a focus on the teleological movement of consciousness through the overcoming of the animalistic element of humanity by means of desire.⁹⁷ The one-sided focus on desire here characterizes the overemphasis on recognition⁹⁸ stemming from Kojève’s concentration on the master-slave dialectic, a dialectic

⁹³ See, Chapter 5, titled Neo-Hegelianism, in Lukács, Georg. *The Destruction of Reason*. Trans. by Peter Palmer. Verso, 2021.

⁹⁴ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Hegel’s Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*. Trans. by P. Christopher Smith. Yale University Press, 1976. 75.

⁹⁵ Schelling’s own reception in France is primarily engaged through his critique of Hegel and his later ‘positive philosophy’ through the work of Jean Wahl. See, Groves, Christopher. “Ecstasy of Reason, Crisis of Reason: Schelling and Absolute Difference.” In, *Pli*. Vol. 8, 1999. 26. For a brief exposition of Wahl’s lectures on Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Hegel, and Heidegger, as well as his influence in France, see, Kleinberg, Ethan. *Generation Existential: Heidegger’s Philosophy in France, 1921-1961*. Cornell University Press, 2005. 84-87.

⁹⁶ Kleinberg, *Generation Existential*, 84. Emphasis is my own.

⁹⁷ Kleinberg, *Generation Existential*, 74

⁹⁸ Steven Smith, though unaware of this Schellingian influence, argues that the emphasis on recognition (through the master-slave dialectic) represents this existentialist reading, identifying the Nietzschean residue: “The Kojèvean readings of Hegel not only points backward to Aristotle; it points forward to Nietzsche.” See, Smith, Steven B. *Reading Althusser: An Essay on Structural Marxism*. Cornell University Press, 1984. 50.

interpreted as purely rational, linearly teleological,⁹⁹ and reproducing a dualism within the human essence itself: the unconscious animal embedded in the unpredictability of its own natural inclinations and a self-conscious human who overcomes its animal nature by thought. Let us now examine how Schelling's Hegel lingers here.

To begin, the dualistic differentiation—an undialectical de-coupling—between nature and the ahistorical subject is implicitly rendered in a vulgar materialist sense: the contingency of the animalistic elements requires *control* and *domination*;¹⁰⁰ that is, 'reason' subdues animalistic instinct.¹⁰¹ This subjugation of the human animal is possible through self-consciousness, or the abstract kind of rationality Schelling incorrectly ascribes to Hegelian thought. Consequently, the human can become self-determinate as a result of its conceptuality. In Kojève, the consciousness of desire—through rational thought—enables the recognition of the other, and their desire, enabling a change based on a logical deduction of the concept. What remains critical for Schelling—Hegel's formal rationality—becomes a positive point for Kojève:

Human Desire...must win out over [the animal's] desire for preservation. In other words, man's humanity 'comes to light' only if he risks his (animal) life for the sake of his human Desire. It is in and by this risk that the human reality is created and revealed as reality; it is in and by this risk that it 'comes to light,' i.e., is shown...¹⁰²

The existentialist theme of 'risk' and the Heideggerian-inspired 'coming to light' (truth as unconcealment) notwithstanding, Kojève's human desire is analytically separated from its animal basis. That is, desire is the origin of self-consciousness, of recognition of the desire of the other so as to demand satisfaction; thus, "human history is the history of desired Desires."¹⁰³ Important to note, then, is precisely that Kojève reduces history to the rationalization of desire, to desire *qua* concept, and deduces from it the meaning of human history. The formalization of desire enables Kojève to depict reality as a result of thought, the thought of desire. If 'human reality is created and revealed as reality' only through the recognition of desire, reality itself is nothing more than a logical deduction of the concept of desire. However, this would assume an absolute separability between the ideal and the

⁹⁹ "This movement is essential to Kojève's overall formulation in that it conserves two key themes in French philosophy: teleology and the notion of free will." Kleinberg, *Generation Existential*, 74.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 73

¹⁰¹ Commenting on this issue in Kojève, Shadia Drury notes, "...to be fully human, [Man] must negate the nature that dwells within him." See, Drury, Shadia. *Alexandre Kojève: The Roots of Postmodern Politics*. St. Martin's Press, New York, 1994. 19

¹⁰² Kojève, Alexandre. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. by James Nichols Jr. Ed. by Allan Bloom. Cornell University Press, Ithaca. 1969. 7

¹⁰³ Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 6.

real in Hegel himself, which as I have shown is not the case. Rather, Kojève's formulation inherits Schelling's critique of Hegel, where existence is the result of rationality itself and posited *linearly* as though the animalist element of human desire moves forward to the rational desire through a series of logical steps.

In her study on subjectivity and desire in Hegel, Judith Butler reflects on the particular form in which the *Phenomenology* was revived in 20th-century France, and on this point remarks that "Kojève traced Marx's theory of class struggle to Hegel's discussion of lord and bondsman in the *Phenomenology*, and although Marx viewed class struggle as the dynamic proper to capitalist society, Kojève generalized his conclusion, claiming that the struggle for recognition forms the dynamic principle of all historical progress."¹⁰⁴ According to Butler's analysis, Kojève reduced the dynamism of historical materialist class struggle peculiar to historically specific social forms to the idealistic, *linearly* progressive dynamics of recognition. In this reading of Marx via Schelling's Hegel, recognition, a cognitive act, centers itself as primary over-against historically constituted praxis—de-materialized, struggle moves from class to recognition, from material social relations to conceptual social cognition. Historical progression becomes a matter of a series of cognitive acts, of the rationality of the concept of one's self and its other, gaining further determinacy through the attainment of a 'reason' independent of its materiality: *the logic of the concept alone determines the thing itself.*¹⁰⁵ Reproducing a Schellingian Hegel, though now uncritically, Kojève de-materializes and de-contextualizes the Hegelian commitment to historical specificity and a concept of reason embedded in a social ground, as Marx noted above. Thus, to the extent that the *Logic* is approached at all, it is understood by Kojève only "...in the context of human action," thus, "...Chapter 4 of the *Phenomenology* becomes the central moment in Hegel's entire system."¹⁰⁶

Developing the historical point into a prescient theoretical insight, Butler points to an important implication of the impact of Kojève's reading of Hegel on French, and by extension Western, 20th-century theory as a whole: "For Kojève, the *Phenomenology* achieves the *telos* of Western culture insofar as it occasions the beginning of an anthropocentric understanding of historical life."¹⁰⁷ If, as we shall soon see in more detail, Kojève disseminated a particular understanding of both Hegel and Marx as abiding by a metaphysical teleological impetus of linear progression to be realized through the exercise of reason, then it is of no surprise that many would turn to other thinkers—Heidegger,

¹⁰⁴ Butler, Judith. *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France*. Columbia University Press, 1987. 64.

¹⁰⁵ Smith, Steven B. *Reading Althusser: An Essay on Structural Marxism*. Cornell University Press, 1984. 49

¹⁰⁶ Butler, *Subjects of Desire*, 65

¹⁰⁷ Butler, *Subjects of Desire*, 64

Levinas, Foucault, Lyotard, etc.—and approach Hegel’s system of categories with a reductive view framed by the Kojèvean lens with rightful suspicion. Thus, as Kleinberg rightfully insists, “...we must remain constantly aware that Kojève’s reading of Hegel is not Hegel.”¹⁰⁸ With Kleinberg, we might also insist: Kojève’s reading of Marx is not Marx either.

Relevant to the subsequent development of Western Marxism is precisely that “Kojève had to read Hegel’s doctrine of the dialectic of nature either as mistaken or as requiring the contributing presence of a human consciousness.”¹⁰⁹ Since, as Kleinberg notes, “... Kojève used his reading of Heidegger to create an existential reading of Hegel,”¹¹⁰ we can observe that while he was in fact reading Hegel anthropologically, his rejection of Hegel’s dialectics of nature meant that for Kojève the Hegelian dialectic only pertains to the development of consciousness. Kojève’s opposition to a dialectical materialist perspective (which would include a dialectics of nature itself), particularly in his treatment of Hegel, is evidenced by his insistence, summarized by Kate Soper, “that we...commit ourselves wholeheartedly to the dualism of Man and Nature.”¹¹¹ To be sure, the abandonment of a dialectic of nature is significant, for it accentuates Schelling’s separation between a logic applicable to thought alone and a nature, existence, as incomprehensibly contingent. Thus, the dialectic is presented as only a *form* of consciousness—or, to put it scholastically, a subjective method among many and not something objectively present in the movement of nature¹¹² and society itself.¹¹³

Ironically, it turns out that a conception of the dialectic as purely a matter of consciousness can be *more* totalizing than the dialectical materialist conception of a dialectic of nature. Butler explains that, “[f]or Kojève, negation is an action of human origin that is applied externally to the realm of the nonhuman.”¹¹⁴ In a kind of Kojèvean homage to Schelling, Hegelian negativity is stripped from its objectivity and no longer regarded as belonging to things, to nonhuman subject-objects. Negation, then, constitutes itself as the result of a kind of reason, of a rational consciousness that determines its negativity over-against the nonhuman. In Kojève’s Hegel, reason *determines* negation, instead of, as Hegel actually had it, *dealing with* negation relationally. In this way negation, negativity, is treated

¹⁰⁸ Kleinberg, *Generation Existential*, 72

¹⁰⁹ Butler, *Subjects of Desire*, 65

¹¹⁰ Kleinberg, *Generation Existential*, 72

¹¹¹ Soper writes, “Kojève...insists that we...commit ourselves wholeheartedly to the dualism of Man and Nature.” See, Soper, Kate. *Humanism and Anti-humanism*. Hutchinson and Co., London, 1986. 47

¹¹² Soper notes, “Kojève’s only real criticism of Hegel is that he fell into confusion by identifying a dialectic in nature as well as in human history.” Soper, *Human and Anti-humanism*, 46

¹¹³ Kojève’s dualism between Human and Nature, Steven Smith explains, “...sought to direct attention away from the theological and even mystical overtones of Hegel’s *Naturphilosophie*, which Kojève regarded as disastrous, to its more radical and revolutionary social theory.” See, Smith, *Reading Althusser*, 48.

¹¹⁴ Butler, *Subjects of Desire*, 92

abstractly and *homogenously*—a treatment *antithetical* to Hegel’s own dialectical logic. This abstract homogenization precludes the analytical possibility of differentiating between *forms* of negation as belonging to particular kinds of things and their metabolic transformative unfolding as a result of their essence *qua* species of thing. In fact, it also de-historicizes the form by which reason itself *expresses* its negativity. One could suggest that negativity belongs to reason *in general*, but this alone tells us nothing about the *form* of negativity in terms of the subject’s relational setting; not only the subject’s socio-historical environment but also how the materiality of non-human subject-objects *mediates* the subject’s development and understanding. In other words, without accounting for ontological negativity and its relational involvement with the negativity pertaining to human reason (its simultaneous heterogeneity and universality), socio-historical transformation and development are impeded from revealing their determinate differences. Reason, then, is reduced to pure sameness, without the *determinate difference of this sameness* (as reason) being grounded in human practice. Instead of such reduction, we can retain ontological negativity as the material relationality through which a historically specific *form of reason*, universal to the species, expresses itself determinately—activated, as it were, by the determinate relations which condition that about which it *reasons*.¹¹⁵

In order to attain a sufficient level of abstraction to appropriately account for the universality of reason, a description of negativity as inherent to reason as such remains a necessary starting point. However, it is important to recognize that the negativity of reason comes from somewhere, that is to say, it *is the result* of a socio-historical form and its development. More importantly, reason’s negativity emerges as the consequence of a *negative* relation with other subject-objects, and their own *ontologically constitutive* negativity.

The claim that human reason can deploy negation only holds insofar as it is predicated on the negativity of other things to which reason is *in relation*: consciousness is always consciousness of *something*. This is due to the fact that *negativity*, ontologically grounded, is not only an attribute of distinct material things but manifests as a contradictory identity relation *between* reason and things. The relational element of the negative, in this way, becomes the positive character through which the negativity of reason is made possible. That is, that negativity structures the immanent becoming of any object means both that it possesses a negative self-relation *and* a negative relation with other objects. At the same time, however, these negative identities are *already* the reflection of their self-constituted positivity; negativity’s movement is *through* the positive condition of which it is a

¹¹⁵ This will be further elaborated in the chapter on Marx.

determination. The fact that human reason can deploy negation represents nothing short of the positive emergence of *this thinking being*, a being of thought criteria, as it is negatively *and* relationally immersed within a totality—a social *and* natural, processually material *ensemble*, wherein a form of struggle in confrontation with the immediate informs the positive development of a physiological structure in *disjunctive unity* within and through a *material relationality*. In becoming itself, the human *takes shape* as a being endowed with reason, an actualization of an emergent *metabolic* process within and through socialized nature, i.e., with other subject-objects, which is precisely the relational *causa sui* of reason itself. Indeed, from the perspective of a dialectical relational ontology, reason eventuates *through* human subject-objects not *from* them; since reason is the result of the *active* and *determinate mediations* out of which and through which the human subject-object itself *unfolds* by means of sensuously *appropriating* and *becoming-appropriated* through objective *involvement* in the material world.

The problem of negation at this level of abstraction and as only applicable to human reason leads to another undialectical de-coupling; namely, the dualist separation between homogeneity and heterogeneity, or, the universal and particular. In describing Kojève's existential reading, the role of negation, and Kojève's fascination with the 'death of man,' Stefanos Geroulanos observes that "...homogeneity organizes and contextualizes the fundamental ontological dualism that animates Kojève's thought."¹¹⁶ This homogenization represents an *interlinking*, which Kojève explains in the following way: "Homogeneity is there as an interaction that separates and reconnects two things that are separate but interlinked."¹¹⁷ Such homogeneity then is the driving force through which heterogeneity is subsumed, particularity dissolves into the homogenous universal. Consequently, Kojève's approach implies that Hegelian dialectical logic is incapable of accounting for particularity.

According to Geroulanos, Kojève's homogeneity reflects his theoretical allegiance to immanence over-against transcendence which is, in my view, an allegiance to a vulgar materialism which extolls "...the denial of any transcendence other than in death."¹¹⁸ Following the Schellingian critique of Hegel, where reason appears as discursive and separate from existence or nature, and mimicking Schelling's own assertion concerning the incomprehensibility of 'man and his doings', Kojève's reduction of negation to reason alone leads to an understanding of homogeneity which disavows *transcendence*: "[a]s this immanence is saturated by homogeneity, negation is not a process that fundamentally alters the world..."¹¹⁹ To be sure, insofar as negation belongs only to *reason*, it changes

¹¹⁶ Geroulanos, Stefanos. *An Atheism that is not Humanist Emerges in French Thought*. Stanford University Press, 2010. 144

¹¹⁷ As quoted in, Geroulanos, *An Atheism*, 144

¹¹⁸ Geroulanos, *An Atheism*, 144

¹¹⁹ Geroulanos, *An Atheism*, 144

only itself, through the negation of itself, by ‘progressing’ toward its self-realization. Practical and productive activity, corporeality and the material conditions in which it’s embedded, play an insignificant, secondary role. Thought transcends itself in reason, but the relational body as an ensemble of activity-in-relation remains wedded to its materiality regarding which it cannot transcend. Thus, death appears as the only form of transcendence, since by means of death consciousness no longer operates, i.e., reason *ceases* to negate. As such, historical transformation is understood as the struggle of reason negating itself; in this schema, practical and productive activity lose their *transformative* potential of transcending their existing conditions. The distinction between theory and praxis in Marx’s eleventh thesis—“Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it”—is done away with instantly by means of a Kojèvean idealism in effect more idealist than Hegel himself. According to Kojève, interpolating Schelling, philosophers have only thought about the world, the point however, is to think about its thinking, thus negating previous forms of thought, and this is as close as we can hope to arrive at changing the world. Kojèvean reason becomes the homogenous universality devoid of particularity through which reality realizes itself.

Homogeneity understood in this way instantiates a form of necessity tethered to the progression of an abstract, purely negative reason divorced from practical activity. In short, it affirms and posits a *metaphysical* teleology concerning the movement of history. Necessity becomes theoretically wedded to an abstract, and ahistorical, progressive movement of reason, inevitably tending toward realization through the establishment of a *homogenous* state of affairs culminating in the *end of history*. Echoing the eschatological tones of Heidegger’s thought, “Kojève rediscovered in Hegel the idea of an *end of history*, that is, the idea that history has an identifiable end, or *telos*, all its own which is leading us through its own ‘cunning of reason’ to a condition of universal freedom and rationality.”¹²⁰ In Kojève the end of history is the realization of an impending freedom, an ontologically negative freedom¹²¹ premised on the struggle for recognition only to culminate in “the disappearance of Man”¹²² through the abolition of necessity. At this point, in Kojève’s view, “Man no longer changes essentially...”; the *end of history* is realized once necessity is abolished.¹²³ Kojève makes use of Marx’s discussion of the relationship of freedom and necessity at the end of *Capital, Vol. 3*. But, since nature, for Kojève—like Schelling, but unlike Hegel—remains something ontologically external to humanity

¹²⁰ Smith, *Reading Althusser*, 48. My emphasis.

¹²¹ See, Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 222

¹²² Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 158.

¹²³ Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 159.

and without dialectic, necessity is not conceived of as *belonging to natural phenomena in dialectical relation to contingency*. As a result, necessity, existing only in the realm of thought, can be ‘abolished’ because it only needs to be negated *by thought*, by rationality’s self-completion, that is, the culmination of the teleological movement of history.

While there are many aspects of his view that could be discussed here, the specific issue I wish to address is the tenuous assumption that “Man”—to adhere to Kojève’s language—himself can reach a point of *fixity*, a point where there is no longer any ‘change’; namely, the *end of history* as the realization of communism, the closure of all transformation. This closure of *metabolic motion* is far removed from both Hegel and Marx’s views of historical development. In terms of the latter, Smith correctly explains the stark difference in Kojève’s account of freedom and necessity and Marx’s: “[for Marx] freedom does not consist in transcending necessity but in learning to find one’s way about it. Freedom...consists in recognizing necessity, *not* in abolishing it.”¹²⁴ The reason for this difference lies in the fact that Marx, contrary to Kojève, recognizes *necessity as ontologically constitutive of both nature and sociality*. Recognizing necessity—be it physiological requirements, the fulfilment of social need or natural laws—requires a process of *intellectual intuition* (in Hegel’s sense), a thinking that presupposes its exteriority (though not absolute as in Schelling) as a premise to its own unfolding. This is the *negative moment*. But, like Hegel, Marx does not in negativity remain: *it is not ‘necessity’ as such that is transcended or abolished, but particular necessities in a geopolitically situated, historically specific social form*. The ‘learning to find one’s way about’ necessity is *the thinking through of necessity as a concept with reference to material content*. In *dealing with* necessity, thought pushes through its indeterminacy, grounding it determinately through the introduction of qualifications, *materially and practically relevant qualities*; i.e., it contains within its process a *positive moment*.

Thus, reason cannot simply ‘negate’, ‘abolish’, necessity as such, and neither can such an abstract conception of ‘communism’ *qua* end of history. Transcendence is not *absolute* and *complete* at any given moment no matter the state of development of the ‘productive forces’ or the teleological progress of ‘reason’. Transcendence belongs to the situation mediated by *determinate necessity*. Note here that ‘determinate’ is not an absolute *determinism*. In other words, the Hegelian and Marxist conception of transcendence dialectically belongs to the *immanence to which it is indissolubly linked*. Transcendence, therefore, is not *immaterial*, not a matter of a theoretical overcoming of practical activity only to be realized in death or a final homogenous political condition wherein ‘Man’ becomes immobile, where

¹²⁴ Smith, *Reading Althusser*, 55.

the human loses its *ontologically metabolic, transformative essence* by reaching a fixed state. Hence, Kojève's *end of history* thesis, and its logico-theoretical structure, could not differ more starkly to Hegel or Marx, particularly in regard to the political vision Kojève was attempting to justify theoretically.

Contrary to Kojève's view, Marx & Engels write, "Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the now existing premise."¹²⁵ Indeed, the 'conditions of this movement' emerge from the necessities peculiar to the 'now existing premise.' The intended abolition refers to the 'present state of things,' not to things as such and, moreover, the 'present state of things' contains its own necessities that require recognition in order to be abolished. In Marx's view, abolition of the present state of things is a form of transcendence—not an absolute one, not an *annihilation*—that remains *immanent*, a '*real movement*'. This abolition contains the determinate necessities belonging to a *historically specific social form*, a negation through which another form emerges, *positively*. This dialectical materialist conception of the movement of history does not do away with necessity as such, but rather, as a result of its dialectical relation to contingency, it *alters* or *transforms* the forms by which certain necessities are realized.

The real movement of social life requires and presupposes the satisfaction of the real movement, necessity, of biophysiological human needs in relation to the changing necessities present in the real, inter-affective and inter-penetrative, movement, objectivity, of and between both nature and society. As such, the universal metabolism of humanity and nature presupposes necessity ontologically and socially in inter-mediated, *inter-affective*, and transformative ways.

As a result of a lingering Schellingian Hegel transposed onto a thus-distorted Marx, Kojève, as I have shown, was incapable of accurately assessing the relationship between freedom and necessity. Indeed, as GV Plekhanov once timelessly remarked, "[t]he old but eternally new question of freedom and necessity rose up....as it arose before absolutely all the philosophers [concerned with] the relationship of being and thought. Like a sphinx it said to each such thinker: *unravel me, or I shall devour your system!*"¹²⁶ Guided by an understanding of Hegel and Marx derived from Schelling and Heidegger, Kojève's theoretical mishaps meant he could not *unravel* the concepts of freedom and necessity correctly and so, as a result of his extraordinary influence on a nascent generation of European

¹²⁵ Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. "The German Ideology". *Marx-Engels Collected Works: Volume 5*. Lawrence & Wishart, 2010. 49

¹²⁶ Plekhanov, GV. *The Development of the Monist View of History*. Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/plekhanov/1895/monist/ch04b.htm>

intellectuals, particularly in France, the possibility of understanding the complexity and rigor of both Hegel and Marx's systems had been fed, by Kojève's hand, to the sphinx of history, i.e., *devoured*.

[1.5] Concluding Remarks

Although this moment of philosophical history is granted little of the attention it deserves, it is no exaggeration to say that Kojève's reconstruction of Hegel and the Hegel-Marx relationship was extremely influential and had a resounding impact on the development of European thought. Just as Schelling's critique of Hegel had attracted the attention of the greatest minds in Europe, so too could one count among those engaging with Kojève's reconstruction a number of scholars through which, in the second half of the 20th century and into the 21st, philosophical discourse would take a number of quite dizzying 'turns.' Indeed, Kojève initiated a Hegelian renaissance. However original the reconstruction, the Schellingian critique lingered, though in an inverted form: what Schelling condemned, Kojève defended. Kojève's peculiar version of Hegel transposed itself onto the framework for a peculiar reading of Marx. Ultimately, by way of Kojève's influence, the Schellingian Hegel became a major theoretical lens through which a (un-)Hegelianized Marx became deeply rooted in intellectual circles, to the point of achieving a kind of *a priori* acceptance by inheritors of this tradition. Despite this widely accepted, interpretive status quo, the depth of this theoretical root is matched only by the extent to which it continues to press against *both* the interpretations of Hegel and Marx. In order to challenge these accounts, my later chapters on Hegel and Marx will provide an alternative interpretation.

In the above analysis I have shown the importance of considering the closure of German Idealism through the long-lasting effects of Schelling's critique of Hegel, and how such critique has lingered even among those who have sought to defend and reclaim Hegel, positing this (mis)interpretation of Hegel onto a (mis)interpretation of Marx. Further, my defense of Hegel emphasized the relational elements of his insights and demonstrated the relevance of reading his dialectical logic in ontological terms. This preview served to clarify the relational dimension of his system in contrast to the predominance of the Schellingian rupture and lay the ground for my relational-ontological reading of Hegel's dialectical logic in chapter three. In the following chapter, I will continue to investigate the diffusion of the Schellingian residues in certain 20th century thinkers and shed light on the theoretical reverberations and reactions resulting from Schelling's rupture with Hegel.

[2] Diffused Residues & the Reverberations of Ruptures: Althusser & Poststructuralism

In order to continue tracing how Schelling's Hegel lingers on into the latter 20th century, let us examine the extent and direction of the influence of Kojève's reconstruction on European thought. First, I account for two forms of *recoil* arising from Kojève: Jean Hyppolite's turn toward the discursive analysis in his reading of Hegel, emboldened by his capitulation of reason to sense, and Louis Althusser's reaction against the existential-anthropological reading of Hegel and Marx in the effort to construct a philosophical system empty of subjectivity. Contrary to Kojève's humanist reading, both Hyppolite and Althusser shared, despite their own differences, an anti-humanist commitment. Second, I outline how these new directions caused significant reaction in their own right, one in which the Schellingian critique of Hegel begins to reverberate once more in the works of Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault. I conclude with an assessment of the limits of these recoils and reverberations and the injustices they commit on both Hegel and Marx. As we turn to the matter at hand, Zhang Shiyong neatly summarizes the preceding and suggest some possible avenues of investigation:

The vitality of Hegel in France, other than the fact of its recent arrival, follows a singular trajectory which continues to obscure its rapport with Marxism and reactively undoes the rational kernel of dialectics. It was in the seminar of Kojève in the thirties that one should date, in our opinion, a certain sort of inscription, not of a purely academic nature, of Hegelian references to the ideological questions of the time. *From this moment on, an image of Hegel was sketched that took more than thirty years to undo—still, we are not far enough from it.* The Hegel of Kojève was exclusively that of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, taken as the idealism of the scissions of self-consciousness, held in the ascending metaphor that follows from sensible immediacy to absolute knowledge, with, at its heart, the master-slave dialectic. It was the formalism of the encounter with the other that had the poetic virtue of placing itself under the sign of risk and death: this Hegel found its audience with the revolutionary romanticism of Malraux and even more with the surrealists. Bataille and Breton owed everything they said to Kojève...this Marx and this Hegel, the first reduced to the second, and the second separated from the very part which had precisely led the way for the first: *The Science of Logic*.¹²⁷

Indeed, illustrating the tremendous depths to which Kojève's reconstruction had taken root in European intellectual culture, the bastardization of Marx and Hegel held strong throughout the decades following his influential lectures: "The Hegelianized Marx of the fifties was a speculative figure but remained virtually revolutionary, while the Anti-Hegelian Marx of the sixties was a scholar devoted to seminars. Or, to put the alternatives philosophically: the Marx-Hegel was the idealist

¹²⁷ Shiyong, Zhang, Alain Badiou, Joël Bellassen, and Louis Mossot. *The Rational Kernel of the Hegelian Dialectic: Translations, introductions and commentary on a text by Zhang Shiyong*. Ed. And Trans. by Tzuchien Tho. RE Press, 2011. 11-14

dialectic, the anti-Hegel Marx was metaphysical materialism.”¹²⁸ Here, Shiyong is describing precisely the secondary and tertiary residues of the Kojèvean presentation of both Hegel and Marx which we have been tracing. Now we must ask, how exactly did these readings take hold and how did this result in the contemporary suspicion of their respective categories and systems?

In a notable case of history repeating itself, Kleinberg explains that between 1933 and 1939, Kojève, like Schelling before him, had an audience filled with both established and emerging philosophical and scientific giants including “Georges Bataille, Jacques Lacan...Raymond Queneau...Raymond Aron, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Eric Weil, André Breton, Emmanuel Levinas”¹²⁹ Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Hannah Arendt, among others. Jean Hyppolite, however, stands alone in terms of his scholarly dedication as Kojève’s theoretical interlocutor—as a Hegelian hermeneutician—proving influential in his own right. Thus, let us inspect Hyppolite’s recoil.

[2.1] *Hyppolite’s Recoil: A Reaction to Rupture*

Jean Hyppolite, together with Jean Wahl,¹³⁰ also participated in the popularization of Hegel read with a particular existential bent. Wahl was among the first to emphasize the *Phenomenology*, developing an interpretation of Hegel based primarily on the ‘unhappy consciousness.’ Hyppolite, Wahl’s student, developed the implications of the same concept in more nuance.¹³¹ If Kojève, vis-à-vis Schelling, had constructed the image of a problematic Hegel (and Marx) as a humanist by centering the anthropocentricity of Hegel’s insights over-against a dialectic of nature, then Hyppolite began to undo the anthropological interest by a focus on history,¹³² while maintaining a similarly exclusive focus on the *Phenomenology* following Kojève’s example.¹³³ However, after World War II, Hyppolite became wary of the burgeoning historicist and humanist¹³⁴ approach to Hegel alongside his dissatisfaction with Marx,¹³⁵ hence his later turning “...from the Hegelian to the Heideggerian...”¹³⁶ path.¹³⁷

¹²⁸ Shiyong, *The Rational Kernel*, 14.

¹²⁹ Kleinberg, *Generation Existential*, 66. See, also Soper, *Humanism and Anti-humanism*, 46-7; Also, see the Appendix in Roth, Michael. *Knowing and History: Appropriations of Hegel in Twentieth-century France*. Cornell University, 1988.

¹³⁰ For a detailed account of Wahl’s intellectual trajectory, see, Baugh, Bruce. *French Hegel from Surrealism to Postmodernism*. Routledge, NY, 2003.

¹³¹ See, Butler, *Subjects of Desire*, 79-92.

¹³² Roth, *Knowing and History*, 28

¹³³ Geroulanos, *An Atheism*, 289.

¹³⁴ “Hyppolite insists...on the priority of an antihumanism.” Ibid. 298

¹³⁵ Roth, *Knowing and History*, 34-35

¹³⁶ Roth, *Knowing and History*, 29.

¹³⁷ Robert Sinnerbrink confirms Roth’s assessment: Hyppolite turned to “Heidegger’s history of being as a way to overcome the limitations of Hegelian historicism.” Sinnerbrink, Robert. *Understanding Hegelianism*. Acumen, 2007. 132

Increasingly dissatisfied with the Hegel he had inherited, Heidegger's critique of humanism was the catalyst for Hyppolite's "...abandonment of historicism"¹³⁸ altogether. It is relevant to consider here that, as one of the very few thinkers to approach the *Science of Logic* in the 1950's, Hyppolite's "...reading borrowed heavily from Heidegger, who provided the language that made a retreat from historicism legitimate if not downright fashionable."¹³⁹ The problem then is precisely the one described by Houlgate above: namely, that Heidegger read Hegel in a *Schellingian* way, assuming that the categories of the *Science of Logic* contained an *anticipatory* element. Caught up in the residual effects of Schelling's critique, Hyppolite's suspicion of Hegel's analysis of history was confirmed, since he read the *Logic* as a purely speculative project. Commenting on the limits of both the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic*, Hyppolite asserts, "With that, the phantom of the thing-itself always arises and returns humanism to a faith beyond all knowledge."¹⁴⁰ In other words, embedded in the French intellectual culture of his time and influenced by Heidegger's ontological venture and a Schellingian Hegel, Hyppolite himself assumes a similar *ontological dualism* as Kojève: negativity is found only in reason itself—though for Hyppolite, in the tragedy of the 'unhappy consciousness'—which is premised on the rejection of an ontological basis in Hegel's *Science of Logic*. In fact, Hyppolite's positive account of Hegel's *Logic* reads it as "...tracing the progressive (systematic) development of language," insofar as "language is the self-consciousness of Being, these relations are the foundations of ontology."¹⁴¹ In Hyppolite's view, then, the *Logic* is read as providing the terminological and speculative ground for ontology in linguistic terms, *not an ontology itself*. In this version of Hegel according to Hyppolite, the 'real' refers to what we can *say* about the real; the question of objectivity is moved to a primarily linguistic focus. This perspective, as is well known, became one of the defining features of philosophical Postmodernism.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Roth, *Knowing and History*, 67

¹³⁹ Roth, *Knowing and History*, 69

¹⁴⁰ As quoted Roth, *Knowing and History*, 70. Originally in: Hyppolite, "Essai sur Logique de Hegel" (1952), in *Figures*, 164.

¹⁴¹ Roth, *Knowing and History*, 73.

¹⁴² Considering Hyppolite's emphasis on the discursive aspect of the *Logic* in combination with his theoretical preference for sense over-against thought—a Schellingian residue—Lukács is indeed right to assert Hyppolite's own irrationalist tendency: "The attempts made in France to 'modernize' Hegel in an existential, irrationalist sense—above all in a well-known book by Jean Hyppolite—have not given me any cause to emend my arguments or even to supplement them. The fundamental critique given here of the picture of Hegel current in the Age of Imperialism applies with equal force to these French efforts to provide a re-interpretation even though the conditions both internal and external for a 'Hegel Renaissance' in France must differ in many ways from those in Germany." Lukács, Georg. *The Young Hegel: Studies in the Relations between Dialectics and Economics*. Trans. by Rodney Livingstone. Merlin Press, London, 1975. Xi.

Hyppolite's turn to Heidegger reflected his own concern with ontology, something that had been *hermeneutically severed* from Hegel for almost three decades.¹⁴³ In an appeal to the value of Heidegger's project, Hyppolite proclaimed that "The first priority is given to ontology, to the relation above all of being and sense; the sense of all sense."¹⁴⁴ Notice here that Hyppolite reproduces the *Schellingian sacrifice of reason to sense*, i.e., it is the *experience* of Being as such, through sense and intuition, that reveals to us the *priority of existence*. Here, we see once more evidence of the *Kantian forfeiture*: rather than dialectically unifying being and thought, Hyppolite replaces thought with sense *qua* experience. This phenomenological move, however, divorces epistemological inquiry from ontological analysis. Reason, then, is reduced to the descriptive: reason acts only to frame sense, an account of the experience of sense. The intelligibility of the ontological dimension is forfeited as a result of the *a priori* determination of the limits of knowledge; hence the importance of the intuitive moment of sense-experience for both Schelling *and* Hyppolite. On the other hand, reinscribing an aforementioned Schellingian determination, the centralization of language in his reading of the *Logic* implicitly depicts logic (specifically in this case dialectical logic) as primarily *discursive*.

Although this argument portends the fruitful development of this analysis, I can only briefly mention Hyppolite (and Wahl) here and must continue to develop the central line of investigation by tracking the residual influence of Schelling's critique of Hegel on 20th century thought. Besides his rank as a thinker in his own right, I am mostly interested in Hyppolite because of his influence on another set of thinkers, namely three prominent thinkers of the latter half of the 20th century, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault,¹⁴⁵ and, negatively, Louis Althusser. Prior to investigating these thinkers, I will provide a brief overview of the theoretical context out of which they emerge in their respective *recoils* and *reverberations*.

[2.2] Postmodernism as Post-Marxism: The Anti-Historical, Anti-Materialist Reverberations of the Rupture

¹⁴³ Roth further notes: "When Hyppolite abandoned heroic Hegelianism to be a hopeful Heideggerian, he abandoned a theory of history as progress in favor of a perspective that valued history as a repetition of the same." Here we find, through the Heideggerian influence, a Nietzschean undertone, another anti-Hegelian strand influenced by the Schellingian critique. Roth, *Knowing and History*, 77

¹⁴⁴ As quoted in Roth, *Knowing and History*, 71. Originally in: Hyppolite, "Note en manière d'introduction à 'Que signifie penser?'" (1953), in *Figures*, 2:610.

¹⁴⁵ See, Baugh, Bruce. *French Hegel from Surrealism to Postmodernism*. Routledge, NY, 2003. 172. Also, see, Butler, *Subjects of Desire*, 177, 205, 217.

Though the rejection of a dialectics of nature within the Marxist tradition is often attributed to Lukács' notoriously dismissive footnote from *History & Class Consciousness*¹⁴⁶ (a rejection which, although he later recanted it, is persistently attributed to Lukács' thought *in toto*), I contend that his dismissal of dialectical materialism was of greater importance to the internal discussions and fragmentations within Marxism itself than philosophical discussions outside of the same. The historical trajectory heretofore described, however, has much broader implications for those outside Marxism as well as Marxism's self-understanding insofar as the aforementioned bastardization of Hegel has impacted future interpretations of both Marx and Engels. The Schellingian critique provided an image of Hegel (and ultimately Marx) that infiltrated and saturated general intellectual discourse and entrenched itself in the basic assumptions and propositions of more than one philosophical tradition.

As I have discussed, the Schellingian reading of Hegel was, given the reception and development of Hegel's dialectic, imposed onto an understanding of Marx & Engels. Thus, for scholars outside the Marxist tradition—unexposed to its historical and nuanced internal debates over the relationship of Hegel and Marx, and of idealist and materialist dialectics—*straw man* representations of both thinkers became commonplace in theory in which they are approached interpretively with already existing biases that assumed, in different ways for each thinker, a *metaphysical teleology of history*, a *rigid determinism premised on necessity*, a *problematic notion of reason and essence*, and a *universalism that obscures all difference and particularity*. Moreover, the rejection of a dialectics of nature, perpetuated most prominently in 20th century Marxism by Frankfurt School theoretician Theodor Adorno, whose influence on the development of Critical Theory¹⁴⁷ is hardly questionable, has induced further proliferation of problematic interpretations of Hegel, Marx, and Engels. Dismissed as *vulgar* or unsophisticated in the attempt to confront materiality, to *comprehend it*, the abovementioned *straw man* assumptions about Hegel, Marx, and Engels gradually became normalized, developing into a veritable punching bag against which a new era of intellectuals exercised its new found strength. In time, Hegel and Marx became anathema to a new era ready to rid itself from the chains of 19th-century

¹⁴⁶ See the infamous sixth footnote in, Lukács, Georg. *History & Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Trans. by Rodney Livingstone. Merlin Press, London, 1971. 24.

¹⁴⁷ In my experience in philosophy circles, it is often assumed that Adorno is a Marxist and that those who study 'Marxism' are attached to Adorno and 'Critical Theory.' There is no doubt that Adorno has some sympathies regarding Marx, and deploys similar terminology in the sharply critical and erudite character original to his style. However, in my view, Adorno is at best Marxist-adjacent, but would hardly qualify as "Marxist" per se. I mention this merely to make clear that I do not align myself with 'critical theory', nor do I think my approach bears much similarity with that tradition, even if some insights and concerns indeed overlap.

philosophical systems through an uncritical embrace of concepts such as *multiplicity*, *contingency*, *anti-reason*, *anti-essentialism*, *discourse*, and *difference*.

Against this backdrop emerges the general postmodern tradition, multiplying and differentiating itself in various ways, representing, as Fredric Jameson famously defined, the “cultural logic of late capitalism.”¹⁴⁸ Tracing the intellectual roots of postmodern philosophy and its specific poststructuralist form, Arran Gare claims that as a response to the “scientific materialism of Kant, Fichte, and Hegel... [Schelling was one]...who forged the basic direction of the tradition.”¹⁴⁹ In Gare’s account, Schelling’s critique of Hegel began a “philosophical revolution,” later picked up by “Nietzsche and Heidegger” and carried into the present by “[t]he poststructuralists, Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard, Deleuze and Guattari...” For these poststructuralists, in Gare’s view, “Hegel is the thinker whose ideas have to be overcome.”¹⁵⁰ Gare is right to point out the antagonism, though he fails to account for the important and influential Hegelian mediator between Heidegger and the latter thinkers: Kojève. For it is not exactly Hegel (and Marx) against which these thinkers reacted, but rather Kojève’s presentation of both.

The theoretical reaction to Kojève’s Hegel and Marx took two main forms. On the one hand, there is the emergence of postmodernism (and poststructuralism),¹⁵¹ where the *rejection of historical grand narratives*, *affirmation of parochial multiplicity*, *contingency*, *relativization of truth* via emphasis on *discourse*, *anti-essentialism*, and the *abandonment of ‘reason’* gain popularity. History loses its materiality and is substituted for ‘historicity’ which is analyzed primarily through discursive practices. Thus, language and its analysis become of fundamental importance. Words no longer follow from things, but the reverse: *things follow from words*.¹⁵² In this way, every social (and natural) phenomenon (especially race and gender) is reduced to a discursive *social constructivism*. Objectivity is dissolved into the multiple with over-emphasis on word-designations, which arise from the intuited subjective experience of our inscrutable otherness, our particularized and contingent difference. Kenan Malik notes that such approach “...under the cover of ‘anti-essentialism’...ends by effectively denying determinate historical relation altogether and thus effectively abandons its original principle that identity and the human subject are socially

¹⁴⁸ Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Verso, 1991.

¹⁴⁹ Gare, *The Roots of Postmodernism*, 32-33

¹⁵⁰ Gare, *The Roots of Postmodernism*, 38

¹⁵¹ These terms are often used interchangeably, which I maintain for the sake of brevity and simplicity. Further, I follow Jan Rehmann’s assertion that “Post-structuralism is...not a counter-concept to postmodernism, but rather one of its main theoretical tendencies: it describes ‘thought under the conditions of the post-modern era.’” Rehmann, Jan. *Theories of Ideology: The Powers of Alienation and Subjection*. Haymarket Books, Chicago, 2014. 211

¹⁵² Discussing the tendencies in structuralism and post-structuralism, Soper notes, “There is no ulterior reality prior to and standing ‘behind’ the signs which denote it.” Soper, *Humanism and Anti-Humanism*, 96

constructed.” The issue, he continues, is precisely that this “discourse reduces (or deconstructs) society to the accidental interaction of individuals and removes the subject from the terrain of the social.”¹⁵³ As a result, a *de-materialization of both the social and the natural*, and its contingent manifestation, begins to take hold of intellectual discourse, such that the very positing of concepts like *sociality* and *nature* are subject to criticism as *purely linguistic devices with no objective, material referent*. Suspending the concern with objectivity through the affirmation of subjectivity and discourse led to an inherent suspicion of scientific exploration, where any attempt at the latter was conflated with positivism.

Thus, on the other hand, dismissed as the result of the ‘totalizing’ character of Enlightenment thought, science itself is chastised, its epistemological framework increasingly regarded as inherently bound to the activity of *domination*. The most politically effective dimension of the poststructuralist critique of science was the recognition, correct in my view, that it could not be as value-neutral as was claimed by Neo-Kantian positivism, which since the early 20th century had already forfeited philosophy to the absoluteness of an apolitical form of knowledge production (for purposes of accumulation) that we call ‘science’ today. Therefore, science’s auto-descriptive discourse about what it is, what it does, and why it does it, was undermined by the poststructuralist critique of the illegitimate epistemological presuppositions of its truth-assertions. In the rational form of this critique, not only the enunciation, but the *locus of enunciation* was brought into question. Poststructuralists rightly insisted on the *subjective* elements of inquiry concerning claims to objectivity: who is performing the inquiry and through what means?

The problem, as this critique overstepped its limits, became one of an over-correction, where—through a Nietzsche-inspired *revaluation*—truth itself was reduced to discursivity and ultimately abandoned to a kind of relativism: subjectivity and objectivity were de-coupled in absolute form. As a result, the Marxian tradition (via its connection to Hegel) was drawn into the controversy since its claims to ‘scientific analysis’ were viewed suspiciously and critically by all fragments of the postmodern tradition. At the end of this critique, Marxism was seen as carrying an element of scientific reductivism—vulgar, paternalistic, and of course Eurocentric—continuing thereby the problems already implicit, at least so it was believed, in Hegel.

The issue is that we have before us, in fact, two diametrically opposed conceptions of science reduced to each other and conflated as the same: *bourgeois positivism* and *Marxian dialectical materialism*.

¹⁵³ Malik, Kenan. “The Mirror of Race: Postmodernism and the Celebration of Difference.” In, *In Defense of History: Marxism and the Postmodern Agenda*. Ed. by Ellen Meiksins Wood and John Bellamy Foster. Monthly Review Press, New York, 1997. 117.

Worthy of note is the fact that for the Marxian tradition the concept and project of science has a quite opposite meaning and very different connotations than its positivist counterpart; the most important being the non-neutrality, partisanship, in its methodological form. Objectivity, then, is not for Marxists, following Hegel, a *dead* objectivity, sterile, neutral, and independent from sociality. On the contrary, in dialectical terms, objectivity and the subjectivity which grasps it—i.e., develops commitments from its realization and interpretation—are not ontologically separate; their self-same *immersion* is a presupposition of dialectical materialist inquiry. Before continuing, let us consider this point in further detail.

Though with some merit, as mentioned above, the tendency in poststructuralist criticisms of science decoupled subjectivity from objectivity in their over-correction, charging Marxian scientific analysis with a sterile objectivist line. In contrast, from within the dialectical materialist tradition, Christopher Caudwell offers a sophisticated account of the difference between Marxian science and positivism in terms of the problematic decoupling of subject and object. It is worth quoting him at length:

What then could exist, *philosophically*, for the scientist? Only phenomena—that is, appearance—the conscious field regarded as independent of subject and object. The subject-object relation is regarded as existing apart from its terms. This has some resemblance to the absolute idealism of Hegel, but because the scientist regards even subjectivity mechanically, he cannot accept the dialectical logic of Hegel. Hegel's dialectics ostensibly draws its validity from the power of reason. It rests on the inward and unquestionable witness of the 'I' which thus, in the alienation of the Absolute Idea, appeals to itself to deny itself. But the scientist, by his training and experience, cannot accept the 'I' as the criterion of validity. He is born in practice. Hence he cannot accept the subjective authority of the Hegelian dialectus. He can only accept phenomena as they come. This is positivism.¹⁵⁴

Indeed, the difference between a Hegelian-Marxist, *dialectical materialist*, approach and a positivist one is significant. In Caudwell's account, the subjective element is not divorced from the objective one: *subjectivity itself remains objective, an objective subjectivity*. At the same time, however, *objectivity contains subjectivity*, is relationally intermeshed with the subjectivity to which it is wedded. A dialectical materialist approach, understood as a relational ontology, assumes the non-static character of objectivity, its transformative or metabolic, *ontological essence*. The objective subjectivity which sets out to comprehend objectivity *shares* this ontological essence of transformation, though is determinately expressed and constituted through a *difference—the essence of a different kind*, in this case a human essence.

¹⁵⁴ Caudwell, Christopher. *The Crisis in Physics*. Verso, 2017. 63.

The unity and difference here is not merely a logico-theoretical one, but the modal character of ontological motion belonging to the processually self-differentiating ‘hypokeimenon’—that which underlies the material process of relationally determined, distinctive, forms and their respective contents. Different forms retain and express objectivity *subjectively* but *in determinate relation* to each other as well as to the objective subjectivity that seeks its comprehension. In dialectical materialist terms—and contrary to the *Kantian forfeiture* performed by Schelling, Kojève, Hyppolite, and poststructuralism broadly speaking—then, the subject’s potential to reach objectivity *presupposes* the explicit recognition, inclusion, and involvement of subjectivity. Thus, against the tendency in postmodernist thinking writ large, and poststructuralism more specifically, to abandon the material referent of categories such as the human or Nature *and* against the positivist insistence on a pure objectivity, dialectical materialism insists on their *inter-affective*, substantive (but necessarily *relational*) existence. Otherwise, “if Man and Nature are ruled out as unreal and non-existent... Truth is meaningless.”¹⁵⁵

To be sure, this does not mean that all Marxists clarified or adhered to such an immersion or presupposition adequately. Indeed, certain thinkers certainly gave credence to the overly objectivist character of Marxism. In fact, the rise of poststructuralism occurred concomitantly with the development of a very narrow and contradictory kind of Marxian tendency, one which emerged namely as a reaction to the Kojèvean event and which ultimately had a significant impact on Marxism more broadly: the structuralist Marxism of Louis Althusser (another student of Hyppolite).¹⁵⁶ In this sense, postmodernism and its various offshoots were not only an attack on modernity and its ills, but were also influenced by Althusser’s theoretical enigmas.

[2.3] Althusser’s Anti-Humanism and Structuralist Marxism: The Non-Teleological Process of History *sans* Subjectivity

Both Althusser and the poststructuralists would, on the one hand, come to reject the humanism invoked by Kojève and, on the other, attempt a rejection or overcoming of Hegel on the basis of the aforementioned categories.¹⁵⁷ Poststructuralists, however, would adamantly and emphatically deny the coherence of dialectics, condemning dialectics as a mere derivative of totalizing Enlightenment rationality. Althusser, on the other hand, sought to ‘de-Hegelian-ize’ the dialectic, to systematize it into an absolute, rigid *scientism*. Where poststructuralists approached history through *historicity*—i.e., discursively—Althusser condemned any residue of the anthropological in historical

¹⁵⁵ Caudwell, *The Crisis in Physics*, 63.

¹⁵⁶ Drury, *Alexandre Kojève: The Roots of Postmodern Politics*, 4

¹⁵⁷ It is interesting to note that in the attempt to move away from Hegel, both Althusser and Deleuze turn to Spinoza.

analysis, emptying history of subjectivity and delivering the infamous claim that “history is a process without a subject,”¹⁵⁸ a process which for Althusser required the purge of all humanist *and* teleological tendencies present in the ‘early Marx.’ Analyzing Althusser’s relationship to (the early) Marx, Sean Sayers explains that “according to Althusser, Marx’s humanism is inescapably teleological.”¹⁵⁹ While their criticisms were grounded in distinct theoretical concerns, teleology was rejected *tout court* by both postmodernism and Althusser’s structuralist Marxism. It is worth briefly investigating Althusser in relation to the above considerations, and more specifically because his approach to *structure* became another driver of the poststructuralist tendency toward the abandonment of *causality*—an abandonment to which Althusser himself had similar proclivities.

I contend that Althusser developed his own philosophical project as a result of his growing dissatisfaction with the French theoretical scene, specifically the existential and humanist Hegelian-Marxism emerging through and beyond Kojève with, for example, thinkers like Sartre and de Beauvoir. Butler corroborates this turn against Kojève’s reading of Hegel: “Althusser’s early reflections on Hegel develop an immanent critique of Kojève’s view, arguing that Kojève develops the subjective dimension of subjectivity to the exclusion of the objective one.”¹⁶⁰ Against this, as we shall see below, Althusser, seeking to reclaim objectivity, outlined his own conception of a properly *scientific* Marxian project.

Attempting to reclaim dialectical materialism against the anti-dialectical theoretical winds of his day, Althusser creatively provided a hermeneutics of Marx—a ‘symptomatic reading’¹⁶¹—that remained as eclectic¹⁶² as it did contradictory and ambiguous. Combining Levi Strauss, Freud, Lacan, Lenin, Spinoza, and Marx, Althusser developed a theoretical approach that had significant impact on post-structuralist thought and Marxism itself.¹⁶³ Jan Rehmann indicates the significance of this relationship wherein “...the Althusserian school was unable to defend itself against the postmodernist take-over of its central categories: the resistance against such a take-over was ‘paralyzed by a theoretical antihumanism, which was itself due to a questionable combination of Marx, Nietzsche, and

¹⁵⁸ ‘Lenin before Hegel’, Althusser, Louis. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Monthly Review Press, 1969.

¹⁵⁹ Sayers, Sean. “Marx and Teleology.” In, *Science & Society*, Vol. 83, No 1, January 2019. 47

¹⁶⁰ Butler, Judith. “Desire, Rhetoric, and Recognition in Hegel.” In, *The Judith Butler Reader*. Ed. by Sara Salih and Judith Butler. Blackwell Publishing, 2004. 46

¹⁶¹ For an account of Althusser’s hermeneutics, see, Smith, Stephen, “Ideology and Interpretation: The Case of Althusser.” In, *Poetics Today*, Vol. 10, No. 3, Autumn, 1989. 495-500

¹⁶² “[Althusser] has not hesitated, when necessary, to borrow concepts from a wide range of non-Marxist thinkers in order to elucidate what he takes to be already implicit in Marx’s works.” See, Smith, *Reading Althusser*, 72. Also, see, Footnote 46 in Althusser, Louis. *For Marx*. Trans. Ben Brewster. Verso, 2005. 206.

¹⁶³ For a detailed account of Althusser’s influence and relationship to Foucault, for example, see Chapter 7 of Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology*

Heidegger.¹⁶⁴ We see here, then, the important philosophical lineage in which Schelling's highly flawed critique of Hegel first exerted its influence on Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, then was crucial in the development of Heidegger's thought, before decisively impacting Kojève, and from here—with all the controversies and clichés worthy of a properly *dialectical drama*—became diffused into a number of intellectual engagements and developments in the late 20th century.

It is unnecessary for our purposes to delve into significant detail on either Althusser or postmodernist/post-structuralist thought. The immediate relevance lies in the taking up, deployment, and/or rejection of *reason, universality, essence, telos, and necessity*. What matters for us here is how their use of the categories participates in a suspicion of Hegel and Marx—or oppositely in Althusser's case, their further dogmatization—in more recent scholarship; hence, the need for constructing a relational ontology centered on appropriation with these categories in mind.

First, Althusser's 'structural' Marx(ism) reproduces the *Kantian forfeiture* through an admission of the separation between the 'object of knowledge' and the 'real object.'¹⁶⁵ Ironically, this leads Althusser, in my view, to the articulation of an uncritical and dogmatic conception of science. Rather than capitulating to the irrational or mystical character of Nature as an object of knowledge, as did Schelling and Kojève (implicitly), this methodological procedure culminated in the same approach to knowledge against which Hegel was charged; that is, a theoretical method *independent* of any situatedness: "the result is something like a phenomenological analysis of science as an autonomous form of theoretical practice *distinct from* the processes that brought that consciousness itself into being."¹⁶⁶ Against any kind of qualified historicism, Althusser empties scientific investigation of any subjectivity, not unlike his proclaimed scission of subject(s) from historical analysis. Despite his constant hyperbolic and religious devotion to a Marxist 'dialectics', the very foundation of both the production of knowledge and historical analysis are premised on a de-coupling of subjectivity from objectivity. Stripped from their mutual inter-affectivity and inter-penetrative *relationality*, subjectivity and objectivity are framed in an ontologically *dualist* form. *Rationality, reason*, in this way becomes exactly the all-encompassing and totalizing form of reason which Schelling rallied against in his critique of Hegel—*despite Althusser's emphatic and adamant anti-Hegelianism*.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology*, 180

¹⁶⁵ Smith, *Reading Althusser*, 72

¹⁶⁶ Smith, *Reading Althusser*, 120. Also, see Althusser, *Reading Capital*. Trans. by Ben Brewster and David Fernbach. Verso, NY, 2015. 42-44.

¹⁶⁷ For a detailed overview of Althusser's engagement with Hegel throughout the entirety of his career see Chapter 2 of Sotiris, Panagiotis. *A Philosophy for Communism: Rethinking Althusser*. Brill, Boston, 2020. 25-35. Althusser's suspicion of Hegelian dialectics is partially influenced by his mentor Gaston Bachelard's own rejection of the same. Not unlike Kojève,

Incidentally, Althusser's insistence on a science without a subject was premised on his critique of Engels: "Althusser identifies Engels as the chief culprit [of a historicist tendency in the Marxist tradition]. By reducing all knowledge to the same coming into being and passing away that characterizes the 'material life process' in general, Engels eliminates any independent basis for thought."¹⁶⁸ This is a curious critique indeed. Engels, who has been ridiculed and dismissed by so many Marxists as the founder responsible for all dogmatic and rigid thinking within Marxism itself,¹⁶⁹ is here blamed for not being *objectivist enough!* Poor Engels, it seems, cannot escape suffering demonization, endlessly contrasted to the angel of Marx.¹⁷⁰

Althusser's dissolution of the unity of a socially constituted subjectivity in relation to the acquisition of objective knowledge rests on a *Kantian forfeiture* - despite his own fetishization of scientific practice. The dualistic, asymptotic distinction between subject and object takes as a necessary presupposition the *fixity* of objects themselves and thereby assumes the fixity of the system capable of producing knowledge of the objects; in this way, Marxism indeed becomes dogmatism. "Theoretical practice"—to use the Althusserian terms—determines 'facts' merely in terms of its conceptual validity,¹⁷¹ wherein its own 'scientific' categories become ahistorical, valid across all time and space.¹⁷² Althusser's undialectical understanding of categories and the objects to which they refer represents a methodological approach *diametrically opposed* to that of both Hegel and Marx. From the very beginning of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, the category of sheer being is subject to change, to the motion of sublation, through the recognition of different qualities, and the changing form of the relationship between this or that category. Similarly, Marx's categories are constantly indicating moments of *metamorphosis*, delineating moments of specification between the abstract and concrete, which itself frames the forms by which they continuously alter each other.

From his early disavowal of continuity in Marx—that persistent and notorious notion of Marx's 'epistemological break' which created the 'early Marx' and 'mature Marx' (read: 'the not useful to Althusser Marx' and 'the very useful to Althusser Marx')—Althusser insisted on moving away from

Bachelard "...refused Hegel's dialectics and insisted on the homogenous character of reality, since he believed that contradictions obtain only in our partial understanding of processes outside our thinking." See, Domingues, José Maurício. *Social Creativity, Collective Subjectivity, and Contemporary Modernity*. Macmillan Press, London, 2000. 49.

¹⁶⁸ Smith, *Reading Althusser*, 117. Also, see Althusser, *Reading Capital*, 261-263

¹⁶⁹ As John Bellamy Foster writes, for Western Marxists broadly, Engels has become a "convenient whipping boy." Foster, John Bellamy. "The Return of Engels." In, *Monthly Review*. 68, (10). 2017. 47

¹⁷⁰ To be fair, Althusser is very critical of the humanist impulses of the 'early' Marx. Thus, it seems that in his view Marx *matured* and overcame his own limits. By this Althusserian logic, even in old age Engels never escaped his naïve immaturity.

¹⁷¹ Althusser writes, "...for *theoretical practice* is indeed its own criterion, and contains in itself definite protocols with which to *validate* the quality of its products." Althusser, *Reading Capital*, 61.

¹⁷² For an excellent explanation and critique of this Althusserian position, see Smith, *Reading Althusser*, 137.

any hint of historicism and humanism; hence his condemnation of the ‘Early Marx’. For Althusser, this Marx, the one he finds most strikingly represented in the *1844 Paris Manuscripts*, remains too Hegelian and therefore too teleological. Althusser’s anti-humanist sentiment results from his anti-historicism, one inherited from the structuralism of Levi-Strauss,¹⁷³ who was in his own way reacting against the French intellectual devotion to humanism and historicism described above.¹⁷⁴ Appropriating Freud, Levi-Strauss sought to explain “...the meaning of man’s existence in an atemporal unconscious, and hence seeks in the latter also its fundamental principle of scientific explanation.”¹⁷⁵ From this aspect of Levi-Strauss’ project, Althusser inherits a tendency toward the ahistorical *apparatus of knowledge* and its corresponding understanding of history without a subject.

Althusser’s dis-joining of subjectivity and objectivity, of individual and history, is the theoretical consequence of his reformulation of dialectics, of contradiction, masked as properly Marxist in its *anti-Hegelianism*.¹⁷⁶ Given Althusser’s *Kantian forfeiture* regarding the ‘real object’ and his frustration with Engels’ epistemological historicism, he reproduces the Kojèvean suspicion of a dialectics of nature, identifying dialectical materialism not as an ontological framework but instead as a purely scientific epistemology: “a theory of the history of knowledge—that is...the process of production of knowledge.”¹⁷⁷ Thus, dialectical materialism for Althusser is in fact a *Marxian epistemology*, and not an *ontology*.¹⁷⁸ “Dialectical materialism was the science of theoretical practice...It was...*the scientific philosophy*. All this Althusser proclaimed, implying a simultaneous break with orthodox conceptions of dialectical materialism as an ontology of matter (in movement).”¹⁷⁹ We see here that Althusser rids Marx(ism) of the Hegelian concern with the ontological and also of Engels’ articulation of an ontologically grounded dialectics of nature. Now, *reason* is solidified as a theoretical practice, a theory of theories, under the guise of dialectical materialism, with no *admission of the role of subjectivity in its process of production*. Schelling’s critique of Hegel, although missing the fundamental point with regards to Hegel, could however be quite aptly and effectively deployed against Althusser, particularly ‘in the last instance,’ as he would say.

¹⁷³ Soper, *Humanism and Anti-humanism*, 99.

¹⁷⁴ Soper, *Humanism and Anti-humanism*, 98.

¹⁷⁵ Clarke, Simon. “The Origins of Levi-Strauss’s Structuralism.” *Sociology* 12, no. 3 (1978): 413.

¹⁷⁶ See, Chapter 1 in Elliot, Gregory. *Althusser: The Detour of Theory*. Brill, London, 2006.

¹⁷⁷ Althusser, Louis. *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists and Other Essays*. Ed. by Gregory Elliot. Trans. by Ben Brewster. Et al. Verso, London, 1990. 8

¹⁷⁸ In disagreement with Western claims of Althusser’s dogmatic sovietism, Soviet philosophers of the time were not sympathetic to the Althusserian enterprise. For a summary of Soviet critiques of Althusser, see, Nemeth, Thomas. “Althusser’s Anti-humanism and Soviet Philosophy.” In, *Studies in Soviet Thought*. Vol. 21, No. 4, 1980. 363-385

¹⁷⁹ Elliott, *Althusser: The Detour of Theory*, 88

For Althusser, an anti-teleological, anti-historicism premised on contingency requires the de-subjectification of theory, that is, the emptying out of the subject in both the production of knowledge and the movement of history. This theoretical maneuver itself rejects any theory concerned with a definition of *essence* as applicable to human beings or any other entity at the same time that must reject necessity as constitutive of ontological becoming.¹⁸⁰ Against, on the one hand, the Kojèvean conception of freedom attained merely through reason and, on the other, phenomenology's concern with lived experience, Althusser seeks "...to deny that...the human subject...is in any way free in his volitions since his choices are themselves the outcome of this all-embracing network of causes."¹⁸¹ Causality becomes too complex and is absolved of epistemological concern, reduced to *elements of a structure*. In sum, Althusser's anti-historicism, anti-teleology, and anti-essentialism result in the abandonment of both causality and agency in his system. This leads us to another important aspect of Althusser's thought which exemplifies a further consequence of his *Kantian forfeiture*.

Suffused in a bustling French intellectual culture, Althusser inherits from Levi-Strauss an abiding interest in Freudian psychoanalysis. However, precisely this marks the danger of Althusser's eclecticism: importing concepts from another theoretical system without sufficiently negotiating them within the tradition at hand can result in serious obfuscation. The most vivid case of this type of obfuscation found in Althusser is in his uncritical adoption of the Freudian concept of 'overdetermination'¹⁸²—a concept that would come to have significant impact on future scholarship.¹⁸³

Against the popularity (which, of course, has nothing to do with accuracy) of Kojève's characterization of Hegel and Marx as crude teleological thinkers, Althusser sought to move away from all teleology¹⁸⁴ and necessity by highlighting contingency as a means of developing the concept of overdetermination in a Marxist framework, thus envisioning history as "...open to a future that is uncertain, unforeseeable, not yet accomplished, and therefore aleatory."¹⁸⁵

Against Hegel's totality—which according to Althusser assumes a universal temporality—and as a method of understanding non-teleological historical development, Althusser deploys the concept of overdetermination "[t]o speak of differential historical temporality..." which "...obliges us to

¹⁸⁰ See, Althusser, Louis. *For Marx*. Trans. by Ben Brewster. Penguin Press, London, 1969. 227.

¹⁸¹ Smith, *Reading Althusser*, 194

¹⁸² Althusser, *For Marx*, 89-116. For Freud's own discussion of the concept see, Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Trans. by James Strachey. Avon Books, New York, 1965. 182-83, 327-30, 341-43.

¹⁸³ Undoubtedly, Althusser's "interpellation" has been quite influential for post-structuralism as well. This, however, has been covered extensively. See, Rehman, *Theories of Ideology*, 147-178; Soper, *Humanism and Antihumanism*, 104-115.

¹⁸⁴ On Althusser's rejection of teleology, see, Sotiris, *A Philosophy for Communism*, 148

¹⁸⁵ Althusser, *Philosophy of Encounter*, 264

define...its *overdetermination*.”¹⁸⁶ Deployed in such a manner, overdetermination entails a reformulation of the notion of contradiction as a process/event wherein *too many determinations* participate in the development of the formal components of any social structure for there to be a discernment of any general contradiction. Instead, Althusser notes, “...a vast accumulation of ‘contradictions’ comes into play, some of which are radically heterogenous.”¹⁸⁷ In this way, all historical change is considered as the aggregate of infinite causes, none adequately identifiable, that *ruptures* with that which came before. Indeed, in this view, history moves through a series of *events* that are properly metaphysical in the sense that they bear no continuity with what came before. A *metaphysics of event* is born: a *radical contingency* resulting from the confluence of undifferentiable *overdeterminations*. “In this sense, [Althusser] is operating with a model of society that can be appropriately described as metaphysical in precisely the sense meant by Marx and Engels. He attributes a permanent content or validity to features found in historically specific forms of society.”¹⁸⁸ Dialectical materialism *as* theoretical practice reduced to a purely epistemological analytic, then, becomes nothing more than an overarching theory of theories that constructs a model presupposing the generality of social forms *qua* ‘structure.’

Though Althusser is correct in noting the existence of heterogenous contradictions, the implication is precisely that overdetermination removes continuity and establishes only absolute breaks, consisting of independent *events* whose causes are *a priori* indiscernible. Smith explains the fundamental problem of Althusser’s reliance on the concept of overdetermination: “the result is that it becomes impossible to distinguish between primary causes without which an event could not have taken place and secondary causes which perhaps only incidentally contribute to it.”¹⁸⁹ Extrapolating this insight in Marxist terminology, we can say that Althusser fails to account for the crucial difference between a mechanistic causality and a dialectical account of causality—where cause and effect interpenetrate and transform: cause *becomes* effect, an effect becomes causal. Sacrificing all nuance in one’s concept of causality makes the identification of continuities not only impossible but irrelevant, and therefore generates a strong overemphasis on the *novelty* of change, as predicated on an abstract, metaphysical, conception of *event*. Thus, Smith’s critique of overdetermination rightfully concludes with the claim that “Althusser could be said to be *dehistoricizing the dialectic at the very point where Marx*

¹⁸⁶ Althusser, *Reading Capital*, 254

¹⁸⁷ Althusser, *For Marx*, 100

¹⁸⁸ Smith, *Reading Althusser*, 172

¹⁸⁹ Smith, *Reading Althusser*, 166

claimed to have discovered it.” To be sure, Marx’s *dialectical* understanding of historical transformation is *antithetical* to the abstract formalism of Althusser’s theoretical practice.¹⁹⁰

Indeed, Althusser’s eclectic, yet dogmatic theoretical construct stirred a number of responses from scholars in disparate disciplines who would eventually coalesce in the movement we know as post-structuralism, many of whom had already been influenced by Kojève’s Hegelian *renaissance*.¹⁹¹ Jorge Larrain notes that “[m]any poststructuralist...authors [were]...attracted by the apparently anti-determinist and anti-reductionist promises of Althusser’s theory...” The initial attraction, however, proved fatal: “...they eventually turned...against Althusser...[taking] them beyond Marxism,” or at least Althusser’s version of it. For this reason, Larrain explains, “the poststructuralist language, themes, and inner structure bear the imprint of the Althusserian problematic and have Marxism as a necessary, if negative, point of reference.”¹⁹²

Through the dissatisfaction with Hegel grounded in Kojève’s presentation of him and, correspondingly, the form of Althusser’s outright rejection of Hegel, the Schellingian critique of Hegel persists into contemporary philosophy, even if in modified form. On this basis, an ontological dialectics has been regarded as *a priori* illegitimate, and reason suffers a *stratification* in two different kinds of formalism: an existential-humanist-anthropological reason and a structural-scientific-anti-humanist reason. Between Kojève (with Hyppolite) and Althusser, postmodernism/poststructuralism emerges with a strong reaction where, as Larrain summarizes, “...Marxism [is] dismissed entirely as an untenable form of essentialism, reductionism and determinism.”¹⁹³

In the postmodern period, it is widely accepted that the most influential intellectuals—regarding academic impact, but perhaps also in terms of public profile—are Deleuze, Foucault,¹⁹⁴ and Derrida, who were all influenced *directly* by either Kojève or Hyppolite, and moreover embedded in Nietzsche¹⁹⁵ and Heidegger, which is to say, embedded in simultaneous

¹⁹⁰ A relevant exemplification of this difference can be found in *The Critique of the Gotha Programme*

¹⁹¹ Althusser’s influence, however, is quite broad and inter-disciplinary, as Larrain demonstrates, “An impressive number of academics and intellectuals working in anthropology, philosophy, sociology, political science, linguistics, semiology, semantics, cultural studies, literary criticism, criminology and psychology have been affected by Althusser in one way or another.” In Larrain, Jorge. *Ideology and Cultural Identity: Modernity and the Third World Presence*. Polity Press, 1994. 67

¹⁹² Larrain, Jorge. “The Postmodern Critique of Ideology.” In, *The Sociological Review*, Vol. 42, Issue 2, May 1994. 290

¹⁹³ Larrain, *Ideology and Cultural Identity*, 85

¹⁹⁴ Dominique Lecourt argues that the move away from ideology to discursive practices and pluralistic knowledges in *Archeology of Knowledge* was Foucault’s response to Althusser’s distinction between science and ideology, see, Lecourt, Dominique. *Marxism and Epistemology: Bachelard, Canguilhem, and Foucault*. Trans. by Ben Brewster. NLB, London, 1975. 199-200. See, also, Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology*, 194-198.

¹⁹⁵ In Deleuze’s own words, “This is why we must take seriously the resolutely anti-dialectical character of Nietzsche’s philosophy...Anti-Hegelianism runs through Nietzsche’s work as its cutting edge.” Deleuze, Gilles. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Trans. by Hugh Tomlinson. Continuum, New York, 2002. 8. A number of thinkers, however, have identified Nietzsche

misrepresentations/mischaracterizations of dialectics which, as we shall see, *clearly carry the imprints of Schelling's critique of Hegel from 1841-42*. To put it in the simplest terms, the rejection of rationality/reason *in toto* is consistent among these scholars; put more precisely, “[i]nstead of claiming the *emancipatory components of reason* and turning them against the one-sided rationality of *bourgeois society*, postmodernism follows a Nietzschean critique of modernity that abandons the dialectics of enlightenment.”¹⁹⁶ Thus, with *dialectics* erroneously reduced to nothing more than a depiction of the movement of consciousness (instead of the ‘movement of real life’) and thereby dismissed as an antiquatedly totalizing expression of reason; *science* understood only in its positivist-bourgeois character; *teleology* thought of as purely metaphysical; *necessity* cast as a deterministic reductivism; *essence* misrepresented as substantive and fixed; and *universality* construed as overly homogenous, the *necessity of overcoming both Hegel and Marx* set the postmodern agenda. Overlooking the prescient—or even, *dialectical*—remark of the young Marx that “[r]eason has always existed, but not always in reasonable form,”¹⁹⁷ a pluralistic and relativist skepticism undermined the potential of identifying the *reasonable* qualities of reason at all.¹⁹⁸ Thus, Rehmann correctly observes that, following the Althusserian *event* and the crisis of Marxism, “...poststructuralist theories have taken over large parts of academia...successfully squeezing out what had been a stronghold of different Marxist tendencies and critical theories.”¹⁹⁹

Postmodernist scholars’ varying antipathies toward and criticisms of Hegel and Marx are well established in the literature, even if there are occasional moments of sympathy sprinkled throughout certain works. While it is, of course, outside the scope of the present work to provide a nuanced account of all the poststructuralist/postmodernist encounters with Hegel and Marx, an analysis of some key philosophical moments in Deleuze and Foucault will suffice to identify their continuities with the Schellingian-Kojèvean dialectical rupture.

[2.4] Deleuze and Foucault: Reverberations of the Rupture

Already in his review of Hyppolite’s *Logic & Existence*, Deleuze subjected his mentor to question though applauding what he took to be the removal of any anthropological tendency in his

as the fundamental contributor to the theoretical developments of postmodernism/poststructuralism. Geoff Waite, for example, writes, “Poststructuralism must be defined as an overwhelmingly positive, assimilative embrace of Nietzsche...[which]...persists today.” In, Waite, Geoff. *Nietzsche's Corps/e: Aesthetics, Politics, Prophecy, or, The Spectacular Technoculture of Everyday Life*. Duke University Press, Durham, London, 1996. 108

¹⁹⁶ Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology*, 212. My emphasis.

¹⁹⁷ Marx, *MECW Vol. 3*, 143

¹⁹⁸ Habermas too notes the conservative tendency—the implication of a rejection of reason—from Bataille, Foucault, to Derrida, see, “Modernity and Postmodernity”, *New German Critique*, Vol. 22. For the connection between Kojève, Bataille, and Foucault, see Drury, *Alexandre Kojève*, 103-123, 124-140.

¹⁹⁹ Rehman, *Theories of Ideology*, 217.

reading of Hegel,²⁰⁰ the emphasis on ontology, and thereby finding an escape from the Kojèvean humanist and anthropological account.²⁰¹ This early engagement is worth considering because it reveals Deleuze's foundational dissatisfaction with Hegel, one which would remain and appear in different forms throughout his career.

Agreeing with Hyppolite's Schelling-inspired assertion that ontology must be, in Deleuze's words, "an ontology of sense and not of essence,"²⁰² Deleuze questions how the relationship between history and ontology can be formulated. Of the problem Deleuze confronted in relation to this question, Gary Gutting notes: "Deleuze suggests that Hegel's mistake is to understand the internal difference of the absolute being in terms of contradiction, which is in fact appropriate *only for external differences* between things."²⁰³ For Deleuze, then, Hegel's contradiction operates at the analytic level of the *synthetic*: the anthropological (thesis) and the phenomenal (antithesis) are externally differentiated and therefore, as contradiction, *synthesize* via *anthropos*' consciousness. In this formulation, not only does Deleuze reproduce the reductive and erroneous thesis-antithesis-synthesis²⁰⁴ model of the dialectic, he also reproduces the assumption that contradiction *only* belongs to the understanding of external difference, that is, to a reason oriented and developed (synthetically) through negativity alone—the exact image of Hegel constructed by both Schelling and Kojève.

Gutting summarizes Deleuze's dissatisfaction: "The problem with contradiction, as Deleuze's later work makes clear, is that it brings into the heart of being the structures of conceptual rationality that make it impossible to supply a viable answer....to the relation between ontology and 'historical man.'"²⁰⁵ Deleuze's own solution would take the form of an ontology of pure difference²⁰⁶ "based on *contingent causal relations not ideal rational connections*...[where] difference is understood not in terms of contradiction and negation but in terms of a fundamental affirmation."²⁰⁷

In Deleuze's framing of the issue, Hegel inserts the structure of rationality into being itself. Since being is subsumed under absolute knowledge, contradiction is seen as the driving force of the

²⁰⁰ Gutting, *French Hegelianism*, 264

²⁰¹ Gutting, *French Hegelianism*, 265

²⁰² As quoted in Gutting, *French Hegelianism*, 266

²⁰³ Gutting, *French Hegelianism*, 268. The comment refers to Deleuze's own words: "Is not contradiction itself only the phenomenal and anthropological difference?"

²⁰⁴ This is best exemplified when Deleuze writes, "It is not surprising that the dialectic proceeds by opposition, development of the opposition or contradiction and solution of the contradiction" Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 157. It is actually quite surprising, since this is by no means an adequate account of dialectical motion.

²⁰⁵ Gutting, *French Hegelianism*, 268

²⁰⁶ According to Gutting, "[t]his is the ontology that Deleuze will eventually develop much later in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*." Gutting, *French Hegelianism*, 268

²⁰⁷ Gutting, *French Hegelianism*, 268

Anthropos—the kind of being that reasons with what it sees (*eidos*)—such that history unfolds as a matter of the synthetic result of reason’s own negativity. We can set aside the strange formulation of inserting rationality into the ‘heart of being’, for *what else does any thinking accomplish if not a rationalizing of the determinate subject-objects, movement*, it encounters? The kernel of the issue in Deleuze’s reading of Hegel, however, is more severe: history can only be seen as *necessary* and *linearly progressive* because contradiction is only a matter of consciousness’s *negative* relation to its object which is synthesized; thus, obtaining a ‘higher level’.

Against this, Deleuze proclaims the *contingent* (divorced from necessity)—rejecting rational connections concerning the movement of history (i.e., the elements of necessity involved)—as the becoming of history. But, contradiction, for Hegel, is part of the *internal objectivity*, the process of becoming, of materiality itself—not merely a contradiction of consciousness and its object. Thus, implicitly reproducing the Schellingian conception of *positivity* regarding existence, one which is supposedly excluded from Hegelian logic, Deleuze abandons both rationality and negativity in favor of *difference* and *affirmation*.²⁰⁸ While Kojève perpetuated the incorrect view that *negativity* is the epitome of Hegelian thought, if Stalin and Mao had already attempted to remove the ‘negation of negation’ from the Hegelian dialectic, Deleuze, in equally undialectical fashion, goes beyond this and announces: *there is only affirmation*. As such, Baugh estimates that “[t]he whole effort of Deleuze’s philosophy is thus to theoretically ground the possibility of construing difference in a *non-negative way*.”²⁰⁹ In other words, exactly along the lines of Schelling’s *Philosophy of Revelation*, existence marks the *affirmation of difference* as it reveals itself because, as Deleuze notes, “...difference is the *only* principle of genesis.”²¹⁰ Becoming, for Deleuze, is understood as the *affirmation of contingent difference*. By failing to recognize that for Hegel positivity and negativity belong together, sublimate and transform each other, and by adhering to the Kojèvean characterization of negativity as the force of negation belonging to reason alone, Deleuze sees the ontological as the contingently appearing positivity of difference. Thus, in brief steps Deleuze—with Nietzschean instruction²¹¹ that guides the trajectory described above—is able to claim

²⁰⁸ For a discussion on the similarities and differences between Deleuze and Schelling see Chapter 6 and 7 of Grant, Iain. *Philosophies of Nature After Schelling*. New York: Continuum, 2006.

²⁰⁹ Baugh, *French Hegel*, 161

²¹⁰ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 157

²¹¹ Further asserting Deleuze’s deployment of Nietzsche against Hegel, Sonnerbrink explains: “Against Hegelian dialectics, which overcomes alienation via the comprehension of our historical experience, Nietzschean genealogy overcomes nihilism by harnessing the active forces of the body and unconscious in order to invent new concepts and modes of existence.” Notice here once again, the reduction of dialectics to a logical form (without ontological reference) *and* the role of the unconscious as the positive. In other words, Schelling’s mysticism, his subordination of reason to sense and intuition, appears in Deleuze as the ‘unconscious.’ See, Sonnerbrink, *Understanding Hegelianism*, 177. For Deleuze’s own remarks that

that the Hegelian categories ('essence and necessity', 'universal and singular') and the dialectical character of their relations are "[n]othing but symptoms."²¹²

Indeed, despite a more sympathetic consideration of Hegel in his later works, Sonnerbrink notes that Deleuze maintains the view that "Hegelian dialectics...remains a teleologically oriented process that subsumes singularity under universality, sensibility under conceptuality."²¹³ Again, the assumption of a metaphysical teleology of Hegel's dialectical logic through which universality subsumes—or *homogenizes*, to use the relevant Kojèvean language—singularity reproduces Kojève's problematic caricature of Hegel exactly.²¹⁴ Similarly, in the same vein and philosophical lineage, the teleological subsumption of 'sensibility under conceptuality' reproduces the original Schellingian depiction of Hegel's rejection of sense and intuition,²¹⁵ the false dichotomy Schelling (mis)attributes to the presuppositions of Hegel's *Logic*. Even, it seems, among his more sympathetic interlocutors, the conversation with Hegel is mediated by Schelling and Kojève.

In considering Deleuze's approach here, I am strictly concerned with the mischaracterization of Hegel's dialectical logic, a mischaracterization which later is projected onto Marx, namely because the categories rejected in Hegel are the same ones discovered - and summarily rejected - in Marx.²¹⁶ To be sure, even in their flirtations with Marx, "Deleuze and Guattari," according to Jean-Jacques Lecercle, "operate a systematic displacement of Marxist concepts."²¹⁷ Deleuze's critique—whether insightful or not in its own right—is directed at a representation of Hegel *twice-removed*. Whatever Deleuze's original contributions to philosophical development may be—and he has certainly proved

reproduce the Schellingian depiction of Hegel traced here see, Gilles Deleuze. *Difference and Repetition*. Translated by P. Patton. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. 42-45

²¹² Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 157

²¹³ Sonnerbrink, *Understanding Hegelianism*, 178

²¹⁴ For an account of Deleuze's explicitly anti-Hegelian and anti-Kojèvean approach to desire, see, Butler, *Subjects of Desire*, 205-217.

²¹⁵ Not unlike Schelling's attempt to move away from subject-object relations, Deleuze and Guattari renounce the conception of a subject at all—another characteristic which underlies their difference from Hegel and Marx. This is also their difference from Althusser, whose conception of the subject is of passivity, a mere 'bearer' (*Träger*) of structural effects and Lacan's split subject. This move, however, does implicate them in the awkward position of *pure immanence* without transcendence (contrary to the dialectical relation between the latter concepts in Marx and Hegel, as explained above). Lecercle notes: "By abandoning the subject [they] reject any form of transcendence." In, Lecercle, Jean-Jacques. "Deleuze, Guattari, and Marxism." In, *Historical Materialism* 13, 3. 2005. 41.

²¹⁶ This accounts for the Deleuzian impact on New Materialisms, which does not refer to Marxian Materialism, but instead is a return to Spinoza (guided by Deleuze's approach to the same). Referring to Deleuze's (and Guattari's) later works, Jean-Jacques Lecercle writes, "[t]hey are closer...to the narrow materialism of the pre-Marxist tradition than to the wider materialism of the philosophy of *praxis*. In their texts, we do not find a materialism of institutions, but rather of bodily assemblages...of desiring machines." Lecercle, *Deleuze, Guattari, and Marxism*, 41.

²¹⁷ Lecercle, *Deleuze, Guattari, and Marxism*, 46.

influential²¹⁸ —he has been directly involved in perpetuating the Schelling-originated caricature of Hegel’s dialectical logic.

Contemporaneously, Michel Foucault participated in the seemingly Académie-wide dismissal of Hegel. Equally as inspired by Nietzsche as Deleuze was, but also firmly rooted in the phenomenological work of Heidegger,²¹⁹ Foucault was also “influenced by structuralism and Marxism...and reacted against them because of their totalizing rationality.”²²⁰ In considering Foucault’s rejection of Hegel, we are obliged, by this stage, to ask the pertinent question: *which* Hegel? As is well known, Foucault approached a radically reworked Hegel, namely the Hegel of the philosopher who taught him Hegel, the Hegel of the philosopher who supervised his (now lost) thesis on Hegel, that is, “...the Hegel of Hyppolite.”²²¹ As noted above, Hyppolite’s approach to Hegel’s *Phenomenology* focused on ‘unhappy consciousness’ and his investigation of the *Logic* concerned *sense* as well as language mediated through Heidegger. One could speculate, with justification, that this particular philosophical initiation directed Foucault’s investigations toward the relation between discourse and power that he would later elaborate.²²² Armed with a “Nietzschean-Heideggerian strand of anti-humanism” supplemented by Hyppolite’s emphasis on sense and a suspicion of the humanist-anthropological reading of Hegel, Foucault emerged as the antidote to the Althusserian enigmatic, while also seeking to move further away from a Kojèvean version of Hegelian reason, teleology, and subjectivity.

Referring to the philosophical issues brought to the fore in Foucault’s *The Order of Things*, “[w]hat is at stake,” Rehmann argues, “is the epistemological status of humans as the ‘subject’ of history and its telos.”²²³ Attempting to contravene the ‘totalizing’ character of reason presented in the *History of Madness*, Foucault undertakes a theoretical move akin to Althusser—though more extreme—

²¹⁸ Daniel Keil, for example, notes, “The theoretical tradition of the New Materialisms can be traced back to poststructuralism, vitalism (for instance Bergson), Deleuze/Guattari, and Heidegger,” and also Althusser. See, Daniel Keil. “The Ontological Prison: New Materialisms and their Dead Ends.” In, *Contradictions: A Journal for Critical Thought*. Vol. 1, No. 2, 2017. 41-42. Also, see: Foster, John Bellamy. “The New Irrationalism.” In, *Monthly Review*, Vol. 4, No. 9, February, 2023.

²¹⁹ Despite certain similarities between their respective uses of Nietzsche, what differentiates Foucault’s approach from Deleuze’s, according to Roth, is “...the fact that...[Foucault] came to Nietzsche through Heidegger.” (Roth, *Knowing and History*, 202). Foucault himself remarks, “Heidegger was always for me the essential philosopher...[however,] Nietzsche and Heidegger, that was *le choc philosophique!*” As quoted in Roth, *Knowing and History*, 202.

²²⁰ Larrain, *Ideology and Cultural Identity*, 91.

²²¹ Gutting, *The Impact of Idealism*, 260

²²² Indeed, in *History of Madness*, Foucault makes use of the notion of ‘unhappy consciousness.’ See, Michel Foucault. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Vintage Books, 1988.

²²³ Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology*, 191. Also, see Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things. An Archeology of the Human Sciences*. Vintage Books, New York, 1994. 387.

in which the subject is *de-materialized* such that “...human practices vanished behind the succession of discursive paradigms.”²²⁴ This move represents a major development in Foucault’s attempt to overcome the limits of a Marxian humanist, anthropology. It is important to note here that, unlike Althusser, Foucault is not seeking to escape only the humanist ‘Early Marx’ in favor of the scientific ‘Mature Marx’; rather he is seeking to escape ‘Marx *in toto*’ because, as Rehmann points out, Foucault extends “Althusser’s criticism of the young Marx’s humanism...to both Marx’s entire work and to Marxism in general.” Consequently, for Foucault, “...any perspective of emancipation or liberation appears as a naïve anthropology that imagines an originally good and fixed nature of the human to be set free at last.”²²⁵ Thus, it is not only the assumed teleology inherent to Marx’s project, but also its *fixity*, its projection of an essence²²⁶ onto the *species-being*, that, for Foucault, present intractable problems inherent in the Marxian framework. Concerned with the overturning of the subject-object relationship as a heuristic analytic, Foucault—like Schelling with Hegel—hints at the representational character of Marx’s understanding of essence,²²⁷ as though Marx formulated a purely *transhistorical* conception of an unchanging subject, an ahistorical, purely rational subject with metaphysically determined moral attributes.²²⁸ The Foucauldian overemphasis on discourse and power underlined by the Nietzschean consecration of individual difference over-against universality makes impossible the consideration “...of how to build up a new (and diversified) universalism from below.”²²⁹ Both discourse and power are directed at the *micro-level* of individual behavior: liberation is for the ‘I’ not the ‘we.’

For Foucault, discourse substitutes the Marxist—specifically Althusserian—concern with ideology. Ideology as ‘false consciousness’ means precisely that there is an underlying conception of objectivity, of truth. Given the relativist character of Foucault’s thought, however, the underlying structure of truth-falsity in Althusser’s ideology critique was itself the foundational problem of

²²⁴ Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology*, 194.

²²⁵ Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology*, 193. Also, see, Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994. 261-262

²²⁶ Though commonly translated as ‘species-being,’ *Gattungswesen* is more correctly translatable as *species-essence*.

²²⁷ Foucault’s analysis makes sense in light of Nietzsche’s own suspicion of essence. After quoting Nietzsche directly, Rehmann notes that “[i]t is perfectly consistent from Nietzsche’s own perspective to oppose any concept of a human species-being [*Gattungswesen*], because it contains egalitarian implications.” Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology*, 195. The passage from Nietzsche reads: ‘there is no human species, but only different singular individuals.’ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Kritische Studienausgabe, Vol. 9*. Edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. Munich: De Gruyter, 1999. 508.

²²⁸ As will be shown in more detail later, this mischaracterization fails to account for two issues: (1) the dialectical relation between universality & particularity (in this case, the transhistorical and the historically specific) and (2) Marx’s *relational* and *metabolic* construction of subject-objects, which cannot be purely representational precisely because for Marx the definitive feature is one of *forms of activities*.

²²⁹ Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology*, 195

ideology critique: "...the concept of ideology is 'always' in opposition to truth, is 'necessarily' related to a subject and subordinated to the economy."²³⁰ Against a dialectical conception of the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity, Foucault sought to formulate the conditions of possibility of discourse itself, of (relative and historical) knowledge wherein "...the subjective and the objective, inside and outside, reality and imaginary..."²³¹ could be substituted for, in Foucault's words, a "*language de fiction*."²³² As such, it is clear that Foucault's development of the concept of discourse is directly related to his rejection of the concept of essence. Indeed, knowledge and discourse, which are represent the result of contingent historical formations, are in his view reducible to assumptions about truth through which human beings are determined. "Man," Foucault is famously able to write, "is only a recent invention."²³³ The problem as Foucault sees it, then, is not simply that a representational depiction of 'man' is produced, but that there is *a certain form and arrangement of knowledge-power and corresponding discourse that produce it*. Thus, *determination* is constituted as *primarily discursive* and the relativity of truth is exposed by recognizing the rules of discourse formation and their social expression, which for Foucault is "the fundamental configuration of knowledge."²³⁴ In the belief that he is attending to the newly discovered roots of power, Foucault directs analytic focus onto the *form* of discourse rather than the content to which it refers: "[t]he point is, in short, to 'dispense with things' in favor of 'things said' (discourse), to define objects as they emerge in discourse without reference to their foundation in things,"²³⁵ since, for Foucault, identification of the material foundation of discourse, its *content*, would necessarily posit objectivity over-against subjectivity—in effect, it would presuppose the existence of necessity and objectivity in historical transformation.²³⁶ Rejecting any qualified understanding of essence, what concerns Foucault instead is the realm of *discursive appearance* and historical change formulated in terms of shifting discursive formations.²³⁷ Contrary to Hegel's conception of historical change, Foucault's analysis of the historical changes of discursive formations

²³⁰ Foucault as quoted in Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology*, 198

²³¹ Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology*, 200

²³² As quoted in *Ibid.*

²³³ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 387

²³⁴ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 30

²³⁵ Soper, *Humanism and Antihumanism*, 135

²³⁶ Larrain explains, "It is not surprising, therefore, that Foucault should have been influenced by a Nietzschean conception of ideology which criticizes the very concepts of knowledge, science and truth." Larrain, *Ideology and Cultural Identity*, 93

²³⁷ Gutting notes: "Foucault could demonstrate that Renaissance thought took place within an episteme quite different from that of the Classical age, and that the episteme of the Classical age was likewise quite different from that of modernity. But he made no effort to account for the processes whereby one episteme was replaced by another." Indeed, given the emphasis on contingency un-dialectically de-coupled from necessity, Foucault would be methodologically unable to provide such an account. Gutting, *The Impact of Idealism*, 262.

do not “involve any dialectical necessity.” To be sure, “[f]or Foucault, like Deleuze, every effect shares in the contingency of its cause, nothing is *existentially necessary*.”²³⁸

Discourse and knowledge appear through relations of power in history grasped genealogically.²³⁹ However, for Foucault, contingency reigns supreme, dislocating certain kinds of continuities within historical development. In this way, power becomes ubiquitous, even ‘relational,’ albeit dispersed differentially among contingent discursive formations. Foucault writes, “power means relations, a more-or-less organized, hierarchical coordinated cluster of relations.”²⁴⁰ Here, ‘relations’ are not meant in the dialectical materialist sense, which would presume a dialectically inseparable yet mutually irreducible understanding of material conditions and the embedded theoretical conditions to which they give rise. On the contrary, power refers to knowledge and discourse and how, as Rehmann explains, “it is linked to the will to truth.”²⁴¹ The Foucauldian concept of power does not lead necessarily to a material referent but instead toward relations between kinds of discourse; even though Foucault is also hinting at this materiality throughout his historical investigations. Its ubiquity, omnipresence, reflects its *indeterminacy*. Hegel’s initial formulation in the *Science of Logic* of the emptiness of pure being and its equation to pure nothing is transgressed by the recognition of *quality*, that is, of determinations in which the purity of being and nothing vanish, and therefore *becoming* enters the picture. Foucault, on the other hand, is methodologically forced to remain at an abstract level in which power has neither a center nor causal linkages constituted through material conditions, since that would presuppose the necessity of going beyond the *discursive* and identifying the *material practices* that in fact *constitute power itself* through *social relations between social subjects*. Thus, unable to express power’s manifold *determinations*, Foucault’s power remains an *indeterminate*—rather than *determinate*—concept, which retains a certain vagueness that makes difficult the identification of various causal links.

Relevant here is the fact that such a formulation of power as a *ubiquitous appearance* is posited as antithetical to the Marxian account of power grounded in an analysis of exploitation. In order to identify, understand, and act against *determinate power*, the Marxist account tethers contingency and necessity, universality and particularity, rationality and irrationality, essence and appearance in terms of historical continuity and discontinuity, i.e., *in the material processes within which social subjects are necessarily*

²³⁸ Baugh, *French Hegel*, 167

²³⁹ Baugh writes, “It is well known that Foucault’s ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’ essay eschews Hegelian history in favor of a genealogy that analyzes the configurations of power that result from the haphazard play of forces.” In, Baugh, *French Hegel*, 167

²⁴⁰ Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-77*. Edited and Translated by Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon, 1980. 198.

²⁴¹ Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology*, 202

involved and situated—in a historically specific and perpetually developing social formation. In his famous discussion with Deleuze, Foucault concedes that Marx correctly understood “the nature of exploitation,” but supplants this development in our understanding by adding that “we have yet to fully comprehend the nature of power.” In his view, neither Marx nor Freud can help in “understanding this thing which we call power...at once visible and invisible, present and hidden, *ubiquitous*.”²⁴² Reflecting on Foucault’s claims of metatheoretical superiority, Rehmann offers his judgement: “The fact that Foucault positions his concept of power over and against the concepts of exploitation, appropriation, and state-analysis shows how the main frontline is again Marxism.”²⁴³

Combining a simplistic understanding of Hegelian and Marxist categories with his own original and creative theoretical pursuits, Foucault developed a vague and primordial concept of power abstracted from the historical and social relations of human activities, installing it “...from the outset as an enigmatic force both outside and ‘underneath’ actual social relations of power and domination.”²⁴⁴ Consequently, social subjects and historical transformation—*sociality itself*—are depicted as, to a degree, unintelligible: reason remains insufficient, all that is left is the analysis of discourse and power. The limitation, then, is predicated on the emphasis of contingency in historical change: the present is as contingent as its power is without ground. The failure to acknowledge the *dialectical* relationship between necessity and contingency means precisely that the novelty of the *discontinuous* takes analytical primacy over-against *continuity*. Conceived in different terms, however, continuities can express novelty insofar as they are relationally and dialectically unified with what indeed is *discontinuous*. History persists materially beyond the confines of discourse and knowledge alone: *it continues even in discontinuity*. Thus, rather than politicizing ontological concepts in terms of the dialectical relationship between their essence and appearance, between their transhistorical and historically specific forms, Foucault—absolving himself of any attachment to objectivity—*ontologizes* power in such a way as to simultaneously de-politicize it. Power’s ambiguity is *indeterminate* and therefore it cannot be *determinately overcome*.

Whatever one may think of his theoretical contributions, it is clear that Foucault reproduces the Schellingian critique of Hegel and unconsciously incorporates Schelling’s own resolution to the Hegelian problem. Indeed, insofar as Schelling approaches reason as purely discursive, as not pertaining to the ontological status of real objects, Foucault manages to give this framework a new

²⁴² Foucault, Michel. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Edited by Donald Bouchard. Translated by Donald Bouchard and Sherry Simon. New York: Cornell University Press, 1977. 213. My emphasis.

²⁴³ Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology*, 203

²⁴⁴ Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology*, 205

grammar within which discourse takes primacy. The becoming of the movement of real life is substituted for the becoming of discourse immersed within an ontologically constituted, abstract and indeterminate, homogenous and all-encompassing, system of power.

[2.5] Concluding Remarks

The traditions of Postmodernism/Poststructuralism encompass a wide array of thinkers from a range of disciplines, though it is well known that despite certain theoretical differences, what unites them is an attempted overcoming of Hegel and, by extension, Marx. This attempted overcoming, which is essentially an attempt to methodologically depart from Hegel's dialectical categories derives namely, as I have argued in this and the previous chapters, from Schelling's dubious post-mortem critique of Hegel. In tracing the history of the Hegelian rupture and its reverberations, I have examined the work and roles of several thinkers, each of whom played an important part in the development of a philosophical tradition which, as I will show in the following chapters, still reverberates in subtle yet influential ways in contemporary scholarship.

Although Althusser does not fit neatly within the category of poststructuralism or postmodernism, he is particularly important as one of the central figures within the Marxist tradition against which the former developed. Given his antipathies to Hegel and his explicit attempt to overcome the categories most relevant to this paper, Althusser played a significant role in continuing the distortion initiated by Schelling's critique of Hegel—then Kojève's problematic resuscitation of the same—in such a way that caused significant reaction and influence.

In the latter half of the 20th century, Deleuze and Foucault both emerged in this Kojèvean-Althusserian context. Proving original and insightful in their own right, they nevertheless remained wedded to a problematic depiction of Hegelian thought which transposed itself onto Marx(ism). Given their theoretical proclivities, they certainly changed the direction and character of philosophical discourse that followed through sophisticated attempts at overcoming *dialectics*, *necessity*, *essence*, *telos*, *reason*, and *universality*.

We must keep in mind that the theoretical conjuncture we have been discussing in this chapter took hold in the immediate post World War II period, a time when Soviet and Chinese Marxism were, in the 'West', vilified to the extreme. One need not be a 'Stalinist' nor a 'Maoist' to admit the truth of such villainization, to which any retrospective on the propaganda of McCarthy's 'Red Scare' project and the cultural attitudes toward Marxism it embodied would attest. Thus, with the inescapable reach of extreme propaganda coinciding with a fecund ground of original and outspoken – even, now, celebrity - thinkers, there arises a new kind of 'Left,' one that detaches itself from the ethical

implications of *actually existing revolutionary practices*. The representative theoretical bloc of this new Left, protected by its geopolitical situatedness, need not get its hands dirty by associating itself with the objective contradictions that *necessarily* belong to social transformation. With the exception of Herbert Marcuse, Frankfurt School Critical Theory is equally guilty of this charge.

In a world of theory where Marxism is regarded as vulgar because of its concerns with *practical-material activity*, it is perhaps unsurprising that, in its development, a theoretical lineage which understands itself as constitutively opposed to Marxism would take a *turn* toward further abstraction by condemning all the categories relevant to making normative distinctions regarding political and economic disruption and reconstitution. From the vantage point of this theory, the totality, the whole, the universal, dissolves into incomprehensible differences, particularities, and thus a parochial return to the immanence of micro-level activity divorces itself from macro-level concerns. *Essence*, viewed in purely theological terms, gives way to a hyper-individualized ‘self’, positively exercising its desire over-against an absolute Other. The epistemological impossibility of understanding an Other is consecrated on the basis of the affirmation of a difference now made absolute.²⁴⁵ *All that is material melts into discourse.*²⁴⁶

Gaining further traction with the rise of neoliberal, financial capital in the 1970’s onward, the poststructuralist landscape consolidates itself. Indeed, the altered form of capital’s self-valorization process implicitly confirms the underlying theoretical premises of the same. With no universal aspirations (since universalism is crudely conflated with Eurocentrism), the refusal to recognize the contradictory motion of development itself (the dialectical relation of progress *and* regress present in development), the *Kantian forfeiture* that abandons the possibility of knowing the thing itself since reason is too ‘totalizing’, the fragmentation of analysis in theory represents a concomitant fragmentation of a social ground out of which the former emerged yet was *methodologically unable to acknowledge*. Here, I refer specifically to the rise of certain strands of feminist, post-colonial, and decolonial scholarship, which has inherited, in their respective formalizations, a sharp suspicion of the Hegelian categories of necessity, universality, essence, telos, and reason, and their respective

²⁴⁵ As Viren Murthy notes, “...the critical standpoint of post-structuralism (one could add here other posts, such as post-colonialism) comes at a significant price, namely an inability to deal with the historical specificity of capitalism. To develop their arguments post-structuralists often invoke some type of quasi-ontological and often transhistorical concept, such as difference, the repressed other, specters, the list is almost infinite.” Moishe Postone, Viren Murthy, and Yasuo Kobayashi. “Reconfiguring Historical Time: Moishe Postone’s Interpretation of Marx.” In, *History and Heteronomy: Critical Essays*. Tokyo: UTCP, 2009. 10

²⁴⁶ For a critique of the turn to discourse as influenced by postmodernist and post-structuralist approaches, see chapters 1-3 of Andreas Malm. *The Progress of This Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World*. New York: Verso. 2020

expressions in the Marxist tradition. The prevalence of this suspicion is not without ambiguity, but remains a consistent thematic across the board such that the *dialectical drama continues to incessantly burn*.

If it is possible to speak of the closure of German Idealism, we see here that Schelling's characterization of Hegel's *Science of Logic* as ahistorical and his dialectical logic as purely rational has come full circle in the 20th century as the absolutized knowledge of Hegel and Marx. The closure of German Idealism, then, occurs through the *continuity of its residues*, still lingering amidst the various *ruptures* that posited its escape. What appeared as the light of a new intellectual era, whatever its positive effects, was predicated on a theatrical and deceptive framing with regards to both Hegel and Marx. Out of this light emerged a constellation of different theoretical strands embedded in the same deception, now armed with the theoretical tools of the postmodern/poststructuralist framework.

Schelling and Kojève certainly made their mark in igniting this fire. Althusser, Deleuze, and Foucault—in their own original ways and through the assistance of other thinkers—carried the torch and passed it down, becoming the alternatives to the 'totalizing' and 'absolutizing' dialectic of sociality and nature. In the vision this light provides lies a defeated Hegel and an exasperated Marx, the nuances of which became obscured and hidden beneath a number of misrepresentations, however sophisticated and original.

In the context of academic institutions, intellectual discourse, the victory against the aforementioned categories, the supposed overcoming of Hegel and Marx, characterizes nothing other than the defeat of the development of a theory relevant to *material* transformation. The theoretical history described hitherto also bears effects on discourses outside the academy, wherein the further de-materialization of social subjects, the ignorance of the relational constitution of history and sociality itself, has resulted in an oversimplified and politically bankrupt understanding of social existence dominated by the liberal fetishization of identity absolved of its historical material ground, emptied of the revolutionary potential of transformation. The end of history has already appeared. With nothing more than individualized *purposiveness* dictated by the ubiquitous power of capital, we abandon reason for illusory intuition—without recognizing their mediations—from which we affirm the positivity of our difference and remain unable to discern the causal relationship between social and natural phenomena, between our social practices and their effects. What remains for us is the ability to *discourse* about it all.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁷ David McNally notes: "...postmodernist theory, whether it calls itself post-structuralism, deconstruction or post-Marxism is constituted by a radical attempt to *banish the real human body*...from the sphere of language and social life. As a result...these outlooks reproduce a central feature of commodified society: the abstraction of social products and practices

Always lurking in the shadows, however, are Hegel and Marx and the various figures that have attempted to sustain, complicate, and further develop their systems. The above account serves as the explanation and justification for a different approach to each thinker, an approach that attempts to unfold the complexity and sophistication of their systems without abandoning the categories of necessity, universality, essence, telos, and reason (and without making each thinker identical), and, in fact, demonstrates their open-ended character. Through the introduction of a different category, *appropriation* and the *mode of appropriation*, the relational dynamism of both Hegel and Marx will hopefully be molded from the darkness into which it was cast. The *dialectical drama*, thus, continues anew.

from the laboring bodies that generate them...” David McNally. *Bodies of Meaning: Studies in Language, Labor and Liberation*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2001. 1

PART II: HEGEL'S DIALECTICAL RELATIONAL ONTOLOGY

“Think? Abstractly? — *Save qui peut!* Let those who can save themselves! Even now I can hear a traitor, bought by the enemy, exclaim these words, denouncing this essay because it will plainly deal with metaphysics. For *metaphysics* is a word, no less than *abstract*, and almost *thinking* as well, from which everybody more or less runs away as from a man who has caught the plague.”

- GWF Hegel, *Who Thinks Abstractly?*

Part II

Hegel's Dialectical Relational Ontology: Appropriation

Part II of this work consists of an interpretation of Hegel out of which appropriation, as an ontological category, is established and made consistent within his system.

Appropriation will gain coherence through an analysis of the logico-theoretical structure of certain Hegelian categories; namely, essence, necessity, universality, telos, and reason. If Part I provided a critical overview of the consequences of certain mis-readings of Hegel, Part II seeks to *positively* develop the concept at hand through a dialectical materialist approach to Hegel's speculative project. Here, the ontological basis of the way in which appropriation is expressed in Marx (Part III) will be made clear.

Part II comprises two chapters, centering on:

(1) A brief overview of the different approaches to Hegel both within and without the Marxist tradition and the implications of the same, specifically in terms of the rift between considering Hegel's work as either: (a) a continuation of Kant's project, which reads Hegel as a thinker concerned primarily with the conditions of possibility of thought, and (b) as systematic thinker whose work is concerned with both (dialectical) logic *and* ontology. More importantly, however, this chapter reveals the relational component of Hegel's thought by defending his own anti-representationalism. Indeed, I argue that Hegel's works demonstrate a significant concern with undermining representational thought, and this marks not only the relational element of his ontological insights, but also definitively overcomes the rejections of Hegel presented in Part I of this work.

(2) The purpose of this chapter consists in a Marxian analysis and uncovering of Hegel's dialectical-relational ontology in his *Science of Logic*, i.e., an explicitly dialectical materialist *resection* of Hegel's work. In order to do justice to the *Logic*, however, other works will also be considered. More specifically, the categories of *essence*, *necessity*, *universality*, *telos*, and *reason* take center stage further revolving around the category of *appropriation*. Through bringing these categories together, appropriation gains a materialist character and so too does the *dialectical-relational ontology* out of which it emerges.

The *dialectical drama* described in Part I now becomes a reconfiguration of the *relational character of dialectics itself*, identified in its Hegelian form.

[3] Hegel's Dialectical Relational Ontology & Anti-Representational Thought

—“It remains necessary to render speech to a gagged Hegel, to an essential Hegel, one on whom Lenin feverishly annotated, one from whom Marx had drawn the intelligence of *Capital*: the Hegel of the *Logic*.” – Zhang Shiyong²⁴⁸

—“Aphorism: It is impossible to completely understand Marx's *Capital*, and essentially its first chapter, without having thoroughly understood the whole of Hegel's *Logic*. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx!!” – Vladimir Lenin²⁴⁹

Following Shiyong and Lenin, I contend that read *materialistically*, Hegel's *Logic* contains a sophisticated relational ontology through a complex, inter-related system of categories which are immanently transformative thereby overcoming a number of philosophical problems—among them, the problem of representational thinking and socio-historical transformation. Through this interpretation the problem of the Kantian forfeiture, described in the previous chapter, becomes a non-problem inasmuch as my defense of Hegelian reason does not succumb to an overarching dematerialized conception of an ahistorical reason as Schelling depicted.

The exposition that follows concerns the identification of the *relational* components of Hegel's ontological system pertaining to the concept of appropriation as an ontological component of the *Gattungswesen*, the human species-essence. From the elucidation of such relationality, I will arrive at the *social* component of the human species-essence, which is the quality within the being that is a human being that differentiates it from other forms of being *qua* active practice. I call this active practice, this modal feature of human existence, *appropriation*. Insofar as appropriation belongs to the *Gattungswesen*, is what defines and differentiates it, then it must necessarily be *universal*, i.e., to be human is to appropriate a socialized nature, a process of making something one's own, and, in turn, to *become-appropriated* simultaneously. What is this 'process', this 'something', this 'one'? These seemingly obvious and intuitive notions will be taken to task.

Methodologically, such definition remains at an abstract level. As of yet, there is no distinction identifiable within the concept of appropriation. In Hegelian spirit, then, it is only through *exercising* the concept that the diversity in form, the particularization of its relevance and explanatory power regarding the complexity and heterogeneity of social existence—the move from the abstract to the concrete—will enable the *transition* from ontology to *social* ontology, from the trans-historical to the historically specific. In this way, appropriation will reveal itself as expressed in concrete historical forms, as the constitutively relational *excess* of social ensembles; that is, as the *mode of appropriation*

²⁴⁸ Shiyong, Zhang, *The Rational Kernel*, 15

²⁴⁹ Lenin, V.I., *Collected Works Vol. 38*, 180

belonging to a historically metabolic social formation tethered to a specific mode of production. The technical and analytic definitions of both *appropriation* and the *mode of appropriation* will come to fruition only as a result of the process by which its underlying theoretical premises gain further determination (Part II), concretizing in my analysis of Marx (Part III).

The exposition in this chapter of Hegel's anti-representational thinking as well as the relationality immanent to the taxonomy of his logico-theoretical structure will lead directly to the following chapter, concerned first and foremost with Hegel alone, which articulates the transition from appropriation to the mode of appropriation through an exposition of his works expressing ontological commitments. Following the previous account of the lingering effects of Schelling's critique of Hegel, the point here is to consider dialectics as ontological and not merely methodological—a consideration that bears import and insight to Marx's own works.²⁵⁰

I will not provide a full account of every work. Rather, I focus on those aspects most directly related to developing a dialectical-relational ontology and, in turn, a social ontology premised on the concept of appropriation. Through a critical analysis of Hegel, the concept of appropriation and the mode of appropriation will be systematically developed within a dialectical materialist framework, a relational ontology from which a normative, political project emerges.

Nowhere does Hegel define appropriation proper. He does, however, provide indications through which a definition can be ascertained. By putting to work the concepts of essence, necessity, universality, telos, and reason, the definition of appropriation along with its relational character will make itself clear. I begin, then, not with the concept itself but with that which underlies it, the composition of its logico-theoretical structure. Appropriation will be conjoined, put together, only at a later stage, after its ground has been opened, composed, and its foundation built, interwoven with the above categories.

[3.1] Contentious Divergences: Hegel, Hegelianism, and Marxism

The number of Hegel interpreters is significant both inside and outside the Marxist or materialist tradition. Within Hegel scholarship proper, there is vast disagreement regarding Hegel's status as a Post-Kantian thinker: is there a strict continuity with Kant or does Hegel's project represent a rupture and overcoming of the Kantian framework? If Hegel is the fulfillment of Kantian idealism, continuing yet complicating Kant's theoretical parameters, what does this mean for how we read

²⁵⁰ In this way, McCarthy is right to assert: "Marx's radicalization of Hegel's method does not occur in reaction to the Hegelian framework but within it." George McCarthy. "Development of the Concept and Method of Critique in Kant, Hegel, and Marx." In, *Studies in Soviet Thought*, Vol. 30, No. 1, Jul., 1985. pp. 15-38. 27.

Hegel, his speculative project, and the categories specific to it? If, however, Hegel decidedly breaks with Kant, in what ways does he achieve this break, and how does it invite us to read his work? Other issues are also a matter of controversy. Is Hegel—specifically in his *Logic*—performing a formalization of categorial logic (only *thinking about thinking*) or does he also have ontological concerns, seeking to address the way in which existence itself unfolds? It is the latter question that most directly concerns us here though with an additional caveat that pervades the spirit of German Idealism: the subject-object relation. At bottom, this central issue is the guiding thread of Classical German Philosophy: how does consciousness access reality and what are the limits of what consciousness can grasp? With appropriation in mind, the implications of the answer to this fundamental question will elucidate my own reading of Hegel in which the relational elements of his system become accentuated. For this reason, I find it necessary to stress the Hegelian *Naturdialektik* as a fundamental element of grounding appropriation as an ontologically essential feature of the human species-essence.

Similarly, the Marxist tradition bears a long struggle with its own relationship to Hegel. From Engels, to Plekhanov and Lenin, the early Marxists engaged creatively and critically with Hegel's project, where Hegel's ontological commitments were maintained. This approach became central to the development of Soviet engagements with Hegel through which dialectical and historical materialism retained a qualified (sometimes reluctant) acknowledgement of Marx and Engels' Hegelian lineage.²⁵¹ At stake was the commitment to developing an ontological system capable of providing critical and partisan political analysis by means of a simultaneous commitment to truth, science, and a holistic worldview: dialectics was both ontological (dialectics of nature) and methodological.²⁵² Western Marxism²⁵³ and Frankfurt School Critical Theory proceeded in a different manner.²⁵⁴ Given Kojève's monumental influence in France,²⁵⁵ and the subsequent controversies, Western Marxism and

²⁵¹ For an overview of Soviet engagements with Hegel, see Chapter 1 of Guy Planty-Bonjoiur. *The Categories of Dialectical Materialism: Contemporary Soviet Ontology*. Translated T.J. Blakely. Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1965. Also see, Ballestrem, K.G. "Dialectical Logic." In, *Studies of Soviet Thought*. Vol. 5, No. 3, Sep. 1965. pp, 139-172.

²⁵² For an overview of the debates between Soviet Marxism and Western Marxism, see, van der Linden, Marcel. *Western Marxism and the Soviet Union: A Survey of Critical Theories and Debates Since 1917*. Translated by Jurriaan Bendien. Boston: Brill, 2007.

²⁵³ Adrian Johnston notes "So-called 'Western Marxism' and its offshoots come to accept the young Lukács's condemnatory verdict without question as the decisive last word on any and every *Naturdialektik*." Adrian Johnston. *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism. Volume Two: A Weak Nature Alone*. Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2019. 17.

²⁵⁴ See, for example: Maurice Merleau-Ponty. *Adventures of the Dialectic*. Translated by Joseph Bien. Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973. 64-67; Theodor Adorno. *An Introduction to Dialectics*. Edited by Christoph Zierman. Translated by Nicholas Walker. Malden: Polity Press, 2017. Longuenesse, Béatrice. *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*. Translated by Nicole J. Simek. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

²⁵⁵ Garaudy remarks that beyond Lukács' rejection of a dialectics of nature in *History & Class Consciousness*, "the point of departure of all recurring offensives since the last war are the studies of Kojève who affirmed that no dialectic is possible without man and his activities." Here is another moment in which Kojève influenced a reading of Hegel premised primarily

Critical Theory oriented itself toward the methodological and critical value of Hegelian thought. Here, dialectics was conceived not as an ontological process but a method pertaining to the *movement of consciousness* within the realm of historical determination and its critical deployment. It is worthy of note that the rejection of a dialectical materialist ontology has typically been framed in Euro-centric, geopolitical terms, where ‘Western Marxism’ and its formalization of dialectics has been contrasted with Marxisms emerging from the ‘Third World’ which have sought to retain dialectical materialism, and its ontological implications, as relevant to social transformation, i.e., as relevant to a revolutionary politic.²⁵⁶ It is not incidental, in my view, that those political spaces under intense imperialist domination have retained dialectical materialism, and it ought to be of no surprise that their theoretical explorations have been dismissed as ‘vulgar’ by those who lay claim to the arbitration of ‘proper thinking’.

More recently, a dialectics of nature, a dialectical materialist ontology, has underwent somewhat of a revival, though under a plethora of different names. This revival is predicated on a re-tracing of various influences on the Marxist tradition and a reconsideration of dialectical materialism that does not reduce it to a dogmatic orthodoxy. It also contains a reconsideration of the materialist kernel of Hegel.²⁵⁷ Additionally, within the context of the ‘Global North,’ those attempting to retain dialectical materialism have been concerned with scientific investigation,²⁵⁸ biological²⁵⁹ and ecological questions,²⁶⁰ and they too have been dismissed as ‘positivist’ or ‘vulgar,’ largely due to the various misconceptions of dialectics described in the previous Part of this work. It is among and from this undercurrent that my own work comes to the fore.

I lay emphasis on a dialectics of nature, a *dialectical materialism*, over-against both the ‘non-metaphysical’ or ‘deflationary’ readings of Hegel as well as the Western Marxist tendency to reduce dialectics to a purely social phenomena or Critical Theory’s focus on recognition and historical determination, but also against any ‘dogmatic’ understanding. Indeed, I understand dialectical

on recognition through historical determination, a reading that lay the ground, set the parameters, for future confrontations with Hegel. As quoted in Planty-Bonjoir, *The Categories of Dialectical Materialism: Contemporary Soviet Ontology*, 2

²⁵⁶ Kangal writes, “*Contra* Western Marxist narrative, there was no single Marxist voice in [the] Soviet Union nor an overall full approval of [a dialectics of nature]. A variety of opinions were held in the ‘West’ as well, a fact which does not fit the predominant historiography of ‘Western Marxism.’” Kangal, Kaan. *Friedrich Engels and the Dialectics of Nature*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. 45.

²⁵⁷ For example, Žižek, Slavoj. *Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism*. London: Verso, 2015. Also, see, Meikle, Scott. *Essentialism in the Thought of Karl Marx*. London: Duckworth, 1986.

²⁵⁸ See, Helena Sheehan. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Science: A Critical History*. London: Verso, 2017.

²⁵⁹ For example, Thao, Tran Duc. *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism*. Translated by Daniel Herman and Donald Morano. Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1986. Also see, Johnston, *Prolegomena Volume 2*, op. cit.

²⁶⁰ See, Foster, John Bellamy. *The Return of Nature: Socialism and Ecology*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2020. Also, see, Malm, *The Progress of this Storm*.

materialism as a relational ontology which I intend to explicate via an account of appropriation and the mode of appropriation; and, it is my contention that without a materialist analysis of Hegel the theoretical value of such a project—*especially in its Marxist variant*—is unforgivingly hindered and limited.

[3.2] Contentious Divergences: Non-Metaphysical or Ontological Hegel

The ‘non-metaphysical’ reading of Hegel is in some sense a continuation of both Kojève’s and Hyppolite’s respective projects though certainly not reducible to either. As outlined in the previous chapter, this continuity can be formulated as a concern for forms of recognition, on the one hand, and discursive analysis seeking to establish the conditions of possibility for conceptual categories. The specific difference, however, between the more recent ‘non-metaphysical’ reading and Kojève-Hyppolite resides in the consideration of Hegel’s relationship to Kant. The former, indeed, reads Hegel as “...an extension of Kant’s transcendental logic, justified by the internal connections that bind the categories together and exemplify the self-determining power of pure thought.”²⁶¹ Moreover, McGowan notes, “[e]ven the followers of Hegel in the later part of the twentieth century who explicitly reject Kojève’s influence do not depart from his de-emphasis on Hegel’s ontological claims.”²⁶² Thus, Hegel’s project is presented as a meta-theoretical, epistemological formalization, not as both a logic and an ontology.²⁶³

In removing metaphysical or ontological concerns from Hegel, “as antiquated irrelevance”, this tendency is deemed ‘deflationary,’ since it fragments the whole of the Hegelian system and focuses solely on its non-metaphysical elements: “his lingering Kantianism, historical consciousness, political perspectives, or linguistic sensitivities.”²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ John Burbidge. “Hegel’s Logic as Metaphysics.” In, *Hegel Bulletin*. Vol. 35, Issue 01, May 2014. 101. Referencing the *Science of Logic*, Robert Pippin notes that its aim is an investigation into “the conceptual conditions required for there to be possibly determinate objects of cognition in the first place, prior to empirical specification...” As quoted by, Burbidge, *Hegel’s Logic as Metaphysics*, 101. See, Robert Pippin. *Hegel’s Idealism: the Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. 176.

²⁶² Todd McGowan. *Emancipation After Hegel: Achieving a Contradictory Revolution*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019. 87.

²⁶³ Indeed, Adorno too asserts: “...the dialectic, the epitome of Hegel’s philosophy, cannot be likened to methodological or ontological principle.” Rather, Adorno claims, “Dialectic is the unswerving effort to conjoin reason’s critical consciousness of itself and the critical experience of objects.” By this conjoining, dialectics is thereby reduced to epistemology, to a form of *verification*. See, Theodor Adorno. *Hegel: Three Studies*. Translated by Shierry Nicholsen. Cambridge MIT Press, 1993. 9-10

²⁶⁴ Adrian Johnston. *A New German Idealism. Hegel, Žižek, and Dialectical Materialism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018. 39

The central problem, then, is not only the formalization of thought, the construction of a pure rational system of cognition—“...a revolution in epistemology”²⁶⁵—but the obscuring and de-severing of the way in which a particular ontological analysis articulates the relationship between epistemology, consciousness, politics and sociality.²⁶⁶ In this view, the Hegelian project is non-metaphysical in two forms: “it does not speculate about transcendent entities, and it does not talk about particular things at all.” Instead, it only “provide[s]...the general conceptual structure...that makes it possible to talk about things.”²⁶⁷ In other words, the Hegelian project comes to be understood as a hyper-formalized delineation of philosophical discourse oriented toward determining epistemological claims. Such formalization enables the development of normative critique in strictly formal terms, the content of which becomes entirely secondary. Hegelian thought, then, is deflated precisely in that ontological presuppositions are implicitly rendered irrelevant to normative, epistemological, and also political claims. This is not to suggest that any ontology necessarily corresponds directly to a certain politics or epistemology, or even to a specific conceptualization of normativity. But, to remove the ontological basis entirely means nothing short of reducing the significance and value of the deployment of epistemological, normative, or political critique. Robert Pippin and Terry Pinkard²⁶⁸ are among the more popular exponents of the non-metaphysical Hegel,²⁶⁹ though they are indebted to Klaus Hartmann’s influential reading.²⁷⁰ Whatever their own

²⁶⁵ McGowan, *Emancipation After Hegel*, 88

²⁶⁶ Johnston notes, “The “deflated” Hegel is a non or post-metaphysical thinker, whether as an epistemologically conservative Kantian, a philosopher of the “linguistic turn” avant la lettre, or a historically minded ethicist and sociopolitical theorist.” Johnston, *A New German Idealism*, 3.

²⁶⁷ Beiser, Frederick. “Hegel, a Non-Metaphysician? A Polemic Review of HT Engelhardt and Terry Pinkard (eds), *Hegel Reconsidered*.” In, *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*. Vol. 16, No. 2 (1995): 1-13. 1.

²⁶⁸ Johnston notes the influence of Robert Brandom’s inferentialist reading of Hegel on Pinkard’s approach to Hegelian ontology: “...by conflating the Hegelian *Idee* with subjective idealist cognitions, the Brandomian Pinkard, however intentionally or not, excessively and unjustifiably downplays the ontological stakes of Hegel’s *Naturphilosophie* in favor of epistemological issues.” Johnston, *Prolegomena Vol. 2*, 20. Also, see: James Kreines. “Metaphysics without Pre-Critical Monism: Hegel on Lower-level Natural Kinds and the Structures of Reality.” In, *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*. Vol. 29, Issue 1-2, No. 57/58. 2008. 48-70.

²⁶⁹ Johnston, *A New German Idealism*, 42. For a critical overview of the questionable and selective ‘deflationary’ reading of Hegel see Chapter 2 in Johnston, *A New German Idealism*. For a critical review of Robert Pippin, see, Stephen Houlgate. “Hegel’s Realm of Shadows: Logic as Metaphysics in The Science of Logic by Robert Pippin (Review).” In, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*. Vol. 57, No. 4, Oct. 2019. 765-766. For a critical review of Terry Pinkard, see, Stephen Houlgate. “Hegel’s Dialectic, Review Article”. In, *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*. Vol. 10, Issue 2, No. 20, Autumn/Winter 1989. 1-19.

²⁷⁰ See, Hartmann, Klaus. “Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View.” In, *Hegel: A Collection of Essays*. Edited Alasdair MacIntyre. New Jersey: Doubleday, 1971. 101-124. Also see, Ameriks, Karl. “Review Essays: Recent Work on Hegel: The Rehabilitation of an Epistemologist?” In, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. Vol. 52, No. 1, March, 1992. 177-202.

hermeneutical differences,²⁷¹ they share the fundamental rejection of any *Naturdialektik* by means of distancing themselves from Hegel's own *Philosophy of Nature*.²⁷² Summarizing the trends of this approach, McGowan contends that "Hegel's speculation never extends to the nature of reality or being."²⁷³

I take issue with the one-sidedness of the non-metaphysical (or non-ontological) reading, because it artificially carves and fragments the Hegelian system. Though it is surely the case that their contributions have both revitalized Hegel (more specifically, *The Science of Logic*) and demonstrated the sophistication of his insights within particular realms of philosophy, I believe a significant injustice is committed through this internal *rupture*, for the power of Hegel is, in my view, most felt through unearthing the dynamism of his ontological claims which themselves generate and further ground the value of his speculative thought in other realms. Approaching Hegel thusly allows me to ground both *appropriation* and the *mode of appropriation* in their properly dialectical-relational forms.

In this regard, I am more positively concerned with a different interpretation, namely, one that reads Hegel's system in its entirety and invokes the relevance of the *Philosophy of Nature* as well as the *Science of Logic*, and the categories therein, as pertinent to ontology and to his thought as a whole. This is what is meant by a dialectical materialist *resection* of Hegel: a concern for the ontological attributes of Hegel's speculative philosophy. Here we find another vast array of thinkers, wherever their own differences lie, whom are united by interpreting Hegel's works as not merely epistemological but with formulating its own (dialectical) logic *and* ontology.

[3.3] The Problem of Representational Thought

My interpretation of Hegel makes clear both the continuities and discontinuities between Hegel and Marx. The relationship has been the topic of a number of controversies.²⁷⁴ In my view, the

²⁷¹ For some of these differences see: Pinkard, Terry. "The Categorical Satisfaction of Self-Reflexive Reason." In, *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*. Vol. 10, Issue 1, No. 19, Spring/Summer 1989, 5-17. Pippin's response can be found in the same volume: Pippin, Robert. "Hegel's Idealism: Prospects."

²⁷² Johnston notes, "Pippin goes so far as to deem the second volume of the *Encyclopedia* to be a wholly unrewarding and completely unimportant part of Hegel's philosophical system that is best left to the dustbin of intellectual history even by diehard Hegelians." Johnston, *Prolegomena*, Vol. 2, 16. See, Pippin, Robert. "Leaving Nature Behind, or Two Cheers for 'Subjectivism': On John McDowell." In, *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

²⁷³ McGowan, *Emancipation After Hegel*, 88.

²⁷⁴ The polemics are much too many to adequately name. The early Bolsheviks, Lenin included, certainly saw Hegel as a necessary contributor to Marxist thought and its general trajectory; as did the later Lukács, Marcuse, among others. Others, for example, Coletti and Althusser as some of the most prominent, assert a definitive break. Others still all too simplistically equate both, especially on the subject of historical development (for example, Charles Taylor and Peter Singer). See, Lenin, VI. *Collected Works Vol. 38*; Lukács, Georg. *The Young Hegel*. London: Merlin Press. 1975; Marcuse, Herbert. *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955; Colletti, Lucio. *Marxism and Hegel*. London: NLB, 1973; Singer, Peter. *Marx*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980; Taylor, Charles. "Marxism and

break is not absolute, and Marx does carry various components of Hegelian thought—specifically those concerning ontological assumptions. Out of a reconstruction of a Hegelian thematic along dialectical materialist lines, I will slowly move toward the *Science of Logic*. Beginning with his critique of representational thinking, I will then weave together the aforementioned categories.

Prior to exploring the Hegelian categories relevant to a dialectical relational ontology and appropriation, this chapter concerns Hegel's break with representational thought and how his own thinking frames the relationship between humanity and nature in terms of synchronic unity and irreducibility. Hegel's anti-representational approach provides the basis through which the *relational* character of his ontology emanates. Here, I will not limit myself to the *Science of Logic* proper, but a number of his works that demonstrate the relational qualities of his system.

Representational thought has long been a difficulty of philosophical thinking. It constitutes the problematic of metaphysics, logic, subject-object relations, positivism, empiricism, and phenomenology—and, arguably, political economy. At bottom, representational thought concerns the relationship between consciousness and reality: is there a way in which consciousness can access reality? Or, is reality inaccessible to consciousness in such a way as to require that consciousness *represent* reality to itself by means of categories that *fix* the order of reality in a particular way?

Representational thought confuses the form through which an object presents itself with the form of its *representation*. In this case, the 'ideal', the representation (of the object), takes primacy over the presence of the object itself. Representation, then, stands as that which validates, epistemologically, the object. In other words, the truth of the object comes to be found in *representation* and not in the relational dynamic of the object's immanent motion. Divorced from its materiality, from its sensuous constitution, the object is reduced to its representation. *Representation encloses presentation*. The object is thereby stripped of any transformative attribute or quality inasmuch as the possibility of its transformation becomes contingent upon the transformation of its *representation*. Representation, again, takes primacy as the gatekeeper to knowledge of the object, on the one hand, and suppresses the recognition of the object's presentation in itself, on the other. In this way, the dynamism belonging to ontological entities is conflated for the concept which designates them; consequently, both the motion of consciousness and the motion of the object, as well as their mutually constitutive relation, implicitly take on a stagnant character. This is the essential problem with formal logic and metaphysics alike, in that the immanent transformation of relational subject-objects is understood through a formalistic

Empiricism." In, *British Analytical Philosophy*. Edited by B. Williams and A. Montefiorie. London and New York: Routledge, 1966. 227-246.

system of unchanging concepts, concepts that determine the order of things as fixed and immutable. Succinctly put, “[s]tatic states form the entirety of [a representational] system, leaving no space for either generation or transition.”²⁷⁵ It is on this basis that Hegel’s speculative system has often been criticized as ‘totalizing’, insofar as his conceptual system is claimed to subsume relational determinations under its rubric. The following section seeks to demonstrate otherwise.

[3.4] Dialectical Relationality as Anti-Representational Thought

In the concluding pages of *Philosophy of Nature* Hegel writes, “This is the transition from Nature to spirit; in the living being, Nature finds its consummation and has made its peace, in that it is transformed into a higher existence. *Spirit has thus proceeded from Nature.*”²⁷⁶ From Nature spirit proceeds for “...spirit,” Houlgate notes, “does not precede nature...but arises only in and from nature.”²⁷⁷ Spirit, understood here as sociality, is a qualitative break from nature, a leap wherein and through which the *ontological* possibility and limit of the human transitions into itself in its *breaking-free* from Nature. Here, there is the constitution of essence, of universality inherent in being human but *not a self-standing individualized subjectivity*.

For Hegel, this does not amount to a *representation* of humanity, but a *dialectical presentation* of its *dialectical unfolding*. Such a narrative differentiates itself from a propositional analytic, representational thinking, insofar as it does not assume *a priori* the fixity of the categories imposed onto a philosophical account. The purpose of dialectical logic, Hegel asserts, “...is to study things in their own being and movement and thus to demonstrate the finitude of the partial categories of understanding.”²⁷⁸ Indeed, there is nothing static, no stony immobility, but *immanent* and *determinate* development. This is only possible insofar as the categories themselves are capable of oscillation between abstraction and concretion, something made impossible by representational thought.²⁷⁹

In contrast to a dialectical conception of a subject, Hegel describes the problem with representational thought’s approach to the same: “...the self in its positive cognition is a represented *subject* to which the content is related as accident and predicate.”²⁸⁰ Against the modern notion of a

²⁷⁵ Somers-Hall, Henry. *Hegel, Deleuze, and The Critique of Representation. Dialectics of Negation and Difference*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2012. 62

²⁷⁶ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 444.

²⁷⁷ Stephen Houlgate. *Hegel On Being: Quality and the Birth of Quantity in Hegel’s Science of Logic, Volume 1*. UK: Bloomsbury Press, 2022. 96

²⁷⁸ Hegel, GWF. *Hegel’s Logic: Part One of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. Translated by William Wallace. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975. 117.

²⁷⁹ See, for example, Hegel’s discussion and critique of Anaxagoras in the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, 35

²⁸⁰ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 37

subject as standing apart from its content, wherein the content to which it is related appears as incidental, ‘as accident,’ Hegel’s speculative thinking, *dialectical logic*, seeks to capture the *transformative* processes of its object, which requires the assumption that the object transforms—as does the subject. Thus, Gillian Rose explains, “[f]rom this perspective the ‘subject’ is not fixed, nor the predicates accidental: *they acquire their meaning in a series of relations to each other.*”²⁸¹ In this way, any subject and its concept “...is not a motionless subject tranquilly supporting the accidents; rather, it is the self-moving concept which takes its determinations back into itself.”²⁸² The subject’s relational involvement in its situatedness constitutes the presuppositions of potential alterations not predicated on thought alone, but on the conditioning determinations which affect the subject.²⁸³

Hegel continues, “[i]n this movement, the motionless subject itself breaks down; it enters into the differences and the content and constitutes the determinateness, which is to say, the distinguished content as well as the content’s movement, instead of continuing simply to confront that movement.”²⁸⁴ Neither the subject nor the object stand indifferent to and apart from the *determinate* relations of their constitution—in fact, they self-sublate in their reciprocal collapse. Indeed, nothing captures so concisely the Hegelian dialectical formulation of metabolic activity inherent in subjects and objects: “...although the idea has its reality in a materiality, the latter is not an abstract *being* standing over against the concept but, on the contrary, it exists only as *becoming.*”²⁸⁵ The becoming of materiality itself participates in the becoming of the subject *not only as idea, as a concept of materiality*, but in the exigency of dialectical contradictions internal to and between subject-objects *materially* and *relationally*. Neither the idea nor materiality stand apart from each other. In fact, they have *their reality* in and through each other, in the *relationality* resulting from *dialectical transformation*.

The dialectic of continuity via discontinuity, via transformation, coheres through the combination of linearity and non-linearity, the *dislocation* of subject-objects from themselves in their maintenance and self-preservation as a result of their becoming within and through determinate relations. The notion of a self-standing subject or object is the symptom of representational thinking, which, in its attempt to sediment knowledge, invokes an abstractly constituted theoretical subject and object devoid of ontological motion, emptied of *metabolic activity*.

²⁸¹ Rose, Gillian. *Hegel Contra Sociology*. London: Verso, 2009. 52. My emphasis.

²⁸² Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 38

²⁸³ Ng writes, “Key for understanding Hegel’s positive account of speculative identity is his description of the subject side or self-consciousness as the *subjective subject-object*, and the object side or nature as the *objective subject-object.*” Ng, Karen. *Hegel’s Concept of Life: Self-Consciousness, Freedom, Logic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. 71.

²⁸⁴ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 38

²⁸⁵ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 674

[3.5] Subject-Object Relation; or, Ontological Transformation = Epistemological Transformation

For Hegel, this metabolic mediation means precisely that a change in the object itself initiates a change in *knowing*. Similarly, a change in knowing itself characterizes a change in the relations internal to and between subjects and objects, a shift in understanding. We see here Hegel's systematic demonstration of how the ontological and the epistemological are necessarily inter-connected. Lukács confirms the requirement of this unity:

...in contrast to all traditional logic, for which it was self-evident to take the forms of objectivity of the real world, their relationships, etc. as simply given, as a basis for elaborating specifically logical forms, the Hegelian [dialectical] logic, *since it is supposed to be at the same time ontology (and epistemology)*, gives itself the appearance of not just accepting these objects, etc. and simply treating them logically, but of being at least coexistent with them.²⁸⁶

Emphasis should be given here to Hegel's conception of the subject-object identity relation. Against the separation between knowledge and its object, knower and the known, Hegel establishes—as an ontological precondition on which their unity remains predicated—the very possibility of a subject knowing an object: the move of subjectivity towards objectivity is intrinsic to the *relationality* inherent in being itself, where the self-differentiation and division of *substance* engenders the *identity* between subject and object. At the same time, this identity *is not*, consists of a *non-identity* between both. A relation of non-identity signifies the specification of a distinction: the ontological negativity of both the subject and object in question are not negativities *as such*—they are determinate negativities that belong to the internally constituted dynamic of each and their respective metabolic activity. As differentiated determinacies, the non-identity between each is nevertheless predicated on the coeval identity relation. Dialectical logic refuses to accept the absolute break or absolute unity between subject-object; or in a formulation appropriate to Hegel, the *absolute identity between subject-object* is at one and the same time the *absolute non-identity between them*. Against accepting subject-objects as given, the epistemological framework of a dialectical account develops through the integrative dimension of the identity of non-identity demonstrating that what *is* (socially and ontologically) in fact is *becoming*, i.e., is both an historical result and futurally generative. Describing the difference between Hegel and Kant, Lukács confirms the element of the transformative dimension belonging to Hegelian thought, a dimension which is neither positivist nor metaphysically representational. The antithesis between subjectivity and objectivity "...is not 'eternal,' it is no philosophical, epistemological antithesis as it is

²⁸⁶ Lukács, Georg. *The Ontology of Social Being 1. Hegel: Hegel's False and His Genuine Ontology*. Translated by David Fernbach. London: Merlin Press, 1982. 38

for Kant and his successors: it is instead an *historical* growth.”²⁸⁷ Change therefore belongs both to the ontological and epistemological realms in reciprocally conditioning forms.

Thus, for Hegel, to assert that something *is* or *is not* without the possibility of change is to omit the essence of that which is, namely, *transformative motion as the basis of things*, the *essential* contradictoriness internal to every object.²⁸⁸ Drawing on the relationship between Aristotle and Hegel, Michael Morris asserts, “Hegel takes process or action as ontologically and epistemically basic.” This processual understanding of the unity between ontology and epistemology through action (or motion) is further premised on a relational determinacy inherent to the objectivity of contradictions: “Action or motion is thus inherently contradictory because it exists as an...irreducible relation between inherently oppositional relata,” which “...cannot be grasped in isolation.”²⁸⁹

This ontological insight becomes an anti-representational, epistemological position: knowing never fixes itself, even in its objectivity, and rather is subject to self-transformation as a result of the transformation of its content. Lukács confirms, thus, that “for Hegel...the object is not fixed, not established forever; there should never be an ultimately defined object but only a progress toward objectivity and then a return to a modified purified subjectivity.”²⁹⁰

Consequently, against the representational formulation of essence which shapes its rejection, for Hegel, *essence is found in the determinate relations outside of itself, those determinations that constitute the essence of a thing as what it truly is.*²⁹¹ It is not an inward turn, wherein essence is fixed in a given thing, *a priori* identified, posited, and unchanging. What best exemplifies this conception—at least in the *Phenomenology*—is Hegel’s analysis of predication: S is P.²⁹² Representational thinking cannot grasp the *metabolic dynamic* of this relationship (S is P). Instead, as abiding by a formal logical construction which admits of no contradiction, the ‘is’ *is definitively*. The predication establishes the essence of the subject. For Hegel, however, predication *changes* such that essence develops. It is in the *movement* from S to P

²⁸⁷ Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, 21

²⁸⁸ After a critique of metaphysical, representational thought which reduces contradiction to an epistemological problem of formal logic, Hegel writes, “Contradiction is the very moving principle of the world: and it is ridiculous to say that contradiction is unthinkable.” In, Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 174

²⁸⁹ Michael Morris. “Against the Post-Kantian Interpretation of Hegel: A Study in Proto-Marxist Metaphysics.” In, *Hegel’s Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Politics*. Edited by Michael J. Thompson. New York: Routledge, 2018. 196

²⁹⁰ Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, 49.

²⁹¹ Explaining the concept of essence in the *Logic*, Houlgate notes: “Each thing is immediately what *it is* and not something else; similarly, the specific qualities and specific magnitude of a thing are immediately whatever they are...Hegel shows all such immediacy to be intrinsically related to, and connected with, other such immediacy. To be something is thus to necessarily stand in relation to other things, and the qualities of something always have a certain magnitude or degree.” Houlgate, Stephen. “Hegel’s Critique of Foundationalism in the ‘Doctrine of Essence.’” In, *Hegel Bulletin* 20 (1-2), 1999. 18-34. 21

²⁹² See, Paragraph 62. In, Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 39.

where the essential aspect of *thinking of the essence* reveals itself. Dialectical logic, then, captures this transformative movement of knowledge through the presentation and recognition of things in motion ontologically: "...everything finite, instead of being stable and ultimate, is rather changeable and transient; and this is exactly what we mean by that Dialectic of the finite, by which the finite, as implicitly other than what it is, is forced beyond its own immediate or natural being to turn suddenly into its opposite."²⁹³ The instability of things, in lieu of the objectivity of their contradictory existence, preserves and changes itself as a result of the determinacy of its kind in relation to the effects of that by which it is conditioned. Essence is always in reference to a *kind*. Nonetheless, the kind, genus, or species, constitutes itself relationally, it *takes shape* and *reshapes itself* through its relational embeddedness regarding objects outside of itself. Essence, then, is both *active* and *metabolic* while retaining varying degrees of continuity in its own transformation, since the possibility of its own *discontinuity* emerges from the continuity itself, that is, from the *continuity's negative collapse*.

Note: in the movement between S and P there is a *collapse* of both subject and object, since it is the *determinate form of their relation* which is at stake and not either the subject nor the object alone, independently standing. *This is the secret of the epistemological component of dialectical logic*: knowing holds temporarily until things collapse (through ontological transformation) of their own accord, then, knowing *reshapes* itself. *The ontological collapse transitions, qualitatively leaps, to epistemological predication*, the result of the becoming of content, i.e., the becoming of something in its self-collapsing. *Dialectical logic exposes the motion between subject and object in their respective forms of relational becoming*: "Becoming is as it were a fire, which dies out in itself, when it consumes its material."²⁹⁴ Thus, the appearance of the phenomena remains tied yet irreducible to the motion of essence. Representational thought cannot achieve the same for its objective lies in forming propositions which define in purely epistemological (not ontological) terms its subject or object and analytically proceeds from the assumption of the stability of the definition itself dislocated from the metabolic dynamism of its referent, as Hegel reminds us, "people want to put everything on the same level."²⁹⁵

Therefore, Shiyong correctly claims, that Hegel's relational approach "...provides a radical critique of the concept of the metaphysics of representation."²⁹⁶ Escaping the choke of the reductive epistemological noose belonging to traditional antimonic thought, Hegel subverts the static logic to

²⁹³ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 118.

²⁹⁴ Hegel continues: "The result of this process however is not an empty Nothing, but Being identical with the negation—what we call Being Determinate: the primary import of which evidently is that it *has become*." Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 134.

²⁹⁵ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 115.

²⁹⁶ Shiyong, *The Rational Kernel*, 58.

which metaphysical, representational thinking is beholden while maintaining a distance from any naïve nominalism²⁹⁷ through apprehending the unity of subject-object *and* their determinate difference.²⁹⁸

Through a reductive assimilation of distinct things (subjects-objects) representational thinking's pretensions to clarity at the level of analytical consistency—the fixity of its propositional definitions—falls short and becomes irrational in positing the antinomy between the appearance of phenomena and essence. In a discussion on the comprehension of nature, Hegel writes: “We can *wonder* at nature, at the manifoldness of its genera and species...for wonder is *without concept* and its object is irrational...[wonder] lets itself go into pictorial representation and runs wild in the infinite manifoldness of the latter.”²⁹⁹ Hegel here describes the irrationality underlying the unwillingness or inability to establish the objectivity of difference and the non-identity between things *while retaining their relational character*. This wonder is reminiscent of the contemporary pseudo-philosophical understandings that conclude ‘all things are the same because everything is just matter.’ In representing objects, in reducing materiality to a thought-object, the material motion inherent in objects themselves is nullified. Things are thus put ‘on the same level.’

Against this, dialectical logic grasps the *immanent* relational becoming of subject-objects. The difference lies precisely in that representational thinking posits a distinction between the object and knowledge of the object.³⁰⁰ In so doing, it attaches to subjectivity the problem of adequacy and correspondence, an adequate representation is that which corresponds to its adequate object. Not only does it presuppose *fixity* both ontologically and also epistemologically, it further *atomizes* the thinking subject such that thought attaches itself to the subject in singular form. Following from the absolute division between unchanging subject and unchanging object, knowledge becomes a result of atomized and *independent* subjectivity divorced from the affective conditions of its very knowing.³⁰¹ The prejudice of the desire for an abstract conception of reason, neutral and purely ‘objective,’ becomes exactly its opposite: *a false objectivity of a neutral and independent subjectivity*—what is referred to as ‘transcendental

²⁹⁷ Since, as Shiyong notes when critically commenting on formal logic's conception of negation, “the negation of a statement (of a formula) has *absolutely nothing to do with the dialectic*, which poses the being of things as the process of its scission.” Shiyong, *The Rational Kernel*, 62. My emphasis

²⁹⁸ One might consider the implications of this insight for contemporary approaches to race and gender—or better, for ‘intersectionality’—since in the overemphasis on individual difference/experience or in the overemphasis of one category over-against another (like, race, gender, or class alone) the *determinacy of difference*, and the *ontological contradictions* involved within each category itself all too often fall to the wayside.

²⁹⁹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 536.

³⁰⁰ This procedure is not unlike the same Althusserian distinction described in the previous chapter.

³⁰¹ Tran Duc Thao criticizes Husserl's phenomenological method in a similar way. See, Part I of Thao, *Phenomenology & Dialectical Materialism*. Jean Jacques Lecercle similarly criticizes Habermas' approach to communication and rationality for succumbing to this kind of individualism. See, Lecercle, Jean Jacques. *A Marxist Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Gregory Ellittott. Leiden: Brill, 2006. 45-72.

consciousness.’ Hegel is cognizant of this issue: “The said critique has therefore removed the forms of objective thinking only from the thing, but has left them in the subject as it originally found them.”³⁰² However, he refuses to forsake objectivity, acknowledging that the diametrically opposed position, relativism or subjective idealism, as equally false. Adorno addresses this directly: “Hegel sees through the moment of illusion in individuation...Nevertheless, Hegel did not dispossess objectivity or essence of their relationship to the subjectivity of the individual and the immediate: *The universal is always also the particular and the particular the universal.*”³⁰³ Subjective reason, for Hegel, emerges from a social ground always retaining the potential toward objectivity as a result of its identity with universality—an identity that maintains its own distinctness, since, Hegel clarifies, “...in reality the subjective and objective are not merely identical but also distinct.”³⁰⁴ Hegelian reason, then, cannot be framed in terms of representational thought, for the *internal dialectic* pertaining to *kinds*—the subjective dialectic of species—is itself the result of the metabolic motion of the objective dialectic of nature. The subjective dialectics internally constituted as immanent to a *species-essence* retains an objective character. Karen Ng explains, “...a *subjective* subject-object is a form of inner purposiveness that is *for-itself*—that is, that self-consciousness at once grasps and constitutes its own living self-relation as the ground of all its knowings and doings.”³⁰⁵ *Spirit’s break with nature*, its diverse and manifold self-sublation *and* universality, makes qualitatively distinct the emergence of the *Gattungswesen* capable of deploying its *objective subjectivity toward objectivity subjectively through relational practical activity*; that is, through *appropriation qua relational activity*. Between the relational determinations and the activities through which it is determined, the immanent purposiveness of the ‘living self-relation’ of the human being objectively *transforms itself*—i.e., appropriates and becomes-appropriated—and thereby objectively reconstitutes its own subjectivity.

Thus, dialectical relational ontology maintains the subject-object relation,³⁰⁶ though understood in processual terms.³⁰⁷ These are necessary analytical distinctions to avoid the pitfall of the *wonder* which inevitably reduces everything to the same, while thinking itself immanent through absolute distinctness. Relations and activities are undergone, occasioned, and enacted through

³⁰² Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 27

³⁰³ Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies*, 45

³⁰⁴ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 121.

³⁰⁵ Ng, *Hegel’s Concept of Life*, 74.

³⁰⁶ For an account of Hegel’s critique of the dualist character of his predecessors’ approach to the subject and object relation, see, Ng, *Hegel’s Concept of Life*, 69-71.

³⁰⁷ In this regard, though I’m sympathetic to a number of his insights, I disagree with Thomas Nail’s attempt to abandon subject and objects in his articulation of ‘kinetic materialism.’ See, Nail, Thomas. *Theory of the Earth*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021.

determinate subject-objects. The dialectical trick, as it were, lies in the positing of subject-objects as *transformative*, different yet united, while rejecting the representational approach toward fixed substance in terms of the immediacy of presence, the given, as Hegel notes, “What *is there* is the still undeveloped simple and immediate, that is, the object of *representational thinking consciousness* per se.”³⁰⁸ Without overcoming the limits of immediacy, of *sensuous consciousness*, without elevating³⁰⁹ the object from the subjective to the objective, to the universal, representational thinking fails to recognize the dynamism of determinate and relational unfolding beyond the fixity of the immediate it encounters; as Karen Ng reminds us, the *Logic* begins “[w]hen objectivity is no longer sought for by relying on sense-experience...”³¹⁰ Indeed, Hegel asserts, that “[r]easonableness...just consists in embracing within itself these opposites as unsubstantial elements.”³¹¹ In the embrace of contradiction, relationality, and determinate becoming, what is substantial is the determinacy of the transformative elements participating in the dialectical unfolding of inter-related phenomena—the ontological quality of transformation is held fast by a kind of knowing capable of identifying its continuations and breaks: the *unsubstantiality of the substantive*.

[3.6] Dialectics not dualism: Analytic & Synthetic Cognition

In this way, dialectical logic cannot be described as a *dualism* either.³¹² Following the convention of representational thinking, dualism refers to neatly characterized and unchanging analytical definitions. It assumes an *a priori* separation wherein each remains the same, indifferent to each other as binaries, followed by a mystical encounter. Thus, the ‘thesis-antithesis’ model imposed on the Hegelian dialectic is correctly chastised as a dualistic binary, where ‘thesis’ encounters its external ‘antithesis’ giving rise to a third ‘synthesis’—a thought far removed from Hegel’s account. Such conception gives way to a false difference: “Everything,” Hegel sums up, “is thus put outside of every other.”³¹³ Contrary to such formulation, however, the ‘antithesis’ *is not external*. Hegel notes, “Thus,

³⁰⁸ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 461.

³⁰⁹ ‘Elevating’, ‘raising’, ‘superseding’, ‘overcoming’ or ‘attaining a higher level’ are terms that have caused confusion in various interpretations of Hegel, insofar as they indicate a quasi-mechanical, linear and progressive development in being conflated with the notion of ‘betterment’ or ‘improvement’. Rubén Dri, however, clarifies: “Another error is thinking that in the Hegelian dialectic ‘supersession’ [‘overcoming’ etc.] means ‘betterment.’” Incidentally concurring with Karen Ng’s sophisticated account of teleology in Hegel, Dri continues, “It is true that there is a teleological orientation which we might call ‘optimistic’, a term Hegel [however] rejects, because optimism and pessimism are psychological characteristics and, despite incorporating them, in Hegel’s own philosophy the ground is always ontological.” Dri, Rubén. *Hegel y la Lógica de la Liberación: la Dialéctica del Sujeto-Objeto*. Buenos Aires: Editoria Biblos, 2007. 49-50. Translation is my own.

³¹⁰ Karen Ng. “Hegel’s Logic of Actuality.” In, *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 63, No.1, Sep, 2009. 148

³¹¹ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 121.

³¹² For an account of Hegel’s overcoming of dualism, see Christoph Henning. *Philosophy After Marx*. Translated by Max Henninger. Leiden: Brill, 2014. 542-543

³¹³ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 174.

for example, inorganic nature is not to be considered merely something else than organic nature, but the necessary antithesis to it. Both are in essential relation to one another; and the one of the two is, *only in so far as it excludes the other from it*, and thus relates itself thereto.”³¹⁴ Indeed, their resultant externality is appearance, i.e., is the phenomenal shine (*Schein*) of the relational essence inherent in the *contradictions internal to Nature itself*. That inorganic and organic nature bear a relation is the contingent appearance of the necessity peculiar to the metabolic motion of Nature’s essence.³¹⁵

Of utmost importance, then, is the development of a system capable of articulating the relation between necessity and contingency *qua* process. In terms of cognition, Hegel is careful to point out the requirement of analytic differentiation rather than rejecting it *in toto*, since analytic cognition itself reveals a necessary conceptual element of identity relations. Hegel writes, “*Identity* is, therefore, the determination which analytic cognition recognizes as its own, and analytic cognition is the *apprehension* of what *is*. Synthetic cognition aims at the *comprehension of what is*, that is, at grasping the manifoldness of determinations in their unity...Its aim, therefore, is *necessity* in general.”³¹⁶ The identity *between* subject-objects apprehends what is, confronts the given, the immediate, and deploys a conceptual differentiation and link. If we remain at this level, however, the immediate is grasped only in *appearance*, as contingency. Synthetic cognition is not the antithesis to analytic cognition, *it belongs to it*. Synthetic cognition is therefore the self-sublating result of the analytic cognition’s self-overcoming, the raising of immediacy through the incorporation of mediations. Analytic cognition maintains itself as part of synthetic cognition: comprehension requires and reshapes apprehension inasmuch as apprehension shapes and requires comprehension. The internal dialectic of cognition describes the objectivity of the subjective dialectics belonging to the human life-form as universal – the specificity of the material movement (metabolism) of the dialectical contradictions present in this kind of ‘something’. In its universality, whatever the heterogeneity and transient character of the historically specific form by which cognition is expressed, cognition (as *activity*) must, in a strictly normative sense, comprehend *necessity* inasmuch as the comprehension of necessity signifies the comprehension of its dialectical counterpart, *contingency*.

³¹⁴ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 174.

³¹⁵ “Because Hegel acknowledged a contingency and accidentality in the real process that cannot be reduced to categories, he does not reduce the material world to logical necessity. [The material world’s] independence is guaranteed.” Smith, Tony. *Dialectical Social Theory and Its Critics: From Hegel to Analytical Marxism and Postmodernism*. Albany: SUNY Press. 1993. 77.

³¹⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 707

Synthetic cognition's dialectical relation to analytic cognition counters precisely the formulaic dismissal of Hegel provided by Schelling outlined in the first chapter. Analytic cognition is *intuition*. Synthetic cognition is the result of intuition's self-sublation, i.e., it is *recognition*. Commenting on Hegel's early *System of Ethical Life*, Gillian Rose defines Hegelian intuition (*an-schauen*) thusly: "Intuition...means a 'seeing-into.' Instead of nature being subordinated...[intuition] must be able...to look back, *without*...subsuming or denying the difference of that at which it looks back."³¹⁷ Subjects *see-into* objects as a result of an immersive immediacy from which arises conceptually determined analytical distinctions. This intuition is *primarily* sensuous, a consciousness of sense, the *sensibility of consciousness*. Hegel's de-emphasis of 'intuition' later in his career is the consequence of understanding the limit of 'intuition' as an inadequate concept for anti-representational thinking, for *dialectical logic*. In consistency with his youthful article *Who Thinks Abstractly?* and arguing explicitly against representational thought, in the *Science of Logic* Hegel writes, "...to regard the given material of intuition and the manifold of representation as the real, in contrast to what is thought and the concept, is precisely the view that must be given up as a condition of philosophizing..."³¹⁸ It must be 'given up' not because intuition and representation play no part in the development of understanding, but precisely because *only* remaining in the immediacy to which they belong and from which they emerge leads to "impoverished abstraction,"³¹⁹ since the form of abstraction peculiar to representational thought assumes that understanding is nothing but the possession of a trait of a fixed subject, as Hegel critically remarks: "When I say of the *understanding* that *I have it* [according to representational thinking] what is being understood by it is a *faculty* or a *property* that stands in relation to my I in the same was as the property of a thing stands related to that *thing*."³²⁰ In contrast, what is necessary according to Hegel is the cultivation of thought that *presupposes* the necessary presence of the immediacy of intuition and representation while simultaneously sublating it through an anti-representational form of thinking.

Nonetheless, intuition's immediacy remains present *qua* sensation, sensuous consciousness, but also as limitation insofar as the analytic component of sensuous consciousness, of intuition, remains bound to representation yet pre-structures and preserves itself alongside recognition. In *Philosophy of Mind*, Hegel writes, "The contradiction between *mental* content and sensation consists in the fact that the former is in and for itself universal, necessary and objective; sensation, on the other

³¹⁷ Rose, Gillian. *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 69

³¹⁸ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 518.

³¹⁹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 518.

³²⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 515.

hand, is an isolated particular, contingent, a one-sided subjectivity.”³²¹ The contradiction between mental content and sensation is not a mind-body dualism. Rather, this determinate contradiction describes a disjunctive unity between the immediacy of sensation as grasped by consciousness (apprehension) and the grasp of immediacy alongside the mediations that constitute it (comprehension), i.e., the holding together of the determinations that condition mediations. Thus, an anti-representational form of thinking, Hegel notes, “Abstractive thought...is not to be regarded as the mere discarding of a sensuous material...it is rather the *sublation and reduction of that material as mere appearance to the essential*, which is manifested only *in the concept*.”³²² The sublation is possible as a result of the object’s *own self-sublating, transformative* actuality. Indeed, intuition and representation grasp the *appearance*, but in turn conflate appearance with understanding the object; in so doing, consciousness cannot approach the *concept*, i.e., *the dialectical relational ontological condition of the object*. Thus, Hegel explains that “...feeling, intuition, sense consciousness...are prior to the understanding, [as] conditions of the genesis of the latter, but they are conditions only in the sense that the concept results from *their dialectic and their nothingness*...”³²³

What appears to intuition (already cognition) is, first and foremost, *appearance*: the simple and thereby the universal. But the universal is at this moment only *apprehended*, that is, *represented* through an under-developed kind of abstraction—not yet what Marx, in the *Grundrisse*, would later call a ‘rational abstraction.’ Hegel remarks, “...it is easier for cognition to grasp the abstract simple thought determination than to grasp a concrete subject matter which is a complex web of such thought determinations and relations.”³²⁴ The complexity that underlies universality is comprehended only once thought weaves together the unity and difference within universality and particularity “...since [universality] is internally differentiated and hence mediated”³²⁵ and, of course, “[t]he universal must *particularize* itself.”³²⁶ The comprehension of the mediations involved is predicated on the *recognition* (the *re-consideration* of immediate and intuitive experience) of *relationality* inherent in materiality, which itself reveals the *condensed* and *compressed* connection between universality/particularity *and* necessity/contingency: “It is physical nature itself that presents such a contingency...because of the external dependency of its actuality, it stands in a manifold of connectedness...”³²⁷ The objective

³²¹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 74.

³²² Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 519. My emphasis.

³²³ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 519.

³²⁴ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 714.

³²⁵ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 714.

³²⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 713. Emphasis in the original.

³²⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 717.

dialectics of nature, thus, expresses its self-determination in both contingent/necessary *and* universal/particular forms. The subjective dialectics of the human life-form intuits *and* cognizes the manifoldness of such relations and determinations.

From initial intuition, the seeing-into, Hegel later articulates the necessary moment through which consciousness transgresses itself. Rose explains that “[i]n the Jena lectures of 1803-4 and 1805-6 Hegel gradually changed intuition, *An-schauen*, into re-cognizing, *An-erkennen*.” ‘Re-cognizing’ emphasizes the lack of identity and difference which is seen.”³²⁸ Hegel’s ontological premise of a metabolic dynamic inherent in subject-objects is re-articulated as a properly *phenomenological* point with epistemological implications. The ontological *negative self-collapsing* described above re-appears with greater sophistication as to both the movement of consciousness *and* the preservation of the necessity of immediacy. Seeing-into transforms to an experiential *re-consideration*. From the immediacy of experience, *cognition’s immediacy*, thought *thinks through itself*, re-cognizing that very immediacy. Experiential re-consideration as thought thinking through itself does not, however, imply the achievement of knowledge “but,” Rose asserts, indicates “that the immediate vision or experience is incomplete.”³²⁹ Thus, “‘re-cognition’ implies initial mis(re)cognition, not an immediate ‘seeing into’.”³³⁰ Consequently, intuition is sublated into recognition, not abandoned but maintained in complex form.

The relationship between synthetic and analytic cognition here demonstrates that Hegel’s understanding of consciousness is not as formalistic as is generally claimed. On the contrary, the *immanent* and *sensuous* character of the human life-form is a necessary presupposition for the identification of the distinctive expression of human (social) consciousness, which in its further development does not do away with neither immanence nor sensuousness but elucidates their embeddedness in consciousness even in its self-sublation. Similarly, here too the relational element is revealed. Relational means nothing short of *inter-connected, inter-penetrative, and, inter-affective forms of determination*. Human cognition develops itself through its *inter-connectivity* and grounding through and with other phenomena. In this way, Felix Duque explains how, for Hegel, “the ‘relation to objects,’ this activity without which the subject could never have come to recognize itself as pure relation-to-self...alters both the subjective activity of thinking and the status of the object envisaged.”³³¹ The

³²⁸ Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 76.

³²⁹ Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 76.

³³⁰ Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 76.

³³¹ Duque, Félix. *Remnants of Hegel: Remains of Ontology, Religion, and Community*. Translated by Nicholas Walker. Albany: SUNY Press, 2018. 21

human subject-object remains tethered in varying degree to the external subject-objects which participate in its self-constitution, through which the human remains *involved*.

This, however, is not merely a question of the development of consciousness. Indeed, the relational element is, for Hegel, also material through determination and constitution:

Constituted in this or that way, the something is caught up in external influences and in external relationships. This external connection on which the constitution depends, and the being determined through an other, appear as something accidental. But it is the quality of the something to be given over to this externality and to have constitution.³³²

The human subject-object—as a distinct kind of *something*—is by no means passive, but also cannot escape the *determinations* that underly and condition its ontological becoming, that constitute its relational unfolding. That is, it cannot escape the *interpenetrative* character of the mediations that frame its transformative actualization, that *determine and constitute* transformative relations as such. With regard to the connection between determination and constitution ‘passing over’ into each other, Hegel explains, “...in so far as that which something is *in itself* is also *in it*, the something is affected with being-for-other; determination is therefore open, as such, to the relation with other.”³³³ Determination, thus, inscribes an *open relation*, the porosity which invokes the very possibility of a relational being, of affectivity-in-relation, of unity which stands simultaneously—i.e., *dialectically*—in difference. Therefore, such mediations and determinations are by their very nature *inter-affective*: they are the stimuli through which the human subject-object enacts itself, an enactment that is *sensuous* in character, and expresses the *excess* of any human subject-object, insofar as their own *activity* goes beyond (thereby undermining) their individual self-standing constitution—both in thought and practice.

Thus, contrary to the premises of representational thinking, Hegel’s understanding of the determinate substance of the human being can be determined as simultaneously *substantive* and *processual*, since the objective subjectivity of the human being (its materiality) is constituted through relational determinations unfolding through *activity*—it is precisely in this way that the human essence, as *appropriative*, is *transformative*. This activity is *appropriation* which is simultaneously a *becoming-appropriated*. Appropriation presupposes a ground, a history, one which cannot but be conceived in relational terms, since appropriation itself is nothing short of the result of *becoming-appropriated*, i.e., of engaging in appropriating nature mediated by sociality so as to engender *specific forms of appropriation*.

³³² Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 96

³³³ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 97.

It must be kept in mind that the combination (and *recombination*) of analytic and synthetic cognition, of intuition and (immanent) rationality, expresses the *form* by which social agency enacts itself—that is, the practical coming-to-be of freedom. Emerging from an immanent ground, such agential activity is relational as a result of its *objective dependence* on the phenomena in which it remains embedded and through which, *qua* activity, it is involved. In other words, reason is not the self-standing and independent *cause* of freedom, but the result of a relational dynamism of cognition's material involvement with other things. In explaining Hegel's break from Kant in terms of freedom, Schacht notes, "[Hegel's] system of reason, however, does not constitute a noumenal world against the phenomenal. *It does not exist at all except in so far as it is embedded in phenomena.*"³³⁴ The Kantian binary between *noumena* and *phenomena* is condensed in Hegel, a condensation which presupposes an ontological ground itself predicated on the *transformative* consequence of the *binding* character of unity and difference, identity and non-identity. In the *inter-connected, inter-penetrative, and inter-affective* condition of all subject-objects, reason appears *as the result of the objective, dialectical relational* ontological constitution of the human *Gattungswesen*. Contrary to the Schellingian reading described in the first chapter, reason, for Hegel, is nothing but a *result* of human relational activity, inseparable from yet irreducible to nature alone.³³⁵

If appropriation, like thought, is not a property of a fixed substance, but a relational activity resulting from the relational becoming of substance itself, then, subject and object are necessary for analytical precision and identification in an account concerned both with immanence and transcendence. Further, it must be kept in mind that subjects are themselves objects and vice versa. They depict and refer to *determinate difference*, not simply difference as such, and thereby explain *determinate* becoming. Insofar as this becoming is equally predicated on determinate relations between things, the specific form of determinacy of the respective things involved remains of extreme relevance. For an account of appropriation able to satisfy the manifold diversity of human social forms, their differences and unity expressed in appropriation *qua* activity, the relational component explicitly renders an anti-representational formulation.

³³⁴ Schacht, Richard. "Hegel on Freedom." In, *Hegel: A Collection of Essays*. Edited by Alasdair MacIntyre. New Jersey: Doubleday, 1971. 300-301. My emphasis.

³³⁵ Referring to Hegel, Schacht explains: "The requirement of reason that the maxim of one's action be universalizable, therefore, does not of itself eliminate the natural basis of the determination of action and replace it with reason. In short, if reason could do no more than impose this requirement upon us, it would follow, on Hegel's view, that rational self-determination would be but an empty phrase and freedom...but an illusion." Schacht, *Hegel: A Collection of Essays*, 301-302.

The dialectical and relational ground of Hegel's system, as I have shown, provides a basis for understanding the subject-object relation, and subject-objects themselves, as processual and transformative, but only so in a *directly material way*, i.e., through constitutions and determinations that mediate transformational becoming itself. I have argued that this conceptualization is not purely formalistic and its sophistication lies not merely in the terminological rigor of Hegel's taxonomy but in the *content* it elucidates. The unveiling of content is only possible through the self-sublating anti-representational form of thinking that Hegel achieves. Indeed, Hegel's anti-representational approach to the identity between thought and being is best articulated in the *Science of Logic* as Absolute Method. Let us conclude this chapter with an investigation into the relationship between Absolute Method and the Science of Spirit. This investigation will foreground the exposition of the categories of essence, necessity, universality, telos, and reason in the following chapter.

[3.7] Objective Dialectics: Absolute Method & the Science of Spirit

The division of the *Science of Logic* provides us with a general overview of the movement of thought and being: The Doctrine of Being, The Doctrine of Essence, and The Doctrine of the Concept. Indeed, Hegel moves from being to concept, adding various layers of complexity throughout this development. I begin this investigation, then, in the sphere of being, wherein the transformative dynamism of a relational ontology emerges. Here, Hegel articulates the framework for what I call *objective dialectics*, an ontological motion of becoming which inheres in the structure of reality itself, independent of human consciousness: "For Hegel, being and all that it entails exists *in its own right* without having to be thought or 'represented' by a conscious mind."³³⁶ This latter claim renders necessary a clarificatory remark on method that, in my view, unites the *Science of Logic* and the *Philosophy of Nature* in such a way that orients my ontological reading of Hegel's categories in the following chapter.

In the *Logic*, Hegel asserts, "...what is required is not a method *appropriate to nature*, but one *appropriate to cognition*."³³⁷ The *Logic* concludes with the move from 'Absolute Method' to 'Absolute Idea', where the previous development of the system is shown to return to itself. The end is simultaneously the beginning, but now includes the *internalization* of the content of what had been hitherto articulated.³³⁸ Angelica Nuzzo clarifies: "[t]he content becomes more and more concrete; no

³³⁶ Stephen Houlgate. *The Opening of Hegel's Logic: From Being to Infinity*. Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2006. 117.

³³⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 714

³³⁸ Hegel writes, "It is in this manner that each step of the advance in the process of further determination, while getting away from the indeterminate beginning, is also a getting back closer to it; consequently, that what may at first appear to

determination is left behind or lost” such that “the linear progression is overcome in an organic structure (a sphere) that grows on itself.”³³⁹ The circular structure of the system characterizes the ‘absolute’ quality of the method, insofar as the method—*qua* Absolute Method³⁴⁰—consists in maintaining the dialectically immanent relationship of the content of the categories and their forms of externalization, their mediated-immediacies. Thus, rather than an anticipatory, linear development, the *science* of dialectical logic yields knowledge of a *transformative* relationship between thought and being, between consciousness’s encounter and *re-encounter* with its object which itself *displaces* consciousness’s previous understanding, *sublates it*, and provides further determination or precision as regards to its content.³⁴¹ The movement of knowledge, by means of Absolute Method, then, is a dynamic process, where the transformative dimension of the object (the object of consciousness) informs the structure through which knowledge sublates itself.³⁴²

Following the above, one might conclude that Hegel’s concern with finding a method ‘appropriate to cognition’ and not nature confirms the non-ontological character of the *Logic*. If Hegel wanted to discuss ontology and nature, he would have asserted the necessity of the development of a method ‘appropriate to nature’ rather than cognition. A brief consideration of this issue, however, should make clear that Hegel’s proposition marks precisely his concern with an objective dialectics of nature, or a dialectical relational ontology.

In my view, Hegel’s Absolute Method is a matter of moving from being to thought and, in turn, from thought to being;³⁴³ or, the formalization of the covalent ground between the ontological

be different, the retrogressive grounding of the beginning and the progressive further determination of it, run into one another and are the same.” Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 750.

³³⁹ Angelica Nuzzo. “The End of Hegel’s Logic: Absolute Idea as Absolute Method.” In, *Hegel’s Theory of the Subject*. Edited by David Carlson. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan. 2005. 202.

³⁴⁰ Discussing Absolute Method, Karen Ng notes: “The absoluteness of absolute method only entails that there is no *in principle* remainder to reason... It doesn’t entail that reason or the absolute idea generates or necessitates existence, nor that existence can be deduced from it, nor that there can’t be existence that is not fully identical with its concept.” Karen Ng. “Existence Within and Beyond the Bounds of Mere Reason: The Confrontation between Schelling and Hegel. In, *Hegel Bulletin*. 2024. 15

³⁴¹ “That the logic unfolds with the movement of an internal and immanent necessity does not imply that the conclusion is already set and reached from the very beginning or that the process does not know the contingency, uncertainty and vagueness of alternative decisions.” Angelica Nuzzo. “Dialectic as Logic of Transformative Processes.” In, *Hegel: New Directions*. Edited Katerina Deligiorgi. New York: Routledge, 2014. 87

³⁴² Robert Pippin notes that “[t]his is why Hegel metaphorically speaks of concepts as alive, in movement, and why the logic’s “motion” is the key to the specification of any concept (that is, any concept understood as a necessary moment in the Concept, the concepts necessary for anything at all to be determined).” Robert Pippin. *Hegel’s Realm of Shadows: Logic as Metaphysics in the Science of Logic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019. 45

³⁴³ Referring to the general structure of the *Science of Logic*, Herbert Marcuse summarizes thusly: “The process of thought begins with the attempt to grasp the objective structure of being. In the course of the analysis, this structure dissolves into a multitude of interdependent ‘somethings.’ qualities and quantities. On further analysis thought discovers that these constitute a totality of antagonistic relations, governed by the creative power of contradiction. These relations appear as the essence of being. The essence, therefore, emerges as the process that negates all stable and delimited forms of being

and the social. On the one hand, Stephen Houlgate notes that being (the ontological) “...is in fact never anything less than nature” and the categories of the *Logic* proper seek to describe “the actual *logical* necessity, or rationality, by virtue of which being proves to be nothing less than nature.”³⁴⁴ However, to be *known* in the various determinations through which being is expressed in its manifold, objective processuality (Nature) a subjectivity must be presupposed, a *sociality from which knowledge deploys itself*; a sociality embedded in this very objectivity of being itself: Spirit. Commenting on the same passage by Houlgate, Adrian Johnston notes: “...[being] is *Natur* specifically as knowable by category- and concept-using *Geist*, thanks to a subjective natural objectivity now being infused with the categorical forms...crystallized in and through *Logik*.”³⁴⁵ In this regard, Hegel recognizes subjectivity’s involvement in the determination of objectivity. Such recognition is only possible, however, if objectivity remains the presupposed ground of subjectivity itself: subjectivity is always an *objective subjectivity*. At the same time, subjectivity’s attempt to arrive at objectivity—the attempt to understand or comprehend the structure of the real—must be done by means of overcoming subjectivity itself, an overcoming that requires the recognition of subjectivity’s own involvement. This overcoming is only made clear at the end of the *Logic* where Absolute Method yields the possibility and necessity of this process. The infamous presuppositionless beginning of the *Logic* comes full circle at its end, such that the categories appearing in its beginning now become endowed with content: the circular arrival at the beginning has the end as presupposition, which is to say the movement of thought has objectivity as its immanent ground. Further, in the pursuit of *immanent* knowledge, Absolute Method retains the *unity* of subjectivity and objectivity as ontological ground: subjectivity negates itself, self-sublates, in the process of knowledge determination through which objectivity is, simultaneously, self-negating and self-sublating. The key point here is that this ‘subjectivity’ is not the subjectivity of individual persons, it is the relational subjectivity of sociality; in short, it is *spirit*.

Therefore, Absolute Method is the “*science of spirit*,”³⁴⁶ and the *science of spirit* is the *science of sociality*. This is Hegel’s Absolute Method. As part of a relational ontology the objective dialectics of nature is thereby analytically and methodologically conjoined with the subjective dialectics of human sociality: the changing character of Spirit coincides, therefore, with the changing character of the objective

and negates as well the concepts of traditional logic which express these forms.” Herbert Marcuse. *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*. Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD, 1955. 127-128.

³⁴⁴ Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 438

³⁴⁵ Johnston, *Prolegomena Vol. 2*, 49

³⁴⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 753

mediation between sociality and nature. The truth of Spirit, in this way, *is a result*, a result of nature's self-externalization and spirit's own practical activity.

Hegel's demand of a method 'appropriate to cognition', then, is a demand for the immanence of cognition itself, or the demand for theoretical activity to be *immanent*; that is, to consistently subject itself, its knowledge as knowledge of its object, to re-examination and self-criticism as a result of the recognition of the transformative character of both the ontological *and* the epistemological. The question remains, however, why not a method appropriate to nature?

Absolute Method needs to be appropriate to cognition because it is *cognition* which is enacting theoretical activity—*not nature*. A method 'appropriate to nature' would be insufficiently immanent, since it would be an external construction of categories that thought then *applies* to nature. In the *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel writes that we commit an injustice to the complexity of nature if we interpret it in anthropomorphic terms: "[t]he wealth of natural forms, in all their infinitely manifold configuration, is impoverished by the all-pervading power of thought, their vernal life and glowing colours die and fade away."³⁴⁷ Contrary to the assumption that Hegel is reducing all thought and being to pure thought, Hegel insists on the necessity of a method that *sticks to things as they are*. Without a method premised on the transformative character of consciousness, of both thought and being, the objects of nature and nature itself are reduced to the purely subjective determinations of thought, a representational form of thinking, that turns nature into something merely *for us*: "we give [nature/natural objects] the form of something subjective, of something produced by us and belonging to us, and belonging to us in our specifically human character."³⁴⁸ A representational approach lacks an *immanent* dimension, lacks the ability to understand the *thing itself* in its transformative form, in its own accord. Without a method immanent to its object, nature is reduced to subjectivity, to indeterminate generality, to form without content, to a static representation defined *only* epistemologically: the objectivity of a thing is reduced to its idea. But, for Hegel, nature and, consequently, "...natural objects...are not presentations or thoughts."³⁴⁹ Rather, they are *objective* entities not reducible to our concepts of them. They stand, in other words, *independent of human consciousness*, as Johnston notes, "Hegel's Idea is always already incarnate in the pre/nonsubjective Real, in objective, extra-mental being(s)..."³⁵⁰ For this reason, the only way to understand nature and objects

³⁴⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 7

³⁴⁸ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 7

³⁴⁹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 7

³⁵⁰ "...in addition," Johnston continues, "to manifesting itself sometimes in and through the categorial and conceptual contents/moments of (self-)conscious thinking too." Johnston, *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism Vol. 2*, 20

of nature as they are in themselves—as they are according to *their* concept—is to fully develop a method appropriate to human consciousness, since that is the starting point from which the cognizing process unfolds. “Accordingly,” Errol Harris writes, a methodological advance “...in self-consciousness demands a return to the concept of Nature, to work out...the sense in which the Idea is immanent in all natural forms and in Nature as a whole.”³⁵¹ Thus, Hegel suggests that for nature to be understood immanently, we need a method most relevant to the *structure* of cognition, a method which lays out the dialectical mediation between consciousness and its object, a method capable of maintaining the *dynamism* of this mediation since it builds itself on the assumption of the transformative character of both consciousness and its object. In short, *the transformative character of cognition itself necessitates a method of a transformative character*. “Thus,” Nuzzo writes, “the process of transformation is both the topic of the *Logic* and that which logical thinking brings about as its immanent effect.”³⁵²

The overcoming of a representational understanding of nature, the escape from subsuming nature under a representational rubric, also means the necessity of subjectivity overcoming its own limits: the limits of *immediacy*.³⁵³ Through the recognition of determinate mediations, subjectivity recognizes the negativity of its own immediacy, and thereby posits its objectivity. Spirit’s self-recognition is the recognition of *objective* subjectivity, the objectivity of Spirit itself. For Spirit to be objective, an existent, it must be grounded in an other which is itself: *Nature*. The goal of the *Philosophy of Nature* is for “...Spirit [to find] in Nature its own essence.”³⁵⁴ Cognition finds in Nature its *own* ground, the unity of itself with an externality (Nature). Here, externality shows itself to be the mediating inter-determination of Spirit itself, “...for Spirit is present in [Nature] in so far as it is in relation, not with an other, but with itself.”³⁵⁵ Spirit’s self-mediation, its internally constituted negative immediacy, is *within* nature. In Nature having a relation with itself—Nature’s *negative self-relation*—Spirit reveals its unity with Nature, *its necessary embeddedness in nature*; since, as Hegel elsewhere asserted,

³⁵¹ Errol Harris. *An Interpretation of the Logic of Hegel*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1983. 305

³⁵² Angelica Nuzzo, *Dialectic as Logic of Transformative Processes*, 95

³⁵³ “This,” Harris clarifies, requires “a new philosophical science, setting forth the dialectic of Nature, in which mind and consciousness develop themselves through the very natural processes revealed by empirical science, and which that science presents...as an evolutionary process, developing life from the inorganic and self-consciousness from life.” Harris, *An Interpretation of the Logic of Hegel*, 305

³⁵⁴ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 13

³⁵⁵ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 13

“Nature is the *first moment* of self-realizing spirit.”³⁵⁶ Indeed, Spirit’s process of self-knowing,³⁵⁷ the process through which knowledge gains its freedom, predicates itself on the original recognition of its unity with Nature, where Nature is known to be Spirit’s ‘first moment’, its internally constituted *negative self-relation*. But, this relation is also an internal self-differentiation as a result of the negativity involved in the very relation between both Nature and Spirit. *In negatively differentiating itself from itself*, Nature gives rise to Spirit. Spirit, *qua objective subjectivity*, maintains this relation: *the immediacy of Spirit is Nature*. However, Spirit contains its own *negative self-relation*, mediates itself in its being mediated through Nature. Precisely in this way, Spirit differentiates itself from Nature and therefore is not *reducible* to Nature while *always already* remaining tethered to Nature. Johnston confirms: “Spirit emerges from Nature and goes on to enjoy a self-determining freedom relative to this material ground...while nonetheless continuing to remain immanent to physical, substantial being.”³⁵⁸ The unity and difference between Nature and Spirit becomes a conceptual demarcation undergirded by an objectively *relational* materiality: thought discovers its own immediacy and differentiates itself from it in recognizing its own *determinate* relation to an other, the mediations involved in the very immediacy at hand. Quentin Lauer explains how, in the Hegelian approach, “...difference *from* another is relation *to* another, and relation is inseparable from thought.”³⁵⁹ Through the overcoming (sublation) of intuition by means of thought, cognition works through the mediations involved here, garners the self-recognition of its *mediated-immediacy*. Consequently, cognition *re-cognizes* the objective dialectics of nature in its positing the transformative, metabolic dynamic of the unfolding of Nature and Spirit as irreducible yet mutually constitutive and *inter-determinate mediations*.

Hegel further asserts: “...it is through Spirit that Reason as such first emerges from Nature into existence.”³⁶⁰ Reason—the *theoretical activity of cognition*—then is the mediation between Nature and Spirit. Reason comes to be *through* Spirit. In giving rise to Spirit, Nature’s own intelligibility becomes

³⁵⁶ GWF Hegel. *The Jena System. 1804-5: Logic and Metaphysics*. Translated by John Burbidge and George di Giovanni. Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1986. 185.

³⁵⁷This is the form through which Hegel undermines the *Kantian forfeiture* mentioned in chapter 1, as Willem DeVries notes: “The other, and I believe deeper, argument Hegel aims at the Kantian position is that it makes it impossible for knowledge to be self-reflective, for knowledge to know what knowledge is. This objection can be generalized into the assertion that Kant’s position makes any knowledge of spiritual (that is, intentional or psychological) phenomena impossible, for all spiritual phenomena, including the process of knowledge, are essentially teleologically characterized. Not only our knowledge that there are other spirits in the world, but also our very knowledge of ourselves as spirits or as knowers is inexplicable on the Kantian model. Kant acknowledges this when he admits that our recognition of ourselves as persons is no more than a fact of moral consciousness, not a piece of objective knowledge.” William DeVries. “The Dialectic of Teleology.” In, *Philosophical Topics*, Vol. 19, No. 2, Fall 1991, 54

³⁵⁸ Johnston, *Prolegomena Vol. 2*, 45

³⁵⁹ Quentin Lauer. *Essays in Hegelian Dialectic*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1977. 32

³⁶⁰ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 13

possible.³⁶¹ Through the *processual motion of the objective dialectics of nature* emerges Spirit, an objective subjectivity undergoing metabolic transformation through practical activity which, in so doing, births Reason. Reason, then, is the process through which Spirit comprehends Nature; that is, the process through which it *rationalizes* its own unfolding. By grasping the forms through which it itself is mediated, Spirit achieves the manifoldness of its self-realization. For Spirit is immersed in Nature and, therefore, acts upon Nature, *appropriates it*, by confronting Nature's own intelligibility.³⁶² Reason is simply what makes the heterogenous and diverse forms of such appropriation possible at all. In confronting Nature, Spirit transforms itself, consequently transforming the very Reason that mediates its negative relation to Nature. In this way, Spirit finds its own essence, *transformation*, in Nature. Or, as Hegel asserts in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: "...what has come to be the element of existence, or the *form of objectivity*, is for consciousness what the essence itself is, namely, the *concept*."³⁶³

However, the essence is differentiated by *form*. The activity of Spirit is not identical to the activity of Nature, even if Spirit is the *truth* of Nature in being its result. In other words, Hegel's insight demonstrates that Spirit's self-understanding through Absolute Method pertains to *cognition* and not Nature even if the former is predicated on the latter. Hegel writes: "The most important point for the nature of spirit is the relation, not only of what it implicitly is *in itself* to what it *actually* is, but of what it *knows itself* to be to what it *actually* is; because spirit is essentially consciousness, this self-knowledge is a fundamental determination of its actuality."³⁶⁴ The truth of nature *is* Spirit and Spirit's negative self-relation is its actuality, one determined not merely by existing, but existing as a *particular* kind: a subject-object—an *objective subjectivity*—that *actually knows itself*. And, in *knowing itself* Spirit *is* actuality; that is, the metabolic result of the unity between being (qua becoming) and existence expressed as the form of life that is *human life*, or *sociality*. Hegel argues for an essential difference between human sociality and nature on the basis of distinct kinds of activity belonging to their respective determinations, their respective *metabolic* processes.³⁶⁵ Nature is not an object, but a process. Spirit is an *objective subjectivity* that finds itself within that process as its own process, mediated and determined

³⁶¹ Rocio Zambrana notes: "To *be* is to be *intelligible*, according to Hegel...[he] argues that intelligibility is the result of historically specific practices of rendering intelligible—what he calls Geist (spirit). Geist is a notion that privileges history for understanding the nature of intelligibility. *What is, then, is always already historically mediated*." Rocio Zambrana, *Logics of Power, Logics of Violence*, 13-14.

³⁶² Karen Ng notes "When Hegel claims that his method is 'absolute', what he means is that anything that can be rendered intelligible will be rendered intelligible on account of the system of thought-determinations presented in the *Science of Logic*." Ng, *Existence Within and Beyond the Bounds of Mere Reason*, 15

³⁶³ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 460

³⁶⁴ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 17

³⁶⁵ This provides an ontological link to Hegel's emphasis on movement in the process of Absolute Knowing described in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. See, Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 460-467

by it, but never reducible to it alone. Thus, method must be grounded in the structure through which the objects of its knowledge and their processes are *conditioned*. In moving through the structure by which processes are conditioned, the method arrives at the provisional truth of the process itself. As mentioned above, arriving at truth is a matter of overcoming Spirit's own subjectivity—through Reason—in the direction of objectivity. Hegel notes, “Truth in its subjective meaning is the agreement of thought with the object.”³⁶⁶ At this level, truth is not fully developed *as result*. Instead, thought is only externally imposing itself on an object, representationally. This, for Hegel, is the problem of remaining in the immediate. Without recognizing the various mediations—the process through which objects are conditioned—thought does not escape its subjectivity: it posits a dualistic separation from its object and thereby reconstructs the object in its own subjective terms. In this sense, the object is corrupted from without.³⁶⁷ Hegel provides the contrast: “in its objective meaning, truth is the agreement of the object with its own self, the correspondence of its reality with its [Concept].”³⁶⁸ The difference here relies on Absolute Method; namely, on the recognition that the object itself stands independent of human consciousness but nonetheless informs, bears a relation, to it. In so doing, the object exists in an *inter-dependent* relation with the subject which *begets* thought and engenders theoretical activity as a result of its own intelligibility.³⁶⁹ At the same time, however, the object *is its own subject*, contains its own negative self-relation, and therefore *is its own Concept*. To comprehend the truth of the object, then, is to recognize its own *self-constituting, metabolic process*, the mediations that are in accordance with itself. This is the exact opposite of representational thinking which imposes on the object a concept constructed independently.³⁷⁰ By discovering the mediations involved in the immediacy of objects, Hegel's Absolute Method seeks to uncover the quiescent truth that belongs to the object itself, its *Concept*.

³⁶⁶ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 13

³⁶⁷ Adorno explains: “Hegel also always interprets the movement that is supposed to be truth as “self-movement” [Eigenbewegung] that is motivated as much by the state of affairs with which the judgment is concerned as by the synthesis effected by thought. That the subject may not simply content itself with the mere adequacy of its judgments to the states of affairs judged derives from the fact that judgment is not a mere subjective activity, that truth itself is not a mere quality of judgment; rather, in truth something always prevails that, although it cannot be isolated, cannot be reduced to the subject, something that traditional idealist epistemologies believe they can neglect as a mere unknown. Truth divests itself of its subjectivity: because no subjective judgment can be true and yet each and every one must want to be true, truth transcends itself and becomes something in-itself.” Adorno. *Hegel: Three Studies*, 39

³⁶⁸ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 13

³⁶⁹ Lauer notes: “Hegel is aware as is anyone else that thinking is an operation of the subject who thinks. Where he differs from others is in insisting that it is at the same time an activity of the object which is thought, if it is truly thought and not merely imagined or represented.” Lauer, *Essays in Hegelian Dialectic*, 32

³⁷⁰ In the chapter on ‘Absolute Knowing’ in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel notes the limit of representational thought in the form by which it constructs the knowledge of its object at the level of immediacy: “What *is there* is the still undeveloped simple and immediate, that is, the object of *representational thinking consciousness* per se.” Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 461.

A brief turn to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* proves useful here.³⁷¹ In the discussion on Absolute Knowing, Hegel writes: “The diversity of content is as *determinate content* in *sets of relations*, not in itself, and its restlessness consists in its sublating itself, or in *negativity*.”³⁷² Negativity constitutes the ‘restlessness’ of the object—or better, the *dynamic motion of its content*—not merely in and of itself, but also in terms of ‘*sets of relations*’. Negativity as internal *self-relation*, therefore, structures the form through which the object relates to that which is external. Externalities, nonetheless, participate in the determinate form through which this very negativity (of the object) expresses itself. Diversity of content, then, arises as both part of consciousness and part of the object. It is in this sense that “*the content is the concept*”³⁷³: the concept has as its own *negativity* the content in which it inheres and from which it emerges. Houlgate clarifies: “The opposition between consciousness and its object dissolves because both are discovered to have the same determinate character: both are negativity.”³⁷⁴ As result of this *negative unity*, the manifold expression of determinate beings reveals itself “...as comprehensible from within thought itself.”³⁷⁵ The unity of determinate negativity—or determinate negativity itself—is not *static*. The determinate character of negativity, then, means simultaneously the determinate form of a difference, an identity of non-identity where the concept truly consists as inhering in the object.

Indeed, the *concept* belongs to the *object*; for the concept is the substantive actuality of the object, or, as Hegel notes, “...substance is *implicitly* what the concept is *explicitly*.”³⁷⁶ The metabolic motion inhering in substance is what appropriately designates its own concept, what justifies the concept being in accord with itself as *objective processual activity*: “The *dialectical movement* of *substance* through causality and reciprocal affection is thus the immediate *genesis of the concept* by virtue of which its *becoming* is displayed.”³⁷⁷ Concept, then, is the *result* of the objective dialectics of *substance*, a substance that is itself *processual* for its very substantiality remains predicated on the reciprocally inter-determinate and inter-affective forms by which it *becomes*—a becoming *through* relational determinations. To be sure, as Quentin Lauer informs us, “...the movement which Hegel describes in the *Logic* is not one from concept to being, but rather from being to concept.”³⁷⁸ The significance of this point cannot be understated. Both the circular structure of the *Logic* as well as the logical development of its categories

³⁷¹ As is well known, it should be kept in mind that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is a presupposition of the *Science of Logic* itself. See, Angelica Nuzzo, *Dialectic as Logic of Transformative Processes*, 86

³⁷² Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 465. My emphasis.

³⁷³ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 465

³⁷⁴ Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, 161

³⁷⁵ Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, 161

³⁷⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 509

³⁷⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 509

³⁷⁸ Lauer, *Essays in Hegelian Dialectic*, 144

(and their content) characterizes Hegel's confrontation with the immanently metabolic structure of the unfolding of the *real*, where the 'genesis of the concept' is the processual and relational result of objectively substantive and transformative materiality—*not the result of consciousness*.

The above describes the identity between thought and being as uncovered by Absolute Method. The circular structure of the *Logic*—the end as also the beginning—then does not imply a tautological development, a repeated circularity, a theoretical Ouroboros. On the contrary, the circular structure expresses the dialectical relationship between linearity and non-linearity in Hegel's schematic. What initially appears as a linear progression of a series of abstract logical sequences is, in fact, a retrogressive *recoil*. The end *is* the beginning, but a new, *sublated*, beginning where abstract thought has fallen asunder, *recoiled unto itself*, and whose categories now have determinate content as their referent.³⁷⁹ The identity between thought and being is, finally, revealed in *objective* terms. Houlgate explains that "[w]hat is revealed through the logical study of our basic categories is thus the structure not just of objectivity *for us* but of *being itself*."³⁸⁰

Moreover, Hegel's assertion that thought and being are identical does not imply a reduction of being to thought. Houlgate notes that this identity "...means neither that beings exist only for conscious thought nor that they are all capable of conscious thought," and rather that "...they exhibit a logical *form* or structure that is intelligible to thought."³⁸¹ It is in this way that Reason is the mediation between Nature and Spirit. Far from 'totalizing,' Hegelian Reason marks the peculiar kind of relation between Nature and Spirit. Reason structures the relation because it is the *only* form through which Spirit subsists *qua* Spirit. The intelligibility inherent in the logical structure of determinate beings independent of human consciousness *determines* the possibilities and limits of Spirit's self-realization. The importance of Absolute Method, then, is premised on the insistence that Spirit approach determinate beings *immanently*, coming to terms with their "...various ways or modes or forms of being."³⁸² Spirit *deals with* Nature, and also with itself, through Reason, by means of which Spirit can make *sense* of the various forms through which Being is expressed determinately. In recognizing its own objective subjectivity, "Spirit has won the pure element of its existence, *the concept*."³⁸³ In doing so

³⁷⁹ Harris notes, "...it is a principle of the dialectic that what results from its process is the truth of that from which it began, and that it can be so only because it is already present implicitly in its beginnings." Harris, *An Interpretation of the Logic of Hegel*, 305

³⁸⁰ Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, 125

³⁸¹ Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, 117

³⁸² Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, 117

³⁸³ Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, 465

immanently, “it unites the objective form of truth and that of the knowing self into immediate unity;”³⁸⁴ a unity, however, that is also a *difference*. Hegel’s *Logic*, therefore, does not assume “...to predict all the specific contingent changes that will happen to being and beings.”³⁸⁵ Instead, he aims “...to disclose and understand the general ways or forms of being that are logically entailed by...being as such.”³⁸⁶ To expand on Houlgate, this disclosure is only possible through an immanent analysis (Absolute Method) premised on an *objective dialectics*, a metabolic and transformative ontological motion that structures the form by which determinate subject-objects are relationally *inter-determined*, *inter-affective*, and *processual* in character.

Given, then, that an objective dialectics (a relational ontology) structures the motion of Nature—is its own *essence*—out of which and from which Spirit makes its appearance, and through which the processual transformation of Spirit is mediated, Hegel’s *Science of Logic* provides the necessary philosophical content for designating the ontological essence of the human being.³⁸⁷ Insofar as the *science of Spirit*³⁸⁸ is the *science of sociality*, and Spirit *qua* sociality is grounded and mediated by the objective dialectics of nature, we derive from Hegel the philosophical potential of specifying the human species-essence in an immanent form; that is, in a form able to hold together the contradiction between universality and particularity, stability and instability, the transhistorical and the historically specific. The category I suggest most apt for maintaining all these contradictions and for demonstrating the heterogenous forms of life peculiar to human sociality is precisely *appropriation*.

With the inter-determinate relational structure between Spirit and Nature clarified in terms of Absolute Method, Hegel’s categories can be understood in their immanent form, divested from the assumption of their ‘totalizing’ character. Moreover, it must be kept in mind that my following interpretation assumes *the fullest circularity of the Logic itself*.³⁸⁹ That is, we are approaching Hegel’s categories with their ontological relevance in mind, where the categories have obtained the development of their content. It is a reading of Hegel’s *Logic* the second time around.

³⁸⁴ Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, 465

³⁸⁵ Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 119

³⁸⁶ Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 119

³⁸⁷ The ontological essence of the human being *as grounded in nature*. My materialist reading of the *Logic*, then, is an attempt to uncover, following Engels, “...[Hegel’s] *real* philosophy of nature...the true kernel of the whole theory.” Frederick Engels. “Engels to F.A. Lange, March 29, 1865.” In, *Selected Correspondence 1844-1895*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975 162

³⁸⁸ “While therefore spirit has attained the concept, it unfolds existence and movement in this ether of its life, and it is *science*.” Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 465

³⁸⁹ Harris writes, “The dialectical circle, therefore, does not close upon itself finally in the *Logic*, but coils above itself into a new circle, and that again into a third, the circle of self-conscious spirit. But the whole system does return upon itself in absolute Spirit, which is the whole in possession of itself as Idea, not only as at home with itself in its other, but also aware of itself as such.” Harris, *An Interpretation of the Logic of Hegel*, 302

[4] A ‘Sea of Subtle Distinctions:’ Hegel’s Dialectical Relational Ontology & Appropriation

“The professor was carrying on a hot crusade against materialists...But every time they were close upon what seemed [to be] the chief point, they promptly beat a hasty retreat, and plunged again into a *sea of subtle distinctions*, reservations, quotations, allusions, and appeals to authorities, and it was with difficulty that he understood what they were talking about...”—Leo Tolstoy³⁹⁰

“I unconditionally repudiate *absolute*, immaterial, self-sufficing, speculation, – that speculation which draws its material from within. I differ *toto coelo* from those philosophers who pluck out their eyes [so] that they may see better...”—Ludwig Feuerbach³⁹¹

Approaching the *Science of Logic* is a daunting task. Not only does one face exegetical intimidation in the encounter with Hegel’s own theoretical formulations, but equal difficulty, sophistication, and complexity is to be found in the literature on him. This wide-ranging, diverse scholarship is unparalleled in scope and nuance. In this regard, my approach here cannot but be limited and, as a result, will inevitably miss the immense details underlying both Hegel’s speculative propositions and the many debates surrounding them. Nonetheless, I will take my own plunge into a ‘sea of subtle distinctions’ to the extent possible. Moreover, as indicated in the previous chapter, my approach to Hegel is already premised on certain assumptions, with a specific objective in mind, that delineate both my own interpretation and the secondary scholarship to which I dedicate my focus.

The first assumption is simply that the *Science of Logic* consists of both “a logic and ontology,”³⁹² and is not reducible to a theory of thought alone, divorced from any situated ground. Secondly, such ontology, I claim, is both anti-representational and relational. The focus on an anti-representational account concerns undermining the assumption that the categories of subject and object ought to be abandoned as a result of their being representational in character. In my view, a properly *relational* ontology, however, cannot do without either a subject or an object. Indeed, if it is necessary to think *relationally*, to think of social unfolding as processual—as many find necessary, myself included—relations must be relations between some *things* (subject-objects). Otherwise, one might ask, what is actually *in relation*? Relation, as a philosophical concept, becomes an all-encompassing word to assert a somewhat progressive form of thought, a thought that appears to identify ‘inter-connectedness’ without having to conduct the theoretical labor of specifying the *content* of what is being related and

³⁹⁰ Leo Tolstoy. *Anna Karenina*. Translated by Constance Garnett. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2003. 25-26

³⁹¹ Ludwig Feuerbach. *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*. Translated by Manfred H. Vogel. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1986. 47

³⁹² Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 115. For a rejection of the view that Hegel’s *Logic* concerns itself with ontology see, for example, Robert Pippin. *Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1983.

the *determinations* involved in the structure of the relations between things. What is necessary, then, is not the abandonment of subject and object, but their reconceptualization, one which highlights their *transformative* ontological character, as well as a method able to specify the determinations that constitute such transformations. It is not enough to suggest that entities and concepts transform. What is needed—and what I seek to demonstrate with Hegel—is precisely the development of a relational ontology that not only accounts for the transformative dynamic inherent in things, but also, and equally important, provides a logico-theoretical structure through which the determinacy of their relations can be revealed. What I aim to show as Hegel’s dialectical relational ontology, then, is this combination, the result consisting in the logico-theoretical framework for articulating the category of *appropriation*.

Here, my approach is slightly different than other secondary readings of Hegel. Indeed, I do not read Hegel as having any singular, ‘master’ concept that defines the Hegelian speculative project as a whole. Neither negativity, contradiction, the negation of the negation, nor Absolute Knowledge, Absolute Spirit and so on, take precedence or gain primacy over-against any other Hegelian category. Nor do I claim that the understanding of appropriation I intend to articulate is something to be found in Hegel himself, as if it is the last golden egg to be retrieved from the dense Hegelian garden. Instead, I consider Hegel’s categories as part of a *relational system of concepts* or a *system of relational concepts*, which provide the logico-theoretical structure through which appropriation can be understood in a subsequent dialectical materialist form. The injustice I commit is, in fact, narrowing the scope to essence, necessity, universality, telos, and reason.

The following chapter examines the philosophical content of Hegel’s approach to essence, necessity, universality, telos, and reason and explores how they provide the theoretical ground of appropriation as the defining modal future of the human species-essence (*Gattungswesen*). I will treat each concept separately, explaining their theoretical weight within the Hegelian system and in relation to each other. Later, I will discuss them in combined terms as they pertain to the definition of appropriation. The goal is to show how appropriation captures and explains the forms through which human sociality expresses its heterogeneity by means of its universality, the self-differentiation of human diversity manifests as the result of this *universally determinate essence*. In other words, this qualitative activity, appropriation, as the human species-essence, expresses the manifold of social heterogeneity not in spite but because of its shared universality. As a qualitatively distinct universality, appropriation, in my terms, is *essence*; the essence of a particular *kind*. But, this essence—*appropriation*—is not an attribute, not a mere substantive property of being human. Instead, it is the species-essence

itself: *essence as unfolding, self-sublating, processual activity*. In terms of a dialectical relational ontology departing from a Hegelian framework, appropriation reveals the metabolic dynamic inherent to being human.

Methodologically, this follows the move from the ‘abstract to the concrete’.³⁹³ Appropriation begins as an abstraction, but a *rational* abstraction insofar as its content—*human creative-aesthetic activity*—expresses a universality indefinitely belonging to human sociality across time and space. Hegel writes, “...everywhere the abstract must constitute the starting point and the element in which and from which the particularities and rich shapes of the concrete spread out.”³⁹⁴ This *abstract* positing of a transhistorical and ontological claim describes a content which realizes itself in historically concrete, geopolitically specific *forms*. In this way, the *particularization* of the universal (appropriation) concretizes *forms of life*, life-forms, as historically situated and grounded transformative activity. To identify variegated *forms of life* is to identify forms of appropriation. As the definition of the human species-essence, then, appropriation is comprised of the aforementioned ontological categories and demonstrates their practical-material ground. Essence, necessity, universality, telos, and reason obtain *actuality* through appropriation. It is in this sense that Hegel undergirds the dialectical relationality of dialectical materialism proper.

This chapter will thereby conclude with the stipulation of the difference between Hegel and Marx, allowing for a transition to the following chapter which seeks to further expand on appropriation and the mode of appropriation as part of the Marxian project. The Hegel-Marx connection, as discussed in the previous chapter, is a controversy all on its own with significant disagreement among scholars. My intervention does not claim to definitively solve this issue. Instead, through my critique of Hegel’s move from ontology to politics, I show how a conflation arises; namely, that Hegel fails to sufficiently distinguish between the *kinds of dialectic* he implicitly designates, forcing him into a problematic ontologization of the political (and, also the historical) that in fact contradicts the fascinating and sophisticated relationality involved in his dialectical relational ontology. Marx, in my view, corrects this conflation while maintaining the relational character of Hegelian ontology through providing a *topological structure* that differentiates more adequately between the kinds of dialectic (objective and subjective) in question. Further, this differentiation between Hegel and Marx

³⁹³ Karen Ng notes, “The *Logic*...progresses from the most abstract to the most concrete and objective...” Ng, *Hegel’s Logic of Actuality*, 150

³⁹⁴ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 715

will allow me to take the next theoretical step from appropriation to the *mode of appropriation* outlined in the following chapter.

[4.1] Objective Dialectics & Appropriation: A Preliminary Definition

I now turn to an interpretation of the *Logic* in terms of defining appropriation as the ontologically constitutive essence of the human being. To use the categories of the *Logic* for the purpose of appropriation assumes, as mentioned above, a reading of the *Logic* ‘the second time around.’ In other words, each Hegelian category is approached in reference to a *determinate content*; in this case, the human species-essence. Though the categories themselves do in fact speak to other subjects, my goal is to apply and redirect them toward appropriation, specifically focusing on essence, necessity, universality, telos, and reason.

The categories follow this order for a particular reason, though this is not to suggest they are reducible to a linear sequence. Instead, the order follows the division between objective dialectics and subjective dialectics. Objective dialectics refers to the transformative, metabolic motion constitutive of the structure of existence *independent of human consciousness* or human activity in general.³⁹⁵ Subjective dialectics pertains to human sociality though it presupposes and is at the same time a part of and emergent from objective dialectics. This is the objectivity of subjective dialectics. Subjective dialectics, then, *does not* refer to the dialectic of individuals independent from one another. Instead, subjective dialectics pertains to *sociality*, i.e., to the *relational* result and process of the *ensemble* of the social. Together, they constitute the dialectical whole: a *relational* ontology. But, in order to move from objective dialectics to subjective dialectics, different ‘moments’ require specification that inform the transition from one to the other. Thus, in the realm of objective dialectics the focus lies on essence, necessity, universality and telos. Telos, however, marks the precise transition between objective and subjective dialectics. For telos, in the realm of being and existence, is *immanent purpose* (not metaphysical purpose), a purpose developed through relational, *material* determinations. But, with the appearance of life—in Hegelian terms, Spirit’s proceeding from Nature—another kind of telos comes to the fore: purpose enacted through *conscious activity*. In this way, teleology is the transitional point into the sphere of subjective dialectics. All the previous categories described in objective dialectics remain part and parcel to subjective dialectics, but now take on altered form as a result of the metamorphosis of

³⁹⁵ In other words, as Adrian Johnston explains in his argument against Terry Pinkard: “...the Hegelian Idea of nature [is] mind-independent *Natur an sich* (nature in itself) as endowed with forms and functions that can be known by minded and like-minded subjects as (among other things) epistemological agents with their “ideas” as mental categories and concepts mirroring (when things go right) the forms and functions of the objective Real.” Johnston, *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism Vol. 2*, 20

teleology itself. This metamorphosis will take us to reason, the determinate mediation of sociality which will be shown to underly appropriation proper. I begin, then, with a preliminary definition of appropriation, one which, in Hegelian spirit, will be put to work—i.e., gain further determinacy—through the application of the concepts at hand.

In the context of our historical conjuncture, *capital*, human creative-aesthetic activity takes shape in a form that corresponds to the self-valorization of value. Indeed, what socially *appears* as creative and aesthetic is defined by and restricted to the structure and aims of the capitalist social relations of production. However, the reification process of capital, the naturalization and eternalization of its historically specific social form, confuses cause and effect. It is assumed that capital is the *cause* of human expressions of creative-aesthetic activity, that the latter takes its most developed forms by means of and only through capital itself. Indeed, it appears that capital extricates from the human body creative-aesthetic activity as such. Capital does in fact extricate creative-aesthetic activity, but only in a way conducive to its own self-realization, the self-valorization of value. To ontologically ground creative-aesthetic activity is to show the ambivalent and multifaceted directions generated by *appropriation* as it unfolds through a social totality *heterogeneously*. In this sense, to characterize the essence of the human being as appropriation is to disclose the *specificity through which sociality unfolds determinately* and render possible a form of considering alternative forms of sociality.

Appropriation is *essentially* the universality of human transformative, creative-aesthetic activity. To appropriate is to make something one's own, to extend one's subjectivity into the object, to trace onto the object one's own *residual reflection*. Consequently, this essence is *transformative* unfolding. Appropriation, then, is the activity through which the immersed body preserves its immersion by an objective, interactive engagement with objects. As practical-material activity, appropriation is immersive insofar as it reveals the *excess* of the body, its *relational* and *processual* character. Appropriation characterizes the excess of the body's process of *self-realization*, of satisfying its form of subsistence; since the body, of necessity, must realize itself *practically* by superseding itself, by negotiating its own limits through various objects, external determinations, which themselves limit and structure appropriating activity itself. In the most general way, appropriating activity is the form through which the human body molds its own existence and is molded by it. One confronts what is before them, the object(s), shapes and reshapes it, makes it one's own. However, the reshaping, molding—the processual self-realization of the body—is not *merely* one of biological satisfaction. It is neither mechanical nor automatic. Appropriation is *physiological*, to be sure, but precisely in the way that its activity, as physiological activity, manifests as creative and aesthetic (always *transformative*) activity:

continues itself through discontinuity, through the establishment of patterns and their interruptions. The singularity of the universal thereby enacts itself creatively, that is, distinctly though in a socially mediated manner. In this way, the creative element unifies itself with an aesthetic dimension, the sensuous character involved in the body's self-determination, a process predicated on its relational involvement with various mediations. Thus, appropriation unfolds always spatially, temporally, and socially: it is the mediating relation between human being and socialized nature.

As the activity that mediates the human-nature relation, appropriation presupposes a social ground and simultaneously *forms* this very ground. Therefore, appropriation is always already a *becoming-appropriated*, a habit-forming activity: the *excess* of the body's innermost negative self-relation, its ontological lack as a physiological organism, is taken from itself in *appropriating* and returns to itself in the completion of the very activity. The return constitutes the body's *becoming-appropriated*, its ambivalent belonging or connection to what is appropriated. The appropriating subject *objectifies* itself, makes of its own objective subjectivity an object (*subject-object*), through appropriation and becomes appropriated: the extension of its activity recoils and transforms the subject in question. In this way, both implicitly and explicitly in varying degrees, the consequences of appropriation, its result, means also a reshaping of the acting subject.

However, appropriation is not merely futural. There is another temporal element that structures appropriation: the historicity involved in appropriation itself. *Appropriation presupposes an 'already having been' appropriated*: it is the expression of the previous *becoming-appropriated*. Insofar as to appropriate means to make something one's own, it also means having *form*, expressing a determinate way of appropriating. One always approaches an object with preconceived tendencies, assumptions, predispositions. That which mediates the act of appropriation directed towards the future is nothing but the internalized *result* of having already undergone previous experiences of appropriation: a history of becoming appropriated—a history that is always *social* in character. This marks the dialectic of linear and non-linear temporality through which appropriation is expressed. Similarly, it also marks the *social* relationality that inheres in the singular appropriating act. The presuppositions involved in *appropriating* are nothing but the individual's negotiation (both consciously and unconsciously) with all the social mediations expressing themselves in the very activity of appropriation. It is precisely in this way that thought does not emerge from a subject, but *through* a subject, a socially situated, relationally determined subject-object that *negotiates the relational emergence of thought itself*. Appropriation, then, is necessarily shaped and determined through history and sociality, and at the same time *determines their unfolding in transformative ways*.

Appropriation, thus, speaks to the process through which sociality reproduces itself, while sustaining transformation in the very process of reproduction. In this way, appropriation is not a homogenizing category. Rather, in its universality, appropriation reveals the relational forms through which the human species-essence takes and gives shape to its own *heterogeneity*. In tackling appropriation, we aim toward the question of human flourishing and social development, the forms by which social being constitutes and *re*-constitutes itself. In revealing the fundament of the human species-essence as creative-aesthetic activity, we also reveal the social structures through which determinate forms of appropriation, amid historically specific social forms, suppress and repress the creative and aesthetic *potentials* of appropriation itself by reifying them in the process of *becoming-appropriated*.

This overall sketch of appropriation serves merely as a point of departure for interpreting Hegel. Through the application of Hegel's categories, the claims made above will gain further ontological determinacy and thereby obtain theoretical clarity. What I mean here is that we are moving through different layers of philosophical abstraction—from the abstract to the concrete—where the addition of new categories integrates, problematizes, and specifies, what came before. This layering is methodologically necessary for identifying the rigor of Hegel's relational ontology. Let Hegel, then, take us to task.

[4.2] Lessons on Hegelian Becoming: Vanishing & Appropriation

Appropriation is first and foremost a *physiological* activity. For appropriation to appear on the scene, it assumes the objective materiality of the human body as an organism and at the same time is the *condition of possibility of the human body's actuality*. The human body, as we will see later with Marx and Engels, is itself the result of appropriation *qua* practical activity. In this sense, the becoming of the human body as a *kind*, as *species*, is the unfolding of appropriation. But the human body, as a particular kind, is always already a *socialized human body*, a *material* and *porous* body, that becomes itself—*gains its objective subjectivity*—through the *objective dialectics of nature*, a relational and processual, self-differentiating, *motion*. The human body, as appropriating and becoming-appropriated, sustains itself through the contradiction inherent in its self-sublating motion; that is, its self-preservation which is always already its self-transformation—its internally constituted self-negation.

Hegel writes, "...contradiction is the root of all movement and life; it is only in so far as something has a contradiction within it that it moves, is possessed of instinct and activity."³⁹⁶

³⁹⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 384

Contradiction here is posited as the process through which motion occurs. An objective, *ontological*, contradiction for Hegel defines the subject-object's motion. But motion here is not the motion from one place to another, locomotion;³⁹⁷ it is the motion of materiality itself,³⁹⁸ *matter's metabolic dynamism*. Motion, in this particular sense, is transformation as contradiction: "[contradiction] is...the negative in its essential determination, the principal of all self-movement."³⁹⁹ Contradiction, as motion, is ontologically *generative transformativity*: "[i]nternal self-movement, self-movement proper, *drive*, in general...is likewise nothing else than that something is, *in itself*, itself and the lack of *itself* (*the negative*), in one and the same respect."⁴⁰⁰ The condition of an existent, determinate being is not merely its affirmative quality, its positive presence as a determinate being. Rather, what constitutes the very determinacy of a determinate being is its contradictory holding together of being *and* nothing; for, Hegel notes, "...nowhere on heaven or on earth is there anything which does not contain being and nothing in itself."⁴⁰¹ Here, the self-mediating, negative self-relation of a determinate being reveals itself to be neither *being* nor *nothing*, but both. That a determinate being *holds together, is constituted by, and takes shape through* the ontological unity of being and nothing (which is always a *difference*) means precisely that such determinate being *becomes*.

Indeed, a determinate being is only determinate insofar as being and nothing are united in it. But, being and nothing, in their determinacy, are *not* the same. Together, they mark the internal mediation of the determinate being in question: a thing (a subject-object) is what it is only insofar as it contains being and nothing. However, if we were to remain at this level, determinate being is defined only statically: a fixed thing with the attributes of being and nothing. Yet, the unity of being and nothing, Hegel reminds us, "*takes shape*."⁴⁰²

Hegel writes, "[i]t is the dialectical immanent nature of being and nothing themselves to manifest their unity, which is becoming, as their truth."⁴⁰³ That every subject-object holds together being and nothing indicates the dynamic element of Hegel's thinking both about thought and being. We must keep in mind, however, that what is held together are not attributes: they are the processual motion inhering in the very material constitution of a subject-object. Being and nothing are themselves

³⁹⁷ "Something moves, not because now it is here and there at another now, but because in one and the same now it is here and not here; because in this here it is and is not at the same time." Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 384

³⁹⁸ "Just as there is no Motion without Matter, so too, there is no Matter without Motion." Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 44

³⁹⁹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 384

⁴⁰⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 384

⁴⁰¹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 62

⁴⁰² Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 70

⁴⁰³ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 80

a *movement* as a result of their mutually constitutive relation: “The truth is neither being nor nothing, but rather that being *has passed over* into nothing and nothing into being.”⁴⁰⁴ Hegel emphasizes the ‘has passed over’ to indicate precisely the interminable process by which being and nothing transition between each other. The transition is the movement of each—“...that *each* immediately *vanishes in its opposite*”⁴⁰⁵—by means of their distinct negativities, which through their unity bring forth a generative moment: *becoming*. The truth of any given subject-object is necessarily its becoming—the transient and transformative unity of being and nothing within it, which is a *vanishing*.⁴⁰⁶ Being and nothing are becoming; becoming is their *truth*. Thus, becoming expresses the truth of their *relation*, the unity of opposites. In this way, becoming is the *objective* expression of a relation, the relation between being and nothing as simultaneously a unity and a distinctness engaged in a *vanishing movement*. Becoming, as truth, is nothing short of an *objective relation*, the result of the identity between being and nothing which itself *becomes* a non-identity, insofar as being and nothing unite by means of their mutual exclusivity *through vanishing*. Their separateness collapses because of an immanent dialectical movement which undergirds the relational structure of becoming itself.

The transformative structure of this tripartite relationship (being, nothing, becoming) is constituted and mediated by the process of the *vanishing*, insofar as being and nothing—held together in determinate being—contain an immanent negativity in relation to each other: “...becoming is the vanishing of being into nothing, and of nothing into being, and the vanishing of being and nothing in general; but at the same time it rests on their being distinct. It therefore contradicts itself in itself, because what it unites within itself is self-opposed; but such a union destroys itself.”⁴⁰⁷ The vanishing of being into nothing and nothing into being marks the operational mode through which the collapse of being and nothing negatively determine the positive emergence of becoming itself. Relevant here is that the vanishing itself is *determinate*, i.e., peculiar not simply to being and nothing as such nor to becoming as such but to the *determinate being* in question. The material constitution of any given subject-object is predicated on the vanishings it has undergone; that is, the specific qualities or determinations that govern the process by which it becomes what it is. Vanishing, then, is the *processual structure* through which a determinate being *becomes* itself. Vanishing, as processual structure, is the limit of the *relational*

⁴⁰⁴ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 59-60

⁴⁰⁵ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 60

⁴⁰⁶ Hegel writes, “Their truth is therefore this *movement* of the immediate vanishing of the one into the other: *becoming*, a movement in which the two are distinguished, but by a distinction which has just immediately dissolved itself.” Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 60

⁴⁰⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 81

becoming of a determinate being,⁴⁰⁸ the boundaries through which a determinate being's self-sublating realization occurs. It is the *anatomic-metabolic fore-structure* of the determinate becoming of the social human body.⁴⁰⁹

As the social human body *becomes*—i.e., maintains and transforms itself—it undergoes an *internal vanishing*: it generates and regenerates itself. But, it does not do so alone. It achieves its self-realization only through its relational involvement and conditioning with and through other, external, subject-objects. The human body is a processual, internally contradictory, substance structured through the vanishing. Vanishing, then, is the *internalization* of the external, insofar as its motion occurs only through an asymmetrical negative self-relation⁴¹⁰ of *determinate becoming*. Appropriation is the *activity* that itself generates the *determinacy of the vanishing*, since the former is the *necessary* mediation between the body, as determinate subject-object, and the external determinations which it confronts. The internal contradictions of the body generate, and are predicated on, the necessity of an objective relationality, 'sets of relations', mediated and defined by a particular kind of activity; namely, appropriation.

The vanishing is the processual structure of the determinate becoming of the human body (as subject-object). Here, the negative self-relation of nature inheres in the determinate becoming of the human body itself, its *mediated-immediacy*. Immediacy is premised on an ontological contradiction (becoming as the unity of being and nothing) by means of which the subject-object's own 'self-movement' enacts itself: its being mediated through its 'lack of itself' (its non-being), its own self-negation, *is its existence, its reality*.⁴¹¹ The contradiction between this immediacy and mediation is *generative*. For Hegel, "[o]nly what is living feels a *lack*...But it is a *lack* only in so far as the lack's overcoming is equally present in the same thing, and contradiction is...immanent and explicitly present in that thing."⁴¹² Vanishing, as the processual structure of determinate becoming, then, frames

⁴⁰⁸ "Wherever and however being or nothing are at issue, this third moment [becoming] must be there; for the two have no subsistence on their own but are only in becoming..." Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 69

⁴⁰⁹ In a future work, I plan to extend on this claim by situating Hegel's ontology within the tradition of both Aristotle and Epicurus, following Lukács' suggestion, "[Hegel's] conception of nature...places [his] philosophy of nature...on the side of Epicurean materialism." Lukács. *The Ontology of Social Being: 1. Hegel*, 35.

⁴¹⁰ This asymmetrical dimension is the condition of excess in terms of the unity of quality and quantity. Hegel writes, "[The dialectical movement of the unity and difference of quality and quantity] *vanishes*, whether the one factor [quality or quantity] is assumed to *exceed* the other or be *equal* to it. From the standpoint of quantitative representation, the vanishing appears as a disturbance of the equilibrium, one factor becoming greater than the other; the sublation of quality of the other and its instability is thus posited." This internal disequilibrium is the immanent motion, necessary disharmony, through which lack and excess constitute each other. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 330.

⁴¹¹ "Reality itself contains negation; it is existence...Negation is for its part equally existence...as belonging to existence." Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 88

⁴¹² Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 385

this ontological lack; for the self-sublating movement of vanishing characterizes the *form* by which this lack is overcome. Indeed, the very possibility of the overcoming of an ontologically constitutive lack depends on the self-constitution of the subject-object: it can only overcome its lack in its own *form*; that is, relative to its shape—or, in this case, relative to the *physiological constitution of the social human body*. Thus, this *lack* is, at one and the same time, an *excess*. In overcoming itself, in its *determinate becoming*, the human subject-object *exceeds* itself, extends itself through practical activity with other subject-objects. Its ontological lack *is* its own-most ontological excess. This objective dialectical relation expresses an *objectively dialectical reciprocal inter-determination*, insofar as the excess (the *necessary* unfolding of the very lack) both preserves and reshapes (i.e., *sublates*) the very lack in question.

Appropriation appears here as self-mediating *extension* predicated on the dialectical structure of a relationally determinate *becoming*. The objective contradictoriness of the materiality of the social human body develops by means of a processual structure—a *vanishing*—through which it realizes itself. It can only do so in a *limited* way, that is, a way restricted by its own *determinateness*, its own *form*. As a particular *form*—or, a *form of a particular kind*—it differentiates itself *qualitatively* from other subject-objects: “[t]hrough its quality, *something* is opposed to an *other*; it is *alterable* and *finite*; negatively determined not only towards an other, but absolutely within it.”⁴¹³ The excess of this form is always already relative to it, determined by its quality “...as *existent* determinateness.”⁴¹⁴ Only in this way is appropriation constitutive of the existence of the human species-essence at an abstract, ontological level. As necessarily emerging from a *material form*—the physiological constitution of the body—appropriation becomes an activity, an activity-form (the form of an activity), which is at the same time *forming activity, forming itself in forming an other*.

As retaining the quality of alterability and finitude, the socialized human body (as subject-object) is negatively determined on two, dialectically reciprocal and synthetic, moments. First, it is negatively determined of its own accord, from within, by the mediation of its own immediacy, its co-existent lack and excess: “...*the mediation of itself with itself*.”⁴¹⁵ Its *excess*, then, *is its own self-negating mediation*, its internal constitution *as processual materiality premised on the motion of the vanishing that structures the contradictory realization of lack*. Nonetheless, as a result of this self-same mediation, this excess also manifests an extension *out of itself*—the excessive result of contradiction—and is thereby a self-determination predicated on a relation with an *other*. This relation with an other is its own immediacy,

⁴¹³ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 83

⁴¹⁴ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 85

⁴¹⁵ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 89

insofar as the social human body is itself *tethered* to nature, and yet distinguishes itself from it. Secondly, Hegel reminds us that “...the quality of nature is just this, *to be the other within*.”⁴¹⁶ But, precisely through retaining this other within, nature, the social human body negates itself, sustains its own contradiction and thereby *realizes itself* only through “...that *which-exists-outside-itself* (in the determinations of space, time, matter),”⁴¹⁷ i.e., *nature*. Thus, the relational becoming of the human subject-object—the motion of its self-negating mediated-immediacy—is a *transformative* self-preservation: it “...preserves itself in its non-being...[and] therefore stands in *reference* to an otherness without being just this otherness.”⁴¹⁸ This otherness is the ‘that which-exists-outside of itself’, external determinations, to which, in maintaining its own becoming, it bears a *necessary relation*.⁴¹⁹ Thus, the very own shaping of the social human body, its ‘*being-in-itself*’, is coextensively a ‘*being-for-other*’.⁴²⁰ Its ‘being-for-other’, however, belongs to its own processual becoming, is *not* in the other’s *being*: ‘being-for-other’ is, therefore, an *immanent qualitative determination*. Yet, as the bearer (*träger*) of this quality, the social human body can only be understood *relationally* and *processually*; for its very own constitution, its distinctness—not as a fixed being but as a determinate becoming—necessarily presupposes a reciprocal, inter-determinate process of *being* inter-connected. In this way, despite containing within itself a natural *immediacy*, the social human body differentiates itself from itself (and subsequently from nature too) by means of its determinate becoming through which—in the process of self-realization—it comes to mediate its own immediacy. This defines its *dialectically relational ontological existence*.

In the sphere of being, of objective dialectics, appropriation is logically determined as the result of the human subject-object’s *internal contradictions* through which it realizes itself, and in being “...capable of containing and enduring its own contradiction” it makes of itself “a subject”⁴²¹—an *objective subjectivity*. Its processual structure, *qua* vanishing, is the becoming through which it “...collects itself in *quiescent unity*.”⁴²² This is its own *substantiality*, the provisionally stationary character through which its becoming is spatially and temporally expressed *qua the immanent motion of the social human body*.

⁴¹⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 92

⁴¹⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 92

⁴¹⁸ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 92

⁴¹⁹ Here we see a direct connection to Marx’s *Paris Manuscripts*; specifically, his analysis of the relationship between the organic and inorganic bodies of humanity and nature. Though making this same connection in terms of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Nature*, John Foster and Paul Burkett note the Hegelian influence in Marx: “For Hegel, as for Marx after him, the distinction between organic and inorganic was no absolute barrier, or relations of absolute dominance, but a *dialectical relation of interdependence*.” It is this *necessary dialectical relation of interdependence that constitutes the relational and processual becoming in question*. See: John Bellamy Foster and Paul Burkett. “Marx and the Dialectic of Organic/Inorganic Relations: A Rejoinder to Salleh and Clark.” In, *Organization & Environment*, Vol. 14, No. 4, December 2001. 452

⁴²⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 92

⁴²¹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 385

⁴²² Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 81

But substance here is itself processual insofar as it is structured through the vanishing: the *interminable vanishing* of its own ontological lack and excess. The relational becoming of the social human body is, then, the objective movement of its own simultaneous lack and excess; a movement predicated on its own *self-negation*. What is undergoing self-negation is its *immediacy*—nature—that preserves itself within the human subject-object in consistently altering form, but only by means of its ontological structure being *relational*, i.e., determined by an involvement and openness to that which exists outside of itself, which in turn *mediates this very immediacy*. What *mediates* this internal self-negating immediacy, this ontological structure of relational determinations *immanent* to the human subject-object, is appropriation itself as *socially mediated activity*. Appropriation, at this level of abstraction, is the most *basic relation* of the (social) human subject-object with its other, but in a way that reveals the complexity of its own relational structure since appropriation underlies the process through which the human subject-object transforms itself in its own immanent transcendence. The metabolic dynamism, *motion*, of the objective dialectics of nature results in the specification of a kind, the ontologically *metabolic*—reciprocally inter-determinate and inter-affective—human-nature relation. In this way, appropriation is *species-essence*.

[4.3] Objective Dialectics: Essence & Appropriation

We have now seen that, at the furthest level of abstraction of the human body, appropriation takes place as the ‘most basic relation’ to external determinations. At this merely *ontological* level, appropriation has not yet obtained further determination or specification. It describes only the basic *way* the human body interacts with what is before it. Appropriation, in this sense, is the body’s form of *approaching* the world in which it remains relationally embedded. I have insisted on qualifying the human body as *social* precisely to make clear that, ontologically, there is no independent human body, no atomistic body indifferent to sociality. The social is the ontological basis of the human body proper.

That the body *is social* means that its *activity* as a body *is essential* to that very sociality. Appropriation is activity as emergent from the body’s immanently contradictory self-relation which compels its self-realization—the inter-changing dynamic of lack/excess and mediated-immediacy. In this regard, appropriation *mediates* the body’s process of self-preservation. In so doing, it is *essence*; more specifically, it is *species-essence*.

It is no remarkable insight that humanity expresses itself in various ways. Any consideration of distinct cultural practices, linguistic colloquialisms, architectures, art, social practices, forms of labor, and so on and so forth, discloses the multi-faceted *actuality* derivative of human sociality itself; a sociality which internally differentiates itself into many social *forms*, many *life-forms*. Even if one

approaches human heterogeneity from a hierarchical standpoint, there remains an implicit recognition that these diverse expressions are the result of some shared element across the spectrum of humanity. We are, indeed, of the same kind. Peculiar to the kind of thing that we are, however, what makes us the *same*, is precisely what makes of us a kind of thing capable of manifold distinctions: an essence. An essence is the unity *in* and *of* difference. More precisely, essence is exactly the process by which this unity and difference makes itself *absolute*.

There is of course a tendency toward the rejection of essence as such. Epistemologically, this remains untenable at the basic level of establishing distinctions between *kinds* of things. For a thing to be what it is *as a kind*, it must have distinctive qualities, features, or some kind of activity peculiar to it that makes it *not* something else, but that also makes it a *kind of thing*. In order for a difference to retain epistemological legitimacy, in one way or another, essence must be posited as the principle of differentiation between kinds of things. But, it does not follow from this account that essence need be metaphysical or, even worse, moralistic. Indeed, essence need not be a particular quality—the quality of a particular—at all, but a kind of activity *generative* of heterogenous qualities, none of which can sufficiently encompass essence itself. We will investigate this through Hegel shortly.

A consideration of how essence is stereotypically presented might be useful here as a contrast to Hegel. Generally, essence is particularized as the defining feature of an individual: an individual is *essentially* good or bad, greedy or self-less, or whatever quality.⁴²³ This notion of essence functions by establishing a *dualistic* (rather than dialectical) separation between the immediate appearance of an individual over-against some underlying foundational quality of that individual, an underlying quality which is understood to be fixed; in which case, all of its appearances are seen as inessential to this foundational quality that defines it. Another form of thinking of essence is logically the same but appears as different; namely, where essence is nothing but what appears in immediacy, where immediacy is posited as essence. So, one could say John's essence *is* good, because John does 'good' things—which of course uncritically accepts John's actions as good. Or, John's essence is 'good' despite the 'bad' things John does as the first account would say. Both approaches here suffer from a representational account of the subject, John, as a fixed being whose essence is an unchanging quality.

⁴²³ This logic also underlies the problem with biological essentialisms, both racial and gendered, and cultural essentialism. Both kinds of essentialism are forms of the *particularization* of essence, a reductive measure of essence by means of an internal differentiation within a kind. The concept of essence I defend here is directly *antithetical* to these approaches. Similarly, a concept of essence that relies on a moralistic definition is equally untenable, since the moral element is unable to withstand consistency across historically specific social forms. In this way, claims of human nature being 'greedy' (neoclassical economic theory), 'cooperative' (à la Kropotkin's anarchism), or 'sinful' (in Judeo-Christian lines), all fall short of a consistent ontological framework, since the moralization of essence ends tautologically.

More importantly, however, another failure is disclosed: John's very individuality is what seems to contain essence. It appears as *his* essence and not anybody else's.

What underlies the salience of Hegel's account, as will be shown, is precisely that essence is never *particularized*. In the case of the human subject-object, *no individual has an essence of their own*. Indeed, essence is not a quality individuals possess, but rather is the activity that *pervades* every individual, that structures the bounds of their modality. Individuals, then, do not express their own essence, but the essence of the human species, one which is not metaphysical but an *immanently historical result*. It is precisely in this way that essence can express—or, *reflect*—itself heterogeneously, diversely, and in multi-faceted forms as peculiar qualities, and how essence is not a moralistic category. All those qualities are not *essence itself*, but rather its forms of expression, qualities that are possible as a result of essence: *essence as activity*. In other words, essence is not any singular quality but rather the *process through which qualitative attributes are expressed in accordance with a determinate form*. The positing of essence then operates in terms of an objective contradiction, an inhering principle that maintains transformation, engenders development, as a necessary condition while itself remaining unchanged.

In *The Philosophy of History*, Hegel notes how 'development,' as process, belongs to "...organized natural objects." The immediacy of the human body—nature that inheres within—constitutes its own naturality. This immediacy, however, is mediated with external determinations, such that the body "...become[s] involved with other objects, and consequently live[s] through a continuous *process of change*." It does so "...in virtue of an internal unchangeable principle; a simple essence."⁴²⁴ This 'simple essence' is the emergent contradictory result of the dialectical motion of substance as expressed in the social human body. The essence which maintains itself as 'unchangeable principle' is nothing short of a peculiar kind of activity through which change, alteration, or transformation is enacted; namely, *appropriation*. The question, then, arises as to whether essence is specific to immediacy or mediation. In properly dialectical fashion, we will see that essence is *both*.

The previous section emphasized the role of immediacy, the immediacy of nature that constitutes the 'being-in-itself' of the social human body. It was also shown that this very immediacy is itself mediated, mediated *determinately*, in its 'being-for-other'. That is, immediacy pertains to the *specific* determinacy of a given subject-object, in this case the social human body, and it can only mediate itself in accordance with its own form *relationally*. The external differentiations that come to affect the internal mediations by which the subject-object negates its own immediacy is the process by which

⁴²⁴ GWF Hegel. *The Philosophy of History*. Translated by J. Sibree. New York: Prometheus Books, 1991. 55

essence “[incorporates] otherness within itself.”⁴²⁵ To phrase it in relevant Aristotelean terms, the body’s potentialities are tethered to and restricted by its actuality—an actuality that is relationally determined. We are now moving beyond the sphere of being alone into the sphere of essence. Unsurprisingly, Hegel gifts us another layer of complexity.

The sphere of essence opens with the claim that “the truth of being *is* essence.”⁴²⁶ Being here is understood with its fullest enrichment; that is, as *becoming*. The truth of *becoming* is essence, and becoming is the negation of immediacy, i.e., the negative self-relation of immediacy itself through which mediation is instantiated. Hegel writes, “That it is being’s nature to recollect itself, and that it becomes essence by virtue of this interiorizing, this has been displayed in being itself.”⁴²⁷ In the process of the becoming of a subject-object, the process of self-sublation in its ‘being-in-itself’ and ‘being-for-other’, the subject-object *recollects* itself, maintains itself in its self-negating motion and thereby obtains *essence*. Hegel writes:

This unity thus posited as the totality of the process of determining, itself determined in the process as indifference, is a contradiction all around. It must therefore *be posited* as this self-sublating contradiction, and be determined as subsistence existing for itself, one which no longer has a merely indifferent unity for result but a unity immanently negative and absolute. This is *essence*.⁴²⁸

Essence is the “*immanently negative and absolute*” unity of the process of determinations in becoming. The subject-object *obtains* essence—or, essence obtains itself, its actuality—in the process of self-determination, structured through the vanishing, where it comes to subsist in its actuality as a kind. Here, essence is the result, i.e., the truth of becoming.⁴²⁹ In this sense, essence is the *activity* of determinateness itself—or the immanent activity belonging to the determinate negative self-relation of the subject-object in question (the unity of its matter and form). Essence subsists, as Laura Byrne notes, through a “tense unity of opposites” and is characterized by a “self-repelling and self-reuniting.”⁴³⁰ Investigating the dimensions inherent in the self-repelling and self-reuniting process peculiar to essence will clarify the form by which “essence is self-reflecting,”⁴³¹ which is to say how essence, as activity, can express itself in heterogenous ways. This investigation will work through the

⁴²⁵ Laura Byrne. “Hegel’s Criticism of Spinoza’s Concept of the Attribute.” In, *Essays on Hegel’s Logic*. Ed. by George Di Giovanni. State University of New York Press, 1990. 140

⁴²⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 337

⁴²⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 337

⁴²⁸ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 330

⁴²⁹ “Essence issues from being; hence it is not immediately in and for itself but is a *result* of that movement.” Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 340

⁴³⁰ Byrne, *Hegel’s Criticism of Spinoza*, 140

⁴³¹ Byrne, *Hegel’s Criticism of Spinoza*, 139

categories of shine (Schein), reflection, and reflective determinations in order to specify the human species-essence in terms of appropriation. For sake of space, then, certain nuances of Hegel's theoretical justification of essence will be overlooked.

Hegel writes, "...essence is being which has been sublated in and for itself; what stands over against it is only shine. The shine, however, is *essence's own positing*."⁴³² The self-sublating motion of being, its becoming, is its own *achievement*: in its own coming-to-be, the becoming subject-object has gained its own determinacy, has posited itself by means of its own *processual* positing (its becoming as *activity*) through which its immediacy is given "...as something from which it has come to be but which has preserved and maintained itself in this sublating."⁴³³ In any provisional moment in which the subject-object *is*, a moment of its own presentation, it necessarily *shines*, i.e., expresses its own *immediacy*. Shine *is* being in its fullest *immediacy*: "it is the negative posited as negative."⁴³⁴ In this regard, shine *appears* as "an *other* of essence,"⁴³⁵ that is, how a subject-object *immediately discloses itself*, its *shine*, appears as inessential, as external to essence, as the *non-being* of essence, essence's *nothingness*. Being shines, the shine is nothing but the immanent givenness of being, "...the sublatedness of being, in being's nothingness."⁴³⁶ Thus, the shine of a subject-object appears as a mystification of its own essence, disconnected from it, as the *unessential* in its immediacy "...which is null *in and for itself*; it only is a *non-essence, shine*."⁴³⁷ This form of appearance, shine, leads to a marked conflation between the essential and unessential. The tendency is to assume that shine is absolutely external to and thereby not relevant to essence itself.

For Hegel, however, "[t]he task is to demonstrate that the determinations which distinguish [shine] from essence are the determinations of essence itself; further, that this *determinateness of essence*, which shine is, is sublated in essence itself."⁴³⁸ Essence, as I noted above, is the activity of determinateness: the process through which essence gains constitution, passes over into existence *as* essence, the result of the contradictory movement of the vanishing mentioned previously, the result of *becoming*. And, becoming is the vanishing of being and nothing: the simultaneously existing non-being of being, non-being of nothing, being of nothing and being of being itself, all of which subsist within and constitute essence itself. Essence, consequently, *contains* all these moments within it, though

⁴³² Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 340

⁴³³ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 341

⁴³⁴ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 342

⁴³⁵ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 342

⁴³⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 342

⁴³⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 342

⁴³⁸ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 344

now with condensed *determinateness*, as inhering through a *kind*. Thus, essence becomes itself through its own *negativity*: “being has preserved itself in essence inasmuch as this latter, in its infinite negativity, has this equality with itself; it is through this that essence is itself being.”⁴³⁹ The determinateness of becoming has crystalized as *essence*, and essence is predicated on the persistence of the process of becoming *determinately*; i.e., the process of determinate becoming of a subject-object. Notice the dialectic of linearity and non-linearity at work here. Essence issues from being, being’s activity as becoming, but that is only because being has gained determinateness through the constitution of essence, essence’s own activity. Thus, one is not merely the cause of the other, but rather both are *mutually constitutive, inter-determinate, inter-affective* moments of the self-same process of becoming.

That essence *is* being, pertains to being, means that essence becomes only in accordance with determinacy, and this determinacy is the result of immanent negativity. Thus, at any given moment, this determinate becoming presents itself *immediately*, i.e., *shines*. Shine expresses the *immediacy* of determinate becoming, it is non-essence, essence’s non-being in immediacy. However, “[t]he immediacy that the determinateness has in shine against essence, is thus none other than essence’s own immediacy...” Shine *belongs* to essence, is the *doing* of essence, a part of essence’s *active process*. The immediacy of shine is nothing but the “...absolutely mediated or reflective immediacy,” or is “...being, not as being, but only as the determinateness of being as against mediation; being as moment.”⁴⁴⁰ The immediacy of shine *is* essence as expressed at a given moment. Shine, therefore, does not *fully* encompass essence, but is a part of the way in which essence expresses itself at a given moment; it is the immediacy of being: *shine is immediate being and immediate being is nothing but a moment of becoming, a moment of essence’s self-revealing negativity*.⁴⁴¹ Shine, therefore, *reflects* essence; it is a moment of essence’s own *negativity*, its own *self-sublating* motion. The very *immediacy* of shine, a moment in which essence is reflected as a *shining*, is itself predicated on the mediation of essence with itself. Shine, as immediacy, is the result of essence’s own self-mediation, its own movement, *essence as movement*, or essence as activity. Houlgate notes, “All essence can ‘be’ is the very movement of [shining] itself, the movement from one [shine] to another and thus from non-being to non-being.”⁴⁴² Such movement is predicated on essence’s internal unity of form and matter which shines in *immediacy* but is self-

⁴³⁹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 344

⁴⁴⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 344

⁴⁴¹ “...the moments of shine, are thus the moments of essence itself; it is not that there is a shine of being in essence, or a shine of essence in being: the shine in the essence is not the shine of an other but rather *shine as such, the shine of essence itself*.” Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 344

⁴⁴² Stephen Houlgate. “Essence, Reflexion, and Immediacy in Hegel’s *Science of Logic*.” In, *A Companion To Hegel*. Edited by Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. 142

mediating; or, the movement by which essence shines immediately is the result of the absolute negativity of essence. As absolute negativity, essence mediates itself, *negates its own immediacy through relational determinations*, and expresses itself at various moments *immediately*. Consequently, shine is really nothing but the result of essence's *negativity*, the contradiction between essence's immediacy and its own mediation that is *reflected*; i.e., *immediately externalized*.⁴⁴³ Precisely, “[i]n this,” Hegel notes, “essence is reflection.”⁴⁴⁴ Prescient here is that shine's connection to essence marks the very *fluidity* of essence itself. Indeed, that shine is connected but not reducible to essence means that the latter can reflect itself in various ways. Essence reflects itself, undergoes a *self-repelling* through which it shines. Shine, then, expresses essence and, to be sure, participates in the reconstitution and self-sublating motion of essence insofar as essence also undergoes a self-uniting through *reflection*. In this way, shine is the result of essence's negativity, its mediated-immediacy, and marks essence as *activity* that constitutes the determinacy of the becoming of a subject-object.

Though there are a number of other categories involved in Hegel's explanation of essence, I move now to determinate reflection,⁴⁴⁵ which is the basis for identity and difference,⁴⁴⁶ but is of importance here to clarify the *ontological structure* of the movement of appropriation. Reflection is the immanent immediacy of shine, or the result of essence's negation of its own immediacy. That is, reflection is “...negation coinciding with itself,”⁴⁴⁷ it is essence's modal process of turning back unto itself, its “self-referring negativity.”⁴⁴⁸ Essence as activity engenders shine, which is a reflection of essence (essence's own negativity). But, this reflection is also a return to essence, a reintegration of its shine, of what it has previously negated within itself. That reflection returns to essence, as within essence, means that essence is *negatively determining the immanent return of reflection*. “The turning back of essence is therefore its self-repulsion.”⁴⁴⁹ Hegel demonstrates here that reflection is not inconsequential to *the motion of essence*. The immanent reflection of essence is not just an externalization of essence—though it is that too—but constitutes the form by which essence maintains itself

⁴⁴³ “This first immediacy is thus only the *determinateness* of immediacy. The sublating of this determinateness of essence consists, therefore, in nothing further than showing that the unessential is only shine, and that essence rather contains this shine within itself. For essence is an infinite self-contained movement which determines its immediacy as negativity and its negativity as immediacy, and is thus the shining of itself within itself.” Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 345

⁴⁴⁴ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 345

⁴⁴⁵ Houlgate confirms this ontological reading of reflection over-against Pippin, who conceives of reflection as the act of thought: “Reflection as such, as it is thematized in the *Logic*, must then be an *ontological structure*, not just an operation of the mind.” Houlgate, *Essence, Reflexion, and Immediacy*, 142

⁴⁴⁶ For an account of identity and difference as pertaining to essence, see Houlgate, *Essence, Reflexion, Immediacy*, 147-150

⁴⁴⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 346

⁴⁴⁸ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 346

⁴⁴⁹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 347

determinately, insofar as the *externalization of reflection* encounters and is affected by other subject-objects.⁴⁵⁰ Thus, reflection's return to essence is *determinate*, and participates in essence's own *determinacy*. But essence *is* activity, which is to say it now *also negates this very return of reflection* and thereby *alters the form by which reflection operates within essence's own negativity*. In this precise way, *essence continually posits itself, is existing positedness*, and this positedness (as *processual activity*) "...corresponds to existence."⁴⁵¹ Essence exists, then, as the result of the determinate becoming of a subject-object, a becoming predicated on a *relationality*, and the specific kinds of relations involved in this becoming also constitute the unfolding of essence since the relations are mediated by *determinations* which reflect, *turn back*, to essence itself engendering further reflection. The latter, the engendering further reflection, is *determining* reflection, i.e., "reflection that has exited from itself;"⁴⁵² *the excess of essence's own negative lack*. This is essence as transformative activity, as activity that *externalizes itself, returns to itself*, and, consequently, *reshapes the very process of its own externalization*.

Before proceeding, I want to briefly note the processual character of essence as pertaining to appropriation. Rather than a metaphysical and fixed concept, my reading above seeks to demonstrate that the Hegelian conception of essence holds together a *determinate* principle of change itself, a principle that constitutes its own reshaping. Essence is always the essence of *something* and we are here concerned with the human species-essence, the essence of being human. Insofar as Hegel's conception of essence invites us to think of essence as activity, it requires us to include specific determinations involved in its structure. That is, the human-species essence is *determinate activity necessarily corresponding to the determinate form of the human subject-object*. Human activity is only possible *determinately*, restricted by the limits of the modal character of its physiological constitution. But to this physiology consciousness belongs *determinately*. Thus, essence as activity emerges from and is the reshaping of the very *physiological constitution of the social human body as also integrative of the process of consciousness*. The excess of this physiological materiality *is* reflection as activity, as an expression of essence, as the reflection not only of the body's material excess but also the consciousness of which it equally consists. This reflection, however, becomes *determinate* in that it is immanent reflection through its turning back into essence, which is self-repelling and engenders another reflection, another externalization; i.e., a moment of *becoming-appropriated*, wherein essence is 'self-reuniting'. The process of becoming-appropriated is,

⁴⁵⁰ "Essence is *reflection*, the movement of becoming and transition that remains within itself...In the becoming of being, it is being which lies at the foundation of determinateness, and determinateness is reference to *an other*." Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 345.

⁴⁵¹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 351

⁴⁵² Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 352

ontologically, the movement of reflection as pertains to essence's own negativity.⁴⁵³ Indeed, this movement of determinate reflection belonging to essence, "...is a movement across moments that are distinct."⁴⁵⁴ Essence reflects itself distinctly across various moments. Or, the human species-essence expresses itself in heterogenous forms *only because essence is "absolute mediation with itself"*.⁴⁵⁵ Becoming-appropriated is a distinct moment of reflection's turning back into essence, and in this way is a determinately internal mediation of appropriation with itself as *essence*. In this way, appropriation is equally *self-negating* and *self-sublating*.

Essence is absolute mediation with itself: it is the self-sublating motion of its own negative self-relation predicated on the *determinate reflection* through which it is conditioned and itself conditions. Analogously, appropriation is essence as constituted through the movement of determinate reflection. Thus, appropriation 'shines', reveals itself in various heterogeneous forms through its self-negation. In self-preservation, the social human body (the determinate becoming of the human subject-object) negates itself by means of *appropriating*. This is essence precisely in that this appropriating is itself the transition of the process of becoming-appropriated, as determinate reflection, returning to *negatively determine* appropriation. Appropriation, then, is the *spiral revolving* of essence—essence's own spiral of *appropriating* and *becoming-appropriated* mediating and negating each other by means of *vanishing into each other*. Any singular act of appropriating thereby is simply a *reflection* of essence as activity, as appropriation, or more precisely the *historically specific expression of a social form of appropriating grounded through appropriation's ontological character*. As reflection, this singular act of appropriating is the shine of essence *but not essence itself*. Robert Pippin notes, "[e]ssence's [shinings] are its *own*...even though no [shining] or sets of appearances express in their immediacy what that essence actually is."⁴⁵⁶ But, as a reflection of essence, it is the result of essence's negativity, which returns to essence *determinately* and thereby *mediates* the *form* by which appropriation will come to be expressed, that is, the form by which essence *appears*. Let us explore this detail further.

Hegel writes, "Essence *has* a form and determinations of this form."⁴⁵⁷ Essence, in other words, takes shape as and through form. Indeed, essence is the process of *form's* own determination and form reveals itself as determinate form through essence (essence as activity). Indeed, essence is

⁴⁵³ We will see later, with Marx, that this ontological process is complicated through sociality itself in historically determinate forms. That is, we will later see the way in which appropriation is expressed in historically specific ways as *forms*.

⁴⁵⁴ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 354

⁴⁵⁵ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 354

⁴⁵⁶ Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*, 230

⁴⁵⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 390

now not essence as such but “determinate essence,” the essence of a *determinate form*.⁴⁵⁸ Form is the taking shape of the becoming of a determinate subject-object, mediated by the activity of essence. In terms of appropriation, form takes on two inter-related dimensions. First, it characterizes the physiological form of the social human body. The human body is a *form*, and its form structures the limits of its self-preservation, its *becoming itself*. In this sense, the ground of appropriation as activity is the form of the human body itself. Secondly, this form is a *way* of interacting with external subject-objects. That is, appropriation occasions as the mediating relation between the human species-essence and the reality which it confronts. This is the *form* of appropriation as reflection. It can appear under many guises: appropriation takes on many forms according to the mediations of a particular society. We will later see with Marx how such forms can be understood as a determining component of social relations proper, where appropriation is shown to consist of what I call three *inter-related forms: labor-form, property-form, and belonging-form*.

Essence, as appropriation, is determinate form: “[t]he activity of form by which matter is determined consists, therefore, in a negative relating of the form to itself.”⁴⁵⁹ Appropriation gains concreteness as essence *only through* form-determination, through an immanent negativity that extends beyond itself, and thereby *appears*: “Essence must appear.”⁴⁶⁰ At first, essence only shines, presents itself as immanent reflection; or essence is activity of a determinate *form* that is self-mediating negativity. The shine of essence is the process by which essence is externalized through determinate reflection—“Reflection is the internal *shining* of essence”—and this shining “...comes to completion in *appearance*.”⁴⁶¹ Appropriation, therefore, as the human species-essence appears determinately, or as the expression of *objective* practical activity. The difference between appearance and shine is key: shine is the *internal revolving motion of essence*, but *appearance* is the negation of this internality, and thus is *externalization*. In externalization, essence *appears* as “...concrete existent mediated through its negation, which constitutes its *subsistence*.”⁴⁶² Thus, by means of externalization (essence’s own self-negating motion) “[a]pppearance becomes *relation*.”⁴⁶³ Appearance constitutes the objective process by which distinct subject-objects reveal themselves to be *essentially related*. That determinate subject-

⁴⁵⁸ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 390

⁴⁵⁹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 394

⁴⁶⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 418

⁴⁶¹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 418

⁴⁶² Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 438

⁴⁶³ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 438

objects appear at all means they appear *in relation to each other*, as determinate forms, and are thereby *inter-affective, inter-determinate, relations of processual activity*. Hegel summarizes:

Therefore, what something is, that it is entirely in its externality, its externality is its totality and equally so its unity reflected into itself. Its appearance is not only reflection-into-other but immanent reflection, and its externality is therefore the expression of what it is in itself; and since its content and form are thus absolutely identical, it is, in and for itself, nothing *but this: to express itself*. It is the revealing of its essence, and this essence, accordingly, consists in being self-revealing.⁴⁶⁴

The social human body, a determinate subject-object, is its own totality, and as a totality contains its own processual becoming, one determined by the limits of its own form. Its *formation* is premised on determinate activity and also engenders *forming-activity*, activity peculiar to its own *form*. This is its appearance amid the broader totality in which it finds itself—a socialized nature. Its appearance is the externalization of its form, of what it *is*, i.e., the result of *immanent reflection* that becomes a reflection-into-other. The dialectical relation, the unity of immanent reflection and reflection-into-other, is the *necessary* appearance of the *form* of the social human body, an appearance which is relational; for the very revolving structure of immanent reflection is itself predicated on the negative moment of reflection-into-other, which itself signals the *interiorization of other*. The externalization is the *turning back of the other into itself*, the *absorption of that to which the social human body becomes related*. As a result, the essence *reveals itself*, is nothing but the self-revealing of the determinacy of the social human body as *relational process*.

Human species-essence is appropriation exactly in this way: *as expression, as the expression of objective activity*. At this ontological level—without yet attempting to include any historical specification—appropriation constitutes the basic expression of a self-revealing, an externalization. But this self-revealing is also immanent, predicated on the *internal self-sublating motion of the vanishing*. This marks the form through which the social human body sustains itself relationally, in that the processual structure of the vanishing is determined by what is being internalized, which in turn structures the form of externalization. This is the ceaseless dialectic between appropriating and becoming-appropriated that constitutes appropriation ontologically. Here we return to the ontological lack previously described in the processual structure of the *vanishing*. The ontological lack exceeds itself in the contradictory motion of its own self-negation. From this motion, essence reveals itself, as absolute negativity, as mediated-immediacy. The ontological lack of the social human body expresses itself as *appropriation, as interaction, as creative-aesthetic activity* directed toward other subject-objects:

⁴⁶⁴ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 464

appropriation is self-revealing, its own-most expression.⁴⁶⁵ This expression is the effect of the inner motion of the social human body, its objective contradiction is the cause of its own *excess*. Excess *reveals* itself, *expresses itself*, is essence as self-revealing. However, the result of this excess—determinate activity with other subject-objects—is reflection-into-other, is *mediated by the other, by that which the social human body is affected and conditioned*. This effect is, then, *its own cause*, the cause of the renewed form of self-negation. In the externalization of appropriating activity, one *becomes-appropriated*, is conditioned by appropriation, and thus undergoes an internal self-negation that is determinate, that is the result of being determined by that to which it remains relationally situated. Appropriation is species-essence as the *ontologically metabolic* structure of the self-realization of the social human body, without which the latter cannot subsist. It subsists only in, through, and as activity, which is its *essence*: appropriation.

Through an ontological reading of essence, I have explained the *immanent* form by which essence can be understood as activity, and thereby posit essence as *ontological, non-representational, and relational*. Insofar as the content here is the human species-essence, I have demonstrated the revolving spiral of appropriation as constituted through inter-connected and inter-affective processes: Appropriating—Appropriation—Becoming-appropriated as a coexisting triadic structure of *reciprocal determination* which inheres in and through the *social human body*. Understood in this way, appropriation as an ontological essence is relational in character, for its very self-subsistence *qua* essence is predicated on the *necessity* of its inter-relatedness with external subject-objects. As relational and processual activity, then, appropriation is a doing and un-doing, a self-repelling and self-reuniting, a dissolution and coming-together, *in metabolic motion* that originates from its very own self-contradictory subsistence while *necessitating* external subject-objects for its self-realization. Its relational situatedness is its own *necessity*, its own objectivity through which it comes to express its subjectivity—its *objective subjectivity*—its own *actuality* as essence.

[4.4] Objective Dialectics: Actuality, Necessity, & Appropriation

We remain at the ontological level, but now with further determinacy. We began with the vanishing, which articulated the social human body as processual structure going beyond itself, *excess*, by means of its own ontological *lack* (its immanent negativity). This provided the background to appropriation as essence, or essence as relational and processual activity. For Hegel, the transition from being to essence forms part of the movement of concretion, where essence expresses itself as

⁴⁶⁵ Commenting on the role of reflection in the *Logic*, Rocio Zambrana notes, “Hegel views what is expressed as realized through a process of change or transformation.” Rocio Zambrana. “Actuality in Hegel and Marx.” In, *Hegel Bulletin* 39, No. 2, 2018. 75

the unity of being (*qua* becoming) and concrete existence, a determinate *process*. I have laid emphasis on the relational elements of this dialectical logic, and by that I mean simply that the motion through which becoming occurs is predicated on determinations, inter-affectivity, and a kind of transformation dependent on inter-connections between subject-objects though in regard to an *immanent negativity*. Such relationality, I claim is the movement of objective dialectics, its actuality expressed in the *actual*, and as such is also a movement of necessity.

Appropriation is structured by the self-negating motion through which appropriating and becoming-appropriated mediate each other. As a movement of essence through determinate reflection, appropriation appears, reveals itself and returns to itself, thereby, reconditioning its motion. Through its own appearance, appropriation becomes relation, *is itself relation*, and expresses the unity with itself, the unity of its own absolute negativity (of its inner and outer appearance). Here, appropriation is species-essence, i.e., *determinate essence of a determinate subject-object*. But, I have claimed that appropriation as essence expresses itself in manifold, heterogeneous *forms*. How can this expression, this appearance, take place without undoing itself completely? That is, how does appropriation *subsist* as appropriation amid this self-negating, objective dialectic?

Appropriation as essence belongs to the determinate becoming of the human subject-object. It is, first and foremost, *form determination*, the determination of a *form* that itself *determines a forming*. The human subject-object *appropriates* by means of retaining an absolute identity with itself, an identity of self-differentiation in actuality. Hegel writes, “[t]he absolute is absolute only because it is not abstract identity but is the identity of being and essence, or the identity of the inner and outer.”⁴⁶⁶ Absolute identity is *absolute determination*, is the determinate becoming of a subject-object in its *actuality*. Actuality is nothing but the “*unity of essence and concrete existence*.”⁴⁶⁷ In this unity, the determinate subject-object is *actual*, concretely exists as the unfolding of the essence to which it belongs, and thus is the appearance of its own historical process, its becoming. The internal structure of the subject-object is *actually* self-preserved through a metabolic dynamism that constitutes its *appearance*, the ‘outer’ externalization of this very internal dynamic as it has come-to-be through relational subsistence: “...it has determined itself within it by virtue of its inner necessity, and, as being’s own *becoming* and as the reflection of essence, has returned into the absolute as into its ground.”⁴⁶⁸ The absolute identity of the species-essence is its own self-reuniting through its internal self-repelling, the form through which it subsists

⁴⁶⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 469

⁴⁶⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 465

⁴⁶⁸ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 468

as *itself* absolutely—not in spite of, but precisely as a result of its particular *metabolic form*; an “*absolute form*,” which “...as manifold is only *one* substantial identity.”⁴⁶⁹

A processual self-negation—which is at once a self-preservation—is the *inner necessity* of the metabolic actuality of the subject-object, of its own absolute identity as a determinate species-essence. Significantly, what Hegel describes as absolute identity—which, of course, presupposes the movement of shine and determinate reflection described above—does not enter the system as an *a priori* category to be metaphysically reached, as if absolute identity was an already pre-determined *end*. On the contrary, absolute identity is nothing but an *immanent achievement*, a result, predicated on specific determinations of the very process of becoming, determinations which are the constitution of the absolute identity as absolute form: “...the absolute cannot be a first, an immediate...the absolute is rather *its result*,”⁴⁷⁰ the result of the immanently determinate reflection of essence.

Essence is activity which unfolds as form. But, we are now dealing with *determinate essence*, *essence expressed as actuality*, that is, as the actuality of an absolute identity as absolute form. Determinate essence consists in a self-revealing, an expression of its content, which again is predicated on its own absolute identity—its equality with itself, an equality, as I have shown above, that is asymmetrical, self-sublating motion, an absolute negativity. The expression of this essence, its actuality, is directly connected to its absolute form, i.e., it can only express or reveal itself in a way peculiar to itself. Consequently, the determinate human species-essence always reveals itself in a “*way or manner*.”⁴⁷¹ This is its *mode*; the structure of its actuality. Hegel writes:

As this self-bearing movement of exposition, as a *way* and *manner* which is its absolute identity with itself, the absolute is expression, not of an inner, nor over against an other, but simply as absolute manifestation of itself for itself. Thus it is *actuality*.⁴⁷²

Actuality marks the objective expression of the *way* and *manner* of a determinate essence; or, its absolute form is its absolute identity as *objective activity*, as self-revealing objectivity, as *actuality*. Appropriation is a ‘way and manner’, an approach, not merely as internal motion or external confrontation but rather as a defining feature of *the modal structure* of the human species-essence in its actuality, in its absolute identity. This mode, “this ‘way or manner’ is the determination of the absolute itself.”⁴⁷³ Appropriation, then, underlies the process by which the absolute identity of human species-essence

⁴⁶⁹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 467

⁴⁷⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 473

⁴⁷¹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 470

⁴⁷² Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 471

⁴⁷³ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 477

retains itself as itself, insofar as it *modally* determines the absolute itself, and therefore reshapes the absoluteness of its form, its absolute identity. Thus, in this reciprocally determinate dialectical movement, “[t]he mode...is the externality of the absolute...it is the absolute’s *own manifestation*, so that this externalization is its immanent reflection...its being in-and-for-itself.”⁴⁷⁴ Indeed, the human species-essence, as appropriation, becomes actual in its *being in-and-for-itself*, which is *realized* as a *mode*—a way or manner—which is its externalization. Thus, the objective dialectics of nature results in an internal self-differentiation through which a determinate becoming is made possible, the actuality of the becoming of the human subject-object. This actuality is actuality at all only by means of its appearance, an appearance which is *essential*. We have seen that appearance *is relation*, and as relation is a determinate relation amid determinate conditions; in fact, the determinate becoming of the human subject-object can *only appear determinately and relationally*, since such appearance is nothing but the result of previous determinations and conditions. The *objectivity* of its actuality, as appearance and relation, is precisely an activity—a way or manner—that “...manifests itself...only as self-differentiating and self-determining movement.”⁴⁷⁵

Appropriation as essence, then, can be understood in a *non-representational form*, as determinate actuality premised on *activity*, but *determinate* activity belonging to and emerging from the absolute identity of an absolute form. Appropriation here is process and relation, i.e., is the *actuality of a relation which discloses the relation of actualities between each other*. In this sense, underlying this activity as foundational to the absolute negativity through which it maintains itself in its being in-and-for-itself we find *necessity*.

In necessity, the objective subjectivity of the human subject-object discloses its relationality. A brief turn to Hegel’s *Philosophy of Mind* (Part Three of the Encyclopaedia) will assist the articulation of necessity in terms of the human species-essence. In the above section, it was shown that appropriation belonged to the *physiological form* of the *social human body*. There, I claimed that its physiological form also contains, and presupposes, *consciousness*. Consciousness belongs to this very physiology, to this form. Thus, to this physiological form a form of consciousness remains tethered, a human consciousness: *self-consciousness as part of its physiological form*. Understood as the mediating determination in the human-nature relation, appropriation’s physiological *immanence* is also, therefore, a matter of self-consciousness’s *immanent ground*. The *social human body*, as argued above, preserves itself in accordance with its own absolute negativity, a negativity that is the result of the self-differentiation of Nature. The social human body contains nature within itself as *immediacy*—its organic physiological

⁴⁷⁴ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 477

⁴⁷⁵ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 478

constitution—which it negates in its self-mediating form; that is, through the unfolding of its own essence as activity, as *appropriation*. Appropriation, therefore, requires an object of appropriation. At this purely ontological level, then, appropriation *necessitates* objects in nature through which it subsists as *species-essence*; indeed, through which it *sustains* the species-essence as activity. This is the subject-object identity. The identity of subject-object—or better, the identity between subject-objects—therefore assumes a unity and difference in their respective *determinacies*. This unity takes place *materially* and *relationally*: “...natural things are spatial and temporal...one thing exists alongside another...one thing follows another...”⁴⁷⁶ In this regard, Hegel notes, “...that matter, this universal basis of every existent form in Nature, not merely offers resistance to *us*, *exists apart from our mind*...” but in their differentiations as particular forms they also “...stand in mutual connection”⁴⁷⁷ in varying degrees. That things exist in determinate forms, mutually connected in varying degrees, does not only affirm an *objective relationality* independent of our mind, but also invokes the *objective necessity of this very relationality*, for only in their *necessary inter-determinations* do they constitute their independent forms *as forms*. In this regard, “...necessity reigns in Nature.”⁴⁷⁸ Shortly, it will be shown how this necessity *includes* contingency, but first let us consider such necessity as ontologically basic of the human-nature relation, a relation *mediated* by appropriation itself.

Though this will be elaborated in more detail in the following section on ‘reason,’ self-consciousness characterizes the subjective element of the objectivity of the human species-essence; a subjective element, moreover, that is itself an objective element of its absolute form. Hegel writes:

[t]he self-conscious subject knows itself to be *implicitly identical* with the external object, knows that this contains the *possibility* of satisfying its appetite, that the object is, therefore, *conformable* to the appetite and that just for this reason the latter is excited by the object.⁴⁷⁹

The ‘implicitly identical’ relation is the mutually constitutive, inter-affective determination by which the subject recognizes in the object the necessity of its own self-realization: “[t]he relation of the subject to the object is therefore a *necessary* one.”⁴⁸⁰ Necessity underlies the relation not because of a pre-determination that structures the form by which the relation develops, but rather because of the very existence of this relation in the first place. The relation is not abstract relation between abstract

⁴⁷⁶ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 9

⁴⁷⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 9. My emphasis

⁴⁷⁸ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 9

⁴⁷⁹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 168

⁴⁸⁰ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 168

postulates. It is an *absolute relation* between distinct *absolute forms*, each with their respective absolute identities, and, therefore, their *independent* but mutually constitutive *inter-connection*.

Before, I mentioned that the absolute negativity inherent to the processual structure of the social human body, the *vanishing*, is constituted through the dialectic of lack and excess and mediated-immediacy. We now see this at work in a more determinate form: “[i]n the object, the subject beholds its own lack.”⁴⁸¹ This internal contradictory movement becomes externalized by means of its relation to another object, and this is the *appearance* of another contradiction, a contradiction between another object and the subject itself. Indeed, essence *externalizes itself*: appropriation appears, it is an *appropriating* predicated on the necessity of fulfilling its own *material lack*, thereby *exceeding itself*. Moreover, the human subject-object as an *ensemble* of self-sublating negativity undergoing a *self-transformative* motion is not static, and therefore can “...remove this contradiction, since it is not [merely] being, but *absolute activity*.”⁴⁸² As absolute activity of the absolute identity of its own absolute form, it removes the contradiction between itself and an other “...by taking *possession* of the object whose independence is, so to speak, only pretended...[and] maintains itself in this process.”⁴⁸³ This ‘taking possession’ is *appropriation as such*, *appropriation as the ontological structure of the human species-essence*. Further, appropriation as absolute activity discloses its relational *actuality* insofar as its motion of self-preservation is *necessary* to its *being in-and-for-itself*. In this sense, appropriation emerges from the *ontological necessity of the unfolding of the human species-essence*, as absolute activity, through which the “implicit identity of subject and object is made explicit, the one-sidedness of subjectivity and the seeming independence of the object are superseded.”⁴⁸⁴ Their independence is *only a seeming*, for their relational unity is precisely predicated on their *mutual exclusion*, their *difference*—both of which structure the emergence of this *necessary relation* predicated on an ontologically necessary ground. Further, in the removal of the contradiction where the necessary relation is disclosed, the “object is thus made explicitly subjective.”⁴⁸⁵ The subjectivity of the social human body *leaves its trace on the object in making it its own*, in *appropriating the object*. But, this very movement, as necessity, is at the same time the form by which appropriation “gives its subjectivity *objectivity*.”⁴⁸⁶ In short, appropriation obtains *actuality*, expresses the *objective subjectivity of the social human body*, as a result of its relational existence and self-realization amid other subject-objects through

⁴⁸¹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 168

⁴⁸² Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 168

⁴⁸³ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 168

⁴⁸⁴ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 169

⁴⁸⁵ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 169

⁴⁸⁶ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 169

necessity. Necessity, then, belongs to this ontological relationality, for it is precisely necessity itself that both discloses a relational coordination between subject-objects and constitutes their subsistence as *actuality*, as *activity*.

Appropriation, as human species-essence, confers onto the object the *objective subjectivity of the social human body*. This is its *mode*, its *mode of appropriation*—the ‘way or manner’ of appropriation as *mediating activity*. With Marx we will see that this *mode* is *always a historically specific mode pertaining to the ensemble of social relations*—a specific social form—but the very possibility of articulating the historical specificity of the *mode of appropriation*, the way in which the mode of appropriation expresses itself in a determinate historical and social form, remains predicated on and constituted by the previously described *ontological ground*; an ontological ground, moreover, determined by *necessity*, the necessity of the relational and processual unfolding of the human species-essence. If necessity undergirds this development, this processual unfolding, how could it be claimed that appropriation appears in heterogenous forms?

In appropriation conferring onto the object its own objective subjectivity, it thereby makes the object *explicitly subjective*, as Hegel noted above. In other words, the object’s being appropriated discloses the *specific mode* by which the objective subjectivity of the social human body leaves its *imprint* on the object itself. The object, then, *retains this objective subjectivity of that which appropriates it, retains the trace of the subject (the social human body)*. In so doing, the activity of appropriation is *reciprocally determinate*, for the very confirmation of the objective subjectivity of the social human body *in* the object constitutes the *object’s own imprint on the social human body itself*, since the latter is necessarily affected by the former by the result of its own activity upon the object. To be sure, for Hegel, the reciprocity involved here is the combination of activity and passivity inhering in both the subject and object (distinct subject-objects) in varying degrees, for “...the reciprocity of action takes on the form of a reciprocal causality of *substances* that are *presupposed* and that *condition each other*, each is with respect to the other *both active and passive substance*.”⁴⁸⁷ This reciprocally determinate movement is the *absolute activity* turning back into itself, a reconditioning and reconstituting of the absolute identity of the *social human body*, of its *species-essence*. In this very return, a moment of self-reuniting or rejoining, a self-repelling is occasioned through the immanent negativity belonging to the subject: the subject *internalizes and negates this very effect of the object*, and thus its absolute identity is shaped by it, a process “...in which the living being posits itself as self-identical *for itself*.”⁴⁸⁸ In short, *in conferring its own objective*

⁴⁸⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 503

⁴⁸⁸ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 686

subjectivity through appropriating the object, the object also determinately returns to this objective subjectivity; the latter, then, undergoes *becoming-appropriated*. This spiral movement is the necessity of relational unfolding through absolute activity insofar as it is a movement of actuality itself.

Hegel writes, “The necessary is an *actual*, as such it is immediate...; but it equally has its actuality *through an other* or in its ground and is at the same time the positedness of this ground...”⁴⁸⁹ Necessity belongs to the actual, to actuality as the unity of essence and concrete existence. Necessity presents itself through the relational inter-determinations of *an other*, thus, necessity is the ground out of which actuality *is* itself, since it is only itself by means of an ontological dependence of an other(s). Hegel writes, “What is actual *can act*; something announces its actuality *by what it produces*.”⁴⁹⁰ This is actuality’s *objective appearance*, the activity of producing. But this production is its own self-realization, which is *necessary* for it to be an *actuality*. Actuality’s activity of production, which is necessary to its absolute form as actuality, is not only an objective appearance of its own accord but *a relational self-manifestation*: “Its relating to an other is the manifestation *of itself*...it is a self-subsistent which has its immanent reflection, its determinate essentiality, *in another self-subsistent*.”⁴⁹¹ For actuality to *be possible*, it relies on the movement of necessity, the necessity of a relationally determinate, processual unfolding.⁴⁹² That a determinate subject-object has actuality means that necessity is already found in its immanent movement: for it to be itself as *actuality*, it must have *necessarily* come-to-be, which is the realization of a previous actuality in which was contained *real possibility*. Actuality contains *real possibility*: “For the real actual is as such the *determinate* actual...has its *determinateness as immediate being*...but this immediate being...is also the *negative* of itself, is an in-itself or possibility and so real possibility.”⁴⁹³ But actuality is itself *a metabolic motion*, a becoming through relational determinations. As such, actuality’s becoming *presupposes* “...the in-itself of an *other* actual,” *already contains this other in itself*; and thus has real possibility *relationally* as characterized by the “*totality of conditions*” in which it *is* actual; and, finally, “...is determined to be the in-itself of an other and intended in this determination to return to itself.”⁴⁹⁴ In this way, real possibility is not distinct from actuality but belongs to it, is part of the *immanent negativity of the absolute identity of an absolute form*. It is *real possibility* precisely because the activity of

⁴⁸⁹Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 481

⁴⁹⁰Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 482

⁴⁹¹Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 482. My emphasis.

⁴⁹² Ng, commenting on this same passage, clarifies: “Real possibility as the totality of conditions necessary for bringing something about determines actuality as something that can act, as something that has the power and potential to produce effects, only insofar as it is a process of actualization resulting from a determinate set of real conditions and circumstances.” Ng, *Hegel’s Concept of Life*, 145

⁴⁹³Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 485

⁴⁹⁴Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 483

actuality, actuality's own activity as absolute identity, is *determinate*, i.e., *restricted to its absolute form*. This is the necessity that grants appropriation its relational character in a determinate form; or, appropriation as a mode, as a way or manner, *can only express itself in manifold ways insofar as such expression relies not on abstract possibility but real possibility, the real possibility involved in the mediation between its own absolute identity and the totality of conditions within which it objectively acts—all of which is predicated on ontological necessity*, for “[t]he necessary is in itself the *absolute correlation of elements*...in which the correlation suspends itself to absolute identity.”⁴⁹⁵ Appropriation, then, as ontological, can only express itself objectively within objectively material conditions, which themselves are *active* in determining the *real possibility* by which appropriation is mediated. For appropriation to appear as this mediating element which retains real possibility as inhering in its *actuality*, in accordance with the absolute form of the human species-essence, necessity must structure its becoming. For, in its very actuality, as absolute identity of absolute form, the human species-essence, appropriation, *is*; and “[w]hat is necessary *is*, and this existent is *itself the necessary*.”⁴⁹⁶ In this regard, necessity is not a pre-determination nor is it the elimination of contingency, it is the *fiber* that holds together the *determinacy of relationality and process* as the unfolding of the totality of conditions under which and through which the human species-essence *realizes itself*.

To reiterate, actuality and possibility, then, cannot be thought of as distinct, but only as mutually constitutive determinations belonging to the process by which a relational objectivity *metabolically* unfolds. A kinetic process predicated on relationality is the restlessness by which actuality and possibility as a unity of opposites condition each other in the becoming of a determinate subject-object, the human species-essence: “This *absolute restlessness* of the *becoming* of these two determinations [actuality and possibility] is *contingency*.”⁴⁹⁷ Contingency enters into the scene as a determinate *result* of the combination of actuality and possibility: “The contingent is...necessary because the actual is determined as possible.”⁴⁹⁸ Indeed, the contingent does emerge as contingent, but not in and of itself, not divorced or decoupled from necessity: the development of contingency is *contingent on necessity*. In other words, it is precisely through the movement of necessity that contingency becomes ontologically constitutive: “Real necessity thus contains contingency,”⁴⁹⁹ but contingency “also *becomes* in real necessity.”⁵⁰⁰ Let us consider this through the lens of appropriation.

⁴⁹⁵ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 213. My emphasis.

⁴⁹⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 481

⁴⁹⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 481

⁴⁹⁸ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 481

⁴⁹⁹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 485

⁵⁰⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 486

Appropriation, as human species-essence, is driven ontologically by necessity, by the necessity immanent to the absolute negativity through which it preserves itself as *actuality*, and thereby retains its own absolute identity as an absolute form (its *metabolic motion*). Hegel notes, “[r]eal necessity is determinate necessity;”⁵⁰¹ i.e., it expresses the movement of objective determinations. That a *social human body* is at all, that it is an *existent*, means that its coming-to-be was an *objective process*, one of necessity to its *being*. All of the categories hitherto described—becoming, vanishing, essence, absolute identity, etc.—were necessary to its becoming itself, they are *of its necessity*. Without this necessity, the *social human body* would simply not be; or would be reducible to our idea of it. But, the social human body is not only an idea, is irreducible to our thought; or, it is an *idea only as a result of its objectivity*—an *objective, determinate being that gives rise to its own concept*. Indeed, its becoming expresses *necessity as a result, as a determinately relational process that constitutes its materiality as absolute activity, as not any ‘thing’ but only itself in its own-most actuality*. In this way, “absolute necessity is absolute relation, because it is not *being* as such, but *being* that is *because* it is.”⁵⁰² Absolute necessity⁵⁰³ characterizes, then, *not only the social human body’s coming-to-be but also the very process by which it subsists, by which it maintains itself as itself, as an absolute identity through relationally and inter-affective absolute activity*.⁵⁰⁴ Absolute activity is *mediated activity*, mediated-immediacy, *absolute negativity* structuring the *absolute identity* of the social human body’s *absolute form*, and this activity can only be absolute insofar as it exists by means of an absolute relation which is the absolute necessity of its own contradictory self-preservation. The extraordinary precision of this Hegelian taxonomy—a *system of relational concepts*—also demonstrates that such necessity, which is immanent to the absolute negativity of the objective processual unfolding of the social human body, discloses the relational structure through which any given subject-object itself unfolds: “...*necessity* is the determining relational mode of substance...”⁵⁰⁵ For, to unfold determinately, a subject-object must preserve itself only by negating itself by means of an other, through an other, an other to which it is *necessarily related (absolute relation)*. This other, nonetheless, *conditions* the *form* through which the movement of self-preservation (of the *social human body*) is itself determined; the other is never merely passive but also active in its own way. At the same time, however, from this necessity emerges the contingent, the actualization of the determinately possible amid the necessary. Necessity expresses

⁵⁰¹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 485

⁵⁰² Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 490

⁵⁰³ Ng reminds us that “[w]hat Hegel calls *absolute necessity* is simply the awareness that contingency is constitutive in the process of actualization...” Ng, *Hegel’s Concept of Life*, 147

⁵⁰⁴ “The link of necessity *qua* necessity is identity...because it is the identity of what are esteemed actual things, although their very self-subsistence is bound to be necessity.” Hegel, *Part One Encyclopaedia Logic*, 219

⁵⁰⁵ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 509

itself *contingently*, in contingent form. This means, however, that such contingency is *determinate*: the unfolding of contingency is determined by that from which it unfolds, from its necessary ground. The contingent unfolding of the necessary becomes the process through which becoming itself *obtains necessity, becomes necessary, expressing this self-same process as a necessity*. The metabolic motion of the human species-essence operates by means of necessity but precisely in that way expresses itself contingently. Such contingency *reflectively returns to necessity, reshapes its own necessary movement, and thereby becomes necessity itself*. Thus, Hegel notes in the *Encyclopaedia*:

Necessity, then... is [identical with itself]...so that it appears within itself in such a way that its distinctions have the form of independent [actualities]. This [identity] is at the same time, as absolute form, the *activity* which reduces into dependency and mediates into immediacy.⁵⁰⁶

In terms of appropriation, this relationship between the necessary and the contingent underlies the ontological process through which appropriating activity and becoming-appropriated mediate each other. Appropriation characterizes the ‘most basic’ human-nature relation as the human species-essence. In this sense, as a relational, self-mediating process oriented by its own immanent negativity, appropriation presents itself as *necessity*. Thus, appropriation *appears*, i.e., reveals itself as *necessary* activity tethered to the absolute form of the *social human body* (human species-essence). The activity here is always *determinate*, always occasioned in and through *objective material conditions*; it is *the spatialization and temporalization of appropriating activity as the actualization of mediations conditioning immediacy*. Insofar as appropriation expresses itself by means of necessity, it presents itself in a *mode*, as a ‘way or manner.’ It must present itself modally, by necessity, because that *is* the activity of appropriation. Here, through mode, in its way or manner, the determinate contingent dimension appears, and its appearance is *necessary*.⁵⁰⁷ The human species-essence is itself spatial and temporal, exists within space through time, but in differing *material conditions, contingent determinations*. Insofar as these material conditions differ, consist of *peculiar diversities*, the *necessary mode of appropriation realizes itself in contingent conditions, and thereby its ‘way or manner’ has flux, develops contingently by means of its own necessity*. Thus, in *appropriating* under variegated material conditions the *social human body* (a self-differentiating and self-transformative kind) expresses *heterogeneous* ways or manners, *modes*, of *its own species-essence*. In the realization of these various *modes*, the social human body also undergoes a *becoming-appropriated* in accordance with the specificity of its mode in historically and geopolitically specific *social forms*. Indeed, it is exactly the mediation of

⁵⁰⁶ Hegel, *Part One Encyclopaedia Logic*, 212

⁵⁰⁷ Lukács notes: “In fact, in Hegel the annulment of contingency takes place on the assumption that it cannot be annulled.” Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, 394

appropriating and becoming-appropriated under diverse material conditions in a historically specific conjuncture that *sediments the practices, tendencies, and dispositions involved in a social form itself*. It is precisely in this way that appropriation as the human species-essence reveals itself as *its own principle of self-transformation*, which retains the dialectic between an activity of self-preservation *through* transformation *and* a necessary contingency which engenders the expression of this essence in multi-faceted, heterogenous forms.

In sum, the objective dialectics of nature is a relational process through which the human species-essence obtains to itself as a *modally structured and objectively determinate* self-transformative activity of self-preservation. Appropriation, as this essence, therefore, becomes a *mode of appropriation*. Hegel then provides here a logico-theoretical structure through which appropriation and the mode of appropriation can be understood as relational, self-constituting, and diverse *species-essence* unfolding as process. Indeed, the unfolding of the *species-essence* occurs through absolute activity expressed always materially as a way or manner, a *mode*. That this is its essence means that it is its *universality*, "...but a universality that pervades particularity and in it immediate singularity."⁵⁰⁸ From essence to necessity, we arrive now at appropriation's *positive* moment: universality.

[4.5] Objective Dialectics: Universality, Teleology, & Appropriation

We remain at the ontological level, but once again enriched with further determinacy. However, we have now arrived at an important transitory moment, where the move from objective dialectics to subjective dialectics (also at the ontological level) emerges in its initial form. This is a convergence where the previously described processes and categories crystalize into the *realm of freedom*, the realm of human sociality. Heretofore, appropriation has been articulated as an activity that constitutes the human species-essence, and as an activity which unfolds relationally, processually, and in terms of necessity. This *objective* process—the objective dialectics of nature—gives rise to a self-negating category belonging to the absolute identity of the human species-essence, a category, however, that is positive: *universality*. In the positive character of universality, appropriation as self-revealing maintains itself as absolute activity belonging to universality proper: *appropriation is universal*. At the same, however, universality is internally self-differentiating and as such presents itself through the particular and the singular, each emerging as different expressions of its own 'moments.' In this way, appropriation appears in objectively concrete terms in particularity (diverse social forms) and even through singularity at the level of the social individual. Nonetheless, this is not a deductive,

⁵⁰⁸ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 632

sequential movement, for the particular and the singular *reflect* back into the universal even as its result: this is appropriation's combinatory *spiral*. Tethered to the immanent structure of universality's relation to the particular and the singular, we find *teleology*, or *purposiveness*.

Teleology becomes crucial in two ways. First, for Hegel, this teleology is *immanent*, which means that purposive activity is a result of the objective determinations occasioned through specific *relations* that *take shape as a form-ing of a materially constituted subject-object*. At this level, purposive activity (immanent teleology) is *not* a pre-defined goal or end that is assumed *a priori*, nor is it a predictive heuristic device that lays claim to pre-ordain the outcome of a given subject-object.⁵⁰⁹ In objective relations between things, determinations *form* purposiveness as a result, and this purposiveness is only purposiveness in terms of that relationality proper. For example, the heart as an organ has a purpose in its relational embeddedness in the human body. It is an object, whose absolute negativity—its own metabolic motion as an organ of a specific kind—engenders *purposive activity*, without which the human body ceases to be alive. This is not a metaphysical purpose (or *telos*) since it lays no claim to its own moral weight nor a metaphysical goal as a *purposive object*. It is immanently purposive and is the result of previous immanent-purposive activity developed through the human body as a totality in its own metabolic motion. This kind of teleology remains at the level of strictly *objective dialectics*.

The second way in which teleology becomes crucial—and crucially tied to appropriation—is found in its relation to reason; a relation that is only possible as a result of its first dimension described above. Teleology becomes *essential*—indeed is tied to essence—for the fluidity of reason in terms of purpose as enacted through conscious activity at the *social* level. Teleology here, which is still immanent teleology, describes purposive activity as negotiated through human self-consciousness in *appropriating*, which itself conditions *becoming-appropriated* and therefore mediates reason's own relation to practical activity. This still insufficient description of the second dimension of teleology will have to do for now, as it belongs more properly to the following section on reason. In order for it to gain more theoretical clarity, we must first deal with universality and teleology at its strictly ontological (not yet social) level.

Hegel writes, “[t]he *universal* is...a *simple* that is at the same time *all the richer in itself*.”⁵¹⁰ The universal is a simple because in its issuing from essence and necessity it presents itself as the *positive* moment of both. As first constitutive of essence and necessity, universality holds within itself only an

⁵⁰⁹ “The closer the teleological principle is associated with the concept of an *extra-mundane* intelligence, and the more it has therefore enjoyed the favor of piety, all the more it has seemed to depart from the *true investigation of nature*, which aims at a cognition of the properties of nature not as extraneous but as *immanent determinacies*.” Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 652

⁵¹⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 530

internal relation, as an *oscillating reflection* between the two and therefore is “...absolute *mediation* but not anything *mediated*.”⁵¹¹ It obtains or achieves content for mediation only when its own absolute negativity culminates—through self-sublation—in an internal differentiation within the universal itself where particularity and singularity emerge as *mediated content*. This marks the moment of universality’s *externalization*, where its *positivity* expresses itself while also *maintaining the absolute negativity of the absolute identity of its own absolute form*. Thus, when the particular and the singular appear, they are nothing but the *diverse* expressions of this original absolute negativity of universality’s content (human species-essence) and universality therefore remains *positive* in character. Hegel asserts, “The universal...even when it posits itself in a determination, *remains* in what it is.”⁵¹² Like essence, the universal remains in what it is, it is self-referring *relation*. Unlike essence—or as a different moment of essence’s unfolding—the universal retains a positive character *as a specter which haunts all of the particulars within which it maintains itself*. Indeed, universality is the *ghostly* material of relatedness *between* particulars; that is, all particulars retain the *positive residuality of the universal*. Thus, in its positivity, universality is *self-referring positivity* that subsists through its self-negation via particularity and singularity. In this regard, universality

...is the *soul* of the concrete which it inhabits, unhindered and equal to itself in its manifoldness and diversity. It is not swept away in the *becoming* but *persists* undisturbed through it, endowed with the power of unalterable, undying self-preservation.⁵¹³

The absolute negativity which inheres through the metabolic process of becoming does not hinder the *presence* of the universal. As a ghostly material, universality *positively persists* by pervading its own self-differentiating content—‘its manifoldness and diversity,’ i.e., particularity and singularity—as content that is *necessarily* self-referential, a *reflexive recoil*. Universality is the recoil of essence’s absolute negativity, and therefore is the positivity of the absolute activity of a determinate essence. Through metabolic self-preservation, a determinate essence exudes a positivity, *universality*, through its becoming. Becoming maintains the absolute identity of an absolute form through the unalterable element of *self-preservation*, which itself is *transformative* self-preservation. This self-preservation is the absolute negativity of essence which itself is a processual structure, *the vanishing*. The vanishing is the *integrative process by which mediations mediate immediacy*. What vanishes, by necessity, is the immediacy that now is mediated by determinate content. But these mediations *vanish* too, and thereby *inform immediacy’s own sublation*. The process by which the vanishing determinately occurs remains tethered to a kind, a *species-essence*; i.e., the vanishing is the processual structure of the becoming of an absolute form. This

⁵¹¹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 531

⁵¹² Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 531

⁵¹³ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 531

absolute form is self-identical absolute negativity, and thus is absolute identity. Absolute identity's own negative self-relation results in a *self-affirmation* that pervades its absolute form however heterogeneously this form might express itself. This *positive pervasion* in heterogeneity is *universality*.

The self-referentiality of the universal, however, is positive precisely because this self-reference is a "relating."⁵¹⁴ That is to say, the universal, as self-referential, as a relating between particulars toward itself, "...lets itself be known in its other."⁵¹⁵ In this sense, the universal is not merely a holding together of particulars between each other internally, but is simultaneously a form of reference of the other to itself. The other stands against the universality of a kind, of an essence, and therefore relates to that universality as an other to it: "The universal...is itself while reaching out to its other...for it relates to that which is distinct from it as to itself."⁵¹⁶ For this reason, the universal is *positive*: it affirms the universality of a kind by means of the external relation through which its own kind, human species-essence, retains itself as itself (self-preservation). Since this external relation is mediation, and therefore a determination involved in the process of becoming (through vanishing), it also conditions the transformative structure of essence's own self-preservation; for in the other, in the external, which is only external by means of mediation, universality "has returned to itself."⁵¹⁷ In this way, universality subsists, for the absolute activity that is the mediation of an externality is always a return to itself, a *recoil*, wherein universality *confirms itself* as the universality of an *absolute form*. In this relation to an other, as also a relation of self-referentiality, universality is a "...*doubly reflective shine*," for it shines "*outwards*, as reflection into the other, and *inwards*, as reflection into itself."⁵¹⁸ This dialectical movement amounts to a recoil, a reflective oscillation that re-establishes universality as absolute identity of the absolute form of the human species-essence.

In terms of appropriation, universality refers to its positive expression that persists across the manifold particularities and singularities of the *social human body*. Appropriation is universal insofar as the social human body—the absolute form of the human species-essence—*affirms itself*, presents itself *positively*, as absolute activity which self-preservation *processually* and through *relational becoming*. In other words, appropriation is the *universal* relation of the social human body with the external determinations it necessarily confronts. The unfolding of essence is this universality, *the architectural frame that positively instantiates its own relational becoming*, which continuously refers to itself, to its own positivity, *only by means*

⁵¹⁴ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 531

⁵¹⁵ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 531

⁵¹⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 532

⁵¹⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 532

⁵¹⁸ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 533

of activity. Appropriation's universality, then, is its encapsulation of the human-nature relation as objective, material activity through which the social human body *affirms itself*. What is universal—at this abstract ontological level—is appropriation as mediating relation of self-preservation (absolute negativity) and thus "...is the informing and creative principle"⁵¹⁹ which persistently inheres in the process of transformative self-preservation that belongs to essence's own becoming. The universal quality—the quality of this determinate universality—of appropriation, then, is the ontological basis of the creative activity expressed through the objective actuality of the human-nature relation. The universality of appropriation, then, is the universality of the creative, which itself is the *result* of the determinate becoming of the human species-essence. Its absolute identity of its absolute form expresses itself *creatively* by means of the manifold forms through which appropriation *must* appear. Indeed, the creative is a *necessity* of appropriation, for the various material conditions which the social human body has no choice but to confront—*confronts by necessity, by being an objectively determinate subject-object, an actuality*—engender multifaceted *real possibilities of engagement*. These *real possibilities* are the contingent conditions which a dispersed social human body faces, and they delimit the actuality of *appropriating activity itself*. Different geographical locations, for example, *necessitate* and engender alternate forms of appropriation for the self-preservation of the social human body. The specific appropriating activity is mediated by such conditions, and their actualization cannot but occur *in relation to those conditions*. Consequently, the appropriating activity *must be* ontologically *creative*, insofar as it demands its own metamorphosis amid the objectivity that restricts it. This is the *excess* by which appropriation satisfies the ontologically metabolic lack of the processual unfolding of the human subject-object. This creative *affirmation* holds universally, insofar as it *necessarily permeates the structure through which the social human body universally preserves itself in its dispersion across various material conditions*.

Appropriation, then, is here logically established as *creative activity* belonging to the universality of the human species-essence. The creative element is the positive expression of universality: universality's positivity is predicated on the creativity which shapes it as universality. Universality here is an "infinite universal"—the pervading ghostly material—that concretizes its finitude through its self-differentiation, and therefore "...is just as much particularity as singularity."⁵²⁰ The process by which universality affirms itself in the particular—and the particular affirms itself in its universality—is the result of "...*creative power* as self-referring absolute negativity."⁵²¹ This ontologically basic creative

⁵¹⁹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 532

⁵²⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 533

⁵²¹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 533

power as universal “...differentiates itself internally”⁵²² as *particularity*. But, in this regard, the universal is “a *determining*” because these differentiations are themselves “...one with the universality.”⁵²³

Hegel elaborates, “The particular contains the universality that constitutes its substance; the genus is *unaltered* in its species; these do not differ from the universal but only *from each other*.”⁵²⁴ The particular provides us with a logico-theoretical ground through which appropriation both retains universality and yet does not reductively subsume the difference of particulars themselves. The particular does not differ from the universal, insofar as in its own determinateness as *absolute activity of absolute form* it *refers to its own universality*, that is, recoils back unto that which *pervades its own particularity*. What pervades the particular is not an attribute or a property attached to its own thing-ness, as might be suggested by a representational account. Rather, what pervades the particular—what both unites it with the universal and also what distinguishes it from other particulars of the same kind—is the *creativity inhering in the modal structure of an activity that defines its form*; namely, *appropriation*. Indeed, the activity itself, appropriation, consists of ‘creative power’, *gives shape to itself positively through this creative power universally but in particular forms*. It is in the concrete determinacy through which this creativity is expressed practically that the self-differentiating movement of universality manifests: “The universal determines *itself*, and so is itself the particular; the determinateness is *its* difference; it is only differentiated from itself.”⁵²⁵ The determination of the universal is the practical realization of creativity in the activity of appropriation through a particular. This *realization* is its *determinateness* since it can only be realized in specific material conditions. Therefore, the determinateness in question discloses the *particular expression of the creative which inheres in the universal*. It is precisely in this way that *particulars* differentiate themselves while retaining a *universality* that belongs to every particular: “The particular has one and the same universality as the *other* particulars to which it is related.”⁵²⁶ The relationship between the universal and particular is determined by a relationality predicated on their mutually positive and immanent embeddedness in the motion of the objective dialectics of nature. In this relational process, the social human body as a substance, as actuality, achieves particularity which “...does not only *contain* the universal but exhibits it also through its *determinateness*.”⁵²⁷ Particularity’s exhibition of its universality, thus, is not an attribute, not the property of an ontologically *fixed*

⁵²² Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 533

⁵²³ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 533

⁵²⁴ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 534

⁵²⁵ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 535

⁵²⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 534

⁵²⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 534

substance, but a *metabolic motion of its own determinateness*, i.e., of *absolute activity*, appropriation, which in its *practical* instantiation both unites and differentiates this very particularity with its own universality.

Particularity, therefore, expresses itself as *diversity*: it is the “immanent connection”⁵²⁸ between universality and the diversity of its expressions, of universality’s own diverse actualization. Appropriation expresses its universality through the particular in which it takes shape as creative-aesthetic activity *of the particular itself*, but only insofar as this creative-aesthetic activity is universally constitutive of every particular of this kind. The immanent form of this activity, of appropriation, is a connection of *two opposing sides*—the universal and particular—that marks “...the negativity which in the universal is *simple*.”⁵²⁹ The simplicity of the universal overcomes itself, *negates its negativity*, in the determinateness of its particularization by means of which complexity discloses itself. The particular—or various particulars—express practically and complexly the simple of the universal. Abstract universality becomes concrete universality precisely in this way: the particulars objectively express the manifold possibility contained in universality. The actualization of manifold possibility, as *real possibility*, concretizes the initially abstract character of the universal, making of this universality a *concrete and positive* manifestation of essence. Indeed, that particular forms of appropriating occur by necessity of satisfying the ontologically inherent lack which constitutes the determinacy of the *social human body*, reflects the universality of that *social human body* itself—*affirms its absolute identity as species-essence*. Methodologically, this universality is “...the *objective foundation*”⁵³⁰ of the process of its own division. To be sure, the universal as the positive within which a negativity is contained “...must *particularize* itself.”⁵³¹ Such particularization allows us to identify the precise form of unity and difference contained not in a subject as fixed substance, but in a concrete universality realized as *a kind of activity peculiar to an absolute form*, namely, appropriation.

Such particularity concretizes itself further—or further concretizes universality—through singularity: “Just as universality immediately is particularity in and for itself, no less immediately is particularity also *singularity* in and of itself.”⁵³² Singularity is where appropriation as both universal and particular appears in its most concrete or practical form, and also what reveals the *relational* dimension of appropriation most concretely, that is, where appropriation’s anti-representational character discloses itself most vividly. Through the concretization of the universal and particular, singularity

⁵²⁸ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 534

⁵²⁹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 535

⁵³⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 713

⁵³¹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 713

⁵³² Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 540

discloses its belonging to both and becomes “...a *determinate universality* and hence self-referring determinateness, the *determinate determinate*.”⁵³³ Appropriation, as objective activity expressed concretely, always appears in its singularity, as activity emerging from a singular, *social individual*. Consequently, singularity encompasses the *phenomenological* moment of appropriation insofar as it is a ‘moment’ of activity in experience, in its actual occasioning as concrete activity in which consciousness is embedded determinately. This individuated moment as the absolute activity of a social individual, a determinate subject-object, is the most *determinate and absolute concretization of the universality of appropriation itself*. Every appropriating act is a *singular act of appropriation*. It is in this way that singularity is the ‘*determinate determinate*’: it further *determines the determinations of the universality the singularity itself is expressing*.⁵³⁴ The appearance of appropriating, as activity, is the achievement of the singular, the act of a social individual. But, this achievement, which in its singularity belongs to the social individual itself, is only possible by means of the social individual’s *own belonging to its particular sociality and to the universality of appropriation as the species-essence*. The social individual’s act of appropriating is determined determinateness, i.e., is the determinate element of its own-most universality *determining itself*.

However, this singular act is singularity “...as self-referring negativity [as] the immediate identity of the negative with itself: it *exists for itself*.”⁵³⁵ The singular is ‘self-referring negativity’, or the *affirmative movement of universality* that negates itself in its immediacy, that constitutes its negative identity relation with the universality and particularity to which it belongs, both of which *mediate* it. The singularity of appropriation is the result of the negative self-relating *mediated-immediacy* of the determinate human subject-object, a social individual that belongs to a particular society; and particular societies are possible only as the result of the *universality of sociality itself* which belongs to the *human species-essence*. We have seen how this singular human subject-object is *ontologically social*, is singular only through a relational existence. Thus, the singular *preserves itself, negates itself*, only through retaining an absolute identity of its own absolute form. In so doing, the singular is the determinate particularization of the universal. But, this very process is not a sequential process, for we know that universality itself is predicated on a doubly reflective shining. In other words, the universal-particular-singular relation is a *spiral revolving*, a relational process of self-constitution that *forms itself*, reshapes itself, in its return to itself. The *singular* realization of the universal creative power, appropriating activity, is also a *reflection-into-itself* of the singular *back into* the universal. Thus, despite singularity expressing appropriation as a

⁵³³ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 546

⁵³⁴ “The singular is not an indeterminate determinate but the determinate determinate.” Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 566

⁵³⁵ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 548

moment of its own singular existence where it "...excludes the *universal* from itself," by differentiating itself *as a singular realization of appropriation*, it nonetheless retains the "universal [as its own] moment", and thereby "...refers to it just as essentially."⁵³⁶

A brief venture into some examples will help to clarify this pertinent theoretical moment. Let us take cooking as an example. Cooking as such is a universal activity of the human species-essence, but this universality determines itself through particularity and, further, singularity in such a way as to recoil back. In cooking, one *appropriates* various objects, instruments, food, spices, etc., to create an object of consumption, an object which bears the imprints, the residues, of the subject itself. When one appropriates these objects, a combination occurs, one which is predicated on the *predisposed assumption* of what serves as a sensible combination. This is the particular, the *specific sociality* that sets the stage for appropriating activity to eventuate as *singular*. One's singular appropriation of the various relevant objects is the further determination that the universal posits via the particular. The singular, in this way, is the result of a becoming-appropriated previously but not reducible to it. In terms of cooking, for example, one's tendencies towards the particular combination of objects, selection of tools, foods, and spices, is itself a result of the particular sociality from which the social individual emerges, has become accustomed, and enacts in their singular way through their own mode of *taking possession of various objects*. Thus, *the form by which they appropriate, their mode*, is their singular negotiation within this particular. Indeed, I, as a Brazilian, cook the combination of rice and beans in a *specifically* Brazilian way (particular). However, I have lived with others who cook the same object, rice, though in a way derivative of their own particularity. A Persian tendency is to add dill weed to rice, something that does not occur in the Brazilian practice of rice-making. I now include dill weed in my rice, a singular differentiation of a *particular* practice that is determined by the universality of cooking itself. Moreover, the particular form in which rice takes shape—either in Brazilian, Persian, or whatever form—is nothing but the result of the sedimentation and habituation of *singular* acts of appropriating, acts which return to the particular, *ground it*, and form the particularity of that *mode of appropriation* as a particular mode; a process which itself informs the universality of cooking—indeed makes of that universality a concrete *intelligibility*.

Another example is dwelling. We, universally, make our dwelling spaces our *own*. There is something of our singularity that imprints itself within our spaces of dwelling, for we *appropriate* our space and in so doing *make it our own*. No matter how strong a given tendency within a particular may

⁵³⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 549

be to impose on the singular a certain form of dwelling, the singular is always a creative-aesthetic moment of the universal instantiation of dwelling. My room is *my room*, *my own*, *not because of the juridical relations involved in the objects of my possession*, but precisely because—in the peculiar organization or setup of the objects I appropriate—my objective subjectivity discloses itself singularly, arranges objects in accordance with a sensibility that is mine. However, this sensibility, the disposition that inclines itself towards the organization of objects in some general way is itself the *result* of my own embeddedness in a social particularity; a social particularity, moreover, that conditions the needs immanent to my thought process—in its most sensuous character—which participates in determining the form by which I appropriate that space which is *mine*. Indeed, this is an *ontological, transhistorical* condition of the human species-essence. Even in the most atrocious conditions, of homelessness or imprisonment, the human subject-object *takes hold* of its own space, *appropriates objects in their own way* to the extent possible as delimited by circumstance. A spatial body spatializes itself by means of appropriating the objects necessary to its own form amid various material conditions. This is the immanent creativity and aesthetic moment of appropriation. Appropriation is creative-aesthetic activity not in a formal way of upholding an externally defined notion of the creative and the aesthetic. On the contrary, the creative and the aesthetic are *mundane* elements of appropriation, of the self-determining motion of self-preservation. The latter, then, cannot be understood in positivist terms as merely quantitative, *biological* preservation. It is that too, but appropriation *exceeds* it by its *mode*, by a self-preservation that is necessarily *qualitative* in character, and differentiates itself qualitatively in its very realization.

Appropriation is here seen, once again, as a *reciprocally determined motion* not only of self-preservation, but also of self-constitution, of the taking shape of an absolute identity beholden to an absolute form. In the reflective movement from universality to particularity to singularity—which is simultaneously a movement from singularity to particularity and back to universality—appropriation escapes *representation*, for it does not emanate from a determinate subject-object, a social individual, but rather *moves through it*, expresses the objective relationality of the human species-essence as *processual instantiation of activity*. The very substantiality of the absolute form of the *social human body*, then, is substantive only as an *ensemble of negative self-determination, a metabolic totality, that preserves itself through an activity that transforms itself by transforming the subject-objects which it necessarily confronts amid a broader totality, the ‘totality of conditions;’* and, thereby, provides its own subjectivity with further objectivity, an *objective subjectivity that is necessarily self-objectifying, makes of itself its own object as a subject* (subject-object), i.e., *takes possession of itself*. Its singularity is its universality determinately affirming itself. Here it is the *creative-aesthetic*, the qualitative dimension of appropriation, that enacts universality’s self-differentiation as

particular and singular, a self-differentiation that returns to itself and reshapes the affirmative form of this universality.

The universality of appropriation, then, manifests through the particular. The particular here refers to the particularity of a *society*, a *social particularity*; or, as we will see with Marx, a *historically specific social form*. The singular is within this *social* particularity. In these terms, we can identify the variability of appropriation, its *essential* heterogeneity, that nonetheless retains itself as human species-essence, i.e., we discover the precise way in which this *modal structure of appropriation—the mode of appropriation—* is further concretely differentiated as belonging to a *particular* social structure within which it becomes actualized *through* the singular. The actualization or realization of appropriation through the singular, itself *reshapes the particular and the universality from which it was initially posited*. Insofar as particular societies of a universal humanity are always already *immersed* within *objective* material conditions, its singular members (the social individual) necessarily engage *creatively*—however minutely or extravagantly— with these very conditions in the process of self-preservation; a self-preservation that is its *own*, and in so being is also not *merely* its own but rather is *social*, i.e., is the self-preservation of its *own sociality*, that to which it *necessarily belongs* and through which this singular moment of appropriation is itself the singular negotiation of previous moments of *becoming-appropriated* socially. Here, the creative as pertaining to the particularity of the *social* is also mediated by an aesthetic dimension, insofar as the particularity of a given society is the *result* of the sedimentation of previous forms of appropriation. Thus, the aesthetic and creative element are equally constitutive of appropriation as the defining feature of the human species-essence. Appropriation is defined as creative-aesthetic activity precisely because its *realization in practice*, its *concrete expression as absolute activity*, cannot be *homogenous*, but singularly differentiates itself as a result of its objective immersion in varying material conditions. Such singular realizations then *concretize* themselves in becoming the sedimentation of the social particularity to which they belong, for the singular is always relationally subsumed by the particular and the universal. Here, in this concretization, appropriation discloses its teleological dimension (its purposiveness). The universal *concretizes* itself in its particularization and becomes singular through purposive activity: “Purpose...is the *concrete universal* containing within itself the moment of particularity and of externality; it is therefore active and the impulse to repel itself from itself.”⁵³⁷ This concretization is the immanent teleological motion of the human life-form as such, as relational and processual activity insofar as the human subject makes of itself an object, a subject-object; for as its own object, the social

⁵³⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 657

individual “...has the determinateness of its totality *outside it*, in *other* objects, and these again *outside them*, and so forth to infinity.”⁵³⁸

With teleology, the movement of the concept has arrived at life through mechanism and chemism. But, this is a reading of the *Logic* the *second time around*, where the previous concepts and teleology itself are already in reference to a determinate content: *appropriation*. For this reason, I will skip over the nuances found in the transition between mechanism and chemism toward teleology, though they are presupposed in my approach to teleology itself. At stake in teleology is the purposiveness immanent to the human life-form, an immanent purposiveness that takes shape through the unfolding of the species-essence, through appropriation; for “...only the *form of purposiveness* constitutes by itself the essential element of the teleological.”⁵³⁹

It is difficult to approach teleology and purposiveness without their metaphysical baggage. However, we must keep in mind that teleology and purposive activity here are meant in their most *materialist* sense—even in Hegel. Purposiveness itself *inheres* in activity, immanent activity of an absolute form. It is a purposiveness *according to itself*, beholden to the materiality of the subject-object in question: *purpose is the subject-object’s own being in-and-for-itself*. It is its *own* purposiveness. We can take, for example, the blossoming of a flower. The flower’s purposive activity is a *blossoming*, not because of a metaphysical, morally-laden value external to the flower, but rather *because the blossoming is its own, is the activity tethered to the flower itself as specific form*. Purpose—at this ontological level—is *not* something a subject-object encounters or finds in its determinate becoming *but is the determinate becoming itself*. Its metabolic self-preserving *is* its purposive activity, is its own-most *purposiveness* as self-determination. We will show how its immanent purposiveness is also tethered to, conditioned by, and involved in a relational totality, but this just means that its purposiveness is actualized relationally, not that purpose as such is external to it. In this regard, teleological motion, *purposive activity*, is not predictive in an *a priori* way. The flower’s metabolic activity determines the actualization of its blossoming—as a particular kind of thing beholden to its own form, and therefore its own form of activity—but it does not follow that it will *always* blossom. Its blossoming is a real possibility belonging to its absolute actuality, the objectivity of its form, but in its relational existence it may encounter external determinations which impede or hinder the blossoming. Despite this, its internal impulse as part of the metabolic structure of the kind of thing that it *is*, continues to engage in purposive activity, *is purposive activity of its own striving toward and through self-preservation, its absolute negativity*. As we will see in

⁵³⁸ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 633

⁵³⁹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 654

the following section on reason, this purposive activity takes on a different form with the introduction of human consciousness as pertaining to the absolute identity of the absolute form of the *social human body*.

Teleology as purpose, Hegel reminds us, is not just a relation but relational activity immanent to a form of life. Purposive activity *develops* through its belonging to an absolute form as the *means* through which this absolute form transformatively preserves itself through its relation to externality (other subject-objects) within a totality of conditions. The immanent purposiveness of the *social human body*—at the purely ontological level—“...stands inside the sphere of objectivity...[and] is still affected by externality as such and has an objective world over against it to which it refers.”⁵⁴⁰ To be sure, purposiveness itself is the *result* of an immersion within the sphere of objectivity, a field in which purposive activity becomes necessary according to itself, according to the absolute identity of its absolute form. In the sphere of objectivity, actualities confront each other, appear over-against each other, and thus constitute a *necessary* relation of unity and difference. Purposiveness as an activity immanent to an object is constituted through this relationality since the external determinations *penetrate* its absolute form through its own metabolic motion. Here, the process by which external determinateness mediates the absolute form of the living subject-object gives rise to the *subjectivity* of purpose; or, the objectively *subjective* character of the immanent purposiveness of the subject-object. The determinateness it undergoes “...has the *determinateness of externality* within it, and its simple unity is therefore the unity that repels itself from itself and in this repelling maintains itself.”⁵⁴¹ In this way, purposive activity is structured by the external determinateness which conditioned it, which it has internalized as determinations of its absolute form. However, this internalization which unites the absolute form with itself, penetrates its immediacy, is met with the *negativity* of the subject-object’s absolute form, the negativity which *repels itself from itself*, i.e., a negativity that induces the *form of its own mediation*. Hegel explains, “This negative relating to the object is equally a negative attitude toward itself, a sublation of the subjectivity of purpose.”⁵⁴² As a result of this negativity, purposive activity *externalizes* itself, *affirms itself* by means of its objectively *subjective* negation of the external object. This is the *means* through which subjectivity enacts itself relationally.

Hegel writes, “[t]hrough a means the purpose unites with objectivity and in objectivity unites with itself.”⁵⁴³ The objective subjectivity of the absolute identity of an absolute form *extends* itself

⁵⁴⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 656

⁵⁴¹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 657

⁵⁴² Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 658

⁵⁴³ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 659

toward other objects—other objects to which it is already *united in its difference*—and in so doing undergoes an objectively purposive activity that mediates itself with itself, that brings in the object toward itself. This reciprocally determinate interaction signifies that “[p]urpose is in need of a means for its realization, because it is finite...[a means] that has...the shape of an *external* existence indifferent toward itself and its realization.”⁵⁴⁴ External objects are *indifferent* to the purposive activity necessary to the living being, and in this sense bear a relation of non-identity. But, purposiveness is activity, purposive activity, engulfed by the movement of necessity, the necessity of self-determination of the living being’s absolute form. In this way, this non-identity relation is simultaneously a relation of identity itself, *for purposive activity is metabolic motion*, is non-static, and *sublates this indifference, this externality*, in its being in-and-for-itself: “In being active in its means, therefore, purpose must not determine the object as *something external to it*...the otherwise external activity of purpose through its means must determine itself *as mediation* and thus sublimate itself as external.”⁵⁴⁵ The externality is relational, precisely because it is not a *pure* externality. There is no *atomism* here, no indifference or separation of actualities and absolute forms between each other. On the contrary, *absolute identity is configured through this relationality* as the *processual unfolding of purposive activity*. Indeed, in purposive activity the living being *specifies the varying degrees of the relational*: external objects disclose the degree of their relational involvement *through purposive activity*. Purposive activity, *immanent teleology*, reveals the needs of the social human body at the abstract ontological level, needs that are themselves the result of its *negativity*, needs that *affirm themselves through activity*: appropriation as practical activity.

Appropriation as practical activity emanating from the living being (the human species-essence), then, is *purposive activity* at this basic ontological level. Its purposiveness is the form by which its relationality is disclosed as *life-process*. Hegel writes, “This process begins with *need*...the twofold moment of self-determination of the living being by which the latter posits itself as negated and thereby refers itself to an *other* than it.”⁵⁴⁶ The ontological lack inherent in the metabolic motion of the determinate human subject-object, as *living being*, is a *need*, a need that marks its necessary relation to objects outside it, objects it must *appropriate* through its *excess*, through *purposive activity*. In this objective relationality, necessity undergirds the realization of appropriation since the “living being is...the impulse to posit *as its own* this *world which is other than it*, to posit itself as equal to it, to sublimate the world and objectify *itself*.”⁵⁴⁷ In its *concrete existence* as a living being (the absolute identity of an absolute form)

⁵⁴⁴ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 659

⁵⁴⁵ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 662

⁵⁴⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 684

⁵⁴⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 684

the *social human body* implicitly posits the world as its own. This own-ness, however, does not imply a relationship of *ownership*. The social human body posits the world as its own only in the sense of a belonging: the world is its own because to it the social human body *belongs*. In belonging to the world, the social human body *appropriates it*, makes the world its own. Appropriation, therefore, is always already a form of belonging—what I call a *belonging-form*. The equality involved in this relation, then, is likewise an *inequality*, insofar as the world not only maintains itself as external but also maintains itself as transformative and, thereby, conditions the absolute negativity through which the social human body transforms itself, makes of its own subjectivity an object, i.e., *objectifies itself processually and relationally*. Thus, Hegel asserts, “[i]ts self-determination has therefore the form of objective externality, and since it is at the same time self-identical, it is the absolute *contradiction*.”⁵⁴⁸ The contradiction is absolute as a result of a mutually constitutive relation of transformation. For to maintain itself as itself, its self-determining self-preservation, the social human body *negates itself through purposive activity, as means*, such that it affirms itself. The world too offers resistance, affirms itself and negatively affects the *negativity of the social human body, penetrates the body’s porous existence*, where the “...externality [is] transformed into interiority.”⁵⁴⁹ At the same time, the social human body externalizes itself, *self-determines*: the human species-essence *appears* to and within an objective world of inter-related yet *indifferent objects* configured by its own absolute form, a form of activity that itself discloses the *real possibilities* of its *form of belonging in the world, its determinateness*. Indeed, “the indifference of the objective world to determinateness and hence to purpose is what constitutes its external aptitude to conform to the subject.”⁵⁵⁰ The *real possibility*—the actuality—through which the world is conformable at all underlies the necessity of the human-nature relation, the necessity of purposive activity as self-determination, the necessity of *appropriation* as tied to the objective limits of the corporeal *social human body*.⁵⁵¹ In these terms, the identical subject-object is rendered as, again, a unity of opposites, a unity of mutual exclusion predicated on the metabolic motion of determinate subject-objects which inform the constitution of the absolute identity of the absolute form expressed by the human species-essence. The finitude of the singular living being, the social individual, is the true infinity of a *concrete universality*: the realization of self-determination through *appropriation as purposive activity*.

⁵⁴⁸ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 684

⁵⁴⁹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 685

⁵⁵⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 685

⁵⁵¹ Ng explains corporeality as grounded in inner purposiveness: “The corporeal form of the living individual provides a schema of immediate synthetic unity that at once enables and constrains its internally purposive activity, allowing it to transform its subjective purposes and aims into objective reality.” Ng, *Hegel’s Concept of Life*, 265

We return here to the contradiction involved in the *vanishing* as the processual structure of the social human body's determinate becoming. The interiorization of the external, objective world is mediated by the *vanishing*, for the latter is the process by which these external mediations condition the *self-mediating form of the social human body's own immediacy*. What vanishes is the immediacy of the mediation itself, which in being interiorized re-asserts itself in the social human body's immediacy. However, *immediacy is absolute negativity*, and is therefore *self-mediation*. In this sense, the vanishing is not a disappearance *but a lingering, a non-residual remainder of external determinations* that maintains itself in the determinate becoming of the social human body. This is how the natural immediacy of the social human body—*the immediacy of nature in spirit*—preserves its *species-essence*, mediates its own immediacy through its relational existence. In turn, this ontologically metabolic process is predicated on purposive activity, one which is purposive *immanently*, i.e., according to the *absolute identity of its absolute form*. Purposive activity is the positive result of absolute form's negativity. As such it coincides with universality's own positivity. The positivity of the universal determines particularity which itself determines singularity: *purposive activity is the affirmative moment of appropriation as the creative-aesthetic activity of the singular*. But this process is a reflective one. Singular purposive activity is universal purposive activity in its self-differentiating *concretization*. The finitude of the singular activity, then, is a recoil back toward the particular and, further, toward the universal. This cyclical process is the *spiral of appropriation as the basic mediation of the human-nature relation*.

As the mediation of the human-nature relation, appropriation emerges as *purposive activity*, an activity which is also a *means* toward self-determination, mediates the very process by which self-determination occurs. This is the ontological sphere of the objective dialectics of nature, an objective dialectics that has differentiated nature from itself in the social human body, which can *only* preserve itself in this objective sphere through purposive activity, through *appropriation* of the objects necessary to its determinate becoming, to its actuality. In this moment, the teleological subsumes the mechanical, escapes pure mechanism: "By seizing hold of the object, the mechanical process passes over into an internal process by which the individual *appropriates* the object in a manner that takes away from it its distinctive make-up, makes it into a means and confers upon it its own subjectivity as its substance."⁵⁵² In appropriating the objective world, the social human body *transforms* objects in a way peculiar to its own objectivity subjectivity, its *absolute form*, and thus transforms its own subjectivity. In making the object its own, it equally imprints its own subjectivity on the object, a subjectivity that reflects back

⁵⁵² Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 686

into its own objective metabolic motion and, thereby, *conditions it as a determinate mediation*. In so doing, appropriation instantiates a *form of belonging*; its self-determination is a reflection-into-self, a *becoming-appropriated*, wherein the social human body *particularizes itself* through constituting a *belonging-form*, a life-form predicated on *purposive activity* of a particular kind. Finally, this particularization engendered by purposive activity describes how appropriation as human species-essence is self-differentiating, expresses itself in heterogeneous forms while retaining its own *positive and concrete universality*. Indeed, this immanently teleological relation, the necessary realization of purpose through an engagement with external objects, also reveals that such external objects—*the objective world*—is *intelligible*.

Here, we reach the transition from objective dialectics to subjective dialectics as mediated through *reason*. The necessary relation between the social human body and the objective world—nature—is the condition of possibility for appropriation as the very process by which the social human body maintains itself as itself, and differentiates itself heterogeneously. For, in the very relation of the social human body with its other, a relation of activity, the external world reveals its intelligibility. Immanent purposiveness, as activity, *presupposes* the intelligibility of the objects it confronts. The appropriated object is appropriated by means of a recognition of its conformity to the very activity of appropriation. Through the teleological aspect of appropriation, *reason* makes its appearance, a reason that inheres in the objectivity of the external world itself. The social human body *discovers itself* through the already existing intelligibility of nature; an intelligibility that *transforms the social human body's process of self-determination*.

[4.6] Subjective Dialectics: Reason, Teleology, & Appropriation

We have now reached the sphere of *subjective dialectics* where appropriation, as an ontological category, transitions into a *social ontology*, into the sphere of sociality, the *realm of freedom*. It must be kept in mind, however, that subjective dialectics is *not* external to objective dialectics. The former unfolds within and through the latter by which it is necessarily subsumed: *the objective dialectics of nature structures and conditions the motion of subjective dialectics*. The relation between the two, then, is a *metabolic relation*, a relation between two *distinct yet inter-related and inter-determinate metabolic processes*: the human-nature relation. However, we have seen in the previous sections that the human, in my reading of Hegel's *Logic*, is not a fixed subject but an *ensemble of determinations in motion*, a subject-object consisting of an absolute form that in its absolute negativity sustains itself as an absolute identity through absolute activity. The most basic or elemental category that describes this absolute activity, as *relational and processual*, is appropriation. Indeed, the 'human' is always an unfolding *social human body* which

constitutes itself through the combinatory spiral of appropriating and becoming-appropriated. But, it always does so *socially* and *objectively*, and in this way objectively unfolds its own subjectivity.

Subjectivity here is not meant as the ‘relative’ and even less so the ‘personal.’ Subjective dialectics refers simply to *sociality*, to the ensemble of the social which is the ontological constitution of the *social human body*. ‘Subjective’, then, refers to the *subjectivity belonging to a sociality*, a *social particularity*. This subjectivity is an achievement or a *result*. The creative-aesthetic dimension constitutive of appropriation at the ontological level marks the form by which the universality of the human species-essence differentiates itself from itself, and therefore *gives subjectivity to itself heterogeneously amid various material conditions*, which themselves inform the very *mode* through which appropriation (creative-aesthetic activity) is *positively expressed*. The objective dialectical relation between material conditions and social particularity (social subjectivity) is the ground out of which the universality of the creative-aesthetic activity realizes itself—instantiates its own particularity—insofar, as mentioned above, as the material conditions are *interiorized* in the social human body itself by means of its metabolic process of self-preservation and self-determination. In its encounter with the objective world, in specific material conditions, the social human body *appropriates objects* and, in so doing, sediments a sense of belonging to this very world, a *belonging-form*. From social particularity (which concretizes itself through this process of self-differentiation predicated on appropriation) enacting a belonging-form there arises a social subjectivity, a subjectivity that is never purely individual. Indeed, the individual is always a *social individual*, and as such the subjectivity of the sociality to which it belongs *pervades* and determines its social *individuality*. Nonetheless, this social individual as its own singularity is not reducible to this social subjectivity, but always has it as its referent. The social individual can no more escape this social subjectivity than it can escape the *objectivity of its own physiological constitution through the objective dialectics of nature*. To be sure, the social individual is determined by both *the subjective dialectics of the sociality to which it belongs and the objective dialectics of nature through which it is at all*.

Both of these determinations, however, do not mean that the social individual is simply a mechanical extension or reproduction. In fact, it is precisely because of these determinations, their *necessity*, that the social individual possesses freedom and agency *ontologically*. This is the role of reason as ontologically constitutive of the human species-essence, as pertaining to the activity of appropriation. Reason *mediates* appropriation, deploys itself in absolute activity. Through its self-mediating negativity, the social human body preserves itself in its excess, the impulse through which its ontologically metabolic lack is satisfied. This excess is realized through absolute activity. This absolute activity is an externalization, a self-appearance, in relation to external objects. The social

human body *appropriates* the objective world, and it does so creatively and aesthetically. That it does so at all, that it is ontologically capable of appropriation in manifold ways, means that the objects it appropriates retain some kind of intelligibility, are objects with which the social human body can *deal*. Thus, reason is the invisible yet effective mediation that sublates appropriation itself, that *transforms* the ontological necessity of this purposive activity (immanent teleology) into something beyond its mere physiological reproduction; this invisibility, however, reveals itself through purposive activity. Indeed, reason is that which redirects appropriation toward purposive activity beyond itself *and* toward itself. Reason is appropriation's own self-mediation. As such, it is the instantiation of the universal into the singular as mediated by the (social) particular. As this instantiation, it is the result of the forms of becoming-appropriated peculiar to the social particularity in which it remains embedded even through its appearance in the singular. The singular, social individual enacts its freedom through appropriation; for, in appropriating, the social individual *reasons* with what it encounters in its *own* way, a reason nevertheless mediated by the social particularity (subjective dialectics) from which it emerges and by which it is conditioned—a *socially subjective rationality*. In this way, reason is *historical* and always already historically *situated*.

Throughout Chapter 3 (and parts of Chapter 1), I already engaged reason's relation to intuition and reason as absolute knowing in terms of spirit's differentiation and unity with nature. Rather than expanding on the epistemological element of reason as knowledge, here I approach Hegel's concern with reason in a *strictly* ontological sense and, more specifically, how it is immanently tied to *purposive activity*. This approach not only proves Schelling's critique outlined in Chapter 1 wrong, it also demonstrates the *materialist* side of Hegel's ontology by his *tethering* of rationality/reason to an immanent ground and thereby provides an alternative characterization of Hegelian reason to the post-structuralist reading described in Chapter 2. Indeed, here the accusations of formalism, of Hegel's abstract construction of reason, is undermined by demonstrating how, for Hegel, reason is tied to activity. Let us investigate further.

The immanent teleology inhering in the absolute form of the social human body develops into a teleology of practice: situated *purposive activity* in a *social relationality*. We have seen that, for Hegel, spirit differentiates itself from nature but retains an *immediate* unity with it. Moreover, we have also seen that spirit is *sociality*: a metabolic totality of relationally situated, *particularized*, social human bodies. The immediacy of nature is therefore retained in this sociality, a sociality that realizes itself *purposively* through external objects. These external objects are themselves *intelligible* and made to be intelligible as a *means* (purposive activity) for the self-determination and self-preservation of this sociality itself.

The immediacy of nature thereby sublates itself in sociality's own motion of self-determination, and nature presents itself as a unity of opposites that mediates sociality by means of a contradiction; namely, the contradiction between a nature that exists beyond the immediacy of the means and the nature encountered and confronted through the means, through purposive activity. This is nature *socialized*, or *socialized nature*. The *mode of nature's socialization*, sociality's particularization of itself through *appropriation*, constitutes the particular rationality immanent to that *form of belonging*, that *particularization* of *conscious* creative-aesthetic activity. Reason/rationality appear, then, as part of the sublation of appropriation itself, its *self-mediation*.

Hegel writes, "...purpose is to be taken as the *rational in its concrete existence*. It manifests *rationality* by [holding together] the *objective difference in its absolute unity*."⁵⁵³ In the sphere of objectivity, where we have reached the ontology of sociality's metabolic motion, immanent purpose sublates itself as inclusive of the consciousness that belongs to the *physiological constitution of the social human body*. Consciousness then is present in purposive activity. Consciousness extends beyond the limit of its own physiology *through* purposive activity, an activity which is *now* purposive in revealing itself as retaining a *rational element*. Again, this is not a formal rationality, a disembodied, supra-sensible 'Reason' guiding purpose. It is an *immanent rationality presently tied to immanent purposive activity*. Purposive activity is the holding together of the 'objective difference' between the social human body and nature (or more specifically, the *objects of nature which have become a means through purposive activity*) which is at the same time an '*absolute unity*' and, in this way, manifests *rationality*—the rationality of a *social particularity*.

Rationality or reason here is the necessary result of purposive activity for it is a relation between the social human body and its other: "...that the purpose posits itself in a *mediate* connection with the object, and *between* itself and this object *inserts* another object, may be regarded as the *cunning* of reason."⁵⁵⁴ Reason refers not merely to itself but to an other and sustains its self-sublation through its *dependence on this externality* through the 'means' by which it realizes itself: "...in the means, therefore, the rationality in the purpose manifests itself as such by maintaining itself in *this external other*, and precisely *through* this externality."⁵⁵⁵ Reason concretizes itself—*is manifest in activity*—not from an abstract, 'fixed', subject, but *through it*. This processual and relational understanding of the social human body is, then, the processual and relational understanding of consciousness itself: consciousness as *immersed within determinate relations* which invoke a rationality *immanent to the process by*

⁵⁵³ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 657

⁵⁵⁴ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 663

⁵⁵⁵ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 663

which it determines its own self-preservation. The ‘cunning of reason’ is reason’s immanent connection to *activity*, through which the activity itself displays a rationality. In terms of appropriation, then, the ‘cunning of reason’ is nothing other than reason’s very own *transformative dimension in its materiality as absolute activity*.⁵⁵⁶ Appropriation, therefore, is not formally rational (not ‘Reason’ as such), but contains an immanent rationality, an immanently creative-aesthetic activity that realizes itself in practice through an immanent reason(-ing) which sustains itself via the *objective difference found within its absolute unity* to a socialized nature. It is worth quoting Hegel at length:

To this extent the *means* is higher than the *finite purposes* of *external* purposiveness: the *plough* is more honorable than are immediately the enjoyments which it procures and which are its purposes. The *tool* lasts while the immediate enjoyments pass away and are forgotten. It is in their tools that human beings possess power over external nature, even though with respect to their purposes they are subjected to it.⁵⁵⁷

This passage is indeed a remarkable moment in which Hegel’s materialist insight bears fruit to the *dialectical relational ontology* I have sought to describe. The immanent teleology belonging to the metabolic process of the social human body’s determinate becoming sublates itself. In so doing, the element of consciousness that belongs to the *physiological constitution of the social human body* extends itself beyond itself. Through the *interiorization* of external determinations—*mediated by the process of becoming*—and the body’s *relational existence* dependent on something other than it for its self-actualization, its *absolute activity*—*appropriation*—develops a rationality peculiar to the *particularization of that activity itself*. Indeed, *appropriation* is the activity of the singular social individual that exists within a *social* particularity. As such, *appropriating activity* contains as its own mediation the *rationality* derived from that very social particularity. This rationality is possible precisely because it is a part of the *universality of appropriation as constitutive of the human species-essence*, which is *simultaneously the universality of reason in spirit*. Moreover, the rationality involved here is predicated on activity, on the self-sublation of purposive activity which results in complexity. In other words, the *process by which consciousness complexifies itself is mediated by appropriation, by appropriation as that which sublates the merely ontological side of purposive activity and makes of this ontological side the facet of its social appearance, its appearance as a mode of appropriation, as consciously purposive activity dependent on the relationality of its sociality*. And, that *rationality is immanent to this process of complexification* means that *appropriation complexifies itself, qualitatively alters the creative-aesthetic form by which it is concretized*. This is of course a process of reflection, a turning back, as we have already seen. Indeed, the

⁵⁵⁶ Lukács too claims that “...Hegel’s so-called ‘cunning of reason’, has its ontological foundation and determination precisely in his investigation of labor.” Lukács, *The Ontology of Social Being Vol. I*, 54

⁵⁵⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 663

concretization of this process of complexification of both appropriation and consciousness *reflects* back from the singular into the particular, and thus the *mode of appropriation becomes part of the specific sociality within which it is mediated and becomes its own mediation*. The tool *contains* this rationality as it is the result of having become appropriated, since the tool is nothing but the crystallization of previous *appropriating activity*, is its *result*. In turn, as *result*, the tool becomes another mediation between rationality and appropriation insofar as it conditions *their own mediation*, the mediation between appropriation and rationality itself. The *form* by which my consciousness approaches the use of the plough is *mediated* by the rationality involved in the plough itself, the rationality involved in my use of it (purposive activity), *and* the previous conditioning of my very consciousness, the *social mediations that have already penetrated the form by which my consciousness inter-weaves the relational elements before it and the activity to which it is directing itself*. To be sure, these are *absolute determinations* involved in the *mode of appropriation*. The tool, then, expresses the ‘means’ as a purpose of a higher order, a *social purpose*, in which the relationality between myself, the tool, and the rationality immanent to the activity for which it is deployed as a means, discloses not just the immediacy of use but the mediations tethered to this immediacy, mediations which exist *beyond myself as a singularly social individual—mediations that constitute my socially relational existence in absolute unity and differentiation from the socialized nature I confront; mediations of appropriating activity itself*. It is precisely in this way—the tool becoming its own mediation—where *becoming-appropriated* occurs, for the tool, *as mediating appropriating activity*, as its own object in designated relation to other objects, confers *upon me*, actively and determinately, an effect which I *interiorize*. The interiorization of this effect pervades *my body*, conditions its modal expression, and thus I also become appropriated by the tool. But, this appropriation I undergo does not pertain to the tool as a mere object, but to the tool as a *relational mediation between myself and other objects*; that is, *as relational activity of appropriating which is simultaneously a becoming-appropriated*. Indeed, the tool does not exist apart from its context and in *appropriating the tool purposively, I too become appropriated by the activity engendered by the tool itself; I become, that is, immersed in the purposiveness and immanent rationality presupposed by the very relational existence of the tool as a particular kind of object deployed through particular kinds of activity*. Furthermore, I can use the plough in my own *form, freely in real possibility, in the recognition of the necessity involved in the actuality of the plough, the actuality of the activity, and the actuality that is my own*.⁵⁵⁸ This is the ‘power human beings possess over external

⁵⁵⁸ In the Jena Lectures of 1805-1806, *Philosophy of Spirit*, Hegel notes how, in this sense, “[t]he tool [as] means is of greater value than the goal of desire, which goal is particular; the tool encompasses all such particularities.” This marks the consistency with which Hegel approaches the *relationality of objects*, not reducing them to their mere thinghood. GWF Hegel. *Hegel and the Human Spirit: A Translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805-6) with commentary*. Translated by Leo Rauch. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983. 103

nature:’ the power of reason’s self-understanding—not of reason itself, but reason as it appears in the relational setting of processual activity, of appropriation; as it appears, that is, in its *own-most sociality*. This is not a power of domination, not a Prometheanism, but the power of creativity emerging from the unfolding of the human species-essence in the ontological process of its self-determining self-preservation.⁵⁵⁹

Hegel concludes the above passage with a prescient observation, namely, that despite the power human beings possess over nature, they remain—‘with respect to their purpose’—‘subjected to it.’ The power of reason as immanently tied to appropriation and, therefore, to purposive activity, is thus always subject to a socialized nature, to the material conditions that delimit the *real possibility* involved in appropriation’s self-actualization. Immanent teleology’s self-sublation “...does not just keep outside the mechanical process...it keeps itself in it and is its determination.”⁵⁶⁰ The mechanical process here represents the law of nature, *ontological necessity*, that constitutes the limits of purposive activity’s realization. But, purposive activity supersedes the mechanical process through its attachment to reason and therefore “...concretely exists freely over against the object and its process, and is self-determining activity.”⁵⁶¹ In the self-determination of this purposive activity, *the absolute activity of the social human body expresses itself in accordance with its absolute form, a form that contains consciousness and therefore reason as part of itself*. Thus, in its externalization, “the power of purpose over the object is this identity existing for itself, and its activity is the manifestation of this identity.”⁵⁶² Appropriation, as the concrete crystallization of self-sublated purposive activity—an *immanent teleology now endowed with reason, manifesting reason*—is the absolute activity through the human species-essence maintains and transforms the *absolute identity of its absolute form. This is freedom in its most absolute sense*. It is not an abstract freedom of the infinitely possible, but a freedom that realizes itself under the objective restraints of its own sociality and nature (hence, the relationship between necessity and contingency involved in freedom).⁵⁶³ A freedom grounded in the creative-aesthetic dimension of reason, of rationality in

⁵⁵⁹ There is no doubt that some *forms* of this ontological ground can be expressed socially as *domination*, but that is a result of a historically specific social form of appropriation and does not belong to its ontological constitution. In this way, the creative-aesthetic activity that appropriation *is* cannot be understood in moralistic terms within the framework of its ontological status. For the *creative-aesthetic* can be expressed problematically, not only in terms of nature, but in terms of its sociality, its concrete social expression. This, however, is outside the scope of the present work.

⁵⁶⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 663

⁵⁶¹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 663

⁵⁶² Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 663

⁵⁶³ Russell Rockwell notes that “After contingency becomes necessity, in the actual transition Hegel shows not only that contingency *becomes* freedom, but also that necessity is intrinsic to it.” Russell Rockwell. *Hegel, Marx, and the Necessity and Freedom Dialectic: Marxist-Humanism and Critical Theory in the United States*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. 57. See, also, Marcuse’s analysis in Marcuse, *Reason & Revolution*, 154.

relational activity. Reason realizes itself as freedom *only* by means of a negotiation: the negotiation of its mediated-immediacy, *the mediations that structure the real possibility present in its immediacy, its actuality, amid actually existing material conditions*. For Hegel too recognizes that the transformative element belonging to the human species-essence is also present in nature and its objects: the absolute unity of an absolute difference. In *Philosophy of Mind*, Hegel notes:

For although the world must be recognized as already complete in its essential nature, yet it is not a dead, absolutely inert world but *like the life-process*, a world which perpetually creates itself anew, which while merely preserving itself, at the same time progresses. It is in this conservation and advancement of the world that the man's work consists. Therefore...we can say the man only creates what is already there; yet...his activity must also bring about an advance.⁵⁶⁴

Indeed, the *objective dialectics of nature*, which both undergirds and externally confronts the *subjective dialectics of human sociality*, is a *metabolic totality*, a self-transforming *processual unfolding* to which the *objective subjectivity of the social human body* is *necessarily related*. Its self-preservation is its own progression, a linear/non-linear dialectic of change. This is the fundamental ground through which the social human body realizes itself: the social human body deploys itself, *appropriating* what is 'already there', and thus 'advances' itself, i.e., *transforms itself*. The mediation of appropriation with itself is reason expressed as freedom in the process of this transformation through *labor*. Thus, the transformative process engenders the *complexification of consciousness and forms of appropriation* in its *self-differentiating modality* and concretizes itself as the *mode of appropriation of a social particularity at the ontological level*.

Reason's emergent connection to purposive activity, thus, becomes constitutive of the way in which appropriation differentiates itself, and *specifies a form of its appearance*. From a general *belonging-form*—appropriation of objects in the unfolding of the life process—we reach what I call a *labor-form*, appropriation as *self-mediating* negativity affirming itself through purposive *means*, an activity that is manifest *universally* but instantiated through the particular, a *social particularity*. However, labor-form is not merely the result of a belonging-form as though one follows linearly from the other. On the contrary, they are *mutually constitutive forms* that reciprocally determine each other, that is, *mediate appropriation itself*. Labor-form, thus, is the universal element of the *species-essence as positively particularized determinacy*. Labor-form then is the *form by which* 'man creates what is already there', and therefore advances the *complexification of its own consciousness in terms of the complexification of appropriation* in a determinate setting. Labor has 'form' because it is a taking shape of the particular, thereby expressing the heterogeneity of its own-most actuality as a *universal*.

⁵⁶⁴ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 63

We see a remarkable similarity between Hegel's above quoted passage and Marx. In the *Preface to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx writes, "Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation."⁵⁶⁵ Marx here identifies the necessary relationality involved in how external, 'material conditions' determinate the mode by which the social human body can *realize itself*. To be sure, *freedom* is this realization enacted through practical activity that is limited by both its pre-existing *rationality* and the rationality engendered by *appropriating activity* amid *determinate material conditions*. Those 'tasks' the social human body can solve are not the result of an independent, supra-sensible reason, but rather the *result* of the processual and relational determination of the absolute activity of the absolute form of the human species-essence's *self-affirmation* through which it retains—in transformational form—its own absolute identity.

Marx here implicitly posits and reproduces precisely the Hegelian relational ontology heretofore described. It is not only the human being that is self-transforming, actualizing itself, but so too are the material conditions within which such self-transformation occurs. Appropriation *mediates* the reciprocal dynamic between two metabolic processes: the human subject-object (social human body) and socialized nature (which includes a *number* of subject-objects). In terms of this mediation, where self-determination and self-preservation constitute the absolute negativity through which the *social human body realizes itself*, we find labor always expressed as form: *labor-form*.

Labor-form marks reason's practical realization in terms of its object. The *objective dialectics* which inheres in the object itself, *ontologically*, is the manifestation of its own necessity—a necessity that mediates the unfolding of the *objective subjectivity of subjective dialectics*. In his interpretation of Hegel's Lectures of 1805-06, Lukács notes Hegel's recognition that "[i]n the object of labour immutable laws are at work, labour can only be fruitful if these are known and recognized."⁵⁶⁶ In this way, Lukács concludes, "[a] dialectic of the subject corresponds to this dialectic in the object."⁵⁶⁷ The social human body is itself objectively dialectical, but in a way peculiar to its *absolute form*. The external object too is objectively dialectical, but also according to its own absolute form. Nonetheless, *the mediation between the two remains determinate*: in their encounter an implicit adjustment manifests. What is adjusted is the *form through which the relation takes shape*, a form that expresses creative-aesthetic activity, *appropriation*.

⁵⁶⁵ Karl Marx. *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. Translated by S.W. Ryazanskaya. Edited by Maurice Dobb. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977. 21

⁵⁶⁶ Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, 325

⁵⁶⁷ Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, 325

Embedded in this relation, however, is *purposiveness*, the reciprocal determination between the object and the subject. This is an *ontological* relation that through reason takes on a *social form* by means of the approach to the object, namely, the *labor-form* that undergirds the appropriation of it by the subject. *The motion of the subject and the motion of the object enter into a state of stability, provisionally stationary motion.* Hegel writes:

...the self is *present (universally)*...now through mediation it must become itself through itself. Its unrest must become stabilization: the movement which annuls it as unrest, as pure movement. This [movement] is *labour*. Its unrest becomes *object*, stabilized plurality, order. Unrest becomes *order* by becoming object.⁵⁶⁸

Labor is the movement by which the *social human body* stabilizes itself, gives itself further objectivity, *makes of itself an object*. The annulment of this movement is not an annulment of movement as such: it is the annulment of the *instability of movement according to form*. The ontological unrest, the metabolic motion of objective dialectics, inheres in the metabolic motion of subjective dialectics, ontologically constitutes the *social human body*. But, at the same time, the social human body *constitutes itself*, is *self-determining*, and thus gives an order to that which it encounters in its own becoming, an order that is not only *purposive* but also *immanently reasoned*. In so doing, a degree of stability expresses itself, a stability of the relationality through which the social human body (in its social particularity) becomes itself, undergoes a *self-objectification*, a metamorphosis, through its *labor-form* by which it also realizes its form of belonging, its *belonging-form*.

Thus, summarizing Hegel's teleology of labor, Lukács notes, "...every working man knows instinctively that he can only perform those operations with the means or objects of labor that the laws or combination of laws governing those objects will permit."⁵⁶⁹ This 'instinctive knowing' is itself the result of having undergone 'becoming-appropriated' within a social particularity wherein the knowledge of the limits of the object's malleability is already immanent to the activity of labor itself. Indeed, the appropriation of the object—at this moment, in terms of a labor-form—reveals the immanent ground of reason and the purposiveness to which it is directly tied as absolute activity of an absolute form. Following this line of thought, we return to the *Logic*. Hegel writes:

...so far as the products of self-conscious purposiveness are concerned...the purpose which they should serve is a determination that is generated by a subjective resolution and constitutes the essential particularization, the form of the concrete existent, on which alone everything depends here.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁸ As quoted in Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, 325

⁵⁶⁹ Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, 345

⁵⁷⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 709

Reason and purposive activity—or better, reason as the self-sublating result of appropriation as purposive activity—constitute the particularization of the labor-form, as the resolution of the mediation between the social human body and its object. Indeed, this very resolution is itself a reflection: the *singular resolution of the mediation reflects back to the particular from which it departed, a social particular that served as the point of departure of the singular resolution itself and, in that way, served as the immanent ground of the purposiveness and reason realized in practice, the practical resolution of the mutual unrest of distinct subject-objects now made provisionally stationary, realized not simply as labor as such but as a labor-form.* The real possibility of the actualization of the labor-form in question, the limited real possibility of appropriation, is “...contained in the thing’s determination;”⁵⁷¹ is beholden to the objective laws of the external object’s own form.

The social human body remains ontologically dependent on the totality of conditions, of external objects, through which it can preserve itself as itself and in so doing transform itself. This necessary stabilization of the absolute identity of the absolute form of the social human body is achieved through *appropriation* as constitutive of the human species-essence. In this relational existence, the human species-essence unfolds in such a way as to undergo a subtle but equally consistent form of self-transformation. It is achievement of activity, of appropriation, whose result is a *complexification of itself through reason.* Reason, therefore, enables a transgression of the material boundaries the social human body encounters, insofar as it engenders novel forms of considering its own process of self-determination. The transgression is *freedom*, the accomplishment of immanent reason expressing itself socially and relationally, a freedom that is ontologically immanent to the very *physiological metabolism of the social human body*; a freedom that is itself the result of the negotiation of appropriating and becoming-appropriated; an ontological freedom enacted through immanent reason that is itself mediated by the creative-aesthetic activity to which it is bound and through which it realizes itself.⁵⁷²

There remains, of course, much to be discussed concerning Hegel’s approach to reason and freedom, but I cannot further develop all its nuances here. In this section, I have only sought to demonstrate a reading of Hegel that *concretizes* his understanding of reason and rationality as

⁵⁷¹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 709

⁵⁷² Frederick Neuhouser explains: “...for Hegel, spirituality is at work wherever humans engage in the project of reconciling their natural, biological neediness with their supreme spiritual aspiration, freedom. This implies that the form of social life appropriate to our nature as spiritual beings is one in which every essential life activity we engage in is also a site of freedom and where every expression of freedom is at the same time a material practice, addressed to our needs as living beings.” Frederick Neuhouser. “Hegel and Marx on ‘Spiritual Life’ as a Criterion for Social Critique.” In, *From Marx to Hegel and Back: Capitalism, Critique, and Utopia*. Edited by Victoria Fareld and Hannes Kuch. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. 125

immanently grounded in purposive activity, as its result. With this, we have reached the conclusion of appropriation's ontological ground, a ground that I have argued is *anti-representational* by means of its processual and relational character. I now turn to the concluding section of this chapter, where a contradiction arises between my reading of Hegel's dialectical relational ontology and Hegel's move from ontology to history and politics. In the process of reading Hegel against himself, I will bring Marx and Engels' materialism to the fore.

[4.7] Concluding Remarks: The Hegel-Marx Relation & Hegel *contra* Hegel

We must keep in mind that my reading of the *Logic* is concerned with unmasking its relational and processual elements in ontological terms—a *dialectical relational ontology*—and thereby providing a logico-theoretical structure through which appropriation and the mode of appropriation could be presented in their ontological dimension as derivative of the categories of *essence, necessity, universality, telos, and reason*. It is my contention that this reading *is* the ground of the ontology of dialectical materialism. Indeed, both Marx and Engels, in my view, not only assume this ontological relationality but develop it further and deploy it in their investigations of sociality, history, and political economy.⁵⁷³ However, if this is the case, if Hegel can be read as materialistically as I have presented, why, one might ask, do we need Marx or Engels? In other words, what renders necessary the move from Hegel to his materialist prodigies if this ontological ground is *already* so materialist in character?

In a future work, it would be possible to go in more depth in order to sufficiently answer these questions. For sake of space, however, I can only limit myself to a few observations as a response. In other words, I can provide a brief criticism of Hegel that shows precisely why the transition to Marx and Engels is necessary, and how they further ground and elaborate on this dialectical relational ontology in original ways of their own.

Arriving at appropriation as the defining modal feature of the human species-essence in a Hegelian form is precisely that: *Hegelian*, which is to say, not Hegel but *of* Hegel. More specifically, this chapter read Hegel in a *materialist form* while maintaining an immanent engagement with Hegel's own account. I maintain, then, that this reading is consistent with a defense of Hegel *pace* Schelling's critique outlined in chapter 1 and the subsequent post-structuralist suspicions of Hegel outlined in chapter 2. In that regard, Hegel's objective idealism is neither as formalistic nor as abstracted from reality as it is typically presumed to be and, in fact, provides a substantive ontological ground for any ensuing

⁵⁷³ As Lenin correctly noted: "If Marx did not leave behind him a 'Logic', he did leave the *logic* of *Capital*...[where] Marx applied to a single science logic, dialectics and the theory of knowledge of materialism...which has taken everything valuable in Hegel and developed it further." Lenin. *Collected Works Vol. 38*, 317

materialist project concerned with overcoming the problem of representational thought and with considering the theoretical implications of the ways in which the human-nature relation unfolds.

The problem, in my view, is not the ontological dimension of Hegel's work but his own application of it to history and politics. What is a remarkably nuanced and profound ontological ground becomes, unfortunately, a reductive historical and political analysis. Part of the issue lies in that Hegel defines the human species-essence as reason, rather than as the absolute activity of appropriation—we will soon see why. It is true, nonetheless, that Hegel's understanding of reason is *grounded* immanently, but in his political and historical analysis Hegel struggles to maintain the sophistication of his ontological framework through which reason emerges in terms of historical and political development. This is why I have claimed that Hegel provides us with the *logico-theoretical* structure through which appropriation and the mode of appropriation can be ascertained ontologically. He does not, however, provide us with a sufficiently rigorous form of their historical and political application. For the latter, it is Marx and Engels who carry the torch of dialectics.

It may be asserted, then, that Engels is right to make the distinction between system and method in Hegel, where the latter holds a liberatory and non-dogmatic element that the former is unable to maintain. By 'system,' however, Engels includes Hegel's *Philosophy of History* and *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*.⁵⁷⁴ If that is what we consider Hegel's system, then, Engels is correct. I look at Hegel a bit differently and consider the system to only include the *Science of Logic* and the three volumes of the *Encyclopaedia*.⁵⁷⁵ Indeed, when I think of Hegel's 'system' I think of his *ontological system*—a *relational* system of *relational* concepts—which is of course premised on his dialectical method but is not quite the same as his application of it to politics and history. Nonetheless, it is precisely through his dialectical relational ontology that Hegel provides the framework for a materialist approach to the historical and political; for, as Engels notes, "...the revolutionary character of Hegelian philosophy...[lies in the fact] that it once and for all dealt the death blow to the finality of all products of human thought and action."⁵⁷⁶ To be sure, it is this 'death blow' that I have attempted to resurrect in my account: Hegel's undermining of fixity, of atomism, of representational thought, through a relational and processual ontology of the human species-essence's unfolding through and within the

⁵⁷⁴Frederick Engels. "Ludwig Feuerbach & the End of Classical German Philosophy." In, *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 26. Lawrence & Wishart. 2010. 361

⁵⁷⁵ Despite his critical distinction, Engels nonetheless retains an immense respect for Hegel's system as a whole: "...as [Hegel] was not only a creative genius but also a man of encyclopaedic erudition, he played an epoch-making role in every sphere." Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, 362

⁵⁷⁶ Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, 359

objective dialectics of nature. An objectively dialectical relationality as processual, then, discloses the transient form through which the human species-essence unfolds itself; that is, reveals its fundamentally *metabolic* structure (the objective subjectivity of *subjective dialectics*) as united with yet irreducible to the *metabolic* structure of nature itself (the *objective dialectics of nature*) —or as Engels infamously put it: “It reveals the transitory character of everything and in everything; nothing can endure against it except the uninterrupted process of becoming and passing away.”⁵⁷⁷

To be sure, Marx himself confirms Engels’ position, noting that Hegel’s philosophy is revolutionary “...because it includes in its *positive* understanding of what exists a simultaneous recognition of its negation, its inevitable destruction; because it regards *every historically developed form as being in a fluid state, in motion, and therefore grasps its transient aspect as well.*”⁵⁷⁸ Indeed, Hegel’s analysis is the ontological basis through which *history itself is recognized as being in motion, as a determinate becoming that in its vanishing lingers through self-transformation*, a mutually constitutive becoming and passing away. The claim of the fluidity and transience of every historical form is predicated on a dialectical relational ontology that, through its *logico-theoretical structure*, reveals the forms through which historical transformation is possible at all, insofar as historical transformation is constituted through not only relations between things, determinate subject-objects, but through the *relational existence of things themselves, their internally constituted absolute negativity*. Both Marx and Engels derive from Hegel a concept of *relational* motion that, as Eva Bockenheimer asserts, “...concerns any form of being, social as well as natural: Any form of being is in a fluid state, in motion, and therefore transient”⁵⁷⁹ This relational motion is itself *dialectical motion, the metabolic, inter-affective, relational motion of the objective dialectics of nature and the subjective dialectics of sociality*. Indeed, it is in this way that Hegel conceives the dialectic, namely, *ontologically*; or, in his own words, “[dialectics] is in general the principle of all *motion*, of all *life*, and of all *activation* in the *actual world.*”⁵⁸⁰

Could, then, this relational ontology itself be “...the aspect of Hegel’s philosophy,” Bertell Ollman asks, “which Marx disparaged as idealist?” Ollman responds in the same way I do: “I think not.”⁵⁸¹ Indeed, Ollman, through emphasizing the role of the category of ‘*relation*’ throughout Marx’s

⁵⁷⁷ Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, 360

⁵⁷⁸ Postface to the Second Edition (1873) in Marx, Karl. *Capital, Vol. I*. Trans. by Ben Fowkes. Penguin Books, London. 1973. 103. My emphasis.

⁵⁷⁹ Eva Bockenheimer. “Where Are We Developing the Requirements for a New Society? The Dialectic of Today’s Capitalism from a Hegelian-Marxist Perspective.” In, *From Marx to Hegel and Back: Capitalism, Critique, and Utopia*. Edited by Victoria Fareld and Hannes Kuch. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. 198

⁵⁸⁰ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 128

⁵⁸¹ Bertell Ollman. *Alienation: Marx’s Conception of Man in Capitalist Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971. 33

works, finds that this relational character of Marx's analysis is itself inspired by and derived from Hegel. Thus, in his view, "Marx's criticism is always directed against how Hegel chose to *apply* this framework...and *never* against the relational quality [of his system]."582 It is this application with which I am concerned here: Hegel's self-undermining application of his ontological system to history and politics. This criticism, however, does not prevent me from maintaining a certain degree of continuity between Hegel and Marx, a continuity most vividly seen by their *relational ontology* premised on an *objective dialectics of nature*, which in the case of Marx and Engels specifically becomes *dialectical materialism*.583

Ollman correctly identifies the Hegel-Marx connection in terms of an ontological continuity noting "...that whenever any system-owning attribute of a factor is at question, Marx generally relies on Hegel's vocabulary."584 For example, Ollman continues, "'identity,' 'abstract,' 'essence' and 'concrete' are all [Hegelian categories] used by Marx, as they were by Hegel, to mark some aspect of the whole in the part, to refer to an *ontological* and not logical relation."585 Indeed, Marx's own appropriation of Hegel's categories, an appropriation that is itself a dialectical inversion, is "...the necessary result of the *relational* conception they shared."586 Thus, contrary to a subset of Marxian thinkers, I insist that my reading of Hegel's dialectical relational ontology shows his pertinence to Marx.587 In this regard, it was Lenin who originally identified the Hegel-Marx connection in terms of movement—what I have called metabolic motion—which undergirds the ontological continuity between the two; Hegel's relational and metabolic "core" which "had to be discovered, understood, hinüberreten [rescued], laid bare, refined, which is *precisely what Marx and Engels did*."588 Marx and Engels' development of Hegel's relational ontology is equally a refinement of the epistemic

582 Ollman, *Alienation*, 34. My emphasis.

583 Thus, I disagree with Howard Williams' claim, for example, that for Marx the dialectic "...is not an ontological or 'materialist' dialectic." Contrary to Karl Korsch, I do not think that the Hegelian influence on Marx's dialectic is reducible to a purely rhetorical strategy of presentation—"a sophisticated kind of metaphorical usage"—and, against Althusser, I do not subscribe to the notion that "Marx's discourse is in principle foreign to Hegel." See, Howard Williams. *Hegel, Heraclitus, and Marx's Dialectic*. Hempstead: Harvester Press, 1989. xii; Karl Korsch. "Introduction to *Capital*." In, *Three Essays on Marxism*. London: Pluto Press, 1971. 58; Althusser, *Reading Capital* (op cit).

584 Ollman, *Alienation*, 35

585 Ollman, *Alienation*, 35. My emphasis

586 Ollman, *Alienation*, 35

587 For an overview of the various debates on Marx's methodological dependence, or lack thereof, on Hegel, see: Tony Burns. "Marx and Scientific Method: a Non-Metaphysical View." In, *The Hegel-Marx Connection*. Tony Burns and Ian Fraser (Editors). London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000. 79-104

588 The full quote by Lenin preceding the one cited above reads: "Movement and 'self-movement'... (spontaneous, internal-movement), 'change,' 'movement and vitality,' 'the principle of all self-movement,' 'impulse' to 'movement' and to 'activity'—the opposite to 'dead Being'—who would believe that this is the core of 'Hegelianism'...?" Lenin, *Collected Works Vol. 38*, 141. My emphasis.

implications of the same, inasmuch as (*a relational*) dialectical materialism marks also the rearticulation of a theory of knowledge premised on its insights. Indeed, if, as Wataru Hiromatsu reminds us, “...Hegel’s philosophy aimed at overcoming the dichotomy of ‘subjective-objective’” at the ontological level—an aim that, in my reading Hegel *achieves*—Marx and Engels were able to further develop this achievement at the social and historical level, against representational thought, “...largely due to the fact that they saw the tracks of the precursor to this in Hegel.”⁵⁸⁹ To be sure, the relationality involved in their dialectical materialism rendered “...in terms of ontology...put forward a ‘primacy of relations’...[determining] an eco-system like ‘towards-nature—between-human beings’ relations...with production at the centre,” wherein the human species-essence is located “...as a being-in of this ‘historical world.’”⁵⁹⁰ In other words, the metabolic dynamism of the relational ontological structure developed by Hegel is taken up by Marx and Engels in a truly *materialist* form.

Again, there is not enough space to delve deep into the tensions between Hegel’s dialectical relational ontology I have heretofore described and his *Philosophy of History* and *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*—which would require an interpretation of each work in equal nuance to my interpretation of the *Logic* above. That said, drawing on passages from the *Philosophy of History* alone will suffice to read Hegel *against* himself—Hegel *contra* Hegel—in a way that reveals the problems of his approach to both the historical *and* the political.⁵⁹¹

In the introduction to the *Philosophy of History*, Hegel posits the necessity of a “*Universal History*.”⁵⁹² Universal history is certainly in synchronic unity and theoretical alignment with the relational ontology heretofore described. History is indeed the mediation between the ontological and the social, in as much as *the historical* characterizes the concrete unfolding of the ontological in terms of sociality. If, as I have argued, the universality of the human species-essence positively affirms itself in manifold heterogeneity, then, it is in *history itself* that this positivity is disclosed and within the *history of sociality* that this very positivity is itself *negated* and thus structured by the contradictory development of change or transformation: “The general thought—the category which first presents itself in this restless *mutation* of individuals and peoples, existing for a time and then *vanishing*—is that of *change* at large.”⁵⁹³ The universality of history, for Hegel, means “...that the history of the world...presents us

⁵⁸⁹ Wataru Hiromatsu. *The Schema of the Theory of Reification*. Translated by John Hocking. Leiden: Brill, 2022. 18

⁵⁹⁰ Hiromatsu, *The Schema of the Theory of Reification*, 54

⁵⁹¹ In a future work, I intend to provide my own account of *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* in terms of the relational ontology I have described. To do it here would simply be an injustice to the complexity of the text itself.

⁵⁹² Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 4

⁵⁹³ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 72

with a rational process.”⁵⁹⁴ By this, Hegel indicates that history is *intelligible*, that reason can deal with history, make sense of the historical as processual. Here, akin to his claim that nature is intelligible,⁵⁹⁵ Hegel is noting the dialectical unity of necessity and contingency present in the historical process: what has resulted in historical development did so through necessity, not because what happened *must have happened in a normative sense* but rather because it did in fact happen in the way it did, a way that was in fact *also* contingent. This point emphasizes the transient character of social-historical forms in Hegel’s understanding of the historical process identified by both Marx and Engels above. Indeed, the relational mediations described in my reading of the becoming of human species-essence speak to how, as Johnston confirms, “...Hegel rejects atomistic as well as psychologicistic approaches to history;” and, in this sense, “[t]he gap between Hegel and Marx is not as wide here as it might seem at first glance.”⁵⁹⁶ So far, so good, as it were.

However, immediately following the above claim, Hegel makes an awkward move, a theoretical leap that undermines the immanence I have teased out in my above interpretation of his relational ontology. Hegel writes, that reason “...supplies its own nourishment, and is the object of its own operations.”⁵⁹⁷ This is a rather awkward statement considering that in the preceding passage Hegel qualifies this with the claim “...Reason is *not so powerless* as to be incapable of producing anything but a mere idea” such that reason does not stand “...outside reality, nobody knows where; something separate and abstract, in the heads of certain human beings.”⁵⁹⁸ On the one hand, Hegel is attempting to maintain reason’s immanence *and* its relational operation, since, as subject-objects, human beings, for him, “...are objects of existence to themselves.”⁵⁹⁹ On the other, Hegel claims that reason ‘supplies its own nourishment.’ This contradiction is not one that can be sustained, however, as it is a *logical* contradiction as opposed to a strictly *objective contradiction* residing in substance itself. For, even in Hegel’s own terms throughout the *Science of Logic*, reason’s nourishment is precisely the purposive activity out of which it manifests, as I demonstrated in the above section. Thus, in terms of the historical, Hegel seems to want to retain reason as immanent and, at the same time, divorce it from its immanence. It is certainly feasible—and I would argue even necessary—to make the claim, as Hegel

⁵⁹⁴ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 9

⁵⁹⁵ See Section 3.7 (conclusion of Chapter 3) above.

⁵⁹⁶ Adrian Johnston. “Capitalism’s Implants: A Hegelian Theory of Failed Revolutions.” In, *Crisis & Critique*, Volume 8, No. 2., 2021. 525

⁵⁹⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 9

⁵⁹⁸ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 9. My emphasis.

⁵⁹⁹ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 33-34

rightfully does, that “Reason *does* exist there;”⁶⁰⁰ that is, *in history*. Of course, it takes reason both to comprehend the unfolding of history as it does to identify reason *in* history’s unfolding; for “[t]o him who looks upon the world rationally, the world in its turn presents a rational aspect.”⁶⁰¹

However, this marks a key issue of the contradiction between Hegel’s relational ontology and his application of it to history. If to ‘look upon the world’ rationally means to *identify* in history the various *modes of appropriation and their effects upon historical development, effects which themselves become causes* (the reciprocity of action described above)—that is, to identify the *differentia specifica* between the *social particulars* and their *instantiations of their own-most universality* in terms of their *activity*—then, it is the *activity itself that takes primacy in historical understanding with an immanent reason as its mediation*. Appropriation, in other words, as encompassing of both a *belonging-form and labor-form*, is situated as an *immanently rational* theoretical object that specifies both universality and particularity in history itself, and thus permits history’s own intelligibility. Unfortunately, however, this is not what I think Hegel has in mind and we shall soon see why that is and how it is connected not only to his understanding of history but also of the political. István Mészáros notes the methodological issue in Hegel, “...namely, the ideological transubstantiation of determinate socio-political realities into logico-metaphysical determinations so that they can evaporate in one sense only to be restored in another.”⁶⁰² The emphasis on activity—in my terms, *appropriation*—remains important to Hegel but becomes secondary in terms of historical unfolding. What for Hegel reigns supreme is only reason itself, that is the *differentia specifica* of the reason immersed in *social particulars*, a reason he thinks can be defined *abstracted from the very activity out of which it emerged in its historical condition*, a reason that does remain grounded immanently but also divorces itself from its activity and ‘supplies its own nourishment’ by means of his ontologization of the political (through his conception of the State) allowing him to conclude that “reason directs the world.”⁶⁰³ Hegel is *both* right and wrong here. He is right insofar as this directing of the world is tied to objective activity mediated by (some kind of) reason and appropriation. He is wrong, however, if this ‘directing’ divorces itself from this ground. As is typical of Hegel, he seems here to maintain *both* positions.

In his explanation of Spirit’s historical role, Hegel lays bare the pertinence of the “...activity of man in the widest sense,” noting that “[i]t is only by this activity that the Idea as well as abstract

⁶⁰⁰ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 10

⁶⁰¹ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 11

⁶⁰² István Mészáros. “Marx ‘Philosopher.’” In, *The History of Marxism Volume 1: Marxism in Marx’s Day*. Edited by Eric Hobsbawm. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1982. 129

⁶⁰³ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 12

characteristics generally, are realized, actualized; for of themselves they are powerless.”⁶⁰⁴ Indeed, the ‘Idea’ is powerless without its active realization; or, reason without practice is meaningless in terms of establishing the role of reason within historical development. In this account, Hegel retains the implicit notion of appropriation taken in its broadest sense as the most *basic* mediation of the human-nature relation: “If I am to exert myself for any object, it must in *some way or other be my object*”⁶⁰⁵—an object of appropriation, an object of which can be taken *hold*.⁶⁰⁶ For Hegel, this absolute activity which contains and exudes reason’s self-mediation through its actualization, *appropriation*, is the function of “...personal existence—to find itself satisfied in its activity and labor.”⁶⁰⁷ Here, we see the combination of the belonging-form and labor-form as constitutive of *appropriation*. Further, we see an altogether novel form implicit too, one that serves as another *mediation* of the dialectic between appropriation/becoming-appropriated; namely, *property-form*. For at this moment, though already implicit in moments previously identified throughout Hegel’s oeuvre, the ontological dimension of *belonging* coincides with a certain *socially mediated (but still ontological) notion through which one’s consciousness relates to objects as objects structured through labor and belonging: property*. However, property here does *not* mean private property but a *form of property*, a form by which external objects appear as exogenously differentiated within a social realm and therefore ignite a *differentiated interest*; for, as Hegel notes, “if men are to interest themselves for anything, they must (so to speak) have part of their existence *involved* in it.”⁶⁰⁸ Therefore, Hegel concludes “...he who is active in *promoting an object*, is not simply ‘interested,’ but interested in that object itself.”⁶⁰⁹ Our *necessary* involvement with objects discloses our relational existence, which is at the same time a *processual* existence, and, consequently, a *transformative* existence which actualizes its *objective subjectivity* through the *reciprocal determinations of objects within a totality of conditions*. In this case, the object as one’s own is not merely the *phenomenological* moment, in its strict classical sense, as the object of consciousness. Instead, it is the object of consciousness as mediated and realized through activity, through a ‘taking possession’ *modally*, which means that the object itself *is* conformable in some way to belonging to the human subject. In its self-determining activity, the *social human body appropriates external objects*, delineating their *belonging-form* by means of a *labor-form* and as

⁶⁰⁴ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 22

⁶⁰⁵ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 22

⁶⁰⁶ We should keep in mind here that this is not a reference to *private property*, but rather the possession indicated by ‘my object’ is only at the level of an ontological relation becoming a *phenomenological* relation: the object is mine insofar as it is an object of my consciousness on which my body acts.

⁶⁰⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 22

⁶⁰⁸ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 22

⁶⁰⁹ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 22-23

mediated through *property-form* engendered by the *sociality* within which this process of self-determination occurs. Indeed, our ontological relationality on which historical unfolding is predicated reveals the human species-essence as an activity, *appropriation*, which takes *metabolic* shape in heterogeneous *forms*; namely, *the triadic structure of appropriation as mediated through belonging-form, labor-form, and property-form*.

Though this will be much clearer with Marx, Hegel does situate the *relationality of property* in terms of ontological activity. Again, this is not yet *private property* though Hegel does ontologize property as private property in the *Elements of Philosophy of Right*.⁶¹⁰ Soon after the above passage, however, Hegel *reduces* this relationality to its fullest culmination in the State⁶¹¹ considered as “...the actually existing, realized moral life,”⁶¹² where “[t]he laws of morality are not accidental, but are the essentially Rational.”⁶¹³ In the State’s rational consecration of social life, Hegel affirms that “...Law, Morality, Government, and *they alone*, [are] the positive reality and completion of Freedom.”⁶¹⁴ In a full break with the *relational* and *processual* ontology above described, Hegel makes a sudden move to *ontologizing* the State as *freedom*. Taking the historically specific eventuation of the State, as a social apparatus, and applying it as a retrospective justification of freedom as ontological is precisely an undermining of the immanent ground in which Hegel articulates both freedom and reason in the *Science of Logic*. Reducing freedom to a *historically specific State*—in fact, *reducing the possibility of various forms of state to ‘the State’*—puts Hegel in the awkward of position of being unable to differentiate between different *forms of sociality*, despite providing a remarkably consistent *ontological* ground for sociality itself. With this political bias—an ontologization of the historically specific political character of the State to which Hegel was exposed—there emerges a *strictly historical bias* in Hegel’s work: “In the history of the World, only those people can come under our notice which form a state.”⁶¹⁵ Hegel arrives at an obviously questionable conclusion, which does in fact reveal not a Eurocentrism but a *Euro-normativity*.⁶¹⁶ Hegel’s political and historical analysis is not simply ‘centered’ on Europe as its originary

⁶¹⁰ In terms of this ontologization of private property, see, for example: Schlomo Avineri. *Hegel’s Theory of the Modern State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972. See, also, Jacob Blumenfeld. “Property and Freedom in Kant, Hegel, and Marx.” In, *From Marx to Hegel and Back: Capitalism, Critique, and Utopia*. Edited by Victoria Fareld and Hannes Kuch. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. 73-88; Joachim Ritter. “Person and Property in Hegel’s Philosophy of Right (§§34–81).” In, *Hegel on Ethics and Politics*. Edited by Robert B. Pippin and Ottfried Höffe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 101–123.

⁶¹¹ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 23-24

⁶¹² Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 38

⁶¹³ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 39

⁶¹⁴ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 38

⁶¹⁵ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 39

⁶¹⁶ I’m indebted to my former colleague and dear friend, Eli Portella, for the use of this category (euro-normative), which she mentioned during a conversation. I find this category specifically useful and more apt for understanding the theoretical

locus, it is rather the envelopment of world history implicitly mediated by a political presupposition that *normatively* subsumes any ‘other’ to Europe under its own rubric of development. The problem, then, is not the concept of world history nor ‘universal history’ as such, but its normative *application* through Hegel’s political lens.

In the application of his relational ontology to history, Hegel not only undermines the very basis through which an account of history can be provided but he does so by means of *ontologizing the political*, taking a conception of a *historically specific politics* and presupposing its legitimacy as a heuristic device against which historical unfolding is measured; for as Hegel himself claims, “...that all the worth which the human being possesses—all spiritual reality, he possesses *only through the State*.”⁶¹⁷ Indeed, the *spiritual reality emergent from the absolute negativity of the absolute form of the human species-essence, an emergence predicated on immanent purposive activity through which reason manifests itself and through which the universal-particular-singular relation is mutually constitutive and inter-determinate by means of unity and difference from and with nature—all the subtleties involved in Hegel’s relational ontology—are immediately thrown away, dissolved of their theoretical substance, substituted for legitimation only through the State*. All the relationality and processuality inhering in the *materialist ontology* Hegel provides becomes an *objective idealism* proper in terms of its application to history premised on the ontologization of the political.

The stark contrast between social-historical change as immanent to history and the presupposition of the State as the crystallization of freedom and ‘spiritual worth’ is a thread Hegel constantly maintains and puts him in a self-undermining predicament. We see, then, that Hegel himself still imports onto history his own *relational ontological* assumptions, but then collapses the political into the ontological—instead, as Marx and Engels do, of maintaining the *changing form of the political as mediated by the changing form of the social and the historical*. Hegel inscribes the historically specific character of the political *into* the historical which assumes an abstract linearity inherent in the latter, a linearity best expressed precisely by the former. The social, then, is relegated not simply to the political, but to a historically specific notion of the political now ontologized. Indeed, Hegel struggles to reconcile the relationship between the three, and in so doing still attempts to retain his relational ontology. It is worth quoting Hegel at length:

If we consider Spirit in this aspect—regarding its changes not merely as rejuvenescent transitions, *i.e.*, returns to the same form, but rather as manipulations of itself, by which it multiplies the material for future endeavors—we see it exerting itself in a *variety of*

implications of European biases than the oft-used ‘eurocentrism,’ for it encompasses not merely a centered focus on Europe but *normative* impetus that may undergird the scholarship in question.

⁶¹⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 39

modes and directions; developing its powers and gratifying its desires in a variety which is inexhaustible: because every one of its creations, in which it has already found gratification, meets it anew as material, and is a new stimulus to plastic activity⁶¹⁸

Spirit, as human sociality, is described here as undergoing a self-transformative process precisely through a heterogeneous and multifaceted *modal form* of self-determination ‘exerting itself in a variety of modes and directions.’ In this multi-directional unfolding, Spirit develops ‘its powers’ by means of the *creative-aesthetic* dimension inherent the very activity through which it determines and alters itself: *appropriation*. The creative-aesthetic dimension imprints itself on the objects with which it is practically engaged, objects which themselves become a ‘new stimulus to plastic activity.’ Appropriation always presupposes a *becoming-appropriated* and at the same time *appropriating activity*—always already purposive activity—itself reshapes the futural form by which becoming-appropriated will take place. Recognizing this activity as activity constitutive of the universality of the human species-essence allows the methodological identification of reason in history; not in a formal sense of a supra-sensible reason, but of an *immanent reason* involved in differentiated *social particulars*. Thus, historical change is not a grandiose postulate, it is a basic and subtle transient process riddled with stagnation, regress, and progress, for the *vanishing* still lingers in sociality’s self-transformation through history: “the grades which Spirit *seems* to have left behind it, it still possesses in the depths of its present.”⁶¹⁹ To be sure, “the abstract conception of mere change gives place to the thought of Spirit manifesting, developing, and perfecting its powers in every direction which its manifold nature can follow.” Indeed, these manifestations, developments, and perfection of powers, *are not the result of mind*, but the result of *objectivity activity* which itself reshapes the *immanence of thought* that enables an *immanent transcendence* of the relational context of *practical Spirit realizing itself in various material conditions*; for, Hegel asserts, “Spirit is essentially the result of its own activity, its activity is the transcending of the immediate...the negation of that existence, and the returning into itself.”⁶²⁰

Indeed, Hegel notes: “[t]he very *essence of Spirit is activity*; it realizes its potentiality—makes itself its own deed, its own work—and thus it becomes an object to itself; contemplates itself as an objective existence.”⁶²¹ The essence of sociality *is activity, practical activity*. Practical activity is not thoughtless activity, but activity endowed with thought, with *reason*. In the process of self-determination and self-preservation, the human species-essence differentiates itself heterogeneously through appropriation.

⁶¹⁸ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 73

⁶¹⁹ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 79

⁶²⁰ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 78

⁶²¹ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 73-74

Insofar as appropriation is also *purposive activity*, this self-differentiating process—the particularization of the universal—is also the emergence of reason as itself a manifold. The ubiquitous presence of reason, then, is precisely its non-ubiquitous *material ground*: the reason immanently tethered to the *mode of appropriation* of a social particularity. In this way Hegel connects the sedimentation of activity to a people: “Thus is it with the Spirit of a people: it is a Spirit having strictly defined characteristics, which erects itself into an objective world...in the events and transactions that make up its history.”⁶²² Now, for the purposes of historical methodology premised on situating manifold and heterogenous development of appropriation as a defining feature of social differentiation, Hegel here maintains the relational ontology above described. Indeed, if appropriation ontologically develops historically through sociality and thereby accounts for the historically specific expression of the mutually constitutive processes of *labor-form*, *belonging-form*, and *property-form*, we have here the Hegelian formula for social and historical difference based on the shared universality of the human species-essence.

Unfortunately, however, Hegel once again immediately inserts a politicization onto this historical insight. The Spirit of a people, a *social particularity*, is reduced to the ‘Nation’: “...that is what [a] particular Nation is.”⁶²³ The ‘Nation’—a *historically specific category associated with the modern State*—is conflated for the social particularity of sociality as such. In this way, nationhood (and the State to which it corresponds) is ontologized rather than *historicized*. This ontologization of the historical as mediated by a certain understanding of the political (which Hegel retrospectively posits as history’s aim) is what justifies Hegel’s hierarchical order between different peoples that ensues in the section *Geographical Basis of History* within the introduction.⁶²⁴ This hierarchical differentiation, of the State and Nation as the point of measurement between *social particulars*, marks Hegel’s abandonment of the non-linear element present in his *dialectical relational ontology* throughout the *Science of Logic*. Linearity becomes consecrated *in* history, becomes history’s definitive movement: “The History of the World travels from East to West, for Europe is absolutely the end of History, Asia the beginning.”⁶²⁵ It is in this way that Hegel undermines himself. The immanent reason so eloquently tethered to practical activity in the *Logic* takes on a dual form in Hegel’s application of it to history as mediated by the conception of a historically specific political State that serves as history’s end—or better, that serves as the *aim* toward which immanent reason is unidirectionally oriented by a transcendent reason that pervades this very immanence. Thus, Marx correctly asserts, “[w]ithin *empirical*, exoteric history, therefore, Hegel makes

⁶²² Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 74

⁶²³ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 74

⁶²⁴ Therein reside his infamous racist remarks.

⁶²⁵ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 103

a speculative, esoteric history develop. The history of mankind becomes the history of the *Abstract Spirit* of mankind, hence a *spirit far removed* from the real man.”⁶²⁶

Though there is much more that can be said about Hegel’s self-undermining theoretical move, the above suffices for the broader claim that Hegel’s dialectical relational ontology *contradicts* his own application of it to history, and that this contradiction is premised on a conception of the political that implicitly justifies the divorce of reason from itself in historical development, which in Hegel is simultaneously a *political development* and for him becomes a heuristic of a hierarchical differentiation.

To recapitulate, Hegel’s articulation of the historical maintains a materialist grounding in terms of *deed* and *heterogeneity* resulting therefrom. Indeed, Engels notes that “[Hegel’s] epoch-making conception of history was a direct theoretical *pre-condition* of the new *materialist* outlook, and already this constituted a connecting link with the logical method as well.”⁶²⁷ The moment where Hegel’s approach becomes a naïve idealism, even in its objective form, is when Hegel reduces the universality of Spirit to its particular in the Nation. The internal contradictions belonging to the self-differentiation and heterogeneity within Spirit itself falls suddenly and quickly to the wayside, its complexity through and as activity is substituted for the abstraction of the nation as the homogenizing factor under and through which Spirit is both subsumed and reduced, insofar as the nation is held together through a quasi-historical conception of the ‘State’. *The principal differentiation between Hegel and Marx rests in this logico-theoretical method as it manifests in the move from the abstract to the concrete.* The problem cannot be that Hegel is purely speculative, reducing all materiality and sociality to logical thought processes.⁶²⁸ Hegel is neither so naïve, nor so careless. Instead, the speculative character of Hegel’s initial abstraction absolves itself of its own concreteness such that in the application and reversion of the abstract to the concrete, the latter is subsumed under the former. Similarly, Marx himself notes: “the method of rising from the abstract to the concrete is the only way in which thought appropriates the concrete,

⁶²⁶ Karl Marx & Frederick Engels. “The Holy Family, or Critique of Critical Criticism.” In, *Marx-Engels Collected Works, Volume 4*. Lawrence & Wishart. 2010. 85

⁶²⁷ Frederick Engels. “Karl Marx ‘A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,’ Part One, Franz Duncker, Berlin, 1859 (Review).” In, Karl Marx. *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. Translated by S.W. Ryazanskaya. Moscow: Progress Publishers. 1977. 224. My emphasis.

⁶²⁸ In this regard, Harry Cleaver’s critique of Engel’s dialectical materialism, which he claims is the birth of dogmatic orthodoxy is inarguably wrong. According to Cleaver, Engels’ invocation of Hegelian categories for the purposes of developing a dialectical ontology, a *dialectics of nature*, is premised on “...a *complete* misreading of Hegel’s concept of ‘real’, which referred not to existence but to logic” (my emphasis). As I have sufficiently demonstrated, the only misreading of Hegel belongs to Cleaver, not Engels. Harry Cleaver. *Reading Capital Politically*. UK: AK Press, 2000. 47. Despite an articulation of Marx’s “relational” approach, for Howard Sherman this relationality is not ontological, which he associates with the pure idealism of Hegel (in like manner to Cleaver). See, Howard Sherman. *Reinventing Marxism*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995. 234-242

reproduces it as the concrete in the mind.”⁶²⁹ Though in Marx’s case a different operation is at work. Marx’s initial abstraction—a properly *rational abstraction*—presupposes, in its construction, its own embeddedness in the concrete. It forms itself, as thought-form, through an inclusion of the very conditions of its own *conditioning*. This, and only this, is what explains Marx’s claim to put Hegel on his feet. It is not a mere inversion. Or, the extent to which an inversion occurs signifies a complete alteration of the logico-theoretical structure of the dialectic. *The relationality of Hegel’s dialectic is subverted, torn asunder, and, from it, a historical-material relationality is wrested: a dialectical materialism.* This is not to suggest an absolute break nor an absolute difference between their dialectics. It characterizes nothing more than the *absolute unity in their absolute difference, the sublating result of the essence of dialectics: the movement of relational materiality.* This kernel of truth was already present in Hegel even if protected and encumbered by his own ‘mystical shell.’ With Marx and Engels, the ‘fire’ of material becoming rises: the dialectic gains another layer in its topology.

This layer is precisely the *historical* as the mediating incision between the *objective dialectics of nature* and the *subjective dialectics of sociality*. Indeed, the materialist dialectical relational ontology present in Hegel’s own work, becomes successfully applicable⁶³⁰ to history in terms of the very *materiality* of sociality. Engels notes, “...our conception of history is above all a guide to study, not a lever of construction after the Hegelian manner.”⁶³¹ *The ontological conception of the social becomes properly ontological and properly social only in terms of the historical.* As an incisive mediation, however, the historical *reshapes* the very conception of both the objective dialectics of nature and the subjective dialectics of sociality. Beyond the *logico-theoretical method* of which either (objective and subjective dialectics) are conceived and constituted as theoretical categories in their meticulous Hegelian form, with Marx and Engels both metabolic processes now retain history within themselves and between each other: *natural* history and *social* history. The latter is the emergent result of the former, but with such a thorough degree of complexification that their mediation (the human-nature metabolic relation) becomes absolutely reciprocal: *social historical unfolding reconditions the unfolding of natural history* in as much as the *unfolding of*

⁶²⁹ Marx, Karl. *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*. Translated by Martin Nicolaus. London: Penguin Books. 1973. 101

⁶³⁰ The issue of *application* is significant. In a letter to Kugelmann, Marx writes: “What the same Lange says about the Hegelian method and my *application* of it is really childish. First of all, he understands nothing about Hegel’s method and secondly, as a consequence, even less about *my critical manner of applying it.*” My emphasis. Marx, “Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann (June 27, 1870),” *Marx-Engels Letters of Correspondence*, 225. Engels too notes, “[Hegel’s method] had been forgotten because the Hegelian school did not know how to *apply* it.” Engels, *Karl Marx, A Contribution (Review)*, 224.

⁶³¹ Engels, “Engels to Schmidt (August 5, 1890),” *Marx-Engels Letters of Correspondence*, 393

*natural history reconditions the unfolding of social history.*⁶³² Appropriation—and its various *historically specific social forms as modes of appropriation*—mediates this unfolding at the general level, and, therefore, has an *ecological criterion in practice: the human species-essence unfolds historically and socially through the ecological, the manifoldness of nature that always appears to us in socialized form yet is irreducible to it.* To be sure, the move from Hegelian dialectics to Marxist dialectics—a *dialectical materialism*—results precisely in the development of, as Engels notes, “...the science of *interconnections*,” such that the “laws of dialectics” derive from the combinatory relationality and processuality of “...the history of nature and human society.”⁶³³ This is the primary philosophical contribution, I claim, that Marx and Engels provide: the relational ontology of Hegel is maintained but deepened with the incorporation of history into the ‘sea of subtle distinctions’ found in the mutually constitutive relationship between history and ontology, and thus a new *topology of the layers of an objective dialectics comes to the fore*, where *appropriation* in its myriad forms becomes the essence of *subjective dialectics* in its historical form; for the presupposition of the *objective dialectics of nature* as the conditioning structure through which the *subjective dialectics of human sociality* develops and differentiates itself is the “...the standpoint of *materialist history*,” namely, “...the practical [not merely speculative] unity of human beings and Nature.”⁶³⁴

So, to answer the previously posed question, ‘why turn to Marx if Hegel is already such a materialist’ (in my reading, of course)? Because it is in both Marx and Engels where the universality of the human species-essence, as appropriation, sublates its merely ontological status, *becomes properly historical in its social expression*, and, consequently, gives rise to a truly *revolutionary and liberatory dialectic*; a dialectic that does not forsake the *objectivity in which the objective subjectivity of sociality is immersed* (the human-nature relation), and thereby maintains the *relational ontological element undergirding the movement of totality*. The turn to Marx and Engels premised on their own relational ontology—with *appropriation* as the focus—is a turn toward the sophistication of a theory that foregrounds not only *revolutionary thinking*, but with it *revolutionary praxis*; as Anja Flower notes: “*Marxism meets its purpose as a weapon of struggle.*”⁶³⁵

⁶³² This speaks to the ecological dimension of Marx and Engels’ thinking. John Bellamy Foster notes: “...once modern humans arose with a fully developed brain, the dialectic of human evolution assumed a different form. It was no longer dependent principally on *natural* evolution of the human corporeal structure, but rather on *social* evolution, rooted in the transmission through the human brain of the quality of educability and the cumulative products of culture. It therefore rested principally on development of science and knowledge and the accompanying changes in social organization.” Foster, *The Return of Nature*, 69

⁶³³ Engels, *Dialectics of Nature (MECW, Vol. 25)*, 356

⁶³⁴ Hiromatsu, *The Schema of the Theory of Reification*, 190. My emphasis.

⁶³⁵ Anja Heisler Weiser Flower. “Cosmos Against Nature in the Class Struggle of Proletarian Trans Women.” In, *Transgender Marxism*. Edited by Jules Joanne Gleeson and Elle O’Rourke. London: Pluto Press. 2021. 234

PART III: MARX(ISM): APPROPRIATION & THE MODE OF APPROPRIATION

“...[E]mancipation involves *all mankind*, without distinction of sex or race...[C]ollective *appropriation* can only proceed from a revolutionary action of the class of producers...” –Karl Marx, *Introduction to the Programme of the French Workers’ Party*, 1880⁶³⁶

“Communism deprives no man of the *power to appropriate* the products of society: all that it does is deprive him of the power to subjugate the labor of others by means of such appropriation.” –Marx & Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*

⁶³⁶ Marx, *MECW Vol. 24*, 340

Part III

Marx(ism): Appropriation & the Mode of Appropriation

Part Three of this work consists of an investigation into the works of Marx and Engels centered around appropriation and the mode of appropriation. Here, I make the case that Marx and Engels further develop the relational ontology they inherit from Hegel in a *dialectical materialist* form through the proper integration of the *historical*.

Chapter 5 explores Marx and Engels' materialist ontological grounding of appropriation. I begin with a critical response to Moishe Postone's suggestion that *Capital* absolves itself of any transhistorical and ontological category, and that this shows Marx's distancing from Hegel's conception of a 'knowing-subject.' Through an investigation of Marx's analysis of the value-form, I demonstrate that this is far from the case and, moreover, that revolutionary theory certainly posits a knowing-subject; to be sure, *requires one*. This analysis leads to a critical response to Postone's political conclusion which suggests that Marx is concerned with abolishment over-against the realization of something new. I then articulate the concept of appropriation as grounded in the triadic structure of 'Nature-Sociality-History' through a combined analysis of Engels, Marx, and certain figures in the Marxist tradition. After demonstrating how nature, sociality, and history are all operative in mediating appropriation as an activity peculiar to the human species-essence, I then turn to an investigation of the dialectic of appropriating and becoming-appropriated. Here, I show how Marx and Engels materialize all the categories present in Hegel (essence, necessity, universality, telos, and reason) and lay the groundwork for a phenomenological reading of their work. Additionally, this provides a framework for understanding how the transhistorical can be held together with the historically specific, that is, how the mode of appropriation provides the methodological ground for historical specification of *forms*.

Chapter 6 explores the mode of appropriation, serving as the conclusion of this project. First, I analyze the triadic structure between the concepts mode of production, social formation, and mode of appropriation. I argue that the mode of appropriation weaves together both the mode of production and social formation in such a way as to highlight how a given social formation retains their distinctive qualities while also becoming shaped by a given mode of production. I then turn to an analysis of each of the separate forms that together constitute the mode of appropriation; namely, labor-form, property-form, and belonging-form. I highlight how reading these categories through the lens of a dialectical materialist relational ontology provides alternative ways of considering both historical and contemporary forms of social transformation.

[5] Marx & Engels: Appropriation's Materialist Ontological Basis

“[I]n recent times...people who are convinced they have gone beyond Marxism, saying, ‘Marxism is out of date,’ are on the increase. *If you have really overcome Marxism then I am more than willing to give you my deep admiration, and I'd like you to instruct me.*” –Wataru Hiromatsu⁶³⁷

It is not incidental, in my view, that both in his early and later writings Marx deploys ‘appropriation’ in reference to the realization of communism. In fact, I think it tells us something *pivotal* about the concept; namely, that, for Marx, thinking through the multifaceted significance of appropriation gives us insight into both the *species-essence* as a transhistorical process of self-realization and the *historically specific expressions* through which the *species-essence* differentiates itself from itself through the process of socialization. To be sure, I follow here Anne Pomeroy’s claim that “[w]hen Marx uses [appropriation], it carries the sense of any and all human relatedness to the objective world....In fact...[for Marx] *all human living always involves appropriation.*”⁶³⁸ Holding together the ontological dimension of appropriation and its historically specific social expression, Marx deepens the relational elements involved in the concept itself in such a way as to direct us to various forms of thinking through social life. This deepening reveals the non-reductive element—contrary to so many accusations—in Marx’s approach to human sociality and its process of transformation.

Appropriation, indeed, is understood here as *ontological* and *transhistorical*. And, “...transhistorical,” Mészáros carefully notes, “means precisely what it says: namely, *trans*-historical and not *supra*-historical.”⁶³⁹ This is a key difference and operates as a necessary premise in my account of Marx and Engels. The transhistorical signifies “...the continued reproduction—even though with changing weight and relative significance in relation to the given social totality—of determinate conditions or processes *across* historical boundaries.”⁶⁴⁰ The transhistorical does not absolve difference, but as we will soon see, is the universal connection through which difference is revealed precisely in its most *distinctive* character. This ontological determination is immanent and in direct contrast to “...the idea of anything ‘*supra*-historical’ [which] is no more than a metaphysical mystification.”⁶⁴¹

This chapter aims to elucidate this relational conception present in both Marx and Engels by looking at how they understand *appropriation* both ontologically and socially (i.e., *historically*). Here, all

⁶³⁷ Hiromatsu, *The Schema of the Theory of Reification*, 179

⁶³⁸ Anne Fairchild Pomeroy. *Marx and Whitehead: Process, Dialectics, and the Critique of Capitalism*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2004. 48

⁶³⁹ István Mészáros. *Social Structure and Forms of Consciousness Volume II: The Dialectic of Structure and History*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011. 59

⁶⁴⁰ Mészáros. *Social Structure Vol. II*, 60

⁶⁴¹ Mészáros. *Social Structure Vol. II*, 60

the *metabolic dynamism* already present in my account of Hegel gains further determinacy but remains in the background as the logico-theoretical structure of the categories of *appropriation* and the *mode of appropriation*. The scope is simultaneously widened and made more precise in terms of the *application of the concept to history, politics, and economics*. The validity of the applicatory possibility of appropriation and the mode of appropriation as categories within the Marxian system rests on the triadic structures outlined in the previous chapter, though now fully *materialized*. Appropriation, ontologically, consists of a threefold, self-sublating and inter-affective, *spiraling* motion that continuously reflects back onto itself: Appropriating ⇔ Appropriation ⇔ Becoming-appropriated (the latter reinscribing itself in the first as a *reshaping*). Moreover, as we have seen with Hegel, appropriation always takes on a *modal* structure as a combination of forms, where the *mode of appropriation is itself constituted by another triadic structure*—which in the previous chapter was ascertained only at the logico-theoretical level—namely: *labor-form, property-form, belonging-form*. We will see, with Marx and Engels, the theoretical value of these forms in terms of their relational character (as ontologically self-differentiating moments of *sociality* realized through the *historical*) in the following chapter.

Here, I maintain the ontological dimension of appropriation described in Hegel, though now in a dialectical materialist form through a more adequate inclusion of the historical. This reading of Marx and Engels will not only demonstrate their philosophical profundity and depth as relational ontologists themselves, but also suggest that appropriation and the mode of appropriation are paramount to their taxonomic system. Their importance resides in their clarificatory potential both for historical analysis *and* social transformation.

In positing the necessity of reading Marx ontologically, I am attempting to argue against a line of Marxism that finds doing so unnecessary or irrelevant to Marxism broadly speaking. Similarly, focusing on the human species-essence and its universality in Marx in the deployment of the concept of appropriation is an implicit rejection of the claims to his Eurocentrism⁶⁴² or a problematic

⁶⁴² In my view, some of the more interesting debates surrounding Eurocentrism, specifically in terms of historical development take place within the field of International Relations, more specifically, “historical sociology.” These scholars, through their concern with the relationship between theoretical interpretation and empirical evidence, take the philosophical underpinning of various categories to task in terms of a critical reading of history. See, for example, Alexander Anievas, and Kerem Niancioglu. *How the West Came to Rule: The Geopolitical Origins of Capitalism*. London: Pluto Press, 2015; Eren Duzgun. “Karl Polanyi against Postcolonial Theory: Beyond Eurocentric anti-Eurocentrism.” In, *Dialectical Anthropology* 48, No. 1, 2024. 115-141; John Hobson and Alina Sajed. “Navigating Beyond the Eurofetishist Frontier of Critical IR Theory: Exploring the Complex Landscapes of Non-Western Agency.” In, *International Studies Review* 19, No. 4, 2017. 1-26.

conception of his universality,⁶⁴³ teleology, necessity, reason,⁶⁴⁴ essence and so on.⁶⁴⁵ As I have demonstrated with Hegel, these categories take on a new shape through a dialectical hermeneutic and thus are not as problematic as generally considered—in fact, quite the opposite. Moreover, with Marx’s own appropriation and deployment of the same categories, not only do they overcome the problem of representational thought,⁶⁴⁶ they, in becoming *materialist*, become fundamental to revolutionary *praxis*.

In order to situate the importance of the ontological character of appropriation in Marx’s framework, I begin with a critical response to Moishe Postone who disavows the necessity of a transhistorical subject in Marx’s work by claiming his abandonment of the ‘subject-object paradigm’ and thereby establishes an absolute break with any remnant of Hegelian ontology in Marx. Against this, I show that Marx’s maintains the subject-object relation, though in a specifically anti-representational and *relational* form. This reading provides a very different political conclusion than Postone’s, who suggests that Marx is concerned merely with the abolishment of capital as opposed to the realization of a new society.

This sets the background through which I then explore the ontological foundation of both Marx and Engels as properly *relational ontologists*. In tackling different moments of their life’s work, I

⁶⁴³ As an example, Ramón Grosfoguel writes, “Lo que Marx mantiene en común con la tradición filosófica occidental es que su universalismo, a pesar de que surge desde una localización particular, no problematiza de que dicho sujeto sea europeo, masculino, heterosexual, blanco, judeo-cristiano, etc. El proletariado de Marx es un sujeto en conflicto en el interior de Europa; lo que no le permite pensar fuera de los límites eurocéntricos del pensamiento occidental.” Ramón Grosfoguel. “Descolonizando los universalismos occidentales: el pluriversalismo transmoderno decolonial desde Aimé Césaire hasta los Zapatistas.” In, *El Giro Decolonial: Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo global*. Editores, Santiago Casto-Gómez y Ramón Grosfoguel. Bogotá: Siglo Veintiuno Editores. 2007. 64. Beyond the reactionary localism presupposed here, it is obvious by the opening epigraph to this section, that Marx’s universalism certainly accounted for more than the white European. Indeed, ‘decolonial’ theorists, however wide that category may be, certainly share Grosfoguel’s sentiment. For a rebuttal, as well as summary, of these claims against Marx/ism, see: Miguel Ángel Urrego Ardila. *Marx, el marxismo y los decolonialies: Tergiversaciones, olvidos y reacomodos*. Mexico: Editorial Morevalladolid, 2021. Decolonial critics, especially within Latin America, of Marx/ism ultimately end in repeating the same claims presented by Postcolonial scholarship.

⁶⁴⁴ In critically summarizing the tendencies of postcolonial approaches to Marx/ism, Chibber, incidentally captures the same tendential problem that can be identified in ‘decolonial’ scholarship: “What is objectionable about postcolonial theory is not that it insists on ‘provincializing Europe,’ but that, in the name of this project, it relentlessly promotes Eurocentrism—a portrayal of the West as the site of reason, rationality, secularism, democratic culture, and the like, and the East as an unchanging miasma of tradition, unreason, religiosity, and so on.” Vivek Chibber. *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital*. London: Verso, 2013. 291. For a critique directed specifically at decolonial scholarship, see: Gaya Makaran y Pierre Gaussens (coordinadores). *Piel Blanca, Máscaras Negras: Crítica de la razón decolonial*. México: Bajo Tierra Ediciones. 2020

⁶⁴⁵ Such criticisms are numerous. Vivek Chibber has already done the work of responding to such critiques from ‘post-colonial’ scholars; see, Vivek Chibber. *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital*. London: Verso. 2013. For a defense of a Marxian conception of universality from an African perspective, see, Ato Sekyi-Oto. *Left Universalism, Africentric Essays*. New York: Routledge, 2019. For a rebuttal to claims concerning Marx’s Eurocentrism from a Latin American perspective, see José Aricó. *Marx and Latin America*. Translated by David Broder. Boston: Brill, 2014.

⁶⁴⁶ See chapter 3 above.

show their dialectical materialist formulation of appropriation as the basis of the human species-essence. Through them, I show how appropriation, as activity, is the crystallized and condensed *actualization* of another triadic structure I call ‘Nature-Sociality-History.’ From this combined mediation inhering in appropriation, I develop the dialectic internal to appropriation itself, i.e., the dialectically reciprocal movement between *appropriating* and *becoming-appropriated*. Through the consideration of this relationship, I demonstrate how Marx and Engels retain the concepts (essence, necessity, universality, telos, and reason) described in the previous chapter on Hegel, in their own dialectical *materialist* way.

[5.1] *A Critical Prolegomena: Value-form & The Necessity of a Historical Subject*

It would be a wholly different project to argue against *all* the criticisms of Marx or Marxism (and even *within* Marxism itself), especially in terms of its ontological ground.⁶⁴⁷ The scholarship is much too wide to engage without sacrificing the ability to positively develop my own thinking in terms of appropriation and the mode of appropriation within this project. Nonetheless, one of the more sophisticated suspicions of arguing against any ontological reading stems from Moishe Postone. It is worth brief consideration as a point of departure, since Postone directly approaches the issue of the epistemological problematic of subject-object relations⁶⁴⁸ and the problem of the transhistorical in Marx’s work, as they pertain to Marx’s critique of political economy and his difference with Hegel.

After summarizing what he finds to be the difference between Hegel’s conception of *Spirit* and Marx’s conception of the subject, Postone concludes: “...Marxian theory neither posits nor is bound to the notion of a historical meta-Subject, such as the proletariat, which will realize itself in a future society.”⁶⁴⁹ As a result, and against what Postone vaguely calls ‘Traditional Marxism,’ the rejection of a ‘meta-Subject’ in Marx represents a “...a major shift in critical perspective from a social critique on the basis of ‘labor’ to a social critique of the *peculiar nature of labor in capitalism*.”⁶⁵⁰

Postone’s goal here is to establish a specific discontinuity between Hegel and Marx for the purpose of elucidating the *historical specificity* of Marx’s critique of capital. In that regard, there can be

⁶⁴⁷ I do, however, intend to make of this a future project.

⁶⁴⁸ The ‘subject-object’ paradigm is also claimed, by Aníbal Quijano, as one of the primary problems of Eurocentric knowledge, which he grounds in Descartes. However, Quijano, similar to Postone, sees subject-object relations in a representational form consisting of mutual exclusivity; and, consequently overemphasizes the role of epistemology—rather than politics—in the unfolding of colonialism. See, Aníbal Quijano. “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality.” In, *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 1, no. 2-3, 2007. 168-178. For a critical analysis of Quijano’s (mis)reading of Descartes, see: Paul Chambers. “Epistemology and Domination: Problems with the Coloniality of Knowledge Thesis in Latin American Decolonial Theory.” In, *Dados*, Vol. 63, no. 2, e20190147. 2020

⁶⁴⁹ Moishe Postone. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A reinterpretation of Marx’s critical theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. 77

⁶⁵⁰ Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, 78. My emphasis.

no transhistorical element to Marx's categories, for Postone, since the historically specific character of Marx's critique is premised on his move "...away from the subject-object paradigm and epistemology to a social theory of consciousness."⁶⁵¹ Departing from the subject-object paradigm marks the central difference between Hegel and Marx, in Postone's view, since there is a shift away "...from the knowing individual (or supra-individual) subject and its relation to an external (or externalized) world to the forms of social relations" and thus, "[t]he problem of knowledge now becomes a question of the relation between forms of social mediations and forms of thought."⁶⁵² There is much value in the latter insight and Postone's insistence on the peculiar expression of labor in capitalism. To be sure, Postone is hinting at the *relational* dimension of Marx's thinking by means of emphasizing its *historical* character. In so doing, Postone identifies the analytical power of studying social mediations as expressive of *forms* in their relational and historical context. For him, this marks the difference between the 'early' and 'mature' Marx: "In his early works, Marx's categories are still transhistorical."⁶⁵³ However, Postone argues that the transhistorical element is substituted in Marx's mature work for "[t]he centrality of the historical specificity of the social forms." Additionally, the insistence of historical specificity "...coupled with [Marx's] critique of theories that transhistoricize this specificity, indicate that [transhistorical categories cannot directly elucidate] ...the critique of political economy."⁶⁵⁴ Does Marx's insistence on historical specificity, however, assume the abandonment of both subject-object relations *and* a transhistorical conception of labor in his critique of capital?

To defend his claim, Postone analyzes an oft-quoted passage by Marx. The passage reads:

[Value] is constantly changing from one form into the other without becoming lost in this movement; it thus transforms itself into an *automatic subject*...value is here the *subject* of a process...its valorization is therefore self-valorization...Value suddenly presents itself as a *self-moving* substance which passes through a process of its own, and for which the commodity and money are both mere forms.⁶⁵⁵

Postone derives from this passage the principal differentiation between Hegel and Marx in terms of the subject. For Marx, according to Postone, "...characterizes capital as the self-moving substance which is Subject."⁶⁵⁶ As a result, Postone asserts that Marx's "historical Subject" does not pertain "...to any social grouping, such as the proletariat, or with humanity."⁶⁵⁷ Instead, Marx's 'Subject' is

⁶⁵¹ Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, 77

⁶⁵² Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, 77

⁶⁵³ Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, 74

⁶⁵⁴ Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, 74

⁶⁵⁵ Marx, *Capital Volume 1*, 255. As quoted in Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, 75

⁶⁵⁶ Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, 75

⁶⁵⁷ Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, 75

“...a conceptual determination of [the] fabric [of modern society],”⁶⁵⁸ a conception consisting of “...objectified relations, the subjective-objective categorial forms characteristic of capitalism...the specific character of labor as socially mediating activity.”⁶⁵⁹ Marx’s ‘Subject’, then, is capital itself as an ‘*automatic subject*’ that objectifies social mediations. Contrary to “...the socialist tradition...”⁶⁶⁰—which, according to Postone, views “...capitalist relations as extrinsic to the Subject, as that which hinder its full realization...”⁶⁶¹—Marx rather “...analyzes those very relations as constituting the Subject.”⁶⁶⁰ In this way, “...capital as the historical Subject,” Postone asserts, “indicates that the totality has become the *object* of [Marx’s] critique.”⁶⁶¹ Capital is ‘Subject’ and totality ‘object.’ Postone’s Marx is a critic of the *form of capitalist totality, a form whose substance is value*. This leads Postone to a political conclusion:

Marx’s assertion that capital, *and not the proletariat or the species*, is the total Subject clearly implies that the historical negation of capitalism would not involve the *realization*, but the *abolition*, of the totality....Marx’s conception of the historical negation of capitalism in terms of the abolition, rather than the realization, of the totality is related to his notion that socialism represents the beginning, rather than the end, of human history, and to the idea that the negation of capitalism entails overcoming a *determinate form of social mediation rather than overcoming social mediation per se*.⁶⁶²

Postone is certainly right to insist on Marx’s criticism of capital as a *historically specific criticism*, namely, from the position of labor, not *as such* but as expressed through the objectified social mediations through which labor appears under capital. Postone is also correct in pointing out that, politically, the ‘overcoming of a *determinate form of social mediation*’ is what remains at stake and not ‘the overcoming of social mediation per se.’ To be sure, insofar as there is such a thing as *sociality*, then, no matter what *form* through which it expresses itself—any given *social form*—there will remain social mediations. The problem certainly resides in the *peculiar forms of social mediation* that perpetuate and maintain forms of domination under capital. Whatever the value of Postone’s many insights—specifically in terms of the analysis of the value-form—there are some issues with his above account. Let us investigate.

First, the longer passage by Marx from which Postone derives his conclusion is telling. There, Marx addresses *value* as process; namely, as *self-valorization*. This marks the relationality through which Marx envisions value: value is a self-moving substance constitutive of *forms* of materialization *qua* commodity, money, and the like. To be sure, the material expression of the *forms of value* at given moments in the movement of self-valorization is predicated on the more general processual self-

⁶⁵⁸ Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, 76

⁶⁵⁹ Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, 76

⁶⁶⁰ Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, 78

⁶⁶¹ Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, 79

⁶⁶² Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, 79

realization of capital itself. However, Postone's interpretation *conflates* value and capital. Notice that Marx is referring to *value* and not *capital* in the passage, but Postone's first interpretive sentence inserts capital as a substitute for value. Here, we have to be very careful and rigorous with the complexity of Marx's method of abstraction. Is capital simply value? Are they synonymous in the way Postone presents? In the immediate passage following Marx's quote, Marx writes:

As the dominant subject of *this* process, in which it alternately assumes and loses the form of money and the form of commodities, but preserves and expands itself through all these changes, value requires above all an independent form by means of which its identity with itself may be asserted. Only in the shape of money does it possess this form.⁶⁶³

Beyond the interesting processual and relational form of description Marx deploys, we should take note of his *specification*: 'as the dominant subject of *this* process.' What process is Marx referring to here? The process of self-valorization, which is the *essence of capital*. Capital's processual becoming is predicated on the *determinate motion of valorization, which is always a self-valorization within the historically specific matrix by which it constitutes itself*; as Jules Gleeson and Elle O'Rourke assert, "[r]ather than being natural or reliable, value is revealed to be processual and relational."⁶⁶⁴ Insofar as valorization is itself a *relational* process, it expresses itself *in relation* to different *objects* throughout moments of this very process.⁶⁶⁵ The relationality inheres in the historically specific form of the *social process* itself, where relations *instantiate* a specific form of connection through which peculiar 'attributes' take shape in accordance with the *specific relations in question*, as Michael Heinrich notes: "We do not regard properties of things that only exist in a specific connection to other things as objective, inherent properties of those things, but rather as *relations*."⁶⁶⁶ Therefore, *value takes on forms relationally*: the money-form, commodity-form, and so on. Valorization, as an *objective* process of capital, unfolds *determinately* within and through a totality, *a capitalist totality*, through which it gains an objectivity of its own as a result of the unfolding process in which it enters into *definite social relationships*: "[t]he substance of value, and thus *value-objectivity*, is something only obtained by things when they are set into relation with another thing in exchange."⁶⁶⁷ We mustn't forget, however, that this is occurring at a *specific level of methodological abstraction*

⁶⁶³ Marx, *Capital Volume 1*, 255. My emphasis

⁶⁶⁴ Jules Gleeson and Elle O'Rourke. "Introduction." In, *Transgender Marxism*. Edited by Jules Joanne Gleeson and Elle O'Rourke. London: Pluto Press, 2021. 14

⁶⁶⁵ The various moments are realized *temporally*, they are the temporal expression of exchange-becoming-value and value-becoming capital. See, for example, Isaak Rubin. *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value*. Translated by Milos Samardzija and Fredy Perlman. New York: Black Rose Books, 2017. 149

⁶⁶⁶ Michael Heinrich. *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital*. Translated by Alexander Locascio. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004. 54

⁶⁶⁷ Heinrich, *Introduction to Capital*, 53

in Marx; namely, *at the level of value becoming capital through its self-sublation in various forms, forms that distinguish themselves at different moments of capital's circuitry from each other, and in so doing reflect back unto the valorization process itself*: as Zhang Yibing notes, “[v]alue is the *relational* means of the *reflexive* agreement of commodities in exchange.”⁶⁶⁸ In this sense, it is self-evident that in ‘*this process*’ capital is the subject: *capital is the subject of valorization*. Its object, then, is the forms within the totality through which it can *valorize* itself, i.e., forms of exploitation, expropriation, and so on. But, again, is the subject *capital* or *value*?

Capital *is* the process of valorization; it is the subject of its own unfolding at a higher level of abstraction: the “dialectical process of [capital’s] becoming is only the ideal expression of the real movement through which capital comes into being.”⁶⁶⁹ Value is only ever expressed through *forms*: there is no value independent of forms: “...value passes through different *forms*, different movements in which it is both preserved and increases, is *valorized*.”⁶⁷⁰ Consequently, forms of value are constituent parts of the process of capital but never fully encompasses capital itself, as Marx makes clear, “...value in general...[is] transformed into capital”⁶⁷¹—because *capital as the general process of valorization exceeds value, is its result, and, therefore, is also the precondition of the appearance of value*: “All the *production relations* within which the process *moves* are therefore *just as much* its *products* as they are *its conditions*.”⁶⁷² Capital is the processual⁶⁷³ deity which extricates *the soul—value—of subject-objects appearing within the capitalist totality, objectified by it, and thereby becomes the dominant social mediation through which these subject-objects become reified and bearers (träger) of abstract value*: commodities, money, nature, and the *social human body*. This is the dialectical logic of the unity of opposites Marx employs,⁶⁷⁴ one predicated on *transformative movement*. Marx writes:

Capital, as self-valorizing value, does not just comprise class relations, a definite social character that depends on the existence of labor as wage-labor. *It is a movement, a circulatory process, through different stages...[h]ence it can only be grasped as a movement, and not as a static thing.*⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁶⁸ Zhang Yibing. *Back to Marx: Changes of Philosophical Discourse in the Context of Economics*. Translated by Thomas Mitchell. Germany: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2014. 442

⁶⁶⁹ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 310

⁶⁷⁰ Karl Marx. *Capital Volume II*. Translated by David Fernbach. London: Penguin Books, 1993. 185

⁶⁷¹ Karl Marx. *Theories of Surplus Value, Part I*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969. 157

⁶⁷² Karl Marx. *Theories of Surplus Value, Part III*. Moscow: Progress Publishers. 1969. 507. My emphasis.

⁶⁷³ It is processual in its going *beyond* self-preservation, for “mere self-preservation, *non-multiplication of value contradicts the essence of capital*.” Marx, *Grundrisse*, 310. My emphasis.

⁶⁷⁴ In Maurice Godelier’s view, “[f]or Marx [the unity of opposites] is out of the question” (86), specifically in terms of Marx’s critique of political economy, which is how Godelier differentiates Marx’s dialectic from Hegel’s. Suffice it to say that I do not agree. For his further elaboration on this difference, see: Maurice Godelier. *Rationality and Irrationality in Economics*. Translated by Brian Pearce. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972. 86-92

⁶⁷⁵ Marx, *Capital Vol. II*, 185. My emphasis

Capital is not merely value, though it cannot be conceived independently of value: capital is the *general* process through which value realizes itself, i.e., is a *result as self-valorizing value*.⁶⁷⁶ Capital, in this way, is an abstraction—or is only grasped *in its essence* through abstraction—but an abstraction endowed with *material consequences*⁶⁷⁷ through the way in which it *appears in its own movement*, and it *appears in various forms as value of a historically specific kind*; hence, *value-form*. At this level of abstraction, then, capital is a subject and totality an object. But capital too becomes an object, *objectifies itself*, becomes the *object of social domination*, and dissolves itself through its own metamorphosis into its various constituent parts, *forms of value*, which are themselves *objects in relation to subjects, the subject-objects of sociality, social human bodies*. This does not fully encompass Marx's critique, however, and is only one dimension of the *processual and relational* expression of a *historically specific social form*, the *capturing of the movement of capital*. Thus, to turn back to the epistemological question of subject-object relations, Marx is not breaking away from subject-object relations *as such*, but rather tearing asunder—through a *dialectical materialist* analysis of political economy—the subject-object paradigm in its *representational form*, where subject and object are divorced *absolutely*; as Roslyn Bologh asserts: "...[for Marx] it is the *separation* of subject and object which is problematic."⁶⁷⁸ Consequently, the subject-object takes on novel epistemological form, namely, a *dialectical form* through the *application* of a relational and systematic approach which recognizes the *movement of capital itself*. The remarkable precision of Marx's analysis resides in the *transformative dimension* retained in his categories *at different levels of abstraction*, where subject *is itself* object as much as the object *is itself* subject—what highlights either element *depends* on the level of abstraction and object of investigation with which we are dealing—a materialist dialectical logic premised on process and relation. Indeed, within the *circuit of capital*, the process through which value valorizes itself, capital is an 'automatic subject', but precisely in such a way as to be *its own object*, insofar as that on which it depends for its own self-valorization *are also subjects it objectifies and to which it is an object*, and this enacts *value's transformation into capital*: "...this process is a *process of self-realization*. Self-realization includes preservation of the prior value, as well as its multiplication."⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁶ "Every pre-condition of the social production process is at the same time *its result*, and *every one of its results* appears simultaneously as its pre-condition." Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value Part III*, 507. My emphasis.

⁶⁷⁷ In a nuanced discussion concerning the relationship between the abstract and concrete, drawing on Ilyenkov, Flower notes the *reality of abstraction*, i.e., its *material consequences*: "In speaking of an *abstraction* as a *reality*, we mean it is *not* primarily a cognitive phenomenon. It emerges *behind our backs* out of the dynamics of the capitalist process, as one of the mediations of class. *It goes as deep as production*." Anja Flower, *Transgender Marxism*, 246

⁶⁷⁸ Roslyn Bologh. *Dialectical Phenomenology: Marx's Method*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979. 160

⁶⁷⁹ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 311

As Marx said of David Ricardo, the problem seems to be that Postone “...does not carry true abstract thinking far enough and is therefore driven into *false abstraction*.”⁶⁸⁰ Capital is both subject and object. It makes of itself a subject through the contributions of social agents (social human bodies of ontologically excessive forms) and their institutions crystallized in a historically specific form. Postone’s insight regarding the objectified social mediations involved in this process is certainly correct: *it is a consequence of the alienated form of capitalist social relations of production and reproduction*. Capital’s becoming-subject is predicated on the *de-personalization* of social relations—an alienation—through which its own motion is constituted as *self-valorization*; wherein, as Isaak Rubin explains, “[t]he structure of the commodity economy causes things to play a particular and highly important *social* role and thus to acquire particular *social* properties.”⁶⁸¹ In this way, capital is in fact an object, a *dominating object*, an object that imbues itself within social mediations, rigidifying its role as an object of *social domination*, an object which—as equally a *kind* of subject—compels an obedience to its very logic, the logic of self-valorization. To be sure, Marx emphasizes the *relational* implication by means of identifying the *essence* of capital and thereby designates the reified *shape* through which capital objectifies social relations:

The more one examines [capitalist relations of production] its nature as it really is, the more one sees that in the last form it becomes increasingly consolidated, so that independently of the process these conditions appear to determine it, and their own relations appear to those competing in the process as objective conditions, objective forces, *aspects of things*, the more so as, in the capitalist process, every element, even the simplest, the commodity for example, is already an inversion and causes relations between people to appear as attributes between things and as relations of people to the *social* attributes of things.⁶⁸²

Marx here outlines the *theory of reification* as tied to capital’s process of self-valorization, where capital *exceeds* its purely *economic* dimension and exemplifies its *social intervention* as a mediation through which social consciousness (a historically specific social consciousness) becomes itself, i.e., becomes *reified through a relationally situated historical ground premised on reification itself*. Consequently, things, *objects*, become the *locus of sociality*, objects conceived in terms of *value* that mask *the relational and processual character through which value appears and by means of which it transforms into capital*. Consequently, Rubin asserts, “[t]his means that ‘value’ does not characterize things, but human relations in which things are produced.”⁶⁸³ Social subjects, then, conceive their very subjectivity *in relation* to this value, to these objects as *fixed* attributes.

⁶⁸⁰ Karl Marx. *Marx-Engels Collected Works, Volume 32*. UK: Lawrence & Wishart. 2010. 72

⁶⁸¹ Rubin, *Essays on Value*, 6. My emphasis.

⁶⁸² Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value Part III*, 507-508. My emphasis. To be sure, as Rubin notes, “Marx did not only show that human relations were veiled by relations between things, but rather that, in the commodity economy, social production relations inevitably took the *form of things* and *could not be expressed except through things*.” Rubin, *Essays on Value*, 6. My emphasis

⁶⁸³ Rubin, *Essays on Value*, 69

Similarly, they are *compelled* to view themselves in terms of a measurement of value—value as *socially necessary labor time*—to which their life is reduced as purely instrumental: ‘I am a *thing* whose life-value is the acquisition of more *value*,’ the teleology of capital dominates the alienated form through which ontologically purposive activity is mediated. Here, then, the *representational form of the subject-object paradigm* is truly instantiated as *the historically specific form* of representational thought, social consciousness dominated by the thought of atomism, mechanism, and the assumption of fixity bestowed onto both people and things. Capital’s reification is, at once, its naturalization, which *transhistoricizes itself*: “a form of life,” Bologh writes, “in which concepts and individuals appear as things without history.”⁶⁸⁴ In subject being separated from object, epistemologically, their transformative ontological *metabolism* is stripped from them. Consequently, Marx notes, “...[one] does not perceive that the production relations themselves, the social *forms* in which he produces and which he regards as given, natural relations, are the continuous product...of this *specific social mode of production*.”⁶⁸⁵ The problem, for Marx, is *this* kind of transhistoricizing, one premised on an irrational abstraction resulting from a representational form of the subject-object paradigm (itself premised on fixity), where capitalist relations of production are naturalized, that is, “...encased in eternal natural laws independent of history...on which society in the abstract is founded.”⁶⁸⁶ The *representational* form of the subject-object paradigm simply cannot comprehend the processual and relational character of *social becoming* amid a historically specific form, for, as Marx reminds us, “the different relations and aspects not only become independent and assume a heterogeneous mode of existence, *apparently independent of one another*, but they *seem* to be the direct *properties of things*; they assume a material shape.”⁶⁸⁷ Indeed, the immediate form by which relations *appear* under the capitalist mode of production, undermines the *relational essence* through which such appearance occurs—*mystifies the appearance of the historical specificity of these social relations*. Marx notes:

A social relation of production *appears* as something existing apart from individual human beings, and the distinctive relations into which they enter in the course of production in society *appear* as the specific properties of a thing—it is *this perverted appearance*, this prosaically real, and by no means imaginary, mystification that is characteristic of all *social forms of labor positing exchange-value*.⁶⁸⁸

⁶⁸⁴ Bologh, *Dialectical Phenomenology*, 160

⁶⁸⁵ Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value Part III*, 514

⁶⁸⁶ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 87

⁶⁸⁷ Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value Part III*, 514. My emphasis

⁶⁸⁸ Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 49. My emphasis.

Capital's abstraction and its mystified appearance reifies the form by which social subjectivity experiences and thereby considers relations *between* things. This 'perverted appearance', however, is 'prosaically real,' i.e., is the *objective consequence of a historically specific set of relations of production—the mystification is not merely imagined, it is decisively objective and the objectivity of its appearance as mystified is necessary to the reproduction of capital and its corresponding relations of production.* The appearance as *mystified*, then, masks the essence of capital at the phenomenal level which requires a *relational method to comprehend*: "All science would be superfluous if the form of appearance of things directly coincided with their essence."⁶⁸⁹ This is the problem of the *representational conception of the subject-object paradigm*: the epistemological consequence of divorcing subject from object results in an absolute separation between essence and appearance, severing the relationship between the concrete and abstract. This is overcome in Marx via the relational ontology already present in Hegel and takes on a *dialectical materialist* character.⁶⁹⁰ Postone merely asserts that Marx overcomes the subject-object paradigm by demonstrating that, for Marx, capital is the historical subject as opposed to any social agent. However, this only means that Postone implicitly reinscribes a *representational* reading of Marx. In disavowing the ability to recognize a social agent as a historical subject, Postone renders capital *representationally*, for as the historical subject capital becomes the agent over-against the '*class of producers*' that is the mere bearer of its objectification. Class struggle becomes *represented* as fixed, without motion, comprising lifeless non-subjects. Indeed, Postone seems to ignore the fundamental role *class*—in the struggle of labor through social life under political-economic duress—plays in the coming-to-be of capital as subject, where *class in itself becomes class for itself*. Instead, it remains necessary to demonstrate the *dialectical* element of the subject-object paradigm that Marx brings forth, and without which the *revolutionary* potential of critique is made invisible. Marx does not overcome the subject-object paradigm by abandoning it, but rather by making it dialectical. In so doing, the centrality of *working-class struggle, the political moment of critique, becomes all the more vivid*.

Beyond the examples above drawn from the late *Theories of Surplus Value*, we can find the dialectical (and relational) employment of the subject-object paradigm *at a different level of abstraction* just as much, and with equal philosophical weight, in Marx's *Paris Manuscripts of 1844*. There, Marx writes: "The sun is the *object* of the plant—an indispensable object to it, confirming its life—just as the plant is an object of the sun, being an *expression* of the life-awakening power of the sun, of the sun's *objective*

⁶⁸⁹ Karl Marx. *Capital Volume III*. Translated by David Fernbach. London: Penguin Books, 1993. 956

⁶⁹⁰ For an account of the methodological semblances between Hegel's *Science of Logic* and Marx's *Capital*, see Michael Lebowitz. *Following Marx: Method, Critique and Crisis*. Leiden: Brill, 2009. 69-98

essential power.”⁶⁹¹ Exemplifying the transformative dimension through which subject becomes object and vice-versa, Marx hints at an *ontological foundation* through which phenomena become observable in their particular context. In other words, the transformative dimension *inheres* in every individuated subject-object insofar as it is a *real object*. Precisely because of this methodological *specification*, a materialist dialectical logic (relational in character) does not reduce the historical specificity of any given phenomena by transhistoricizing it. On the contrary, as a result of certain *transhistorically grounded relational qualities* of a given subject-object, one can truly identify its *historically specific character*. This, of course, is possible only by situating the *human species-essence* as itself a part of nature, as its own object, in a *transformative relationship to other objects in nature*, an ontologically metabolic determination which constitutes and underlies the *subjective dialectics of sociality itself*. Jindrich Zeleny notes: “...all objects are active as natural objects, objectively acting natural essence, and the same time passive essence, since they are exposed to the objective effects of other natural objects.”⁶⁹² The specification of subject *qua* subject or object *qua* object depends only on the *level of abstraction* with which a scientific investigation is dealing, and does not, as a result, *remove the dialectically relational ontological ground* of the subject-object as such.⁶⁹³ Thus, in the context of appropriation as a transhistorical ontological ground of the human species-essence, social and historical specificity is by no means lost, contrary to Postone, but rather is *materialized in its unity and difference with its own historical ground*. To be sure, “[w]ith Marx,” Zeleny notes, “things, phenomena and qualitative characteristics are themselves grasped as things which develop from other things and are transformed into something else.”⁶⁹⁴ Zeleny captures here ontological relationality as the *transformative mediation* of the historical, wherein the objects themselves are transformed through the changing character of sociality and, thereby, obtain their historically specific character. Indeed, this implicit relational ontology renders the Hegelian logico-theoretical structure above described as pertinent to Marx. Zeleny describes this Marxian position thusly: “Every real form is understood as being in the *process of alteration*; then, not only are appearances transitory, alterable, fleeting, only divided from one another by conditional limits,

⁶⁹¹ Kar Marx. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961. 157

⁶⁹² Jindrich Zeleny. *The Logic of Marx*. Translated by Terrell Carver. New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980. 125

⁶⁹³ Regarding a discussion on their materialist method specifically regarding relations between things, Engels notes “The fact that it is a *relation* already implies that it has two aspects, which are *related to each other*. Each of these aspects is *examined separately*; this reveals the nature of their mutual behavior, their reciprocal action.” Engels is making clear that at different levels of inquiry, one must approach the peculiar character of the relations involved *at that level*—not as such. Engels, *Karl Marx, A Contribution (Review)*, 226. My emphasis.

⁶⁹⁴ Zeleny concludes this remark recognizing its Hegelian origin: “...they are, to put it in Hegelian terms, understood as ‘themselves-becoming-another.’” Zeleny, *The Logic of Marx*, 18

but also the *essences* of things themselves.”⁶⁹⁵ In fact, this conception of essence, as derived from Hegel,⁶⁹⁶ is precisely how Marx overcomes the representational ‘substantialist-attributive’⁶⁹⁷ view underlying Ricardo whose “...materialist, substantialist logic is determined by his conception of fixed essence.” Marx, on the other hand, advances “...from fixed essence to fluid *dialectical* essence.”⁶⁹⁸ It should be noted that this dimension of Marx’s critique of Ricardo is simultaneously an overcoming of the mechanical, representational, “social materialism”⁶⁹⁹ underlying classical political economy. Through the incorporation and inversion of Hegel’s dialectical logic and a nuanced exposure to classical political economy, Marx develops a truly *dialectical relational ontology* of significant *critical value* that retains the *revolutionary element of both abolishment of existing conditions and, against Postone, the realization of a new social form.*

The dialectical presentation and understanding of the subject-object paradigm manifests its theoretical complexity premised on different moments in which different *forms of effect*, reciprocal effects, “...on the basis of the developing essence”⁷⁰⁰ of a given subject-object are materialized and, therefore, their historical specificity *identified*. Such identification is possible precisely because the relationality through which Marx approaches causal relations between (changing) subject-objects as varying forms of effects is premised on an ontological conception of dialectical *motion*.⁷⁰¹ As we have seen with Hegel, this dialectical motion is premised on absolute negativity, and thus *absolute contradiction* of every *absolute form*. Marx’s recognition of the ontological nature of *objective contradiction* as the *relative motion* inhering in every form, “...is the innermost property...of the *relational and developmental*

⁶⁹⁵ Zeleny, *The Logic of Marx*, 18

⁶⁹⁶ “...Hegel’s new conception consists in this: that...essence is understood to be self-developing. Hegel prepared the way for the Marxian thesis on the starting point of science by his reflections on the circular structure of a scientific system and on the combination of the immediate (the unmediated) and the mediated in reality and thought.” Zeleny, *The Logic of Marx*, 33

⁶⁹⁷ ‘Substantialist-Attributive logic’ is used by Zeleny to describe *representational thinking*, where entities are viewed as *fixed* substances with pre-determined attributes—the *opposite of a relational ontology*.

⁶⁹⁸ Zeleny, *The Logic of Marx*, 24. My emphasis.

⁶⁹⁹ Zhang Yibing explains: “It is necessary for us to differentiate the social materialism that existed in early political economy from social realism, which is understood in the context of sociology. The logic of the former is philosophically abstract; the context of the latter is experiential and concrete” (1). For Yibing, social materialism represents classical political economy’s articulation of a “scientific abstraction of the essence of society,” which he suggests “can be traced...from [Say, McCulloch, de Tray] to [Adam] Smith” taking its most comprehensive and scientific character in David Ricardo (32). Yibing further notes that the mechanical character of social materialism leads to an authentic economic determinism; and that it is Marx’s recognition of this philosophical underpinning present in the classical political economists that “...was the true, *critical basis*” for Marx’s historical materialism which overcame such reductionism. Yibing, *Back to Marx*, 33

⁷⁰⁰ Zeleny, *The Logic of Marx*, 77

⁷⁰¹ “Marx’s conception of the different forms of effect is inseparably linked with two principles (is an aspect of those two principles): the principle of the unity of the world and the principle of self-development, that is the view that the absolute ‘condition’ of things and phenomena is to be found in the process of alteration, in motion.” Zeleny, *The Logic of Marx*, 75

ontological structure of Marxian theory.”⁷⁰² To be sure, against Postone’s assertion that the overcoming of the subject-object paradigm is pertinent to Marx’s critique of political economy, I suggest, through Zeleny, that it is Marx’s *dialectical* conception of *relational* subject-objects—as part of a processual and relational *ontology*—that is most pertinent, since it maintains the historical as relevant to the critique of capital while not transhistoricizing qualities of the latter onto the former. This theoretical re-articulation of subject-object relations characterizes the immanent fluidity of the categories in the Marxian system, as Zeleny explains: “The core of the Marxian conception of the elasticity of concepts and the supersession of fixation in ideas...is...a new relationship of relative and absolute, and...a *new objectivity*, the relationship of objects in objective reality to the process of perception.”⁷⁰³ Zeleny’s point here marks the *phenomenological* dimension necessary to the achievement of historical specificity in thought itself. For, despite a social consciousness dominated by the reification tethered to capitalist relations of production, it remains possible for a *subject—a social human body, the human species-essence*—to *come-to-know* the forms by which they are mediated, to logically comprehend the *mediations of domination that pervade their immediacy*; and, in that way, to *practically act against them through a novel form of self-realization*, indeed, a *revolutionary one*. Against Postone, then, Marx does not only inherit Hegel’s ‘knowing subject’ but *materializes the very ground of its knowledge and the conditions of its knowledge*; grounds, that is, *knowledge production*.⁷⁰⁴ The theoretical validity of this grounding which engenders rigorous historical *specification* is itself premised on certain transhistorical elements that must be presupposed. The transhistorical element pertains to the *ontological foundation of the human species-essence*, its sociality. For example, Marx writes:

Whatever the social form of the production process, it has to be continuous, it must periodically repeat the same phrases. *A society can no more cease to produce than it can cease to consume*. When viewed, therefore, as a connected whole, and *in the constant flux of its incessant renewal, every social process of production is at the same time a process of reproduction*.⁷⁰⁵

Indeed, the essence of sociality is the production and reproduction of its form. Social production exceeds itself, *is the ontological excessive result of the activity of social human bodies*. This excess of *sociality* is *reproduction*: the excess of social production is social *reproduction*. And, social *reproduction* as an excessive result is the *transformative component of social production*. This qualitative feature is the ontological basis of *all sociality*. Thus, the *ontological ground* of human sociality is applicable *universally* and *transhistorically*, and

⁷⁰² Zeleny, *The Logic of Marx*, 29

⁷⁰³ Zeleny, *The Logic of Marx*, 20

⁷⁰⁴ Postone writes, “[w]hereas Hegel’s Subject is transhistorical and knowing, in Marx’s analysis it is historically determinate and blind.” Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, 77

⁷⁰⁵ It is clear that Marx is making a general, *transhistorical*, claim here because later in the same page he *specifies*, qualitatively, a historical difference: “If production has a capitalist form, so too will reproduction.” Marx, *Capital Volume I*, 711

in this precise sense *remains an objective precondition of social analysis and/or critique*. To develop a *critique of the historically specific character of any given society*, to disclose the problematic forms through which its social mediations operate, requires—of *epistemological necessity*—a common and general feature through which specificity can be determined. It is hopefully obvious, however, that this does not mean that *every* Marxian category is transhistorical. But to eliminate the relevance of the transhistorical dimension featuring in certain categories, to disavow an ontological foundation in Marx, is to lose the salience of both the negative (*critical*) and positive (*revolutionary*) dimensions of his work. Indeed, this is the ‘structural-genetic’ logic Marx develops.⁷⁰⁶ It is ‘genetic’ in terms of *genesis*, self-development, determinate becoming, and thus assumes an ontological basis. It is ‘structural’ precisely because it approaches the object of its investigation by means of identifying the *historically specific character* by which a social form is organized or arranged.

As a result of this ontological component in Marx’s structural-genetic analysis of capital, we can also provide a criticism of Postone’s political conclusion with regard to the ‘negation of capitalism’ conceived in terms of ‘the abolition, rather than the realization, of the totality’ and the notion that such negation ‘entails overcoming a determinate form of mediation rather than overcoming social mediation *per se*.’

Postone is undoubtedly correct in asserting, as I have already noted, that abolishing the social mediations *peculiar* to capital is not the abolishment of social mediations *per se*. Nonetheless, the issue of supposing abolition *over-against* realization remains remarkably one-sided, *especially* if the historical subject is conceived of as capital. Who, then, for Postone, is doing the abolishing? Is it capital itself that dissolves itself, abolishes itself, through crisis? Or, in Postone’s analysis, is it actually value that abolishes itself? What guarantees, one might ask, the realization of socialism after such abolition? Could it not be the case that some other antagonistic and alienating political apparatus arises in the wake of capital’s abolishment rather than socialism? What directs this hypothetical post-capitalist development?

We may be reminded here of Marx’s critique of Bruno Bauer and consider its applicability to Postone’s political conclusion. In a critical analysis of Bauer’s conception of substance, Marx writes:

...instead of *real* people and their *real* consciousness of their social relations...[Bauer] has the mere abstract expression: *self-consciousness*, just as, instead of *real* production, he has the activity of this *self-consciousness*, *which has become independent*. On the other hand, instead of *real* nature and the *actually existing social relations*, he has the philosophical

⁷⁰⁶ Zeleny, *The Logic of Marx*, 45-70

summing-up of all the philosophical categories: *substance*; for Bruno....erroneously regards thoughts and ideas...as the basis of the existing world.⁷⁰⁷

Instead of the consideration of *the real basis of sociality, social human bodies*, Postone has only *value*. He may be forgiven, so to speak, given that in capitalist society value is, in like manner, its primary *substance*. However, this is true only if we regard the abstraction and idea of capital, its thought determination, as the ‘basis of the existing world.’ To be sure, the *process through which actually existing social relations reproduce themselves is determined by capital whose substance is value*; or, more correctly, self-valorization. Capital’s substance as value, however, is determined only at a level of abstraction where capital has become subject, that is *the historical subject*, and thus is merely the ‘abstract expression’ of it. But, one might ask, what is the substance of value? *Labor—not just any labor, but a qualified aspect of labor in a historically specific form*, as Engels asserts, “[i]t is not labor that is bought and sold as a commodity, but rather labor-power,”⁷⁰⁸ labor as value-producing labor,⁷⁰⁹ *commodified labor*, which is itself measured by *value*⁷¹⁰ (*socially necessary labor time*).⁷¹¹ And what is labor, if not an activity performed⁷¹² by *real, actually existing, social human bodies, subject-objects of which sociality is comprised?*⁷¹³ “We arrive, therefore,” Marx

⁷⁰⁷ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. *The German Ideology*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976. 108. My emphasis.

⁷⁰⁸ Frederick Engels. “Preface to the First Edition.” In, Karl Marx. *Capital, Volume II*. Translated by David Fernbach. London: Penguin Books, 1993. 101. Engels is consistent with this claim. In *Anti-Dühring*, he writes: “...labor as such can have no value, this is by no means the case with labor-power. This acquires a value from the moment that it becomes a commodity, as it is in fact at the present time, and this value is determined...by the labor-time necessary for the production of the means of subsistence which the laborer requires for his maintenance...” Engels, *MECW Vol. 25*, 190, Marx too maintains this definition: “As with every commodity so it is true of labor-power that its price can rise above its value or fall beneath it.” Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, 1068

⁷⁰⁹ In the *Grundrisse*, Marx notes: “As against capital, labor is the merely abstract form, the mere possibility of value-positing activity, which exists only as a capacity, as a resource in the bodiliness of the worker. But when it is made into real activity through contact with capital...then it becomes a really value-positing, productive activity.” Marx, *Grundrisse*, 298

⁷¹⁰ Heinrich affirms: “The magnitude of value of a commodity is not simply a relationship between the *individual* labor of the producer and the product (which is what the ‘substantialist’ conception of value amounts to), but rather a relationship between the *individual* labor of producers and the *total labor of society*.” Heinrich, *Introduction to Capital*, 55.

⁷¹¹ Interestingly, Postone does recognize this in Marx, and specifically in terms of a discussion on substance: “[Marx] refers to value as having ‘substance’, which he identifies as abstract human labor.” Nonetheless, Postone proceeds through an excessive distinction between capital and labor to the point where labor loses its revolutionary potential. Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, 75

⁷¹² And this performance is *necessarily temporal*, an instance of the temporality of capital that *regulates* the process of social production: “...*labor-time is fundamental to the regulation of the reproduction of society*: the performance of labor produces both use-values and social relations; the performance of surplus labor reproduces both the surplus product and the class relation.” Anwar Shaikh. “The Poverty of Algebra.” In, *The Value Controversy*. London: Verso, 1981. 270. Or, as Marx elsewhere puts it: “Labor-time is the *living state of existence* of labor irrespective of its form, its content and its individual features; it is the quantitative aspect of labor as well as its inherent measure.” Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 30. My emphasis.

⁷¹³ In *Value, Price, and Profit* Marx notes the historically specific *social* character of both value and labor, exemplifying the *relational* dimension of his analysis: “As the *exchangeable values* of commodities are only *social functions* of those things, and have nothing at all to do with their *natural* qualities, we must first ask, What is the common *social substance* of all commodities? It is *Labor*. To produce a commodity a certain amount of labor must be bestowed upon it, or worked up in it. And I say not only *labor*, but *social labor*.” Marx, *MECW Vol. 20*, 121.

explains, “at this conclusion[.] A commodity has a *value*, because it is a *crystallization of social labor*.”⁷¹⁴ It is important to thoroughly consider this issue for the question Postone raises is a real theoretical *and* practical problem. Postone is considering the overcoming of capital, of the capitalist totality. But, the capitalist totality is a capitalist *sociality*, a *sociality dominated by capital* and its corresponding dominance of social mediations through reification. And capital has, as its object, *another subject*, the subject-object of sociality whose activity *qua* social labor is *dominated* by the *object*, capital, which is the subject of its own *process*.⁷¹⁵ Thus, the *real* question cannot be who is or is not the subject or object, and instead the transformation of the *historically specific sociality through overcoming a specific subject-object, capital, by means of the revolutionary activity of a different subject-object, the ‘class of producers.’*

This transformation requires an ‘abolishment’, undoubtedly, but equally requires a *realization*, the becoming real of something new, insofar as realization is itself immanently tied to abolishment. Both the abolishment and realization of something new requires actions on the part of *real social subjects*. However, not all subjects want something new, for they are not *homogenous subjects*, but *real subjects* that exist in differentiated relationships to one another, through each other—in terms of the mode of production proper as well as their *social life*, since the former necessarily conditions the latter—and thus *actually exist in accordance with their social positionality*. To divorce abolishment from realization, as Postone does, is nothing but the symptomatic result of divorcing value from the subjects who create it *and* those who exploit and expropriate them, and who, in so doing, maintain and perpetuate—not always of their own accord but as a result of “...the mute compulsion of economic relations [which] seals the domination of the capitalist over the worker”⁷¹⁶—the existing order of things.

It is worth briefly considering the correspondence between my two criticisms of Postone. Insofar as abolishment and realization are dialectically tethered, so too are the *historical specificity of capitalist relations of production* and *non-capitalist relations*; in fact, it is precisely the peculiarity of capitalist relations themselves to include within them the historical persistence of non-capitalist relations as *historical residuals*.

To be sure, contrary to critics of Marx who claim that he performs an absolute ‘homogenization’ such that *only capitalist relations of production exist under capital*, he recognizes explicitly

⁷¹⁴ Marx, *MECW Vol. 20*, 122. My emphasis.

⁷¹⁵ This becomes very clear in the wage-labor relation. Bologh notes, “[workers] are persons that capital recognizes as such in exchange; they are not just another force of nature. The labor is both exchanger and labor power. As exchanger, he relates to himself as owner of labor power. He has a subjective existence in relation his body as object. Yet, while the worker has a subjective existence as an exchanger, he is at the same time just another objective condition of production for capital.” Bologh, *Dialectical Phenomenology*, 161

⁷¹⁶ Marx, *Capital Volume I*, 899

the existence of other production relations subsisting therein. In *Theories of Surplus Value*, Marx discusses the labor of ‘handicraftsmen’ and ‘peasants’ in capitalist society. He explains how they are not engaging in neither ‘productive’ labor nor ‘unproductive’ labor, and that despite presenting themselves as “sellers of commodities” and while also being “producers of commodities,” their “production *does not* fall under the capitalist mode of production.”⁷¹⁷ Ironically, it is precisely the fact, according to Marx himself, that the presence of non-capitalist production relations exist under the capitalist mode of production which makes of capital a *historically specific and complex mode of production*: “And here we come up against a peculiarity that is characteristic of a society in which one definite mode of production predominates, *even though not all productive relations have been subordinated to it.*”⁷¹⁸ Marx pushes this thought even further, noting that the reification of social mediations under capital are so intensified that different productive relations *appear* (ideologically) as *capitalist relations* “...even where the relation is in direct contradiction to it.”⁷¹⁹ So much, then, for a ‘totalizing,’ ‘homogenizing,’ Marx who supposedly failed to recognize the persistence of non-capitalist relations in capital itself.

The economic law⁷²⁰ of capital, however, is predicated on the continuous *subsumption* of non-capitalist relations of production existing under capital, which *compels* an obedience to the logic of valorization,⁷²¹ such that the “...handicraftsman or peasant who produces with his own means of production will either gradually be transformed into a small capitalist who also exploits the labor of others, or he will suffer the loss of his means of production...and be transformed into a wage-laborer.”⁷²² Indeed, this determination of capital means precisely that *capitalism can and does comprise itself through the existence of non-capitalist relations of production alongside capitalist relations.*⁷²³ Simultaneously, it

⁷¹⁷ Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value Part I*, 407

⁷¹⁸ Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value Part I*, 407-408. My emphasis.

⁷¹⁹ Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value Part I*, 408

⁷²⁰ One should keep in mind here the historical character of this economic law. Indeed, in a letter to Friedrich Lange (1865), Engels notes, critically, the “remarkable likeness between [Darwin’s] account of plant and animal life and the Malthusian theory” and concludes: “To us [Marx & Engels] so-called ‘economic laws’ are *not* eternal laws of nature but *historical* laws which appear and disappear.” I would like to make note that though Marx and Engels took seriously Darwin’s discoveries, they were careful as to differentiate the implications in terms of different levels of inquiry and to not reduce the laws of society, which are historical, to the laws of nature, even if the latter are always already present in the former. Engels to F.A. Lange, *Marx-Engels Correspondence*, 161. My emphasis.

⁷²¹ For an account of the ‘agrarian origins of capitalism,’ which discloses the changes in social property relations in the transition from feudalism to capitalism, with an emphasis on the ideological corollary of valorization as the notion of an ‘ethic of improvement,’ see: Ellen Meiksins Wood. *The Origins of Capitalism: A Longer View*. New York: Verso, 2002. 95-124. The notion of improvement was *central* to an ideological social mediation that fit the *social consciousness* capital was forming. Brenna Bhandar traces the origin of what she calls the “ideology of improvement” to the work of William Petty. Petty provided a *quantitative* schema of labor’s relation to value through the colonization of Ireland. See: Brenna Bhandar. *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Ownership*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018. 33-75.

⁷²² Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value Part I*, 409

⁷²³ This insight bears relevance to the debates on ‘unfree’ labor relations under capital. Ultimately, the question lies in whether ‘primitive accumulation’ is in fact the precursor, ‘pre-history,’ of capital or if it is an ‘on-going process of

attempts through implicit coercion by means of becoming the *dominant object of social mediations* to bring non-capitalist relations under its scope:⁷²⁴ “This is the *tendency* in the form of society in which the capitalist mode of production predominates.”⁷²⁵

This ‘*tendency*’ of capital’s coercive domination to subsume⁷²⁶ non-capitalist relations is the dialectical *inversion* of capital’s *indifference* to those very relations, which is precisely why capital’s *universalization*, as the dominant mode of production, does not necessarily homogenize every *extra-economic* element but only subdues them if they are relevant to the valorization process; those subjects not actively relevant to capitalist relations of production are merely a *surplus population*, and capital is indifferent to whatever way in which they may subsist. This indifference coincides with the subjugation of the technological toward valorization. Marx notes, “[c]apital can produce surplus labor only by positing necessary labor, i.e., by entering exchange with the worker.”⁷²⁷ In so doing, capital structures the peculiar relation between laboring activity and self-valorization. In its tendency toward accumulation through self-valorization, capital’s tendency is “...to produce as much labor as possible, just as it is its tendency to reduce necessary labor to a minimum.”⁷²⁸ The technological development of the productive forces results in a *quantitative* increase in production while reducing the amount of

dispossession.’ The assumption of the latter tendency (most famously argued by David Harvey and Silvia Federici) is that unfree labor remains present in capital and, therefore, primitive accumulation is ‘on-going.’ This tendency argues that this proves the non-linear dimension of Marx’s thought, going against the ‘stagist’ theory of Orthodox Marxism. This position is misleading, however, as it in fact promotes a liberal (and not Marxist) position by assuming—along with the liberal political philosophy tradition—that free labor is the definitive feature of capitalism. This position becomes quite suspicious, however, because it assumes precisely that where unfree labor remains capitalism has not fully matured. Consequently, the political implication is to obtain to a mature capitalism fully—rather than working against it—in terms of labor’s acquisition of liberal ‘rights.’ However, this *re-inscribes* a *stagism* in that it presupposes a *linear development* toward socialism through liberal democracy *first*. In recognizing the co-existence of non-capitalist relations alongside capitalist relations of labor, the question of ‘free labor’ as the defining feature of capitalism also falls apart. Indeed, ‘free labor’ and ‘unfree labor’ are both *constitutive of the historical specificity of capital*. Here, I side with Tom Brass’s position of the necessity of marking a boundary between ‘so-called primitive accumulation’ and capitalism proper, and insist that this does *not* signify a linear, ‘stagist’ theory of historical development, but instead describes the *change in form* through which the complexity of capital can be discerned. For a review and critical analysis of the aforementioned, see: Tom Brass. *Labour Regime Change in the Twenty-First Century: Unfreedom, Capitalism, and Primitive Accumulation*. Leiden: Brill, 2011.

⁷²⁴ A practical and relevant example of this instance is the Landless Peasants Movement in Brazil (MST-Movimento Sem Terra). Briefly, after taking over unused land they develop alternative, non-capitalist, modes of social organization and production. However, once they gain *juridical ownership* over the land—i.e., once the land they’re occupying becomes officially their own—the organization encounters a number of difficulties in maintaining their creative social alteration. This is because once officially recognized by the state, they are obligated simultaneously to engage in the capitalist mode of production, having to then produce for *sale* instead of subsistence. This, in turn, causes a number of stressors to the social organization during their ‘illegal’ occupancy, disenfranchising their revolutionary micro-level structures. For an overview of this issue, see: Leandro Vergara-Camus. *Land and Freedom: The MST, the Zapatistas and Peasant Alternatives to Neoliberalism*. London: Zed Books, 2014.

⁷²⁵ Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value Part I*, 409

⁷²⁶ For a more nuanced discussion of subsumption, as *formal and real subsumption*, see the ‘Appendix’ to *Capital Vol. I*.

⁷²⁷ Marx, *MECW Vol. 34*, 16

⁷²⁸ Marx, *MECW Vol. 34*, 16

labor required for that production, *necessary labor* (this is relative surplus value).⁷²⁹ This means also that capital must create an absolute dependence of labor on it: capital becomes the object of the social subject, insofar as the social subject is a social subject *under capitalist relations of production* even if they are not *directly involved in the process of production*. “It is therefore,” Marx concludes, “the tendency of capital to enlarge the working population as it is to posit a part of that population as a *surplus population*, = a population which is initially useless, until such time as capital can utilize it.”⁷³⁰ Non-capitalist relations of production, those social subjects who transgress the representational epistemology of capital itself (its neat and self-evident boundaries of employer and employee), are tolerated and allowed to persist as they wish precisely because they are *useless* in the eyes of capital. They become ‘problems’ relegated to the State.

With Marx’s astute observations in mind, we can see the necessity of a historical subject(-object), the human species-essence in its manifold heterogeneity—a heterogeneity that persists even within the domination of capital’s universalization—for the purpose of considering both the abolition and realization of a novel society. In this sense, at a different level of abstraction—namely, at the level of postulating *social transformation*—Marx does not simply theoretically construct a subject but identifies an *already existing subject, a set of real subject-objects*: the “class of producers,” even those producers that are considered a ‘surplus population’ for capital. Indeed, the working class as a historical subject is not a theoretical result, but a practical result of the *actually existing social relations immanent to the historical specificity of capital*. So too are the bourgeoisie: they are just as much a historical subject of a specific social form. In specifying the *level of abstraction*, however, we reveal the subject of a *specific process: the revolutionary transformation of society, its abolishment*, has as the subject of this process the *class of producers*.⁷³¹

Of course, Marx infamously asserts that “[w]e call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things.”⁷³² However, to such abolition a realization is dialectically immanent: “...a *practical movement, a revolution*.”⁷³³ To be sure, for Marx, “the revolution is *necessary*,”

⁷²⁹ “It is the constant aim of capitalist production to produce a maximum of surplus-value or surplus-product with minimum capital outlay; and to the extent that this result is not achieved by overworking the workers [i.e., absolute surplus-value], it is a *tendency of capital to seek to produce a given product with the least possible expenditure*—economy of power and expense...In this conception, the workers themselves appear as that which they are in capitalist production—*mere means of production*, not an end in themselves and not the aim of production.” Karl Marx. *Theories of Surplus Value, Part II*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968. 548

⁷³⁰ Marx, *MECW Vol. 34*, 16

⁷³¹ For a historical account of bourgeois ascendancy and its impact on state formation within Europe, specifically through the development of modern law, see Michael Tigar and Madeleine Levy. *Law & the Rise of Capitalism*. New York: Monthly Review Press. 1977

⁷³² Marx, *German Ideology*, 49

⁷³³ Marx, *German Ideology*, 60. My emphasis

precisely because “...the *class overthrowing [the ruling class]* can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew.”⁷³⁴ Communism is indeed the beginning, as Postone notes, but that beginning is itself an abolition of that against which it begins, that which it abolishes, that which it *negates*. The materialist negation of the negation—the negation of the reified form of capital’s *negation of human life, of the social human body*—is itself the *positive emergence of a new sociality enacted by the ‘class of producers.’* However, there are two important points here. First, the new society is not divorced from its historical ground, from that which it emerges in the process of abolishment—to think this would amount to a purely utopic ideal regarding which Marx is, as is well known, critical. In the late *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx writes:

What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it has *developed* on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, just as it *emerges* from capitalist society; which is thus *in every respect*, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birth marks of the old society from whose womb it emerges.⁷³⁵

To emphasize abolishment over-against realization, as Postone argues, is to promulgate a kind of passivity without creativity in which the inevitability of abolishment is simply presupposed, and thus there exists a tremendous failure to recognize that the very process of abolishment itself is *already* premised on the futural realization of a new sociality. Abolishment, however, is premised on the realization as already immanent to it: *the tendency toward abolishment of existing conditions is already the realization of society anew in embryonic form.* Moreover, such realization emerges through abolishment still *dealing with* the ‘birth marks’ of the old society, i.e., their social mediations, but now critically understood. This leads us to the second point; namely, that for Marx this transitional moment is indeed premised on a historical subject, the class of producers, whose revolutionary potential is itself premised on retaining the ontological ground of being a ‘knowing subject.’ Indeed, for both abolishment *and* realization to occur at all a *knowing subject is necessary*, a subject that can recognize the problematic dimensions of the social mediations that dominate their social existence, a subject that recognize itself as an object, its objective subjectivity, and, more importantly, can actualize its revolutionary potential by *do something about it.*⁷³⁶ In this way, Marx’s integration of the relational ontology of Hegel is indeed

⁷³⁴ Marx, *German Ideology*, 60. My emphasis

⁷³⁵ Karl Marx. “Critique of the Gotha Programme.” In, *Marx-Engels Reader*. Edited by Robert Tucker. New York: W.W. Norton. 1999. 529

⁷³⁶ In *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, Engels notes: “And this conflict between productive forces and modes of production is not a conflict engendered in the mind of man, like that between original sin and divine justice. It exists, in fact, *objectively*, outside us, independently of the will and actions of the men that have brought it on. Modern Socialism is nothing but the reflex, *in thought*, of this conflict in fact; its *ideal reflection* in the minds, first. Of the class directly suffering under it, the working-class.” Engels, *Marx-Engels Collected Works Vol. 24*, 307

retained, though simultaneously endowed with the historical specificity, amid the heterogeneity of social formations, through which and in which the human species-essence has historically found itself.

But, we need not rely on other texts to disprove Postone's assertion that Marx is concerned merely with abolition. In *Capital* itself Marx *directly* undermines Postone's thesis. In discussing the historical process of formal subsumption and the transition to capital Marx notes that "...a complete economic revolution is brought about."⁷³⁷ This takes on two determinate expressions. In the first, the subsumption process "creates the real conditions for the domination of labor by capital."⁷³⁸ Then, through capital's becoming dominant in a contradictory and antagonistic manner, it *incidentally* "...creates the real premises of a *new mode of production*, one that *abolishes the contradictory form of capitalism*."⁷³⁹ This much *must be* the case. Insofar as an alternative society is possible, it cannot but emerge from its historical conditions, i.e., the conditions of capitalist production. However, precisely as a result of the contradictory form of capital, its own development "...thereby creates the material basis of a *newly shaped social process and hence of a new social formation*."⁷⁴⁰

This brings us to the truly non-reductive character of Marx's work. Notice that in the above quoted passage from the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx mentions that the emergence of a new society still must deal with the social mediations from which it is originating '*in every respect*.' What Marx calls—as mentioned in the opening epigraph to this part—the 'collective appropriation' of the products of society is the instantiation of a *novel* set of social relations which assume a distinct expression of *novel* forms of the appropriation of social life. This is not a mere change in the mode of production, but equally a change in the *mode of appropriation of social existence*, i.e., a change predicated on Marx's ontological grounding of the human species-essence which has expressed itself in a *historically specific form* but has already existed in *other* forms—since other forms, other production relations, still exist under capitalist relations—and can transcend the *social form* of capital. The realization of a new *sociality* is the positive *result* of abolition as an *immanent transcendence*, as the 'early' Marx asserts: "communism as the *positive* transcendence of *private property*, as *human self-estrangement*, and therefore as the real *appropriation* of the human essence by and for man."⁷⁴¹ The appropriation of the human essence is not a *return*, but a new beginning, where *the mode of appropriation (the combination of belonging-form, property-*

⁷³⁷ Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, 1065

⁷³⁸ Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, 1065

⁷³⁹ Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, 1065

⁷⁴⁰ Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, 1065

⁷⁴¹ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 103. My emphasis

form, and labor-form) takes on a new creative-aesthetic shape in terms of *social life*.⁷⁴² This is precisely *not a doctrinal program that displaces the social particularity of a given social formation under a dogmatic rule*.⁷⁴³ On the contrary, it includes the creative-aesthetic dimension of the social particularity of each social formation in question, now oriented toward the creation of a social-form that allows for this universality to express itself *heterogeneously*. Istvan Mészáros notes that this immanent, “[p]ositive transcendence...[and]...its realization can only be conceived in the *universality of social practice as a whole*.”⁷⁴⁴ This subtle remark is, in fact, a profound insight. The realization of a new social form concerns the *universality of social practice as a whole*. It does not only concern *labor, the mode of production*—even if that is inarguably a *major and necessary* concern—but the transformation of *social practice as a whole*, i.e., *a rearticulation of social life in novel form*. A social practice, not only universal in character but the very essence of human species, is *appropriation*. A focus on appropriation includes labor but also discloses the heterogeneous *particularizations of sociality itself*, expressed in *various forms which constitute social life*. An immanent transcendence of capital, then, concerns the *integration of sociality* with a critical lens toward all the *forms* that constitute it, and in this way, as Ollman notes, “[c]ommunism is the time of full, personal *appropriation*.”⁷⁴⁵

The appropriation of human life is self-possession, the appropriation of human species-essence over against forms of alienation; the appropriation of the human species-essence is the resurrection of appropriation itself, i.e., of creative-aesthetic activity in the manifold of its real possibility. In this sense, it is neither a return nor a redemption: *it is the engendering of real possibility of integrative sociality, the realization of freedom through the social; the social, moreover, that is cognizant of its fundamental, ontological, metabolic relation to nature*. Marx renders the possibility of *practical* social transformation in theory by means of a relational ontology that, against Postone, is necessarily

⁷⁴² This is equally the case for those Marxists who have advanced theories of social transformation in reference to pre-colonial societies. José Mariátegui is a prime example. Harry Harootunian writes that “some...have wrongly referred to Mariátegui’s rescue of the archaic, Inca communal order as an expression of ‘Inca utopianism’...But when [he] summoned the example of a primitive Inca communism in the American tradition, he had no intention of restoring what had long passed into the archive of historical presuppositions. Its momentary recall in the present was a way of *enlivening socialism* that fit into Latin America by giving it its own ‘style’ and ‘individuality’ that would reinforce its capacity to evade the snares produced by imitating the ‘European repertoire.’” Harry Harootunian. *Marx After Marx: History and Time in the Expansion of Capitalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015. 139. For a nuanced account of Mariátegui’s relationship to socialism and Incan indigeneity, see: Omar Rivera. *Delimitations of Latin American Philosophy: Beyond Redemption*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019. 66-91.

⁷⁴³ I have elsewhere dealt with the non-dogmatic character of a dialectical materialist relational ontology in terms of Lenin’s articulation of it. See, Kenny Knowlton Jr. and Cameron Gamble. “The Philosophy of Ecological Leninism.” In, *Contradictions: A Journal for Critical Thought*. Vol. 6, No. 2 (2022). 17-39.

⁷⁴⁴ Istvan Mészáros. *Marx’s Theory of Alienation*. London: Merlin Press, 1970. 161. My emphasis.

⁷⁴⁵ Ollman, *Alienation*, 95

dependent on both a *transhistorical* underpinning—as well as a historical specificity concomitant to it—and *realization* through abolition, a realization predicated on the *self*-realization of a determinate knowing subject-object, the *social human body*. For Marx, the self-realization of the human species-essence, then, is the enactment of freedom, which “...presupposes,” as Carol Gould notes, “the overcoming of both natural and social necessity.”⁷⁴⁶ The overcoming of these necessities, Engels tells us, “...could become possible, could *become* a historical necessity, only when the actual conditions for its realization [are] there.”⁷⁴⁷ Indeed, the conditions for abolishment are, simultaneously, the conditions for the realization of something new, which makes of both *an immanent necessity*.

To be sure, novel modes of appropriation, the de facto construction of novel belonging-forms, property-forms, and labor-forms, are a positive exercise that cannot be achieved without a conception of a subject, itself an object—indeed, a determinate becoming subject-object, which can appropriate itself as social, appropriate its own-most sociality, and engender the possibility of realizing creative-aesthetic activity in novel forms. That is, when, Engels notes, “...the capitalist mode of appropriation...is replaced by [a novel] mode of appropriation...*direct social appropriation*, as means to the maintenance and extension of production [and] *direct individual appropriation*, as means of subsistence and enjoyment.”⁷⁴⁸ It is in this *relational envisioning of social particularity combined with social singularity* as expressing the *positive* universality of the human-species essence, as *appropriation* (as creative-aesthetic activity), where it becomes possible, as Marx notes, to make real the “complete return of man to himself as a *social* (i.e., human being);”⁷⁴⁹ for the realization of the *ontological social element* over-against the individualization of capital, is where, Engels asserts, “[t]he struggle for *individual* existence disappears.”⁷⁵⁰ Moreover, this *claim to human sociality* contains implicit within it an ecological claim, in as much as a “fully developed humanism equals naturalism;” and therefore characterizes “...the *genuine* resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man.”⁷⁵¹ The struggle against forms of social domination, the implications of which are not merely ideological in character, are not merely problems of social consciousness, but equally problems of the metabolism of the human-nature relation, i.e., ecological problems, in as much as the form of capitalist social domination has brought sociality itself to the ecological limit of the possibility of its self-realization. Indeed, the

⁷⁴⁶ Carol Gould. *Marx's Social Ontology: Individuality and Community in Marx's Theory of Social Reality*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980. 125-126

⁷⁴⁷ Engels, *MECW Vol. 46*, 321

⁷⁴⁸ Engels, *MECW Vol. 46*, 320

⁷⁴⁹ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 102

⁷⁵⁰ Engels, *MECW Vol. 46*, 323

⁷⁵¹ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 102

resolution of the conflict between ‘man and nature’ should not be read as a collapse of the distinction between two kinds of metabolic processes (the social and the natural).⁷⁵² On the contrary, following Hegel’s understanding of the dialectical relation between Nature and Spirit, Marx and Engels simply aim to show the *political* necessity of changing a mode of production, and its corresponding mode of appropriation, that sees nature as merely an *object* to be exploited. A transformation of this kind is premised on a relational and processual comprehension of the distinct *forms of motion* peculiar to nature and sociality, respectively. Thus, there is no static reconciliation, but an emphasis on a novel mode of social being that takes seriously the basic way in which it relates to a socialized nature—and, this basic, universal relation concerns, as we have seen with Hegel, the question of *appropriation*. Now more than ever, it is necessary to consider the practical realization of novel forms of appropriation, the construction of a new *mode or modes of appropriation*.

[5.2] The Marxian Ontology of Appropriation: The Triadic Structure of ‘Nature-Sociality-History’

Through a critical assessment of Postone, I have already hinted at some elements of Marx’s ontological schematic premised on a structural-genetic analysis which does retain some transhistorical features in certain categories and also retains Hegel’s conception of the ‘knowing subject’ though in a *historical*, materialist framework. Now, I turn to a more specific interpretation of Marx and Engels from which their relational ontology can be determined, centered on the role of appropriation in their work. Here, the emphasis lies in appropriation as the crystallized and condensed mediation of the triadic structure of ‘Nature-Sociality-History.’

The combination of Marx and Engels’ intellectual formation is astounding and it is my contention that this critical intellectual ground is the basis for their own original philosophical contributions and more specifically their complex understanding of appropriation. Though it is outside the scope of this work to trace their intellectual history, some elements are worth mentioning in broad strokes to situate how I see their approach to appropriation and the mode of appropriation as a result of their critical navigation over a wide field of knowledge.

In short, I see the development of their thought as a critical incorporation and conglomeration of a variety of theoretical insights. Their materialism, as both dialectical and historical, is the result of this process, concerned with *sociality* and its development through natural and social history in *relational* and *processual* terms. In this regard, Yibing is right to claim “...that the essence of social existence is

⁷⁵² In *Dialectics of Nature*, Engels writes: “Man, too, arises by differentiation. Not only individually...but also *historically*.” Engels, *MECW Vol. 25*, 330

made up of social relations; thus [dialectical and] historical materialism is [a] ‘relational ontology.’”⁷⁵³ To be sure, “the ‘material’ in...materialism refers to social, *relational* existence on the basis of natural material.”⁷⁵⁴ In this way, dialectical materialism as a relational ontology, in my view, is the original result of complex considerations of nature and society, and the *essence* of both.

What stands out most in the work of Marx and Engels, in my view, is a critical combination of Epicurus,⁷⁵⁵ Aristotle,⁷⁵⁶ Vico,⁷⁵⁷ Feuerbach, and Hegel, alongside Darwin,⁷⁵⁸ Morgan,⁷⁵⁹ and Liebig,⁷⁶⁰ Proudhon, Smith, and Ricardo, among so many others.⁷⁶¹ Combining these thinkers (amid so many others) as theoretical inter-locutors reveals Marx and Engels’ concern with the *relational* element of social existence, of social being; a concern *not only with the critique of capital*, but with the positing of a new system of thought that provides the theoretical tools with which to investigate the *transformative dimension of the human species-essence* through which there emerges the *subjective dialectics of human sociality* by means of its interdependence and constitution through an *objective dialectics of nature*. This is the triadic structure between Nature-Sociality-History out of which appropriation appears as the *ontological* bearer of this triadic mediation. Appropriation, in my view, is the category that most adequately captures this combinatory, critical, intellectual *synthesis* in their work.⁷⁶² Or, as Mészáros asserts: “Marx raised the problem of universality and its realization also under its other vital aspect: as *appropriation*...[presenting] us with the *objective dialectic of real existence*.”⁷⁶³ Taking as a clue Mészáros’ claim, let us investigate.

⁷⁵³ Yibing, *Back to Marx*, 459

⁷⁵⁴ Yibing, *Back to Marx*, 403. My emphasis.

⁷⁵⁵ See: John Bellamy Foster. *Marx’s Ecology: Materialism and Nature*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000.

⁷⁵⁶ See: Meikle, *Essentialism in the Thought of Karl Marx* (op cit.); Jonathan Pike. *From Aristotle to Marx: Aristotelianism in Marxist Social Ontology*. New York: Routledge, 2018.

⁷⁵⁷ In a brilliant footnote, Marx renders the relevance of Vico’s insight in terms of the differentiation between social and natural history following an identification of Darwin’s theoretical contribution to ‘the history of natural technology’: “Does not the history of productive organs of man in society, deserve equal attention? And would not such a history be easier to compile, since, as Vico says, *human history differs from natural history in that we have made the former but not the latter*?” Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, 493. For more on this connection see: Timothy Brennan. *Borrowed Light: Vico, Hegel, and the Colonies*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014

⁷⁵⁸ Foster, *Return of Nature*, 219-23, 450

⁷⁵⁹ For a nuanced account of Morgan’s influence, see: Emmanuel Terray. *Marxism and ‘Primitive’ Societies: Two Studies*. Translated by Mary Klopper. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972

⁷⁶⁰ Foster, *Marx’s Ecology*, 155

⁷⁶¹ See: Mészáros. *Marx’s Theory of Alienation*, 232-241; and, Lawrence Krader. “Theory of Evolution, Revolution and the State: The Critical Relation of Marx to his Contemporaries Darwin, Carlyle, Morgan, Maine, and Kovalevsky.” In, *The History of Marxism, Volume I: Marxism in Marx’s Day*. Edited by Eric Hobsbawm. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982. 192-226.

⁷⁶² Unfortunately, for lack of time and space, I cannot further expand on this claim. I mention it, however, to point out what underlies my thinking when approaching Marx and Engels. In short, I cannot help but see the residues of these thinkers, and others, presented in an original and critical way throughout the entirety of their works.

⁷⁶³ Mészáros, *Marx ‘Philosopher’*, 107. My emphasis.

The *objective dialectic of real existence* is the *objective dialectics of nature* and its oppositional unity to the *subjective dialectics of sociality*. We have seen this outlined in Hegel's work, but with Marx and Engels' *history* mediates this relation. We have also seen, in the previous section, that Marx and Engels' analysis is predicated on a sophisticated account of motion, *dialectical motion*, which forms the basis of their own relational ontology. In accounting for the unity and difference between the laws of nature and the laws of sociality, we are concerned with *kinds of motion that determine each in their reciprocally inter-determinate expression*.⁷⁶⁴ Engels writes:

Motion itself is a contradiction: even simple mechanical change of position can only come about through a body being at one and the same moment of time both in one place and in another place, being in one and the same place and also not in it. And the continuous origination and simultaneous solution of this contradiction is precisely what motion is.⁷⁶⁵

Motion is not merely *locomotion*, as in change of place, but is the underlying structure of *change* itself, of *transformation*.⁷⁶⁶ Motion is origination and solution of *the unfolding of objective contradictions*, contradictions that inhere in the processual character of nature.⁷⁶⁷ Insofar as motion can never be identified separate from matter, motion's processual and relational materialization characterizes, as Tran Duc Thao explains, objective reality's "...most fundamental structure [i.e.,] *matter in motion* or *motion of matter*."⁷⁶⁸ Indeed, Engels notes: "Dialectics...is nothing more than the science of the general laws of motion and development of nature, human society and thought."⁷⁶⁹ The *motion of an objective dialectics of nature* is an *infinite* array of contradictions that, in their development undergo various forms of *transformation*. Therefore, with reference to the 'brilliant intuition' of Greek philosophy, Engels notes, "the whole of nature...has its existence in eternal coming into being and passing away, in ceaseless flux, in *unresting*

⁷⁶⁴ Indeed, one of the proofs of Marx's sympathy with, and awareness of, Engels' *Dialectics of Nature* is revealed in a letter exchange between them concerning, among other things, *motion*. On Nov. 23, 1882, after an analysis of equations concerning electrical energy, Engels proposes his own formula, and excitedly claims "Thus what I have formulated for the first time is a *universal natural law of motion*" (my emphasis). He, concludes, "I must really go ahead and finish my *dialectics of nature*" (my emphasis). On Nov., 27, Marx responds, "Your verification of the role of the *second power* when energy is transmitted with change of form is very pretty and I congratulate you on it." Marx and Engels, *MECW Vol. 46*, 383-385.

⁷⁶⁵ Engels, *MECW Vol. 25*, 356

⁷⁶⁶ Engels notes: "But the motion of matter is *not* merely crude mechanical motion, mere change of place, it is heat and light, electric and magnetic tension, chemical combination and dissociation, life and, finally, consciousness." Engels, *MECW Vol. 25*, 332

⁷⁶⁷ This conception of motion centers on the recognition of its *real actuality*, independent of mind. Thao explains: "...motion is real only to the extent that it is motion *of matter*, and any attempt to posit it in itself, *outside* matter, as pure motion, inevitably results in transforming it in an ideal motion of thought." Tran Duc Thao. *Investigations into the Origin of Language & Consciousness*. Translated by Daniel J. Herman and Robert L. Armstrong. Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1984. 135

⁷⁶⁸ Thao, *Investigations*, 136

⁷⁶⁹ Engels, *MECW Vol. 25*, 131

*motion and change.*⁷⁷⁰ The whole of nature is a *processual* and *relational* whole understood as its own system. Engels writes:

The whole of nature accessible to us forms a system, *an interconnected totality of bodies*, and by bodies we understand here *all material existences*...In the fact that these bodies are *interconnected* is already included that they react on one another, and it is precisely this mutual reaction that constitutes motion.⁷⁷¹

Relationality and process constitute the *interconnected, inter-determinate, and inter-affective*, forms through which motion unfolds, an unfolding that constitutes the determinate taking shape of various bodies. The point here is not merely that Engels recognizes the interconnectedness of things. More importantly, he recognizes the *dynamism* of the interconnections which express *the specific character of transformation* between *determinate things*, which simultaneously makes of these ‘things’ *relational entities* (subject-objects). Indeed, this is the *ontological* basis through which determinate change between determinate forms can be explained. In interpreting Engels’ *Dialectics of Nature*, Tran Duc Thao comments on the dynamic form of transformation through which nature differentiates itself and, in one mode of this self-differentiating movement, “...matter *becomes* thereby something other than itself—i.e., precisely life and consciousness.”⁷⁷² It is worth quoting Thao’s conclusive remark at length:

Reality *qua* dialectic is movement of such a type that, in each mode of being, the changes of causal order that are determined by the very structure of this mode *necessarily* conclude, by the very development of their content, in the constitution of a new mode that *absorbs* the first and maintains it as suppressed, preserved, transcended. It is the very continuity of *becoming* that determines the *discontinuity of forms*, since *mechanical movement*, developing within the causal framework, necessarily *overflows* this framework and is constituted in a *dialectical* movement.⁷⁷³

The movement of the dialectic, as the structural unfolding of relational and processual motion, engenders various modes of being, each consisting of their own peculiar determinations which forms their content. In their relational process of *formation*, each determinate content unfolds as a *new mode*⁷⁷⁴ that *absorbs* elements of the external determinations that condition it. In this way, *transformation of material content* itself constitutes changes in *forms* in a both *linear* and *non-linear* manner. And, each *form* carries with it elements of that which constitute it as ‘suppressed, preserved, and transcended;’ or, as Thao writes, “...each form is presented with its own originality that finds its precise foundation in the

⁷⁷⁰ Engels, *MECW Vol. 25*, 327

⁷⁷¹ Engels, *MECW Vol. 25*, 363. My emphasis

⁷⁷² Thao, *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism*, 138

⁷⁷³ Thao, *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism*, 138

⁷⁷⁴ Thao writes, “...dialectical materialism takes the *different forms of being* in the *movement* by which they pass from one to the other. Matter is posited in its *becoming conscious*, nature in its *becoming human*.” Thao, *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism*, 236

very process of its constitution.”⁷⁷⁵ *This is the materialization of the processual structure of the vanishing in Hegel.*⁷⁷⁶ Subject-objects *in* and *as* relation undergo reciprocal—but asymmetrical—forms of self-constitution, in which *elements are suppressed, preserved, and transcended*. Suppression is an *integrating*; preservation is a *maintaining*; and transcendence is an *immanent overcoming*. This combinatory, *spiral* unfolding constitutes *becoming*, which in its very continuity engenders *discontinuity*—transitions between *kinds*—for becoming itself is, as we have seen with Hegel, an *excess*, an ‘overflow’ in which mechanical movement *goes beyond itself* and becomes dialectical. Nature’s self-differentiating movement results in “every *form* emerging as a *historical formation* in a universal process.”⁷⁷⁷ In the *necessary* movement of nature, the ‘whole of nature’ as an interconnected system, appears “[t]he domain of life...constituted as a *historical result* of the anterior movement,” which in turn constitutes a “theatre of evolution” wherein “living forms become more and more differentiated...through the interchange of matter.”⁷⁷⁸ Finally, then, there emerges the *absolute form* of the *social human body*: the becoming of nature results in the differentiated form of becoming peculiar to the *human species-essence*, which marks its distinctive quality through the *activity* that defines it: *appropriation as creative-aesthetic activity*. In this regard, “the opposition between man and nature no longer has a *raison d-être*—the discontinuity being but a *result* that does not exclude, *but rather implies* the continuity of becoming that has constituted it.”⁷⁷⁹ Nature *inheres* in sociality and, in this exact way, *sociality is nature’s own-most discontinuity as a moment of the continuity of nature’s own-most becoming*; thus, Marx affirms, “[t]he nature which comes to be in human history is man’s *real nature*”⁷⁸⁰ and this, indeed, is “*the social reality of nature*.”⁷⁸¹ Appropriation, as the activity that defines the human species-essence, is the ontological basis of the human-nature relation. It is ‘*the social reality of nature*,’ the objectivity of social subjectivity, the objective creative-aesthetic activity through which *sociality continuously makes itself real in heterogenous form*. Gould further explains that “...individuals create their mode of being and change it by their activity, and this mode of being is *sociality*.”⁷⁸²

⁷⁷⁵ Thao, *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism*, 135

⁷⁷⁶ See Chapter 4, Section 4.2 above.

⁷⁷⁷ Thao, *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism*, 135

⁷⁷⁸ Thao, *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism*, 135

⁷⁷⁹ Thao, *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism*, 135. My emphasis.

⁷⁸⁰ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 111

⁷⁸¹ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 111-112. My emphasis.

⁷⁸² Gould, *Marx’s Social Ontology*, 35. Gould’s nuance and clarity throughout this work is truly profound, and it is unfortunate how little it has been taken up. She constantly brings out, highlights the relational elements of Marx’s thoughts concerning ontological presuppositions. There is, however, only one issue that is a subtle regression into representational thinking. Gould describes the social individual in Marx as ‘individuals-in-relations’ (33). This has the tendency—though this may not be her intent—to imply that individuals are simply *in* relation to each other, and thus discrete individuals. I hope it is clear that this is not quite my conception. In my view, Marx and Engels are not simply asserting that individuals are in relation to one another, but rather, that individuals themselves are *relational beings*; as I describe below, an ‘*ensemble of relations*.’

Appropriation is both cause and effect of the changing form of the social human body as its mode of being, a mode of being, moreover, actualized through and within sociality. Insofar as the actualization of sociality occurs as a mode of being, as *the mode of being* of the human species-essence, which is modality constituted through transformative activity, then, Gould asserts "...this sociality must be taken as changing, that is, as developing *historically*."⁷⁸³

As the principal organism of sociality, *the social human body*⁷⁸⁴ (as the absolute form of the human species-essence) actively differentiates itself from nature, ensures nature's discontinuity, through the development of its own metabolic dynamism, the transient historical laws of sociality. For Marx, the continuity through discontinuity, the unfolding of *socialized* natural history, is a result: "History itself is a *real* part of *natural history*—of nature's coming to be man."⁷⁸⁵ However, for Marx, "[t]he individual is the *social being*."⁷⁸⁶ In other words, this unfolding of the *social human body* is *precisely a social unfolding*, an unfolding of sociality itself through a *relational and processual movement*. Sociality as such, then, is ontologically grounded in its *dialectical relationality* with and through *nature*, and thus "...is the consummated oneness in substance of man and nature...the naturalism of man and the humanism of nature both brought to fulfilment."⁷⁸⁷

Sociality here is the necessarily contingent result of nature's own self-differentiating becoming. As such, it is *on-going achievement*: the discontinuity of nature that continues anew. In this achievement, the immediacy of nature inhering in the human species-essence undergoes a transformation through which it takes a different character: "[t]he life of the species...consists physically in the fact that man...lives on inorganic nature."⁷⁸⁸ Living here is not seen as an abstract life, but a concrete and historical life-*form*, a *social life*; and a social life is a *material* life, a life which has *materiality* as its *necessity*: "Man does not live by bread alone, it is true, but it is *certain*," James Becker correctly claims, "that he *does not live at all without it*."⁷⁸⁹ *Social life is mediated living, the immediacy of life as constituted relationally and processually by mediations, by determinate activity in relation to external determinations*. Moreover, *nature inheres in sociality too*. In social life nature remains present in mediated form: "[j]ust as plants, animals, the air [etc.]...constitute a part of human consciousness in the realm of theory...so too in the *realm of practice*

⁷⁸³ Gould, *Marx's Social Ontology*, 35

⁷⁸⁴ Marx confirms this methodological point, which reveals his relational thinking: "What is to be *avoided above all* is the re-establishing of 'Society' as an abstraction *vis-à-vis* the individual." Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 105

⁷⁸⁵ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 111

⁷⁸⁶ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 105

⁷⁸⁷ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 104

⁷⁸⁸ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 74

⁷⁸⁹ James Becker. *Marxian Political Economy: An Outline*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1977. 19

they constitute a part of human life and activity.”⁷⁹⁰ *The exogenous character of nature becomes the endogenous a priori of social existence.* The immediacy of nature becomes the *mediated-immediacy* of sociality. In this way, natural laws structure the laws of sociality, but the latter are irreducible to the former: the laws of sociality establish themselves as their *own*, the *laws immanent to a social formation and between different social formations.*⁷⁹¹ To this immanence history belongs as a *determinate structural mediation* between sociality and nature. The unfolding of the human species-essence occurs under and through this *triadic rubric*, actualizing itself through appropriation, as “its characteristic mode of activity.”⁷⁹² Thus, Eric Wolf notes, “[t]he human species is an outgrowth of natural processes; at the same time, the species is *naturally social.*”⁷⁹³

Nature, sociality, and history comprise the determinate elements through which the human species-essence unfolds itself, *actualizes itself*, and thus differentiates itself from itself in heterogeneous forms. Nature, sociality, and history are *crystallized and condensed* in the human species-essence as the structure of its determinate becoming. As such, this triad is found in the *specific activity—universal and positive—*through which and in which the human species-essence *becomes*, gives itself manifold *shape* through self-determination: *appropriation*. Appropriation is the universality of the basic human-nature relation—which is itself a nature-sociality-history relation—and is expressly *positive* in that it always consists of the affirmation of practical, purposive, creative-aesthetic activity. To appropriate is to transform an object in one’s *own* way, and since ‘one’ is always social, appropriation is a *socially mediated* approach to transforming an object. Given that sociality is *historical*, it also changes itself *through appropriation*, through transformations of and within appropriation itself, i.e., *modes of appropriation*. This process generates specific social tendencies, *social laws*, laws peculiar to a given social formation.

Thus, Engels notes, “the history of the development of society turns out to be *essentially different* from that of nature.”⁷⁹⁴ On the one hand, Engels explains, “[i]n nature...there are only blind,

⁷⁹⁰ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 74

⁷⁹¹ This hints at the “theory uneven and combined development,” a concept most generally attributed to Leon Trotsky, but actually original to Marx and Engels (Radhika Desai. “Marx’s Geopolitical Economy: ‘The relations of producing nations.’” In, *Capital & Class* 45, No. 2, 2021. 5). Desai seems to trace this origin in Marx through his critique of Carey (Desai, *Marx’s Geopolitical Economy*, 5-6). However, I find, following Teodor Shanin, that it is more well-developed and clearly articulated in “the drafts of the ‘Letter of Zasulich’” (Teodor Shanin. “Late Marx: gods and craftsmen.” In, Teodor Shanin (Editor). *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and the Peripheries of Capitalism*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983. 16). Though I cannot pursue this further, I find ‘uneven and combined development’ to be relevant to a *historical and social ontology* premised on appropriation and the mode of appropriation. Though I disagree with their political conclusion (a focus on ‘permanent revolution’), Anievas and Niacioglu provide an excellent account of the concept; see Anievas and Niacioglu, *How the West Came to Rule*, 43-63.

⁷⁹² Gould, *Marx’s Social Ontology*, 33. Here, Gould makes explicit reference to the Aristotelean influence on Marx.

⁷⁹³ Wolf Eric. *Europe and the People Without History*. Berkeley: University of California Press 73

⁷⁹⁴ Engels, *MECW Vol. 26*, 387. My emphasis.

unconscious agencies acting upon one another, out of whose interplay the general law comes into being.”⁷⁹⁵ Indeed, the unfolding of nature itself is not predicated on conscious directives; it is a processual realization of the objective dialectic of necessity and contingency without *conscious intervention*. On the other hand, “[i]n the history of society...the actors are all endowed with consciousness, are men acting with deliberation or passion, working towards definite goals.”⁷⁹⁶ Sociality, and its history, unfolds through the *relationally metabolic, ontological excess* of interactive *social human bodies*, and “...it is precisely the result of these many wills and of their manifold effects upon the world outside that constitute history.”⁷⁹⁷ Engels, however, is careful to note that this does not mean society simply develops *according* to those ‘conscious’ goals. The result of the contradictory excess internal to sociality—owing to the different relations between social *positionalities* of discrete agents or groups—“...are of very different kinds” and thus the conflicts between them produce “in the domain of history...a state of affairs entirely *analogous* to that prevailing in the realm of unconscious nature.”⁷⁹⁸ To be sure, the actions of an internally differentiated ‘many’ pertaining to a given society do not result in a consciously organized unfolding but rather a *contradictory one*. But this does not mean that the laws of history pertaining to sociality are equal to the unconscious laws of nature, they are so only *analogously*. Indeed, the issue concerns the *appearance* of social laws at the *phenomenal level*: the social human body experiences, in its immediacy under determinate historical and material conditions, *the appearance of the contingency of sociality in like manner to the appearance of contingency of the laws of nature*, conflating their laws as the same.⁷⁹⁹ Engels is asserting precisely that the laws peculiar to sociality and the laws peculiar to nature are not identical, and to grasp the essence of each in their own accord requires a series of adequate distinctions pertaining to *their own respective processual unfolding, their own metabolic dynamism*.

In terms of the metabolic dynamism of sociality, we find the dialectic between appropriating and becoming-appropriated. The positive dimension of appropriation—as conscious, creative-aesthetic activity—also consists of a negative moment, a moment of the ‘unthought’, of the

⁷⁹⁵ Engels, *MECW Vol. 26*, 387

⁷⁹⁶ Engels, *MECW Vol. 26*, 387

⁷⁹⁷ Engels, *MECW Vol. 26*, 387-388

⁷⁹⁸ Engels, *MECW Vol. 26*, 388. My emphasis. In this regard, the assumptions of many a ‘Western Marxist’ that lay blame on Engels as being guilty of collapsing natural laws into historical laws is, as Yibing asserts, “...an untenable accusation.” Zhang Yibing. *The Subjective Dimension of Marxist Historical Dialectics*. Translated by He Huiming, Berlin: Canut International Publishers, 2011. 297.

⁷⁹⁹ Indeed, this is how capital comes to be associated as a law of nature, Smith’s ‘invisible hand,’ or Hayek’s ontologization of capitalist competition as a quality of nature.

inconspicuous form by which and through which the social being inherently *belongs* to its own sociality: the always simultaneous process of *becoming-appropriated*.

Indeed, the positivity of appropriation equally consists of a *negative* moment: in *appropriating socialized nature*, we too *become-appropriated*. That is, the *ontological excess of the social human body* constitutes a relational *excess* resulting in a processual reproductive *excess* of a *specific sociality (social particularity)* within which it is immanently involved. The rhythmic habituation of appropriating activity results in the *internalization* and *normalization* of the very activity itself to the extent that, *in appropriating*, the social human body is simultaneously undergoing a *becoming-appropriated*, where it is both consciously and unconsciously exceeding itself and in so doing *becoming part of a particular social form, developing a form of belonging to it, developing, that is, the form of belonging peculiar to that social form in the very reproduction of that social form*—indeed, in this movement it participates in the construction of *the very particularity of a social form itself*. This dialectical movement thereby also shows the way in which society itself acts on nature, demonstrating an *asymmetrical yet reciprocal relation*. Engels furthers the point:

[t]he naturalistic conception of history...[which portrays nature]...as if nature exclusively reacts on man, and natural conditions everywhere exclusively determined his historical development, is therefore one-sided and forgets that man also reacts on nature, changing it and creating new conditions of existence for himself.⁸⁰⁰

Inasmuch as social history, and therefore social development, *historical development*, can be severed from its dependence on nature *only theoretically, never practically*, neither can the actions of sociality, the practical activity of human beings, be inconsequential to the unfolding of natural history mediated by the social. This theoretical observation is made possible by the dialectical materialist combination of social and natural history while maintaining their “critical difference,” where “...the former cannot be separated from human beings to be independently operated by itself;”⁸⁰¹ since, at this level of abstraction, the separation between the subject (society) and the object (nature)—both of which are also *object and subject*—would result in the inability to fully recognize the environmental consequences of particular social forms. The issue here is that certain forms of *becoming-appropriated* engender an unconscious and uncritical view regarding appropriation itself, i.e., a view which may take for granted the *causal relations between social activity and nature*, such that in future appropriating activity this very relation (society-nature) is not sufficiently comprehended in terms of its unity and difference. This is a significant consequence of the *representational form of the subject-object paradigm*: sociality is seen as always and only subject, nature as always and only object, obfuscating the complexity of each and their mutual *relation*.

⁸⁰⁰ Engels, *MECW Vol. 25*, 511

⁸⁰¹ Yibing, *The Subjective Dimension*, 297

Moreover, the representational form of the subject-object paradigm, operative under the reifications of capital, can just as much retain the tendency to treat *sociality* itself, *other social human bodies*, as *mere objects*. In this latter case, forms of racialization and sexist, hetero-normative forms, become sedimented and structurally intensified. This is *not* the result of thought alone, but the result of particular forms of *appropriating activity*, which again always appears according to and within the presuppositions of a given social form, with assumed delineations about social identities in relation to the activity itself. However, if we consider the development of *social forms* in general as a result of the relationship between *appropriating* and *becoming-appropriated*, so too can we understand the constitution of the *absolute form of the social human body as itself a result of appropriating and becoming-appropriated in its contextual social relationality within the processual motion of nature and, equally, in the contradictions found internally within that very social relationality*. Indeed, through appropriating and becoming-appropriated—*forming* and *being formed*—the human being gives shape both to its own sociality as a social particularity *and* to the absolute identity of its own absolute form; as Pomeroy eloquently puts it: “The encounter of the active social individual with the objective world is both a transformative and generative encounter.”⁸⁰²

The adequate understanding of both the difference and unity between social history and natural history rests on a dialectical materialist theory of knowledge. This is the *scientific character* of dialectical materialism. The conception of science operative here is precisely not equitable to a purely ‘neutral’ and thereby *objectivist* (i.e., positivist) conception of science as is typically conceived. In positing the *dialectical-relational* character of the unity of opposites inherent to the subject-object relation (subject as object, object as subject), the *objectivity of subjectivity* is always a premise of inquiry, the subjective and the objective are always already a unity in transformation. Gould, thus, explains, “Marx conceives of the fundamental entities of his ontology...not as fixed, but as historically changing.”⁸⁰³ Where positivist and representational scientific theories posit objectivity as unchanging, as fixed and immutable, dialectical materialist epistemology recognizes the *processual* and *transformative ontological character* through which objectivity and subjectivity *reciprocally inter-determine each other* and, therefore, undergo *qualitative transformation*.⁸⁰⁴ This necessary acknowledgment consists of the insertion of history as another mediation between nature and sociality in a dialectically *scientific* manner. Thus, Mészáros asserts, “the Marxian view of history is articulated...not merely as historical *materialist*...but simultaneously and inseparably also as *dialectical* materialism.”⁸⁰⁵

⁸⁰² Pomeroy, *Marx and Whitehead*, 49

⁸⁰³ Gould, *Marx's Social Ontology*, 3

⁸⁰⁴ See, Knowlton and Gamble, *The Philosophy of Ecological Leninism*, 21-26

⁸⁰⁵ Mészáros, *Social Structure Vol. II*, 46

Indeed, Engels disrupts the pseudo-neutrality of ‘bourgeois’ natural science, a kind of science that *representationally* divorces subject from object. Instead, in recognizing our involvement and belonging to the natural world, Engels makes clear that the knowledge we produce is the result of our *objective subjectivity*, since he begins with the assumption that our social subjectivity is itself an objective result of determinate motion. Engels writes: “Natural science, like philosophy, has hitherto entirely neglected the influence of activity on their thought; both know only nature on the one hand and thought on the other.”⁸⁰⁶ Indeed, Marx too writes of this *representational* division characteristic of natural science:

The weaknesses of the abstract materialism of natural science, a materialism which *excludes the historical process*, are immediately evident from the abstract and ideological conceptions expressed by its spokesmen whenever they venture beyond the bounds of their own specialty.⁸⁰⁷

Both Marx and Engels are separately noting that the absence of human activity—which is always already *historical activity*—has severe implications for the adequate comprehension of the Nature-Sociality-History relation.⁸⁰⁸ The representational schema, particular to the reified consciousness of capital, which does not include the ‘historical process,’ is expressed in the relationship between science and labor. Through the technical division of labor (intellectual and manual labor) under capital, science and knowledge reveal their normative embeddedness within the relations of production where, Marx writes, “[s]cience appears as *potentially alien* to labor, *hostile* to it and *dominant* over it, and its application.”⁸⁰⁹ To be sure, this alien and dominant hostility “...rests entirely on the separation of intellectual potentialities of the process from the knowledge, understanding, and skill of the worker.”⁸¹⁰ Science, here, is deployed as a *technical form of domination* of supposedly ‘neutral’ knowledge which is its justification over-against the knowledge of the worker: “the basic principle of the organization of labor,” Etienne Balibar explains, “becomes *necessary to replace the operations of manual labor as completely as possible by the operations of machines*.”⁸¹¹ Consequently, through capital’s domination over labor alongside its reification, “...rather than the instruments having to be adapted to the human organism, *that*

⁸⁰⁶ Engels, *MECW Vol. 25*, 511

⁸⁰⁷ Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, 494

⁸⁰⁸ Marx recognized as much as early as the *Paris Manuscripts*: “But *nature* too, taken abstractly, nature fixed in isolation from man—is *nothing* for man.” Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 169

⁸⁰⁹ Marx, *MECW Vol. 34*, 34

⁸¹⁰ Marx, *MECW Vol. 34*, 34

⁸¹¹ Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 403. For a discussion on the fetish of machinery over-against manual labor (‘steam fetishism’) in terms of the early rise of fossil fuels in England, see: Andreas Malm. *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming*. New York: Verso, 2016.

*organism must adapt itself to the instrument,*⁸¹² an instrument that objectively appears according to the historically specific relations of capital itself where the *object* dominates the subject. This domination of the technological, as an instance of capital's dominating form, returns us to the previous discussion regarding things taking on the attributes of capital itself. Indeed, industrial capitalist development—with its reliance on technology as a form of domination in its service to capital—transposes capital onto social relations generally. Marx writes:

The transposition of the social productivity of labor into the material attributes of capital is so firmly entrenched in people's minds that the advantages of machinery, the use of science, invention, etc., are *necessarily* conceived in this *alienated* form, so that all these things are deemed to be attributes of capital.⁸¹³

Indeed, the representational expression of the subject-object relation results in the difficulty of *realizing* the generative creative-aesthetic quality of labor (one instance of appropriation). This again, is the problem with positing only capital as the historical subject (as Postone does), since that only obfuscates the ability to cut through the reified way in which capital already appears as the subject, the creating subject, the subject through which advances in knowledge are enacted. Thus, *actual social human bodies* (subject-objects) are thereby disassociated from their ontological creative-aesthetic ground. That the representational form of the subject-object paradigm, under capital, separates the subject from the object is the *theoretical result* of the actually existing conditions where "...the concentration and development of the conditions of production and their conversion into capital rests on the divesture—the separation—of the worker from those conditions."⁸¹⁴ The representational separation of subject and object, then, obfuscates the *conditions of knowledge from knowledge itself*, and, consequently, prevents a holistic analysis that recognizes the *political, economic, and normative* function of knowledge in a historically specific social form. This brings us back to the implication of separating sociality and nature. The assumption that knowledge stands outside *both* as fixed and immutable knowledge, *static* knowledge, is predicated on the divorce of sociality from its embeddedness in nature. Against this representational division—which separates epistemological questions from ontological ones in its separation of the subject of knowledge from the object of knowledge—Engels notes, "[b]ut it is precisely the alteration of nature by men, *not solely nature as such*, which is most essential and immediate basis of human thought."⁸¹⁵ The human-nature relation is a *reciprocal relation* emerging from a *spiral*

⁸¹² Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 403

⁸¹³ Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, 1058

⁸¹⁴ Marx, *MECW Vol. 34*, 34

⁸¹⁵ Engels, *MECW Vol. 25*, 511

unfolding of determinate motion.⁸¹⁶ As a result, knowledge of nature is shaped by human practice. Indeed, Engels here performs the criticism of, as Yibing notes, “...one-sided mechanical naturalism.”⁸¹⁷

From the general, processual motion unfolding through the relationality of nature as a whole, Engels specifies human knowledge in terms of its *ontological embeddedness in sociality and nature*. From the general unfolding of matter-as-motion, as objective contradiction, he specifies the determinacy of human practice, *which itself reshapes*, in varying degree, the unfolding of nature through the unfolding of sociality, and thereby solves *certain kinds of contradictions* in provisional form (without doing away with contradiction as such):⁸¹⁸ “...man *also* reacts on nature, changing it, and creating new conditions of existence for himself.”⁸¹⁹ Knowledge, Scott Meikle notes, is the immanent result of “...the ongoing *social metabolism* in which the daily practice of people develops practical problems and discovers their resolutions.”⁸²⁰ Indeed, here we find a significant distinction that both *separates* sociality from nature and *maintains* their irreducible *unity*: “dialectic is...*both* a movement of the mind, and something mind-independent that imposes itself from the realm of Being.”⁸²¹ Thus, the subjective dialectics of sociality is tethered to the objective dialectics of nature but as a *different kind*, a different *essence*, as mediated through historical practical activity; as Wolf explains, “[t]his active relation of the species to nature, while rooted in biological characteristics, is put into effect by the exosomatic means of technology, organization, and ideas.”⁸²² At stake is the differentiation between *kinds of dialectic* that unfold in a *combinatory spiraling*: the objective dialectics of nature and the subjective dialectics of human sociality. What makes of them an *objective unity* is history as their mediation, insofar as *history develops itself through the changing form of human activity through which knowledge itself is shaped and reshaped*, grounded in the activity *essential* to the human species-essence: *appropriation*. “Such a dynamic, historical perception,” Yibing

⁸¹⁶ “Reciprocal action is the first thing that we encounter when we consider matter in motion as a whole...” Engels, *MECW Vol. 25*, 511.

⁸¹⁷ Yibing, *The Subjective Dimension*, 295.

⁸¹⁸ In this regard, Engels’ analysis points to the work of Richard Levins and Lewontin *The Dialectical Biologist* (they dedicate the book to Engels himself). More specifically, I’m thinking of their chapter that treats the organism not merely as the passive recipient of an external nature, but just as much an active participant in the unfolding of its eco-system. See, Chapter 3, “The Organism as the Subject and Object of Evolution,” in Richard Levins and Richard Lewontin. *The Dialectical Biologist*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985.

⁸¹⁹ Engels, *MECW Vol. 25*, 511

⁸²⁰ Scott Meikle. “Dialectical Contradiction and Necessity.” In, *Issues in Marxist Philosophy Volume I: Dialectics and Method*. Edited by John Mepham and David-Hillel Ruben. US: Humanities Press. 1979. 29

⁸²¹ Meikle, *Dialectical Contradiction and Necessity*, 29

⁸²² Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*, 73

notes, “constitutes the core of the dialectical view of nature.”⁸²³ Appropriation, then, is an activity in which ‘Nature-Sociality-History’ is crystallized and condensed in the human *species-essence*.

[5.3] The Dialectic of Appropriation: Appropriating & Becoming-Appropriated

With the triadic structure of Nature-Sociality-History established as comprising the *ontological basis* of appropriation as activity, we can now investigate the *spiral* development and dialectical relation between appropriating and becoming-appropriated. Here, all the Hegelian categories described in the previous chapter come to absolute fruition in their materialist form. Essence, necessity, universality, telos, and reason are shown to be definitive aspects of Marx and Engels’ understanding of appropriation in terms of a dialectical—now *materialist*—relational ontology.

Appropriation is creative-aesthetic, *purposive* activity and it consists of a two dialectically inter-related ‘moments’: *appropriating and becoming-appropriated*. Appropriating is the *affirmation* of creative-aesthetic, purposive activity; it is the *excess of the physiological constitution of the social human body*. Even in the historically specific critique of capital, Marx notes, negatively, this *ontological excess constitutive of appropriation* (in this case, as labor):

The growth of the population is a further productive force which costs nothing. But is only through the possession of capital—in particular in its form as machinery—that [the capitalist] can appropriate for himself these free productive forces; the latent *wealth and powers of nature* just as much as all the *social powers of labor* which develop with the growth of the population and the historical development of society.⁸²⁴

This passage is quite revealing. First it shows that the category of ‘productive forces’ is not merely a technological category in terms of machinery and rather that it integrates the bio-physiological powers of the social human body *and its knowledge, the knowledge of laboring activity*, i.e., a knowledge that develops itself *socially* and through *practice*. But, most relevant to our immediate discussion, Marx shows that, in the process of production, the capitalist *relies on an excess, an ontological excess of the combination of social human bodies in production*. Indeed, despite assuming an individualistic atomism *in theory*, capital depends on the ontological unity of the individual as a *social being* in order to *appropriate its labor* and ensure its own process of valorization. For labor, as one expression of appropriation, actualizes itself in production, amidst and through others, and therefore depends on the *relational excess of movement of social human bodies in terms of activity*.⁸²⁵ In this excess of any singular social being production takes place, transforms itself: in productive activity we learn from one another, implicitly and explicitly, and

⁸²³ Yibing, *The Subjective Dimension*, 395

⁸²⁴ Marc, *MECW Vol. 34*, 18

⁸²⁵ Becker writes: “It is inescapable that the energies of social labor are *always* and *everywhere* socially necessary...” Becker, *Marxian Political Economy*, 19

thereby *productive activity itself, appropriating activity*, is the result of *the ontological excess of the social human body as such*.

To be sure, appropriating *exceeds* the body's material limits in engaging external objects in its own way, i.e., a creative-aesthetic form. In appropriating the tools to make a chair, my body extends itself towards other objects, manipulates them in a way peculiar to my physiological constitution. The way my hands move, my fingers curl, my arms succumb to a certain weight, my thoughts materialize in the form by which I combine different parts, are all the *excessive result of my own bodily limit*. The negative limitation of my body is simultaneously the form through which its limit is overcome, the form through which it affirms itself by means of appropriating *activity*. However, the fact that some parts that I must put together are sensible to me, are what we might call 'intuitive', is not the result of the intellectual acuity of my own being, but rather is the result of my having become-appropriated in a specific social form. That I see a hammer and immediately know its own limits as a tool, know my limits regarding its use, and know to what other object I can put it in relation just as much as I know what objects to which I must avoid its use, is not representative of the ontological condition of the object and my relationship to it. On the contrary, that is the result of the object's taking shape alongside my own taking shape within a society in which this object carries a certain set of objective meanings and implications. That I know these things about the object is simply the result of my having become-appropriated in a particular society, and equally the result of *appropriating objects* in a determinate way: an *immanently social reason*. Thus, when I approach the equipment required to make a chair, I know generally their inter-relations as a result of the social specificity in which they are what they are and through which I have become. Sociality *mediates* not just my relation to these objects, but my *approach to them*: this is the materialist immanent teleological relation. *Purposiveness*, mediated by an immanent social reason, underlies *one's approach to the object*. I, of course, singularly actualize this mediation in my own way, i.e., *appropriate the object*; and this moment expresses the immanent social reason and its corresponding teleological immanence within which I am embedded. Consequently, this actualization is my own *only insofar as* it is simultaneously an expression of my social existence, of my having become-appropriated in a historically specific form, of having been cultivated by an immanent social reason and thereby negotiated purposive (teleological) activity in my own form. Nonetheless, through conscious directive and purposive deliberation, my singular creative-aesthetic disposition, as a human being, shines forth in the actualization of the chair (however subtle or extravagant such expression may be).

The dialectical process of appropriation—appropriating and becoming-appropriated—is an ontological condition of the human species-essence. I argue that it is a transhistorical and ontological activity that defines the human essence. The human essence is activity, the actualization of creative-aesthetic activity in *some* way, regarding *some* thing. Particular social formations distinguish themselves historically *through* their peculiar modes of appropriation, which, through the process of social reproduction, *consolidate* themselves as part of the structure and everydayness of that social formation.⁸²⁶ In any case, in order to identify the historically specific qualities of any *social formation*, or any *mode of production*, and, therefore, *any mode of appropriation*, an ontological and transhistorical element is methodologically necessary, an element that is consistent to sociality as such. This element is appropriation. One component of appropriation is labor. “We shall therefore,” with Marx, “have to consider the labor process [and the process of appropriation] *independently* of any specific social formation.”⁸²⁷

To consider appropriation and labor as independent of any specific social form, as Marx does, means to consider them *ontologically* and *transhistorically*. It means to retain an explicitly ontological basis in the method of a dialectical materialist relational ontology. This is consistent with Marx’s comments in the *Grundrisse*: “...all epochs of production have certain common traits, common characteristics. *Production in general* is an abstraction, but a *rational abstraction* insofar as it really brings out and fixes the common element.”⁸²⁸ What makes ‘production’ a *rational abstraction* is its universality, its commonality, its inherence in human *sociality*. I take this initiative with appropriation. Appropriation is a rational abstraction insofar as it discloses *a kind of general activity present in every sociality*. However, this is precisely not to equate nor to transhistoricize specific expressions of appropriation in their social particularity. Whatever the distinct expressions of appropriation may be, they remain united “...from the identity of the subject, humanity, and of the object nature.”⁸²⁹ Nonetheless, as we have seen with Hegel, *essence as activity* is a *unity of and in difference*; thus, in recognizing the universality of appropriation, it is simultaneously maintained that in its diverse, historically specific social expressions “...their essential difference is not forgotten.”⁸³⁰

⁸²⁶ One could suggest, along these lines, that what marks a culture distinct is the peculiarity by which its social subjects have historically negotiated *appropriating and becoming-appropriated*; or rather that culture is the result of the latter process. But this is merely one element of appropriation. Appropriation is not culture, though culture is the result of appropriation.

⁸²⁷ Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, 283

⁸²⁸ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 85

⁸²⁹ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 85

⁸³⁰ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 85

Regarding one *form of appropriation*, labor, Marx writes: “Labor is, first of all, a process between man and nature, a process by which man, through his own actions, *mediates*, regulates and controls the *metabolism* between himself and nature.”⁸³¹ Labor, as productive activity, is a *negotiation* between the *objective dialectics of nature* and the *subjective dialectics of sociality*. Labor, as a form of appropriation, *mediates* the metabolic relations between the two. This mediation is a confrontation: the human species-essence “...confronts the materials of nature as a force of nature.”⁸³² Labor is itself a ‘force of nature’ as emanating from *an objectively social subjectivity*, a social human body—the *materialization of the absolute form* of the human species-essence. Labor is predicated on appropriation; it is a specific a moment of appropriating as productive *and* transformative activity, as Pomeroy writes: “[t]he objective material that is appropriated is both retained and simultaneously transformed.”⁸³³ This moment requires the *kinetic* unfolding of the *physiological form of the social human body* (a physiology to which consciousness is tethered): a singular social human body “...sets in motion the natural forces which to belong to [its] own body...arms, legs, head and hands, in order to *appropriate* the materials of nature *in a form adapted to [its] own needs*.”⁸³⁴ The appropriation of the ‘materials of nature’ is the realization, *determinate motion*, of the *excess of the physiological constitution of the social human body*, an excess resulting from its ontologically metabolic *lack*, its *need*, a need that is always expressed in its own *form* (i.e., historically). In appropriating the materials of nature, the social human body discloses its own existence as a ‘natural force’, as a being endowed, as the early Marx wrote, with “essential powers;”⁸³⁵ powers immanent to its *essence* as a *species*, the power of *purposive, creative-aesthetic activity; powers that are essential to it, that are constitutive of the human essence, powers of appropriation*.

Appropriation is rendered here as a *concrete activity*. The social human body ‘appropriates,’ Marx specifies, ‘in a form adapted to its own needs.’ This characterization highlights the *creative-aesthetic element of appropriation as such*. The social human body does not just appropriate arbitrarily but in such a way as to *shape* its materials in accordance with its need. ‘Need,’ here, is not to be read as mere bio-physiological need, though those certainly can also take part. Rather, the need can just as easily be understood as a *creative and aesthetic need*, the need to satisfy *socially mediated desires* in singular fashion; indeed, the need to *fashion an object* in a way that *imprints onto the object itself* the very singularity of the social human body appropriating it, its *objective subjectivity*—and this imprint is nothing but the *singular*

⁸³¹ Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, 283

⁸³² Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, 283

⁸³³ Pomeroy, *Marx and Whitehead*, 49

⁸³⁴ Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, 283

⁸³⁵ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 107

negotiation of the universal as mediated by the social particularity in which the singular is found.⁸³⁶ That the social human body retains the *potentiality* to adapt objects in ‘a form’ according to its own needs means precisely that the social human body can *consciously and purposively realizes itself through other objects* and, moreover, can do so in manifold, heterogeneous forms. This describes the *relational existence of the social human body*.

However, Marx notes, that the act of appropriation—the material expression of creative-aesthetic, purposive activity—is not merely one-sided: “[t]hrough this movement [the social human body] acts upon external nature, and in this way...simultaneously changes [its] own nature.”⁸³⁷ In the process of self-determination through appropriation, the social human body changes itself, ‘*changes its own nature*.’ This is precisely the process of *becoming-appropriated*. Appropriation *changes* appropriation itself—is *self-transforming*—through its residual effects: in the very resilience that underlies our ability to appropriate objects, our vulnerability—our susceptibility to transformation—discloses itself. The social human body *becomes-appropriated* in the very act of appropriating. Becoming-appropriated reveals our vulnerability in the sense that our body, as a relational and processual whole, is affected by the residues of appropriating activity. In other words, the social human body undergoes a subtle *internalization*, porously takes in the residual effects of previous acts of appropriating in unexpected ways. Indeed, we are not always conscious of the forms by which we become-appropriated, precisely because our physiological excess returns to us relationally through objects we transform—they too transform us, reshape our form of appropriating, our form of being. Some moments of becoming-appropriated are, however, conscious moments. ‘Before we know it,’ we suddenly discover our ability to *actually do something*. In practicing an instrument, let us say, a guitar, one appropriates the guitar as their own. One places one’s fingers here or there, clumsily attempts to make music and instead makes noise. The strings of the guitar inevitably responds to the arbitrary plucking, to the process of the social human body *figuring it out*. Without the technical knowledge of playing guitar, a social human body immersed in a specific social form--wherein guitars are recognizable and relevant objects—feels the sensibility of the object in relation to its own lack of knowledge: *noise is the excessive result of the guitar as an object*. And, the social human body *recognizes* its own lack through the implicit self-recognition of its own limitations: noise is a necessary but insufficient condition for music. However, through *practice* a material rhythmic relation unfolds purposively, and suddenly—‘before you know it’—one has become-appropriated by the guitar and its excess: one learns to play the instrument, i.e., *becomes-*

⁸³⁶ See my account of this process in Hegel in Section 4.5 above.

⁸³⁷ Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, 283

appropriated by the activity itself, which reshapes other forms of its appropriation; in fact reshapes the very form by which it *relates to other objects*; *one can now recognize notes, melodies, rhythms, tones not only in other musical instruments but in various non-musical objects*; *the world then discloses itself in novel ways, in accordance with new relations of which we are made cognizant as a result of appropriation*. In this precise way, an immanent social reason is necessarily tethered to the dialectic of appropriating and becoming-appropriated. *Knowledge alters not merely in accordance with itself but in accordance with the activity with and through material conditions which engender new forms of thinking about the very same.*⁸³⁸

In his discussion of appropriation in Marx, Ollman expands on this point in terms of the effects of appropriating activity (specifically regarding the appropriation of a sunset): "...it may increase our appreciation for beauty to such an extent that we now regard the whole of nature in a new way."⁸³⁹ Despite not using the term *becoming-appropriated*, Ollman identifies it as constitutive moment of the process of appropriation. Indeed, appropriating *entails* our own *becoming-appropriated* by our situated relationality amid a confluence of objects. And, this *material situatedness* re-shapes appropriation by *altering* our future *orientation towards these objects*: "[o]rientation...is affected as some things assume new or broader meanings depending on which of our fires has been kindled."⁸⁴⁰

In other words, in appropriating objects the social human body undergoes a *vanishing*, where, through becoming-appropriated, its previous habits, assumptions, and predispositions, its *sensuous and embodied understanding* about a given activity or a given object *dissolves, vanishes*, but lingers in their combination with new residual effects. Indeed, to return to the guitar example, after not practicing playing guitar for some time, one's artistry may be temporarily displaced, vanished, which is, nonetheless not absolute, and the residual effects of having previously become-appropriated by the instrument still remain part of the *physiological excess of that social human body*, a part of its *metabolic motion*. Furthering the point, Ollman expands in terms of appropriating a sunset as an example:

It *becomes ours* in the experiencing of it. The forms and colors we see, the sense of awakening to beauty that we feel and the growth in sensitivity which accompanies such an event are all indications of *our new appropriation...[making]...this event even more part of us.*⁸⁴¹

⁸³⁸ Or, as Henri Lefebvre puts it: "Knowledge is in no respect an abstract activity. It may have its theories and concepts, and it can be a host to the conflict between theory and practice (in their dialectical unity, i.e., a creative conflict), but nevertheless theoretical knowledge cannot be separated from praxis. It is an integral part of it." See: Henri Lefebvre. *Critique of Everyday Life, Volume II: Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday*. Translated John Moore. London: Verso, 2002. 241-242.

⁸³⁹ Ollman, *Alienation*, 91

⁸⁴⁰ Ollman, *Alienation*, 91

⁸⁴¹ Ollman, *Alienation*, 91, My emphasis.

The dialectic between appropriating and becoming-appropriated reveals our internalization of the very relations that condition us, processually, an internalization from which some kind of modification ensues. This marks the very porosity of the *social human body* and discloses in equal form its *material relationality*. Moreover, we should take note of the significance of the process of something ‘becoming ours.’ It does not ‘become ours’ by means of us *owning an external set of objects*. It becomes ours in the determinacy of our relationship to it, through our *belonging to and immersion in* a particular relational situatedness. In some way, it is already *partly* our own in terms of our very experience of it. This is a crucial difference from representational thought. Thinking about appropriation in these terms reveals that the *social human body* is an *ensemble of relations* which ontologically and *necessarily* belong to an ensemble of social relations, an ensemble that is just as much mediated by nature. We appropriate the world in some way or another because we are a part of it, mediated by it, and the world is in asymmetrical form a *part of us*.

These examples aside, Marx is arguably identifying a *key moment* of social life, a *phenomenological moment*, that is ontologically constitutive of human activity—indeed, the *fundamental dialectical reciprocity internal to the metabolic motion of the human species-essence*: appropriating and becoming-appropriated. As creative-aesthetic activity that creates and re-creates itself, the human species-essence confirms itself, Gould claims, as “...a changing and developing essence.”⁸⁴² Consequently, this inter-play expresses our relationality within variegated material conditions, all of which constitute our *form of belonging to* and within it socially and historically.

Appropriation as the materialization of sociality is also historical, relational, and contains within it the immediacy of nature, though in a mediated manner. This is our starting point. Appropriation is an ontological and transhistorical condition. But, it simultaneously is always already a *result*, a result of having become-appropriated. Further, in its concrete expression, it always takes shape in a historically specific form. Appropriation is the form by which the human species-essence masters sociality and masters nature too. At the same time, incidentally, appropriation, as also a *becoming-appropriated*, is the form by which such mastery reveals the limits of sociality. In a passage discussing human ‘mastery’ over nature in *Dialectics of Nature*, Engels writes:

Let us not, however, flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory takes its revenge on us. Each victory, it is true, in the first place brings about the results we expected, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel the first... Thus at every step we are reminded that we *by no means* rule over nature like someone

⁸⁴² Gould, *Marx's Social Ontology*, 35

standing outside nature, but that we, with flesh, blood and brain, *belong to nature*, and *exist in its midst*, and that all our mastery of its consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to learn its laws and apply them correctly.⁸⁴³

The human species-essence unfolds itself through purposive activity that is always already creative-aesthetic activity, *appropriation*, which expresses the form of sociality's *internal differentiation* (as heterogeneous societies) and its separation from nature. Nonetheless, the human species-essence always 'belongs' to nature, stands 'in its midst.' Nature expresses itself through various conditions, *material conditions*, which stand as the *pre-condition* through which any kind of appropriating activity takes place, shaping the limits of its *realization*. Marx writes, "the restricted relation of men to nature determines their restricted relation to one another, and their restricted relation to one another determines men's restricted relation to nature."⁸⁴⁴ Nature shapes, *restricts*, the form by which a given society can appropriate it. Commenting on agricultural production, Marx stresses this point: "In agriculture...(as also in mining) we not only have the social productivity of labor to consider but also its *natural* productivity, which depends on the natural conditions within which labor is carried on."⁸⁴⁵ A society's limitation of its appropriating capacities in reference to a specific natural environment, in turn, participates in the development of that society's relational social arrangement. For the social agents which comprise that society, have no choice but to consciously innovate through purposive, practical activity, their forms of appropriating nature. Thus, the manifold forms by which nature presents itself to a *social particular* is the *immanent* ground out of which the creative-aesthetic ontological dimension of the human species-essence, as appropriation, emerges *of necessity*. Indeed, the *relation* between a (human) being *belonging to nature* and the distinctive forms by which nature presents itself underlies the *necessity* of a creative-aesthetic adaptation to those very conditions. At the micro-level of appropriating activity, the human species-essence *learns to belong to itself in its belonging to nature, engenders its own form of belonging, a belonging-form* that makes of its sociality *a social-natural sociality*, a sociality in which nature necessarily *inheres* but to which it is irreducible.

Appropriation as activity does not ever appear *ex nihilo*, and rather is always already *mediated* by the sociality in which it is immersed. In this sense, the form of belonging *lingers* through a society's reproductive process, but also undergoes transformative dimensions. We will soon see how and why in more detail. At the moment, we are merely setting the ground for the ontological characteristics of

⁸⁴³ Engels, *MECW Vol. 25*, 460-461. My emphasis.

⁸⁴⁴ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 471

⁸⁴⁵ Marx, *Capital Vol. III*, 901

appropriation. The first is that we are *essentially* social-natural creatures. We ‘belong to nature’ in our very differentiation from it and relation to it, and thus we also *belong to ourselves*, to *sociality*. To have, pervading us, the human species-essence (as activity) is to retain the *actual possibility* of belonging: *to belong to sociality and nature is a fundamental ontological condition of our being*.

In teasing out the conception of ‘human essence’ in Marx, George Márkus writes: “Naturally, the individual is always a ‘social being,’ i.e., a being who can live in and through society, and whose existence and nature are determined by the subsisting social relations.”⁸⁴⁶ We are individuated beings whose very individuality is constituted through the sociality in which it persists. Moreover, this sociality persists through a subsistence, namely, *appropriation*, which itself is consciously directed activity. Thus, Márkus asserts: “Consciousness is naturally an attribute belonging to every human individual, to every...member of the species *homo sapiens*.”⁸⁴⁷ Here we should take note of the principal materialist element of Marx’s conception of the human essence, as Márkus explains: it is “...not simply that there are certain abstract traits which remain invariant...but above all, that this never-ceasing formation of ‘human nature’ is itself a *unified process* which can be comprehended and characterized in this unity.”⁸⁴⁸ The ‘unified process’ is the form of *sociality’s own differentiation*: the heterogeneous result of appropriation through differing material conditions that gives rise to various *social forms*. This ontological element, then, pertains to sociality itself whose essence is the relational and processual unfolding of the human species-essence. The transformative element of human sociality is precisely what marks its *historical process*. Márkus continues: “...the characterization of man as a *conscious social* being engaged in material *productive self-activity* refers to those traits, those dimensions of this [historical] total developmental process.”⁸⁴⁹ Indeed, in the triadic structure of Nature-Sociality-History, the human species-essence actualizes, in heterogeneous ways, *the unity of the total developmental process*, i.e., the *relationality through which it actively becomes what it is*. This total process is the synthetic result of the aforementioned triadic structure as it mediates *appropriation*. The total developmental process comprises, ontologically, an evolutionary process that retains a dialectic between linearity and non-linearity. Let us investigate.

Nothing captures the *ontological*, and also *historical*, relationality of sociality and nature, in addition to appropriating and becoming-appropriated, so concisely as Engels’ evolutionary claim:

⁸⁴⁶ George Márkus. *Marxism and Anthropology*. Translated by E. de Laczay and G. Márkus. Netherlands: Van Gorcum Assen, 1978. 38.

⁸⁴⁷ Márkus, *Marxism and Anthropology*, 38

⁸⁴⁸ Márkus, *Marxism and Anthropology*, 39

⁸⁴⁹ Márkus, *Marxism and Anthropology*, 38-39

“The hand is not only the organ of labor, *it is also the product of labor.*”⁸⁵⁰ At the general, *ontological* level, which speaks to the *determinate and transformative motion of the becoming of the human species-essence*, there emerges a properly *dialectical* and *materialist* articulation of Hegel’s more abstract formulation of the same. The development of the social through the natural is predicated on *forms of labor*, a part of *appropriating the natural world*, not only in the sense of the *production of a thing*, but also through the unconscious implications of *becoming-appropriated* through particular *forms of labor*. The objects we appropriate, and the labor that acts as one form of mediation of this activity, reflects back unto the *social human body*, reconditioning its *absolute form*, the form by which it becomes itself. For in *appropriating*, in engaging in labor-forms, socialized nature *simultaneously appropriates us*, is *determinately involved in shaping and reshaping our very physiology and its activity*—a physiology of a determinate kind, within which consciousness is *immanent*, which means that a *physiological re-shaping is always already a reshaping of social consciousness*. Indeed, the ‘early’ Marx is in full agreement with the ‘mature’ Engels:

For not only the five senses but also the so-called mental senses—the practical senses (will, love, etc.)—in a word, *human sense*—the humanness of the senses—comes to be by virtue of its object, by virtue of *humanized nature*. The *forming of the five senses is a labor of the entire history of the world down to the present.*⁸⁵¹

The physiological constitution of the *social human body* is the historical result, the *immanent achievement*, of labor—one aspect of appropriation. In transforming the objects to which it is in relation, labor just as much transforms the very social human body from which it emanates. In its objective manifestation as *activity*, labor reflects back unto its origin, the social human body, and reconditions its absolute form. Reconditioning the absolute form is a physiological process but precisely in the sense of the *excess* of the physiological proper; or, in the excess of the social human body’s *material* relation to other kinds of things, as *activity*. For appropriation is always “*sensuous appropriation,*”⁸⁵² i.e., is the process of making all the ‘senses’ what they are, their *material attunement* to the relationality of their conditions. This transhistorical and ontological determination is the universality of the human species-essence in its manifold, *real* possibility as constitutive of its *absolute actuality*. In this way, appropriation as a process of making something one’s own is not a mere matter of “*...possessing, of having.*”⁸⁵³ Marx writes: “Man appropriates his total essence in a total manner, that is to say as a whole man.”⁸⁵⁴ As the most basic human-nature mediation, appropriation is at once the expression and constitution of the human

⁸⁵⁰ Engels, *MECW Vol. 25*, 453

⁸⁵¹ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 108. My emphasis.

⁸⁵² Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 106. My emphasis.

⁸⁵³ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 106

⁸⁵⁴ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 106.

species-essence in a holistic sense. “As a rule,” Ollman remarks, “all a person’s abilities for appropriation move ‘forward’ together.”⁸⁵⁵ Different *forms of labor* involve the ‘whole man’, i.e., *the social human body as a complex, as an ensemble of relational activity*. It is worth quoting Marx at length in this regard:

“Each of his *human* relations to the world—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, being aware, sensing, wanting, acting, loving—in short all the organs of his individual being, like those organs which are directly social in their form, are in their *objective* orientation or in their *orientation to the object*, the appropriation of that object, the appropriation of the *human world*; their orientation to the object is the *manifestation of the human world*.”⁸⁵⁶

Ontologically, the human species-essence consists of a physiological form in determinate motion, i.e., a *kinetic* and *transformative process* by which and through which it becomes itself. This entails an *inherent diversity* of the body as a whole, a body constituted by *inter-determinate and inter-affective sensuous relations*, both *internally* and *externally*. They are the result not of an independently developing form, a *tabula rasa* that arbitrarily is set against the world, but instead is an *immersed absolute form* undergoing *processual unfolding relationally within the world*; a world, moreover, that the human species-essence is changing—*appropriating*—and is just as much being changed by it—*becoming-appropriated*. Further, the organs of the body, here, are not identified by Marx in their purely instrumental or functional capacity. On the contrary, they are addressed as a *complex, relational unfolding* determined by *practical activity* consisting of conscious activity. In *Ludwig Feuerbach*, Engels writes:

“The material world that is perceivable through the senses and to which we ourselves *belong*, is the only reality: and our consciousness and thinking, however suprasensuous they may seem, are only the product of a material bodily organ—the brain. Matter is not on a product of mind, but mind itself is merely the highest product of matter.”⁸⁵⁷

The organs of the body are not discrete objects but *an excess*: their combination makes possible both the *specific form of material lack they experience* (i.e., bio-physiological need) as well as their overcoming of that need by means of their unity, *the social human body*, and its ‘objective orientation’ to the objects outside it. Indeed, here nature is present in its *immediacy*, but now *mediated* by the particular form of the human body, as its own *processual and determinate ensemble of relations*. The social human body, ontologically and transhistorically is an *ensemble of relations*, a material bundle of relational activity. However, it is never isolated, never an atomistic *body*. To be sure, the relational ensemble of the social human body as a *metabolically transformative body* realizes itself through its *excess*: the activities it performs that *exceed the physiological limits of its own existence*. These activities are performed amid its *sociality* and

⁸⁵⁵ Ollman is commenting on the same passage quoted above. Ollman, *Alienation*, 93

⁸⁵⁶ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 106.

⁸⁵⁷ Engels, *MECW Vol. 26*, 369

thus these very activities ‘are always *directly social in their form.*’ Indeed, “[b]esides these direct organs, therefore, *social* organs develop in the form of society.”⁸⁵⁸ The social human body as an *ensemble of relations* develops itself only through society: *the physiological organs through which the human body is constituted as a body of sense, a sensuous-thinking body, is the result of the social organs through which it expresses its activity and thereby expresses itself, actualizes itself, gives determinate shape to its very own physiology, its sensuous character.*

In this way, to make something one’s own, to *appropriate*, is to be sensuously immersed in the *triadic structure of Nature-Sociality-History*. Appropriating the objects of nature is the ‘appropriation of the human world,’ its making, its production; and is thereby the ‘manifestation of the human world;’ a manifestation, that is, of “...the *human* essence of nature [which] first exists only for *social man.*”⁸⁵⁹ Marx’s analysis here points to the *active role of the object too*, since the determinacy of an object which is appropriated, its specific form, structures the possibilities of *how* it can be appropriated. In these terms, the object is also subject, is an asymmetrical participant in the ‘manifestation of the human world,’ since the latter is predicated on the *creative-aesthetic, necessarily purposive, transformation of objects themselves*. In the *necessary identity* between sociality and nature, and its distinction, appropriation appears as the *condition of self-transformation of the social human body in its social and natural relationality*. Marx writes, “the eye has become a *human* eye, just as its *object* has become a social, *human* object...[the *senses*] relate themselves to the *thing* for the sake of the thing, but the thing itself is an *objective human* relation to itself and to man, and vice versa.”⁸⁶⁰ The social human body has its very constitution as an ensemble of relations by means of its *necessarily relation* to objects. A relation, moreover, that becomes, through practical activity, a *purposive relation* through which the object *becomes necessarily social*, a socialized nature. Marx never loses sight of the *physiological* character of the *social human body* in terms of appropriation. Labor, as one expression of appropriation, serves as an immediate example: “...in the course of this activity, i.e., labor, a definite quantity of human muscle, nerve, brain, etc. is expended.”⁸⁶¹ *Indeed, appropriation is the activity that constitutes the social human body as the material expression of the human species-essence undergoing purposive self-determination through its exertion, i.e., its self-realization by means of appropriation.*

Thus, appropriation underlies and structures this *excessive social physiology* as its most essential activity, its most basic form of self-actualization. But, this is *only true*, methodologically, if this *essential activity*—appropriation—is universal, and in its being universal presents itself as the positive expression of essence, essence as activity (as I’ve described in Hegel). In *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx writes, “But the

⁸⁵⁸ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 107

⁸⁵⁹ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 104

⁸⁶⁰ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 107

⁸⁶¹ Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, 274

human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality, it is the *ensemble of the social relations*.⁸⁶² The human essence does not consist of a set of fixed attributes, unchanging in character, neither is the human essence a property of any single individual. On the contrary, the human essence, for Marx, consists of a heterogeneity-engendering activity, *appropriation*, that is universal in its belonging to the multifaceted relations comprising sociality, the architecture of social bonds and the activities that constitute them. *The human essence is the material and processual relationality of sociality itself*. Thus, the social human body as an *ensemble of relations* comprises the ontological ground of sociality as the *ensemble of social relations*; together, they constitute the human essence in its *transformative, metabolic form*. Indeed, in its own-most sociality, its basic ontological condition, the *social human body* exists *relationally* through the triadic structure of nature-sociality-history; first, as the immediacy of nature which inheres within its very anatomy; and, second, as the mediation through its immersion in social life, as mediated life—“*as the life-element of the human world; only here does nature exist as the foundation of his own human existence*.”⁸⁶³ And, this ‘life-element’ is the social human body’s *ontological constitution* as a *social being*, a transhistorical condition of sociality itself which is its *essence* independent of any historically specific form. Here, once again, we find Marx’s concern with essence and appearance. Indeed, in a historically specific social form, social relations may appear as disconnected, as the aggregate of *individual*, atomized, bodies, such that the human life-form *appears* independent from the social form in which it exists. Against this, Marx notes that the singular *social human body*, “[h]is life, even if it may not *appear* in the direct form of a *communal* life carried out together with others—is therefore an expression and confirmation of *social life*.”⁸⁶⁴ The essence of being human is appropriation as it is expressed and confirmed through *social life*, insofar as to *appropriate at all* means to *orient oneself toward an object*, and therefore presupposes some sensibility through which the object is approached—a *sensibility which is a combined residuality of activity mediated by a social immersion, a history, and a physiological constitution, all reciprocally determinate and inter-affective*.

The triadic structure of Nature-Sociality-History is crystallized and condensed in the human species-essence as *appropriation*. *The social organ is the reflection of the organic body, a body that constitutes itself through appropriating various objects, a process of objective humanization, or the humanization of objects*. Sociality thereby becomes the means through which life itself is expressed: “thus, *activity* in direct association with others, etc., has become an organ for *expressing my own life*, and a *mode of appropriating human life*.”⁸⁶⁵

⁸⁶² Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach (Marx-Engels Reader)*, 145. My emphasis.

⁸⁶³ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 104

⁸⁶⁴ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 105. My emphasis.

⁸⁶⁵ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 107

This *universal positivity* is therefore an expression of essence, but precisely in such a way that the expression of essence is *non-identical* to itself. How does this occur? Appropriation is an ontological condition, universal in character. However, we have seen that the motion of sociality is a self-differentiating motion: *sociality differentiates itself and is thereby comprised of various social forms*. This self-differentiation is achieved through different *modes of appropriating social life*, modes which are tethered to historically and geopolitically specific social forms. As a result, inherent to appropriation as *creative-aesthetic activity*, as sensuous activity comprised of “...truly *ontological affirmations of essential being*,”⁸⁶⁶ is a processual and relational engagement with objects. The subject, human species-essence, *affirms* itself through objects, and thus “...all *objects* become for [the human species-essence] the *objectification of [itself]*, become objects which confirm and realize [social] individuality, become [*its*] objects.”⁸⁶⁷ Appropriation is a *making one’s own of an objective, socialized nature*, and in this very process, “...*man himself becomes the object*.”⁸⁶⁸ Indeed, the human species-essence actualizes itself through appropriation, *appropriating objects*, as subject, and in so doing becomes its own object, an object for itself, *a determinately becoming subject-object* undergoing a process of *becoming-appropriated* by the very sociality which it is confirming in *appropriating*. In appropriating, therefore, in accordance with the mediations of a *historically specific social form*, the social human body *confirms* its social belonging, appropriates objects through singularly negotiating its *social sensibility*, and thereby *becomes appropriated by this very sociality, which itself is a moment in which its social existence is confirmed as a concretely singular social human body: its own appropriating subject-object*. One becomes one’s own through *appropriating*—a creative-aesthetic activity, simultaneously conscious and unconscious—and thereby confirms one’s own sociality, one’s *mediated social existence*, and *becomes-appropriated by it* confirming the *particularity and distinctness of that very sociality*. Here, we see that *appropriating* and *becoming-appropriated* are *spiral* processes that in their very universality—as the positive expression of the human species-essence—engender *distinctive social forms*.

Indeed, appropriation is the *affirmation* of the human species-essence through a negation of other objects, which then is a *self-negating*, a *becoming-appropriated*—constituting, thereby, its *life-form*: “[b]y producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly their material life.”⁸⁶⁹ This affirmation, as universal, is the ontological condition of *historically specific social forms*. ‘Historically specific social forms’ is not merely a temporal qualification but is just as much a *spatial qualification*. Indeed, appropriation occurs within a materially grounded society, a society exposed to *determinate material conditions*. Thus,

⁸⁶⁶ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 136. My emphasis.

⁸⁶⁷ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 108

⁸⁶⁸ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 108

⁸⁶⁹ Marx and Engels, *German Ideology*, 37

appropriation *encounters specific kinds of objects*, determinate objects, which shape and delimit the form by which appropriation is practically *realized*. This means that *reason* is *immanently tethered to appropriation*, in fact it is its result; for the *social activity of which appropriation consists is also a conscious activity, but a socially mediated conscious activity which is its own, i.e., is a historically specific social consciousness*. Indeed, Marx notes: “[n]ot only is the material of my activity given to me as a social product [*i.e., as a result having become-appropriated*] (as is even the language in which the thinker is active): my *own* existence is *social activity, and therefore that I make of myself, I make of myself for society and with the consciousness of myself as a social being.*”⁸⁷⁰ Once again, we find the articulation of social reason as *immanent*, as grounded historically, and, therefore, as a *historically specific expression of the human species-essence, a species-essence endowed with an immanent rationality through which it discovers purpose in its activity, and in its realization of that purposive activity reshapes the immanent reason by which it was deployed*. Appropriating is recoiled back unto itself through the process of becoming-appropriated.

Becoming-appropriated reflects back onto appropriating and reconditions the form by which the latter is futurally expressed. This *metamorphosis* undergirds the general process of social production and reproduction; or, it *mediates* social production and social reproduction. The process of appropriating, of making something one’s own, is the process of confirming a *social form*, a production of that social form. In this sense, it is a constitutive part of social production: it expresses the already existing presuppositions of social production in its actualization as purposive activity. The concomitant moment of *becoming-appropriated* is the internalization of the initial self-objectifying moment of appropriating, is already an expression of the presuppositions of social production. Appropriating is already the *result* of having previously *become-appropriated*. But, appropriation is *creative-aesthetic activity*, however subtle or extravagant, and thus *appropriating induces self-transformation: engenders new ways of appropriating*. This in turn re-shapes the form of becoming-appropriated, which reinscribes itself in appropriation once again. Becoming-appropriated, thereby, reconditions the form by which appropriation occurs thenceforth, for it appears *relationally* and *socially* and thus affects not merely the objects of appropriation but the social subjects involved. In this way, the *spiral* dialectic of appropriating and becoming-appropriated is the *re-articulation of the reproduction of a particular social form*.

[5.4] Concluding Remarks: Appropriation, Consciousness, & the Production of Sociality

We have heretofore seen the dialectic between appropriating and becoming-appropriated as the ontological constitution of the human species-essence and, therefore, as the mode of activity

⁸⁷⁰ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 104. My emphasis.

through which the *social human body* forms itself and, in turn, cements the form by which sociality *realizes* itself. I now turn to a more specific engagement with the concept of appropriation in terms of consciousness and sociality; or better, in their mutual constitution. Here, we see the way in which appropriation begets the analytical capacity for the identification of historically specific social forms, which will lead us to further specifications regarding the *mode of appropriation* in the following chapter.

It has been argued that appropriation contains within it, as *activity*, the triadic structure of ‘Nature-Sociality-History.’ Further, I have elucidated that appropriation consists of the reciprocally determinate dialectic between *appropriating* and *becoming-appropriated* as expressed through the *social human body* as an *ensemble of relations*. Insofar as this relational conception is premised on an inter-active, purposive, simultaneously conscious and unconscious, *process*, it reveals the social human body as always in *excess* to itself and, thereby, constitutes sociality as an ‘ensemble of social relations’—which itself is where the *human species-essence* is found.

In order to specify the *production of the social* at this general ontological level, we need to investigate production itself as a specific kind of appropriation. “All production,” Marx writes, “is *appropriation of nature* on the part of an individual *within and through a specific form of society*.”⁸⁷¹ Production is a process of transformation, a purposive activity. Consequently, production has an object outside it, an object which it shapes and by which it is reshaped. Insofar as production emanates from a *social human body*, a specific kind of activity of it, it characterizes the “...the subjectivity of *objective* essential powers [powers of appropriation], whose action, therefore must also be something objective.”⁸⁷² Appropriation is the activity of an *objective subjectivity*, a *social subjectivity that realizes itself objectively as a subject* undergoing self-objectification. “A being who is objective acts objectively,” Marx writes, “and he would not act objectively if the objective did not reside in the very nature of his being.”⁸⁷³ Objectivity underlies the very *essence* of the human being, an objectivity that is itself *activity* and only realized *objectively* as its own-most process of self-determination and self-actualization; in and through *objective activity*—appropriation and production—the social human body confirms its *subjectivity*, its *objectively social and historical character*.⁸⁷⁴

⁸⁷¹ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 87

⁸⁷² Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 156

⁸⁷³ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 156

⁸⁷⁴ To be sure: “The first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals. Thus, the first fact to be established is the physical organization of these individuals and their consequent relation to nature.” Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 37

Marx continues: “Man is a directly *natural being*....as a *living natural being* he is...furnished with *natural powers of life*—he is an *active natural being*.”⁸⁷⁵ The human species-essence, as a living ensemble, expresses ‘natural powers of life’—that is powers to *subsist* as a *living being*, self-maintaining powers that inhere in its very physiology and “...exist in [it] as tendencies and abilities.”⁸⁷⁶ These powers, inasmuch as they are *its powers*, are equally the very limitation of *its life-form*, the form of life that is human life. At this level, *necessity* becomes clear: *the physiological expression of the species-essence is its corporeality as activity, which is just as much its vulnerability*. The vulnerability of its corporeality is a *relational vulnerability*; or, its relational existence and self-actualization is *necessarily dependent* on “...objects independent of him...*objects* of his need.”⁸⁷⁷ To maintain itself as itself—“the need to maintain its physical existence”⁸⁷⁸—to *express itself as the human species-essence* requires, by *absolute necessity*, “...essential objects”—objects *necessarily related to its own essence*—“indispensable to the manifestation and confirmation of [its] essential powers.”⁸⁷⁹ Indeed, it is the human species-essence’s continuous *appropriation* of these external objects on which it is dependent that *produced the human species-essence as itself, as a particular kind, as a social human body, as the determination of an absolute form, as an ensemble of relations*.

This self-constituting process just described is the immanent ground out of which and through which the human species-essence *confirms* itself as a social essence and, therefore, *confirms its essential activity—appropriation—as the essence of the social*. “But man,” Marx reminds us, “is *not merely a natural being: he is a human natural being*... Therefore, he is a *species [essence]* and has to confirm and manifest himself as such *both* in his being and in his knowing.”⁸⁸⁰ With the adjectival inclusion of ‘human’ prior to ‘natural being’, Marx indicates the *sociality inherent in the human species-essence*. The social human body’s *essential powers of appropriation* are in fact *social powers*, powers constituted through *sociality*. That it ‘has to confirm and manifest’ itself as *a species-essence* marks the necessity that structures it: the social human body has appropriation as its own-most *necessity*, as part of its ontological character. This necessity is shown not only in its relational immersion within objects outside of it, but also in its capacity as a *knowing* being. Indeed, the actualization of its ‘essential powers’ through which it confirms its *species* character is predicated on both *activity and thought*; or, activity to which thought is necessarily bound, interwoven.

⁸⁷⁵ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 156

⁸⁷⁶ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 156

⁸⁷⁷ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 156

⁸⁷⁸ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 75

⁸⁷⁹ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 156

⁸⁸⁰ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 158

Thinking, as we have seen, *consciousness*, forms part of the species-essence in its being tethered to *activity*. But, this thinking is not—as in representational thought—just a quality of mind alone. Thinking—or consciousness itself—is possible *through* mind, as the qualitative leap of the neuronal formation of the brain (a necessary condition for thought),⁸⁸¹ but its *originative, generative, and creative ground is always found in, as, and through relation*: “the production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the *material activity* and the *material intercourse* of men—the language of *real life*.”⁸⁸² The impetus of *the movement of consciousness is the relational motion of the social human body: consciousness is the language of real life*. In other words, consciousness emerges from the *interplay of objective material relations*, the processuality of a totality of conditions that gives consciousness something to *think about, something about which one has consciousness*.⁸⁸³ The human species-essence, therefore, “...has *conscious life-activity*.”⁸⁸⁴ Only *abstractly* can one posit that one ‘thinks’; for to think is always to think *about something*—even something fictional, imaginary, or fantastical—and to think about something *presupposes a relational mediation of other objects, objects external to the mind itself, relational mediations emergent through activity that condition thought*: “It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness.”⁸⁸⁵ The ensemble of relational mediations that constitute *consciousness*, however, is grounded not simply in ‘relation’ but in *determinate relations, social relations, active relations of “social existence,*⁸⁸⁶ *relations of activity through which consciousness as determinate and of a historically specific sociality is invoked*: “[i]n creating an *objective world* by his practical activity, in *working up* inorganic nature, man proves himself a conscious species [essence].”⁸⁸⁷ Here, Marx confirms the ontological element of reason, in its broadest and most practical sense, as grounded in the process through which the human species-essence *confirms itself as itself*, namely, through *activity*. In so doing, it produces and reproduces itself as a *social being*,⁸⁸⁸ which is precisely its *historical character*. Appropriation, then, carries with it conscious life-activity, it *is* an activity mediated by consciousness: “The whole character of the

⁸⁸¹ For a discussion on the ‘qualitative leap’ from the neuronal to the mental, see Catherine Malabou. *What Should We do with Our Brain?*. Translated by Sebastian Rand. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008. 55-77

⁸⁸² Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 42. My emphasis.

⁸⁸³ I call this the *metabolic essence of mind*, the topic of a future project.

⁸⁸⁴ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 75

⁸⁸⁵ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 42. My emphasis

⁸⁸⁶ To emphasize Marx’s consistency, an almost identical phrase from the *German Ideology* (quoted above) is articulated in the infamous ‘Preface’: “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.” Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 21.

⁸⁸⁷ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 75

⁸⁸⁸ “The human being is in the most literal sense [a political animal], not merely a gregarious animal, but an animal which can individuate itself *only in the midst of society*.” Marx, *Grundrisse*, 84

species...is contained in the character of its life-activity; and free, conscious activity is man's species character."⁸⁸⁹

Thao emphasizes the relationality between consciousness and productive activity:

...if we define productive activity as activity that ends with its result according to *rules* [rules immanent to a form], it is clear that these rules are constituted first of all *outside of consciousness*, in the *reality of behavior* as an *objective consequence* of the material conditions of the use of the tool.⁸⁹⁰

Productive activity enacts itself according to the rules immanent to the social form from which it emerges. The rules of productive activity are simultaneously *bio-physiological* and *social* rules; the predispositions, assumptions, and sensibilities peculiar to a historically situated social form which determine or condition the practical behavior where productive activity appears and is understood *qua* productive activity. The 'rules' of productive activity, however, are not simply the result of an abstract consciousness, a consciousness that merely determines for itself its activities divorced from its relational involvement. On the contrary, the rules emerge from the '*reality of behavior*', from the linear and non-linear 'to and fro' movement, between the body its sociality, its history, and the objects through which it realizes itself. Consciousness, then, has its *soul* in the *relational unfolding of metabolic motion* (the generative contradiction between *objective dialectics* and *subjective dialectics*). This condition of consciousness as wedded to productive activity, to appropriation, is the universal condition of the human species-essence itself. The *particular* expression or realization of productive activity, however, is a concretization of universality *the universality of appropriation*: "Universality is but a *result* in which is reflected the indefinite possibility of repetition that is implied in the objective structure of the process of the tool."⁸⁹¹ Indeed, the tool as an instrument of production marks the further *concretization* and *particularization* of the *universal* dimension of appropriation, of the process of the production and reproduction of material life.⁸⁹² The tool as mediation discloses a *technological* relation, and thereby expresses the various presuppositions and immanent reason tethered to a particular kind of appropriation within a given social form.

That the relational inter-play between the social human body, its consciousness, and its material conditions, are mediated by appropriation (i.e., *appropriating* and *becoming-appropriated*) is

⁸⁸⁹ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 75

⁸⁹⁰ Thao, *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism*, 171. My emphasis

⁸⁹¹ Thao, *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism*, 171

⁸⁹² In an evolutionary sense, this becomes decisive as the very foundation of the human species-essence which instantiates the "dialectic of behavior" peculiar to the human form. Thao notes: The reptile *explores* the ambient space; the mammal *skirts* the obstacle and *manipulates* objects; the lower apes *profit* from the intermediary; the anthropoid *makes use of* the instrument; but man alone can *make use of* the tool." Thao, *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism*, 164

implicitly consistent in Marx's work, contrary to those who attempt to identify a 'break' between the 'early' and 'mature' Marx. In a footnote in *Capital Vol. I*, Marx writes:

Technology reveals the active relation of man to nature, the direct process of production of his life, and thereby it also lays bare the process of production of the social relations of his life, and of the mental conceptions that flow from these relations.⁸⁹³

Technology reveals the active relation between a *social* human body and nature through the *relations* by which the human species-essence actualizes its own life-form. Form here is particularly important as it indicates a *heterogeneity* as opposed to a *homogenization*. The deployment of technology is indicative of a *form*, a way of engaging with nature, an *approach to various objects* through which a *form of life* develops. Technology, however, is not arbitrary. On the contrary, technology itself—as *instruments of production*—is a *result*, an *immanent result of the historically specific form through which a given society has become-appropriated*. These *forms* that underly a previously existing technology express a *historical consciousness* immanent to the *already socialized material conditions of that society*. That these forms are social means that they are directly inter-related to the *process of production*, but not reducible to them alone. For in the very process of production—which is always already a process of *reproduction*—the various dimensions of social life take on a *modal combination*, what makes a specific society a *social formation*. Here, not only are so many dimensions of social life revealed, but they are also shown as *relational combinations* of the *inter-determinate, inter-affective, process of the production of sociality itself*: political relations, economic relations, gender relations, racial/ethnic relations, become immediately identifiable in their most historically specific character without forsaking their universal, *metabolic* ground.

Sociality, then, is produced and reproduced by and through appropriation, wherein *social consciousness materializes itself*. The dialectic between appropriating and becoming-appropriated mediates the *metamorphosis* of consciousness through its interwovenness with various kinds of activity. Here, consciousness loses its abstract character and is seen to be grounded in the sociality that constitutes it, while also being involved in the constitution of sociality itself.⁸⁹⁴ Without this transhistorical and ontological *postulate*, identifying the elements pertaining to the historically specific character of a given social form is rendered impossible. Indeed, appropriation is a 'common element'—following Marx's introduction to the *Grundrisse*—applicable to every social form. Despite the broadness of the category,

⁸⁹³ Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, 493

⁸⁹⁴ Thao notes, "All that we are contesting is the concept of a pure consciousness whose relation to the world would imply a *metaphysical* transcendence. But in the *immanence* of natural being, consciousness plays a major role for the accomplishment of behavior." Thao, *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism*, 174.

however, it is precisely this universality (necessarily *general*) from which *social particularity*, and even social *singularity*, can be identified in its most concrete terms.

In appropriating the objects of nature through the mediation of the social within a determinate geographical, ecological, and historical setting, the human species-essence differentiates itself into various *forms*, and in so doing so *generates* various *belonging-forms*, that is, various strictures through which members of a given society learn to belong to each other, through distinctive designations of kinds of activity, political organizations, social hierarchies, spaces of worship or adumbration, the development of social identities relevant to the functions peculiar to that social organization. Indeed, members of a society develop *forms of belonging* as a result of appropriating and becoming appropriated.

At the general level of a *positive* universality, appropriation always constitutes and presupposes a *belonging-form*. Belonging-forms are just as much mediated by *property-forms* also resulting from appropriating and becoming appropriated. *Forms of property* are meant here simply as forms by which a given sociality determines the relations between its objects and the members of its social group. Similarly, property-forms and belonging-forms are just as much mediated by the labor-forms peculiar to the society in question. Labor-forms express the specific set of productive activities present in a given social formation, their *forms* in terms of their organization, expectations, style, and social division. Together, these three *forms* constitute the triadic structure of the *mode of appropriation*. This will be the focus of the following chapter.

[6] The Mode of Appropriation: Labor-form, Property-form, Belonging-form

“Far from being exhausted, Marxism is still very young, almost in its infancy; it has scarcely begun to develop. It remains, therefore, the *philosophy of our time*. We cannot go beyond it because we have not gone beyond the circumstances which engendered it.”—Jean-Paul Sartre⁸⁹⁵

We have reached the moment of appropriation’s historically specific expression as the *mode of appropriation*. It has been claimed that the condensation and crystallization of the triadic structure of Nature-Sociality-History embeds itself in appropriation as such. Further, I have suggested that this embeddedness is the ground through which different societies differentiate themselves, produce and reproduce themselves, form themselves as distinct *social formations*. Production is a key component of this process, but what remains decisive is not simply production alone, but *the forms that both structure it and are, simultaneously, its result*. The dialectic between appropriating and becoming-appropriated is always a *taking shape* through *forms*; forms, moreover, that *concretize* a specific *social form*. Embedded in appropriation, as the transhistorical and ontological motion of the human species-essence, is precisely the actualization and realization of the manifold and heterogenous *forms* of self-determination peculiar to the *social human body*: the actualization and realization, that is, of a *mode of appropriation*. Following Marx and Engels, then, I provide an account of the inter-determinate relationship between *labor-form*, *property-form*, and *belonging-form*, which together construct and define the movement of the *mode of appropriation*.

This raises a number of questions. Is appropriation just labor? Am I conflating appropriation with production? What is the specific difference? What theoretical value is found in the mode of appropriation that is not already contained within the category of mode of production?

In answering these questions, my own response to the criticisms of Marx/ism becomes implicitly possible—though I will not linger on these issues here—and, additionally, the potential of future explorations of the categories of appropriation and the mode of appropriation can be raised. I can briefly indicate a response, which will be further elucidated throughout the remainder of this chapter.

First, all labor *is* appropriation, but not all appropriation is labor *sensu strictu*; for appropriation also highlights historically and socially specific *forms of belonging* and *forms of property* that structure the creative-aesthetic dimension of a *labor-form* realizing itself, and in that way appropriation is *involved* in social production and reproduction beyond its merely economic connotation.

⁸⁹⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre. *Search for a Method*. Translated by Hazel Barnes. New York: Vintage Books, 1968. 30

Second, the *mode of appropriation* is the category that, in my view, tethers together the *mode of production* with (the more specific) *social formation*. This is an implicit response to a number of criticisms of Marx and the Marxist tradition writ large. For example, some have issued a dissatisfaction with Marx's claim concerning the universalization of capital.⁸⁹⁶ The assumption here is, basically, that the universalization of capital would imply an absolute homogeneity between different social formations—here, once again, we have a *Kojèvean* Marx as described in chapter 1—such that all distinctive cultural features would fall prey to capital. But, it is said in response, social formations retain their particularity even in the face of capital's universalization. Therefore, Marx's claim must be in error: Brazil is not India, South Korea is not Mexico, etc., and none are Europe, so the universalization of capital does not occur in the way Marx assumed,⁸⁹⁷ and this is held to underly Marx's Eurocentrism.⁸⁹⁸ Beyond the lack of rigor in this sort of claim, there resides a naïve but genuine question: how can this be the case? How, in other words, can the spread of capital, its universalization, exist in light of the *social particularity* of different *social formations*. The answer can be found in Marx himself,⁸⁹⁹ with Hegel's relational ontology as its background, through teasing out the category of the *mode of appropriation*. Indeed, the *mode of appropriation* solves the conundrum by demonstrating the way in which the general *mode of production predominates over a social formation, while the latter still retains its social particularity*. The mode of appropriation, as constituted through a triadic structure (*labor-form, property-form, and belonging-form*) serves the purpose of highlighting *social specificity* while retaining both the ontological dimension of the universality of the human species-essence *and* the historically specific expression of capital's own universalizing process (which is not the same as a homogenization).

⁸⁹⁶ For example, see: Dipesh Chakrabarty. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000. I should note that Chakrabarty's criticism ends in a turn away from the Marxist conception of history toward a conception of history inspired by Heidegger. The presentation of Marx he provides is precisely a symptom of the readings of Hegel and Marx I provide in chapters 1 and 2. Indeed, Chibber points out that "[Chakrabarty] mistakenly equates universalization with homogenization;" exactly along Kojèvean lines described above. Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory*, 288

⁸⁹⁷ These sorts of criticisms have a long history. In the 1997 *Preface* to his monumental book, *Europe and the People Without History*, mostly focused on the colonial foundations of capital, Eric Wolf responds to similar remarks concerning his deployment of Marxian categories: "Contrary to the claims of some commentators, I have not argued...that this incorporation into capitalist networks necessarily destroys peoples' distinctive, historically grounded cultural understandings and practices or renders their cultural schemata inoperative or irrelevant....Capitalist expansion may or may not render particular cultures inoperative, but its *all-too-real* spread does raise question about just how the successive cohorts of peoples drawn into the capitalist orbit align and realign their understandings to respond to the opportunities and exigencies of their new conditions." Wolf. *Europe and the People Without History*, xxii. My emphasis.

⁸⁹⁸ Tracing the intellectual history surrounding the development of capitalism, and arguing against Marx's supposed Eurocentrism, Radhika Desai notes what happened in the literature: "...Marx's question of how capitalism developed when and where it did was replaced by a Eurocentric Weberian question, 'What made Europe different?'" Radhika Desai. "Marxist Engagements with Geopolitical Economy: Author's Response." In, *Rethinking Marxism* 27, No. 4. 2015. 574

⁸⁹⁹ I have already partly addressed this in section [5.1] above.

The first section concerns elucidating the relationship between the concepts of mode of production, mode of appropriation, and social formation. Thenceforth, each ‘form’ of the triadic structure of the mode of appropriation will be considered in its own section: ‘labor-form,’ ‘property-form,’ and ‘belonging-form,’ respectively. I will thereby conclude with indications for the analytical relevance of the mode of appropriation and the array of theoretical possibilities it opens.

[6.1] Mode of Production—Social Formation—Mode of Appropriation

In my view, the mode of appropriation mediates, in oscillating form, the relationship between the mode of production and the social formation. A mode of production refers to a political-economic form by and through which a given society, a *social formation*, is organized and reproduces itself. However, two distinct social formations may share the same *mode of production* as the predominant mode by which they are organized. Further, there are also different modes of production that operate simultaneously under a *dominant* mode of production. The mode of appropriation always operates between these combinations, i.e., between co-existing modes of production and the social formation in which they function. Indeed, it is the *mode of appropriation*, in my view, that both prevents a given social formation’s *assimilation to a given mode production* from being a pure homogenization and yet elucidates how that very assimilation takes place in a way *peculiar* to the social formation in question. In the latter occurrence, history becomes pertinent. When a social formation begins to develop a new mode of production—be it endogenously from its own contradictions or exogenously from external introduction—it still retains the lingering remnants of its *history*, i.e., the previous modes of appropriation peculiar to it. In this way, the emergence of a new mode of production—which itself may be present in more than one social formation—necessarily encounters all the *forms of appropriation* peculiar to the social formation in question, and thereby *can only actualize itself through mediating these very forms*.

The definition of a mode of production is quite contentious and almost every Marxist attempts to define it in their own way. This is due to the fact that Marx’s definition of mode of production contains a certain ambiguity,⁹⁰⁰ at times broader than a purely economic postulate and at other times more centered on economic organization. I find this ambiguity very productive, for it permits demonstrating that the mode of appropriation necessarily forms part of the mode of production but

⁹⁰⁰ Henri Lefebvre comments on the concept of production which remains equally applicable to the concept of the mode of production: “For Marx and Engels, the concept of production never emerges from the ambiguity which makes it such a fertile idea.” Henri Lefebvre. *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1991. 68

also distinguishes itself in that it refers to certain broader element of social reproduction. Let us investigate.

In the *German Ideology*, Marx and Engels write:

The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the means of subsistence they actually find in existence and have to reproduce. *This mode of production...* is a definite *form of activity* of these individuals, a definite *form* of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life* on their part. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce. Hence what individuals *are* depends on the materials conditions of their production.⁹⁰¹

The mode of production consists of a ‘*definite form of activity*’ and thereby expresses a ‘*definite mode of life*.’ Consequently, their *social being* ‘coincides’ with this ‘definite form of activity’ in terms of the objects they produce (‘what’) and with the *form* (‘how’) of their production. The definite form of activity refers to the production of their ‘means of subsistence.’ Social being is constituted by the object and form of producing the means of subsistence out of which their sociality is *reproduced*. To be engaged, involved, and a part of the production and reproduction of the means of subsistence is to belong, “in a definite way,...to social and political relations.”⁹⁰² Social and political relations structure the motion of the mode of production, are the *connective tissue of the fibers that are the relations of production*. Thus, Marx elsewhere notes: “The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, *the real foundation*, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.”⁹⁰³ It is not only productive activity in a definite form, then, that defines the mode of production, but rather a *totality of relations of production*. Moreover, the totality of the relations of production are ‘*the real foundation*’ that is the ‘economic structure of society.’ Indeed, the relational unfolding of the human species-essence has, as its *centripetal nexus*, the production and reproduction of its means of subsistence, its *economic structure* and the relations that constitute them, i.e., the relations of production. However, precisely because the mode of activity through which this centripetal nexus develops is a creative-aesthetic, and therefore transformative, activity that actualizes itself through the realization of its own *excess*, what simultaneously occurs is a *centrifugal* development. The relations of the superstructure, political, legal, but also gendered and racialized, etc., are the centrifugal result of the multifaceted form by which the economic foundation realizes itself as a *centripetal nexus*.

⁹⁰¹ Marx and Engels, *German Ideology*, 37. My emphasis

⁹⁰² Marx and Engels, *German Ideology*, 41

⁹⁰³ Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 20

This is the *true meaning* of the ‘base-superstructure’ relationship: the dialectic between the *centripetal nexus of the economic structure and the centrifugal sphere of the superstructure*, each determining the other in various ways, culminating in the *spiral development of social production and reproduction*. Contrary to the assumption that it is a mechanical or crude economic reductionist model, this relationship reveals “...identifiable objective determinations...[through] the complex dialectic of the social base and its superstructure.”⁹⁰⁴ Indeed, the concept of mode of production undergoes an internal division, the base-superstructure relationship, for the methodological ability to retain both the transhistorical and ontological dimensions of human life *and* their historically specific expressions. In this way, Marx maintains the complex interconnections of changing forms of any society, since the dialectic between its ‘*real foundation*,’ or economic structure, is necessarily tethered to the superstructure corresponding to it. Procedurally, then, this provides the ability of revealing the *inter-connected forms of the totality of social relations* and the manifold ways in which they determine and re-determine, co-constitute, each other in various instances or levels. Indeed, if sociality is understood, following Marx, as the *ensemble of social relations*, the mode of production is the generative form by which the *ensemble* materially persists, as containing *differently demarcated* dimensions that make the *ensemble what it is, how it is, and how it transforms as an ensemble*. Base-superstructure relation holds its analytical weight as categories of demarcation of the specific historical expressions of the rational abstraction of the mode of production.

The mode of production, then, as consisting of the base-superstructure relation, reveals the *relational determinations of sociality as such and the social human bodies that comprise it*. In methodological consistency with Engels’ specification of motion and inter-connection *as determinate*, Marx’s category is not just the expression of a truism that everything is connected with and to everything else. On the contrary, as Mészáros explains, “For it is the *determinate* character of what is connected as well as the *specific mode* of the prevailing connections that matters, not the mere fact of connectedness.”⁹⁰⁵ Dialectical materialist relational ontology is precisely concerned with grasping the specific connections structuring the movement of a given totality “...whose parts,” Mészáros confirms, “are not *merely* interconnected, *nor equally important*, but constitute a *structured whole*, with its appropriate internal order and determinate *hierarchies*, even if the latter must be understood as *dynamically shifting and changing*...”⁹⁰⁶

The dynamism of the base-superstructure relationship constitutes the “...social metabolism...” in its capacity to capture “...*the totality of determinations, from direct material processes to the most mediated*

⁹⁰⁴ István Mészáros. *Social Structure Vol. II*, 38

⁹⁰⁵ Mészáros, *Social Structure Vol. II*, 58

⁹⁰⁶ Mészáros, *Social Structure Vol. II*, 59. My emphasis

intellectual practices.”⁹⁰⁷ The excess pertaining to the metabolic motion of the unfolding of the human species-essence is a process of self-actualization *through a social metabolic structure*, determinately mediated by a mode of production as constituted through the base-superstructure relation. This is the ontological character of sociality as such, its *transhistorical quality*. Mészáros notes:

The structural foundation of *all social processes* is the *transhistorical objectivity of social ontological determinations* in virtue of the inescapable fact that the social metabolism is rooted...in the *metabolism between humankind and nature*.⁹⁰⁸

The concept of the mode of production pertains to the identification of the *social metabolic structure* of a given social form, the basic premises of which are shared *universally and transhistorically* insofar as the primary subject-object of the investigation is the self-realization of the human species-essence. The analytic value, then, of the mode of production lies “...in its capacity,” Wolf explains, “to underline the strategic relationships involved in the deployment of social labor by organized human pluralities.”⁹⁰⁹ In other words, the mode of production reveals the relations undergirding the actualization of social labor within a given historical context and thereby reveals “...the political-economic relationships that underlie, orient, and constrain interaction.”⁹¹⁰ Metaphorically, then, the *physiological anatomy* of a given society is constituted, as Etienne Balibar notes, “by the study of the *mode of production*.”⁹¹¹ Thus, Balibar writes, “...history...becomes intelligible as the relationship between an essential permanence and a subordinate movement.”⁹¹² That is, the mode of production secures the identification between the *transhistorical* and *the historically specific* by penetrating the heart of sociality, *its metabolism*, and thereby holding together, in an open-ended form, the economic permanence (appropriation in the broadest sense, which includes production) as the *centripetal nexus of the social metabolism* and the *centrifugal result*, the superstructural forms, pertaining to the historically specific character of a given social form.

We can see that the mode of production, nonetheless, is the specification of the political-economic structure of a given social form in its *conceptual comprisal* of other ‘modes’ that specifically pertain to a society’s ‘*real foundation*.’ We can take a clue here from the way in which Marx discusses three ‘modes’ that are *internal* to the mode of a production as a concept: ‘modes of commerce’, ‘modes of circulation,’ and ‘modes of consumption.’ Following my previous discussion on different ‘levels of

⁹⁰⁷ Mészáros, *Social Structure Vol. II*, 59. My emphasis

⁹⁰⁸ Mészáros, *Social Structure Vol. II*, 59-60. My emphasis

⁹⁰⁹ Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*, 76

⁹¹⁰ Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*, 77

⁹¹¹ Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 362

⁹¹² Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 363

abstraction,' we should, however, always be careful to note the differences between the application of these categories to an analysis of *capital* specifically and their deployment to other modes of production. That is, we should not confuse the meaning of 'commerce', 'circulation,' or 'consumption' with the ways they appear in capital. Marx would, correctly, insist that despite a terminological similarity, the *content* to which a *concept* refers drastically alters the meaning of the concept itself. Thus, I am *indirectly* teasing out here the categories as Marx is deploying them critically toward capital, but in a way that reveals an implicit form by which they are subordinate to the concept of the mode of production in general, and in that precise way applicable to social forms distinct from capital itself, i.e., applicable to *transhistorical analysis of social structures*.⁹¹³

In a discussion concerning the circuit of capital in *Capital Vol. II*, Marx notes:

...what is emphasized in the categories money economy and credit economy, and stressed as their distinctive feature, is actually not the economy proper, i.e., the production process itself, but rather the *mode of commerce* between the various agents of production or producers that *corresponds to the economy*.⁹¹⁴

The *mode of commerce* describes the forms of economic inter-change between the agents of production peculiar to the *economic organization* of a given social form. Thus, *every social metabolic structure* contains some element through which material goods undergo a changing of hands, so to speak. This does not necessarily imply a capitalist economic form, nor even a money or credit economy. Marx mentions the Incas as an example and asserts that its economy "...would fall into none of these categories."⁹¹⁵ As an economic organization of a specific kind, its *mode of commerce* does not imply the combination of money and credit peculiar to capital; but it does have a *mode of commerce* of its own. In speaking directly about capital, however, Marx notes that the 'money relation' "...rests fundamentally on the *social character of production*, not on the *mode of commerce*; the latter derives from the former."⁹¹⁶ Indeed, capitalist reification *inverts the causal relation*: "...the bourgeois horizon...[sees] the foundation of the mode of production in the mode of commerce corresponding to it, rather than the other way around."⁹¹⁷ In other words, a different mode of production engenders a different kind of relation to the mode of commerce from which it is derived.

Regarding a mode of circulation—i.e., the *movement of social products, productions of social production*—Marx, also referring to capitalist circulation, writes:

⁹¹³ I am following Balibar's mention of these modes as comprising the mode of production. However, he only asserts their relevance to the mode of production, but does not expand on how. Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 370

⁹¹⁴ Marx, *Capital Vol. II*, 195-196.

⁹¹⁵ Marx, *Capital Vol. II*, 196

⁹¹⁶ Marx, *Capital Vol. II*, 196. My emphasis

⁹¹⁷ Marx, *Capital Vol. II*, 196

This particular manner of circulation arises from the particular way in which the means of labor gives up its value to the product, or acts to form value during the production process. This in turn arises from the special way in which the means of labor function in the labor process.⁹¹⁸

Notice Marx's emphasis on specificity: 'particular manner'; 'particular way'; 'special way'. He invokes the *specific mode by which circulation is expressed in a social form undergirded by the value-form*, which is the 'special way in which the means of labor function in the [capitalist] labor process.' However, *social products* can circulate in differing forms that correspond to a *different* mode of production. In fact, insofar, as we have already seen, that different modes of production can be combined within a given social formation even if dominated by a *particular* mode, different *modes of circulation* may already be present and indirectly associated with the capitalist mode of circulation itself. Thus, a non-capitalist mode of production, a non-capitalist social formation, will carry with it the expression of a mode of circulation that inevitably corresponds to the social character of its relations of production, i.e., to its own *social metabolic structure*.

In *Capital Vol. I*, Marx gives us a clue as to the mode of consumption:

[one's] means of subsistence must...be sufficient to maintain him in his normal state as a working individual. [One's] natural needs...vary according to the climactic and other physical peculiarities of [one's] country...the number and extent of [one's] so-called *necessary requirements*, as also the *manner in which they are satisfied*, are themselves *products of history*...⁹¹⁹

Elaborating in a different way on his dialectical exploration of production and consumption in the *Grundrisse*,⁹²⁰ here Marx notes the necessary conditions through which the *mode of consumption* ascertains the variations of the satisfaction of the means of subsistence as it appears in a given social form. In noting that the 'manner' of the satisfaction of needs are 'products of history,' Marx discloses a constitutive element relevant to the mode of appropriation; namely, *form*. Indeed, the *mode of consumption* is predicated on the social metabolic structure of a given society. Consequently, it expresses itself in a *form* peculiar to that society, a *form* immanently tethered to its mode of production, and is thus *historical*. Therefore, even in transitions from one mode of production to another, the already mentioned potential combinatory, the mode of consumption changes while also retaining its historical traces, the lingering (*vanishing*) residues of the previous modes of consumption form which it has developed.

In sum, the concept of the mode of production expresses an analytical power of transhistorical application by a dialectical inter-play between its economic *centripetal nexus* and the *centrifugal* developments that oscillate from it and, in turn, reconstitute it. The objective inter-determinations

⁹¹⁸ Marx, *Capital Vol. II*, 240

⁹¹⁹ Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, 275

⁹²⁰ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 90-94

involved in this asymmetrical—but always mutually constitutive—relational unfolding underlies the process of social production and reproduction, identified most aptly through the base-superstructure relation. The mode of production further permits the identification of specific kinds of relations through its internal triadic structure: modes of commerce, modes of circulation, and modes of consumption. Each ‘mode’ reveals the *centrifugal motion* which the *centripetal nexus* (the economic structure) opens and transforms in its own internal motion. This account explains the *social metabolic structure of sociality*, i.e., *the underlying motion of the subjective dialectics of sociality as such*.

This brings us to the concept of ‘social formation’—itself a topic of a number of controversies within the Marxist tradition.⁹²¹ Let us begin with Marx himself. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx writes:

In all *forms of society* [i.e., *social formations*]⁹²² there is one specific kind of production that predominates over the rest, whose relation thus assigns rank and influence to the others. It is a general illumination which bathes all the other colors and *modifies* their particularity. It is a particular ether which determines the specific gravity of every being which has *materialized within it*.⁹²³

Marx identifies some key issues here. First, there are different and discrete social forms, i.e., *social formations*. This immediately indicates that social formation is a geopolitically and historically specific ensemble—not any society but, to be sure, a *society of a specific kind*, a *social particularity*. Secondly, a *social formation* may include within it more than one mode of production, may be formed, that is, by a *combination* of modes of production that participate in its form. Arguably, it is the peculiar ways in which different modes of production are *combined* and *intertwined* that constitutes the very particular and distinct *texture* and *fabric* of the social relations of that social formation. Moreover, as containing its own objective and internally coherent *structure*, a social formation is predicated on the delineation of the social agents which comprise it, their *social relations*, which develop in accordance with the specific history of that social formation. The concept of social formation thus expresses the concrete expression of the more abstract concept of *subjective dialectics of sociality*. The latter is always expressed concretely and *empirically* through the former.

Marta Harnecker defines the concept of social formation as “...a concrete, historically determined, *social reality*,” which “...can correspond to a given country, or to a series of countries which have more

⁹²¹ For a discussion of the rejections and uses of the term within the Marxist tradition, which ends in defense of its employment (which I am sympathetic to) see, Tony Burns. “Marx and the Concept of a Social Formation.” In, *Historical Materialism* 31, No. 1, (2023), 1-30.

⁹²² In the German: *Gesellschaftsformen*.

⁹²³ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 107

or less similar characteristics and a common history.”⁹²⁴ Thus, when referring to social formation, a specific geopolitical environment of a historically specific character is being delineated. Herein, the *historically specific character of the mode of production is revealed as expressed through a social formation*. Analytically, the concept of social formation provides us with the methodological ability of specification, where the contradictions of a given social form can be disclosed in more nuanced ways, namely, ways that reveal the complexity by which a *specific social formation undergoes transformative processes in its own peculiar way*. However, this is not a purely *internalist methodology*,⁹²⁵ for social formations are always already *inter-related*, determining each other in various forms. The form of development of one social formation, therefore, presupposes the development of another by which and in which its own development has been affected (in varying degree). Thus, the universality involved in production as such is particularized and concretized temporally and spatially by the concept of social formation. At this level, then, the character of a specific set of social relations belonging to a given social formation is revealed in terms of the previously described triadic structure of Nature-Sociality-History. A social formation discloses a *concrete ensemble of social relations*, which itself structures and is formed by a myriad *ensemble of social activities* that simultaneously constitute and transform these very relations. This is the on-going achievement of the universality of sociality *particularizing itself*. And, this particularization unfolds *in time*, i.e., history, just as much as it unfolds *in space*, i.e., amid a socialized nature. Combined, these various elements structure the *peculiar character of a given social formation*.

With the conceptual underpinnings of both the mode of production and the social formation made clear, I can turn to the mode of appropriation. I will first briefly approach the mode of appropriation in its general, conceptual form. In the following sections I will clarify each dimension of its triad. Indeed, as I have previously mentioned, the *mode of appropriation* consists of a triadic structure: the co-constituting, inter-determinate, and inter-affective relations between *labor-forms*, *property-forms*, and *belonging-forms*. After an exploration into these forms, I will return the *mode of appropriation* as a concept with more determinacy.

‘Mode of appropriation’ is a concept that almost *every* Marxist uses in one way or another, including of course both Marx and Engels. Most often it is used in terms of *appropriating value* (i.e., the capitalist *appropriates* surplus labor), but also, as we have seen in the previous chapter, as *appropriating*

⁹²⁴ Marta Harnecker. "Mode of Production, Social Formation and Political Conjuncture." In, *Theoretical Review*, No. 17 (1980): 78-80.

⁹²⁵ For a critique of internalist methodologies, see Anievas and Nisancioglu, *How the West Came to Rule*, 13-42; also, see: Benno Teschke. *The Myth of 1648: Class, Geopolitics and the Making of Modern International Relations*. London: Verso, 2003. 13-45.

nature. I find this ambiguity extremely productive because it does invoke the complexity of appropriation itself. However, if appropriation is, as I have heretofore argued, the *ontological human species-essence*, the mode of appropriation is its *historically specific expression*. As a concept, it seeks to highlight the specific *forms* through which the Nature-Sociality-History mediation expresses itself through a mode of production and a social formation (the latter may contain a combination of modes of production). What is the use of doing so? What does it add that is not already present in the extensive Marxist theoretical corpus?

In my view, it adds three decisive insights. The first has already been sufficiently explained; namely, the transhistorical and ontological character of appropriation on which the mode of appropriation is based. This ontological structure is necessarily presupposed in all historically specific expressions of the *mode of appropriation*.

The second insight concerns the ability to identify *various complexities about social life*, both contemporarily and historically. By highlighting that the mode of appropriation is the mediation between a dominant mode of production and other modes of production contained in a given social formation, the issue of Marxism's supposed ignorance of cultural distinctness is done away with. Why? Because the mode of appropriation *presupposes appropriation*, and appropriation itself is predicated on the dialectic between *appropriating* and *becoming-appropriated*, and this movement is always materialized practically, historically, and concretely within a distinctive social form as a *mode*. This is how appropriation encompasses productive activity (labor) but also more subtle dimensions of social life that are not strictly *economic* in character, i.e., how one might appropriate their dwelling space and objects around them, appropriate moments of their social existence in a *creative-aesthetic* form. The mode of appropriation reveals *the historical and social characteristics pertaining to a form of activity* and thereby reveals a number of relations *involved* in the activity, relations peculiar to a given social formation and in that way helps clarify the peculiarity of the social consciousness found therein. Thus, when a dominant political-economic structure, such as the capitalist mode of production, comes to pervade a previously non-capitalist social formation what occurs is a kind of mediation with its pre-existing mode of appropriation. The capitalist mode of appropriation encounters other modes of appropriation which are socially historical in character (peculiar to the given social formation). Insofar as capital becomes dominant, the previous mode of appropriation is subsumed by it, but it does not thereby *lose* all of the *forms of appropriation peculiar to it*. In fact, it retains these forms, forms that belong to its history (a social-natural history) while these very forms are juxtaposed to capital. In this way, the mode of appropriation *specifies* the peculiar cultural, economic, political, aesthetic, and creative, expressions

immanent to a given social formation. Consequently, in terms of historical analysis, I contend that changes in the mode of production results from changes in the mode of appropriation *first*. Indeed, the internal transformations of a given mode of production that alter its form or internal transformations that cause a transition into a *different* mode of production are predicated in the more subtle transformations occurring in a given social formation through *the mode of appropriation*, i.e., through contradictions between labor-forms, property-forms, and belonging-forms.⁹²⁶

The third insight follows from the second. If this is the case, if the analytical power of the mode of appropriation resides in seeing the *unique* ways in which a mode of production interpenetrates and subsumes a given social formation, ways that disclose the particular form of adaptation that retains the historical vestiges and distinctness of that given social formation, then, it provides a framework for the heterogenous realization of the overcoming of capital. In other words, it shows that the realization of socialism/communism (which itself is a *universal* aspiration) can and should take place in a *multifaceted form*, in ways that *instantiate the distinct character of each social formation while overcoming both the contradictions of capital and the contradictions peculiar to its own history*. In my view, this is how the theoretical problem of the realization of communism as pure homogenization can be most directly solved.

The mode of appropriation serves doubly, then, as a heuristic device for pinpointing social transformations historically—i.e., the *changes in forms that are economic, political, cultural, etc.*—and as a basis for considering the heterogenous possibilities of *existing social transformation*. Thus, through the ‘mode of appropriation’ it becomes possible to account for distinct geopolitical social formations and their unique historical-cultural dimensions without forsaking the interconnected and combined forms through which they are necessarily related specifically in terms of *forms of activity, activities which presuppose relational forms*. In this light, mode of appropriation situates particular *social identities*, the objective subjectivities of social human bodies, through the *inter-determinate* and *inter-affective* forms that underly their modes of activity and thereby underly and constitute the mediations of their social consciousness. These forms, once again, are the combination of *labor-form, property-form, and belonging form*: the triadic structure of the mode of appropriation.

⁹²⁶ I cannot do justice to this claim here and must leave it as a speculative proposal for future research. Indeed, that was the *original* goal of this project: to provide a *historical analysis through the lens of the mode of appropriation* which could identify these contradictions as the *cause* of broader changes in the mode of production. In this kind of analysis, the role of class struggle, of resistance and revolution, would come more directly to the fore. However, though that was my initial intention, I found it necessary to first attempt a formulation of the theoretical basis from which a historical analysis of that kind could possibly develop.

[6.2] Mode of Appropriation: Labor-Form

As we have seen, a dialectical materialist relational ontology is an ontology of dynamic and kinetic transformation. As a point of departure, it maintains the unity and distinction between the *trans-historical* and the *historically specific*. The necessary (social) ontological unity of socialized humanity differentiates itself through the contingently distinct forms that sociality expresses across space and time in its own socially subjective form—the *subjective dialectics of sociality*—but never loses the universality of this ontological ground, i.e., its *species-essence*.

An ensemble of social relations, the subjective dialectics of sociality, structures the ensemble of social activities of social agents. The latter, in turn, re-structures the former. This marks the combination between *modes of production* and a specific *social formation* and is the limited and determinate character of the *spiral* form of human development and social transformation mediated by the *mode of appropriation* which operates at the practical interstices of a social formation and the modes of production contained within it. A specific dimension of appropriation is *labor*, which is always already expressed determinately as a *form*; hence, labor-form. Labor-form addresses the peculiar *way or manner* through which the ontological character of appropriation is actualized as purposive, productive activity, in a historically specific form.

Marx writes: “It is not *what* is made but how, and by what instruments of labor, that distinguishes different economic epochs.”⁹²⁷ Marx lays primacy on the structure of activity, the *form* through and by means of which an immanent social reason, a historically situated *social consciousness*, realizes itself determinately through a labor-form. Contrary to a substantive ontology or representational forms of thought, Marxian analysis provides a *relational* conception through which different modes of production and their corresponding modes of appropriation can be distinguished precisely by means of determining the activity of the human species-essence “...in the universality of its *appropriative operation*...[as]...*processive productive life-activity*.”⁹²⁸ The appropriating act, an ontological facet of the *species-essence*, is the processual content expressed determinately through practical, purposive, and productive activity as labor. This is the *labor-form*: the creative-aesthetic content contained within the *immanent teleological actualization of labor as it is found in a peculiar form, i.e., as it materializes within a given social form*. What marks not only differing modes of production but even their combinations within a given social formation is the peculiar character of its *labor-form*. If labor manifests in every society, always already, *labor-forms* analytically present its concretization in a

⁹²⁷ Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, 285-286.

⁹²⁸ Pomeroy, *Marx and Whitehead*, 136

determinately situated, historically specific sociality. The determinacy of such specificity is premised on the *social relations* and *mediations* which condition this *labor-form*.

Labor-forms take shape under and through an ‘ensemble of social relations’ *by means of practical realization*, by the geopolitically specific ‘how’ of its own *form*, that is, as an ensemble of social activities.

Marx writes:

The transformation of the material by living labor, by the realization of labor in the material—a transformation which, *as purpose*, determines labor and is its *purposeful activation* (a transformation which does not only posit the form as external to the inanimate object, as a mere vanishing image of its material consistency)—thus preserves the material in a definite form, and subjugates the transformation of the material to the purpose of labor.⁹²⁹

Labor is always *living labor*, life-activity, activity through which life subsists *qua* human life: “...the species life of human life is determined by those ontological features that delineate the human being as a ‘functional’ kind of being.”⁹³⁰ Laboring activity is self-realization in the object, an object that is recognized as necessarily retaining the potential of being transformed. The recognition of the object’s transformative potential is, at one and the same time, the self-recognition of living labor’s self-transformative capacity. There is a temporal mediation at work in this relation; a linear/non-linear dialectic. Linearity mediates the *teleological dimension of the process of transformation*, the subjugation of the material to its own purpose. The transformation itself, the activity, is purposive in its *form*. The non-linear element appears at this moment: the object’s malleability through and in accordance with the purpose of labor *determines labor*, i.e., activates labor’s purposive realization. The purposive activity is predicated on the concrete purposiveness of both the object itself and that for which the object is being manipulated. Labor, as process, then presupposes its previous laboring activities, its previous activities *in general*, in its approach to the object—this again is its non-linearity. Labor already confronts the object with various assumptions about its own limit as labor, the limit of the object, and the conditions that structure the enactment of labor, its realization (i.e., social constraints of various kinds). Labor gives the material shape *in a definite form*, in a specific way or manner. The socially specific character of labor is the distinct style by which the activity of labor is presupposed in a given social formation. The general structure of labor, an ontological and transhistorical structure, always realizes itself, *gives itself actuality*, in a concrete historical and social situation; hence, *labor-form*.

⁹²⁹ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 361

⁹³⁰ Pomeroy, *Marx and Whitehead*, 136

Marx writes, “Labor is the living, *form-giving fire*; it is the transitoriness of things, their *temporality*, as their *formation* by *living time*.”⁹³¹ Labor forms itself in giving form: the dialectic between *appropriating* and *becoming-appropriated* is both the giving of form and a self-forming. It is transformative activity *actualized* creatively and aesthetically: in enacting transformation *labor discloses the transformative character of the subject-objects to which it is in relation, and, therefore, reveals a fundamental temporal relation in its materialization as form-giving activity*. The actualization of labor is fleeting, it exceeds itself, and thereby manifests the temporal character of *motion*. Labor is a movement in and through time; or better, time mediates labor *relationally* insofar as labor’s actualization occurs *spatially* and *socially*. In other words, the temporal character of labor is not merely found in its actualization, as in the instance in which it occurs. Rather, the temporal character of labor becomes fully recognizable only in the *inter-play* between the labor that preceded it (the history of that *form of labor*, the techniques of labor) and the other kinds of labor to which it is necessarily related. Time forms labor as activity, and labor instantiates its own *rhythmic* temporality as *socially grounded* activity, mediated by the general social consciousness to which it *necessarily belongs*.

It is this complex relationality that fully discloses the temporal character of labor, a temporality that is always already *social* and *objective*. In other words, labor always appears as *form*, as labor-form which actualizes itself through the historically specific social form which gives this labor-form its peculiar character. Its temporal structure is its objective structure actualized *spatially* amid the *ensemble of social relations* which it shapes and by which it is re-shaped.

To be clear, by labor-form I do not simply mean *different kinds of labor*. That a given society demands different kinds of labor through which it must reproduce itself—varying from social reproductive labor, agricultural labor, bureaucratic labor, etc.—is, of course, obvious. Instead, what I mean to suggest by *labor-form* is the *style and rhythm of labor peculiar to the creative and aesthetic sensibility of a specific social formation*. In a specific social formation, there will exist various *kinds* of labor and those *kinds* of labor maybe be abstractly *identical* to the same *kinds* of labor of a different social formation. But their *labor-forms*, though sharing some general characteristics, will necessarily actualize or materialize in different ways as a result of their *immanent belonging to a sociality with its own history, i.e., to a sociality consisting of its own internal mediations and social relations, its own aesthetic dispositions*.

The universality of labor, of appropriating activity as creative-aesthetic and productive activity, instantiates its own rhythmic articulation in its “...breaking away from the dictates of mere repetition

⁹³¹ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 361. My emphasis

based on physical needs which, in turn, indicates the *operation of purposive...conscious conceptuality*.⁹³² This ontological feature always manifests as *social*, imbricated in the *subjective dialectics of a specific social formation*. The appropriation of objects through labor forms part of the “...conscious life-activity” of the human species-essence and thus “involves consciousness of the objects of appropriation.”⁹³³ However, as mediated by a specific *social formation*, this consciousness is *objectively social: the objective subjectivity of a determinate social consciousness*. Thus, the labor-form of a particular social formation always involves the mediated structure of a determinate social consciousness. It is here, then, that the *specific creative-aesthetic character of appropriation as such reveals itself as distinct in its very universality*. Contrary to approaches that over-emphasize culture and thereby move further away from the *material relationality of determinate social human bodies*, here the sensuous character of creative-aesthetic activity as historically mediated in its appearance through a *specific social formation*—as a socially distinct creative-aesthetic *sensibility* that equally expresses the particularity of the social consciousness of which its forms part—is disclosed as *materially and relationally grounded* in the dialectic between the universal and the particular.

Labor-form also reveals the purposiveness involved in laboring activity as *mediated by social conceptions of purposiveness which are immanent to the social formation in which it appears*. In other words, the *form* by which labor takes shape, as described ontologically above, is mediated by a situated social consciousness with various social presuppositions that pervade and structure both implicitly and explicitly the *specific performance of that form of labor*. Labor is given form on the basis of the historical and social conditions that mediate its appearance. Indeed, novel forms of labor—the self-transformative capacity of labor-form itself—as appropriating activity, are always already the result having *become-appropriated*. In that sense, the *techniques, styles, and presuppositions of a given labor-form is the materialization of the historical conditions through which it appears as a distinctive labor-form*. Labor, indeed, can appear in many *forms*, forms tied to its essence as *appropriation*.⁹³⁴ However, the determinate *form* in which it *actually appears* is predicated on its relational existence, i.e., the social matrix and the various social mediations that undergird it, that *inform both the intentionality preceding the actualization of laboring activity and the physical articulation of the social human body, already endowed with habits of movement, sensuous dispositions, aesthetic presuppositions and creative inclinations*. Indeed, in the historically specific character of the *labor-form* the relationality of a determinate social human body as immersed within a given sociality discloses the

⁹³² Pomeroy, *Marx and Whitehead*, 138

⁹³³ Pomeroy, *Marx and Whitehead*, 138

⁹³⁴ The logico-theoretical structure of this process has been outlined in my analysis of Hegel: section [4.3].

process through which the universal becomes particular and, in turn, singular. To be sure, labor-form is nothing but singularity *negotiating itself* amid the universal and the particular.

The immanent social reason that conditions the purposiveness through which a labor-form is realized also underlies a labor-form's *creative-aesthetic* dimension. Indeed, the sensibility through which social consciousness thinks its object, the purposiveness of the result of labor and the purposiveness in the form by which it is realized, characterize the social peculiarities immanent to the historical conditions of that labor-form. The distinct creative-aesthetic dimension of the labor-form is the result of the tendencies and presuppositions interwoven in social particularity in which it finds itself. Thus, in labor-form's active realization, those creative-aesthetic sensibilities are reproduced (however subtly or extravagantly). These elements, then, express the material condition of possibility through which a labor-form is itself *self-transformative*, i.e., that its creative-aesthetic form is not static but equally changing. Gould notes: "...self-creation involves a process in which the agent through [their] causal action creates new conditions which present possibilities of new choices and purposes and *new modes of action*."⁹³⁵ Labor-form's self-realization is a self-creation, a re-creation of its own *form*, and thereby opens the possibilities of self-alteration through identifying 'new choices and purposes.' The process of this activity is engendering of new modes of action, highlighting the *way in which a given labor-form overcomes any static or mechanical reproduction*.

Labor-form is distinct as pertaining to a specific social formation, but it is not the unintelligible other, not an abstract identity that cannot be grasped in its distinctive character.⁹³⁶ In fact, quite the opposite: the distinctness of a given labor-form, its socio-historical vestiges, retains the identity of non-identity it shares with labor as an ontological expression of appropriation. To be sure, the non-identity between distinctive labor-forms is at the same their identity, an identity predicated on the *positive universality by which the human species-essence affirms itself*. Indeed, it is precisely the intelligibility that resides in *labor-form as activity* that discloses the *originality and qualitative difference between labor-forms of different social formations*. In a phenomenological sense, labor-form makes itself intelligible not by its mere distinctness, but precisely because its distinctness is *recognizable* by means of the *movements of the social human body* and, therefore, has the ability of being comprehended, reproduced, shared.

⁹³⁵ Gould, *Marx's Social Ontology*, 85

⁹³⁶ This is where I distant myself from Enrique Dussel's concept of exteriority, which he grounds in Marx's category of living labor. The issue is that "exteriority" is, explicitly for Dussel, a metaphysical concept, and in that regard carries with it an immaterial foundation, though Dussel is ambiguous about this. See the Appendix of Dussel, *Toward an Unknown Marx*, op cit.; see also, Enrique Dussel. *Philosophy of Liberation*. New York: Orbis Books, 1985. 39-48

In short, labor, as historically situated and tied to the respective immanent social reason that mediates its actualization, materializes itself as a labor-form via the dynamic *agency* between relations, mediations, and activities which condition the creative-aesthetic and transformative activity of appropriation.

The particularity of a labor-form, its appearance, the immanent purpose and social reason by which it is mediated, however, is not independent of the other elements that constitute the historical specificity of a given social formation. In other words, the specific social character of a given labor-form is predicated on its relational determination through the corresponding *property-forms*, and *belonging-forms* from which it emanates and which it also actively transforms. I now turn to an investigation of property-form.

[6.3] Mode of Appropriation: Property-Form

The universality of appropriation, then, is actively expressed in concrete historical shape *qua* labor-form. In any given social form, labor-forms reconstitute or reshape their ground, i.e., socialized nature. Such reconstitution is an extension of the underlying historical and social reason which guides it. The objects crystallized as the result of a labor-form—which presuppose the relation of *understanding* and *intention*, or *purpose* resulting from a historically specific situation—are delineated in accordance with the ensemble of social relations, on the one hand, and the ensemble of social activities that determine the *function* and *role* of the object in question. The presupposition of all *purposive activity* is the possession of the capacity for it. Labor-forms require the assumption of the possession of the capacity of *appropriating* objects and are tied to the immanent social logic by which these objects become *property-forms*. Yet, the appropriation of an object is not simply the desire of an appropriating individual alone. Rather, the activity itself expresses the immanent social logic within which such individual negotiates their own acts, realizes their *social freedom*; and, this *realization* is necessarily mediated by the *forms of property* that delimit it, that serve as the relational objects through which freedom, in its most practical sense, can be realized.

In *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Marx critically assesses Proudhon's de-historicized conception of 'property': "To try to give a definition of property as of an independent relation, a category apart, an abstract and eternal idea, can be nothing but an illusion of metaphysics or jurisprudence."⁹³⁷ Indeed, a theory of property *as such* remains purely speculative, divorced, de-historicized, absent of the identification of a relational element which qualifies the appearance of property within a social and

⁹³⁷ Karl Marx. *The Poverty of Philosophy*. New York: International Publishers, 1969. 154

historical context. Marx is right to make this claim, for a theory of property *as such* implicitly conflates a historically determinate conception of property with the varying forms by which property can take shape across different societies and even through their internal transformations. A theory of property formulated in this uncritically abstract way expresses reproduces the problem of representational thought: property is conceived representationally, as a fixed object of individual possession. Indeed, most notably, property as such is most often simply conflated with *capitalist private property*.

In a preceding passage, Marx notes, “[i]n each historical epoch, property has developed differently and under a set of entirely different social relations.”⁹³⁸ Reading Marx as an anti-representational thinker makes obvious that his claim concerns neither property itself nor property as a mere object. On the contrary, for Marx, property takes shape *as a relation*. Thus, ‘in each historical epoch’ property consists and appears through *relational arrangements*, processually as a relation, as a definite result of determinate social relations. If one is to speak of property at all, to address property as embedded in the specific character of historical circumstances and the social configurations peculiar to them, one must, I contend, address property as a form: *property-form*.

The terminological shift here does not merely concern a more ‘proper’ theoretical exposition of the concept of property. To understand property as a relation, as *property-form*, bears practical implications insofar as it makes clear the *changing character of this relation*. Property as is generally understood can—and should—take shape in a novel form. This transformation, however, can not only depend on the property-form itself, but on other relations as well; since the transformation of the way in which one subject-object relates to an other is not merely change *of the relation*, but a change in *the relationality of the subject-objects involved, for they consists of various kinds of relations*, which are inter-affective and inter-determinate. This is the difficulty involved when many who presuppose private property as the only form of property encounter alternative forms, for example, forms of property peculiar to autochthonous societies or forms of property peculiar to ‘actually existing’ socialist social formations. In reified representational form, they struggle to identify that the property-form relation does not merely consist of a *discrete* relation between a subject and an object independent of any other *social relation*, and so find the difference either inconsequential or utterly ‘primitive;’ when, in fact, the problem lies in their own inability (or unwillingness) to identify that the *entities* themselves are relational and thus caught in a network of broader relations that co-constitute each other and thereby are

⁹³⁸ Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, 154

affected in varying degrees by changes in *forms and relations*, which of course presupposes differing *modes of activity*.

Marx is right to dismiss a theory of property as such because of the implicit assumptions and ahistorical speculations that would be contained in such a theory. What is needed to account for property-forms are also other forms and the modes of activity that constitute such forms in a historically grounded way that reveals the changing character of all these forms without reducing such change to pure contingencies. An account, moreover, that takes material relationality or relational materiality seriously and thus overcomes tensions reproduced by representational thinking. In short, what is needed is a *theory of appropriation*, its *mode*, a theory capable of explaining changing *forms* and the relations involved therein.

In the *Grundrisse*, Marx writes:

All production is *appropriation* of nature on the part of an individual within and through a *specific* form of society....But it is altogether *ridiculous* to leap from that to a *specific form of property*, e.g., private property...History rather shows common property...to be the more original form, a form which long continues to play a significant role in the shape of communal property....*An appropriation which does not make something into property is a contradictio in subjecto.*⁹³⁹

Here, Marx demonstrates both the variability and inter-connection between labor-forms and property-forms: all production is *appropriation* of nature by a singular *social human body* within and through historically specific *social formation*. Appropriation, of course, is the process of making something one's own. It is the active imprinting of an objective subjectivity onto an object through which both the object and the objective subjectivity are mutually transformed. Property is this relation: the relation by which an object comes to bear the traces of productive activity, of an objectively social subjectivity. Indeed, *all appropriation makes something into property*. However, *property is not a thing*. It is a relation; or better, it is a relational unfolding that weaves together relations of the social fabric, relations of activity between people and things. This is the ontological ground of property-as-relation.

To be sure, considering property as not a mere object is quite difficult given the reified and representational thinking in which we are so embedded. We know, however, that no object exists independently of any other object. In fact, we have seen that objects obtain to their very objectivity relationally and processually through series of determinate motions. A property-form is a set of these distinct relations within a *historically determinate social formation*. Indeed, property rather than a mere

⁹³⁹ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 88

object is a *relational disposition toward conditions of appropriation*.⁹⁴⁰ These conditions are those *necessary* to the affirmation of the production and reproduction of human life. To be sure, this pertains to economic organization, but also to *the appropriation of various dimensions of social life*, and therefore is just as much political, cultural, or even *personal*.

Each object that stands in the network of social relations exists as a relational object that mediates various kinds of activity, indeed determines them. A given form of property indicates not only an attribute of the object in question, but kinds of activities and persons that are associated with it. In this sense, property-forms should always be understood, as Benno Teschke notes, as *social property relations*:

Social property relations, mediating the relations between the major classes, primarily define the *constitution* and identity of these political units. The time-bound balances of social forces find expression in politically constituted institutions...that set the parameters for class-specific, and therefore antagonistic, rules of reproduction.⁹⁴¹

The combination of mode of production and a social formation is mediated by the mode of appropriation. The latter serves as the specific character through which *modes of activity* underly and constitute the form by which *relations between people and things* take on a particular expression. Property-forms, thus, consist in demarcating the *social forces* that operate around and through the constitution of objects, social forces which are delineated politically and economically. Different social formations organize the relationality surrounding property-forms in accordance with its historically immanent social reason. That is to say, the rules of reproduction of a given social formation are the negotiated inheritance of a previous assumptions about how property-forms *ought* to appear in terms of the determinate kinds of activities that constitute them, and the specific political and social character of the *social human bodies* involved. These are social property relations, which themselves instantiate *property regimes*. In a given social formation's historical unfolding such property regimes undergo various transformations: "Changes in property regimes restructure the identity of political communities and their distinct forms of conflict and co-operation."⁹⁴² Indeed, various kinds of social identities undergo transformations, obtain different content in terms of their identity, not simply as a result of owning *property as an object*, but through the *relational character* of property-forms as tethering together the political, economic, and social means of appropriation.

⁹⁴⁰ Gould suggests that for Marx property is defined as "...disposition over the conditions of production." I think she is partly right, but I'm extending this insight toward a broader conception of property. Gould, *Marx's Social Ontology*, 87

⁹⁴¹ Teschke, *Myth of 1648*, 7

⁹⁴² Teschke, *Myth of 1648*, 7

The ontological component of making something one's own, of giving an object the character of property, as relation, i.e., as a *property-form*, materializes processually within and through an ensemble of social relations as mediated by an ensemble of social activities. The point is, that contrary to the notion that property is merely an object of possession, property contains various forms mediated by the social relations in which it appears. Such mediations inform the role and function of the form of property as part of the rules of reproduction of a given social formation. However, as I have argued above, if property is understood as a *disposition over conditions of appropriation*, it garners a specific *transformative quality*. There are various *forms of property* and each form represents a disposition, reflects an immanent social reason for its existence in a particular *form*.⁹⁴³ The consideration of property-forms as relational, as a disposition, demonstrates the *real possibility* and difficulty *transforming the conception of property as merely an object, as private property*. For to change a form of property, then, is not merely a transformation of the object, but a transformation of the modes of activity (e.g., labor-forms) that constitute that object as a particular form of property. Similarly, it marks a transformation in the very *social identity* of those for whom specific property-forms are delineated. Indeed, the transformation of private property to novel property-forms can only be enacted through *practical* changes in the very relations that private property itself presupposes. In this sense, inasmuch as property-forms are directly associated with labor-forms, they are just as much dependent on the historically specific character of a *form of belonging*.

[6.4] Mode of Appropriation: Belonging-Form

We have seen now that appropriation's historically specific expression as the *mode of appropriation* include labor-form and property-form. I would now like to take this opportunity to think through the belonging-form. This is a category of my own, which I have not encountered in the literature. At this point, I will develop this concept with all the previous theoretical insights in mind.

A theory of appropriation is a theory of self-transformative capacity inherent to the human species-essence—or better as the human species-essence itself. The dialectic of appropriating and becoming-appropriated has shown the form by which the social human body *exceeds* itself through its self-actualization and thereby reshapes both itself and the conditions in which it exists. In considering

⁹⁴³ Initially, my intention was to provide a number of historical instances in which the variation of forms of property could be exemplified. Hence, my initial projected intended to investigate pre-colonial non-western societies, feudal society, the colonial encounter, and the continued existence of various property forms throughout the universalization of capital. For sake of space and time, this became impossible. Thus, my indications here must remain speculative, though I do think there is an additional historical basis through which these speculations can be further justified.

the complexity of this process, we have covered various theoretical categories that constituted the structure of the theory from Hegel to Marx and Engels.

Appropriation is activity, *social activity* which expresses the crystallized and condensed mediation of Nature-Sociality-History. Through this activity labor-forms and property-forms manifest in their determinacy as tethered to particular social formations. What is ontologically constitutive and implicit in all these dimensions is the fact that the social human body necessarily *belongs*. Indeed, to be appropriating beings of a specific kind is to belong to that kind, belong to it essentially. In belonging to it we express it, and therefore it *belongs to us*. The singular social human body belongs both to itself and to the universality of which it is a materialization. Additionally, as a physiologically constituted body predicated on an ontological lack that is realized historically as need, the social human body belongs to nature. As the condition of possibility for its self-realization, *nature then also belongs to the social human body*. They retain a fundamentally *necessary relation*.

Belonging-form arises *ontologically* as the *excess of the metabolic motion of social human bodies*. We have seen that the social human body engenders a relational excess by means of its self-realization. This excess is a *combined* excess, the excess of activities and relations between subject-objects within a social setting. A belonging-form is the *result* of this excess, the excess of all the determinations involved in appropriating and becoming-appropriated. Belonging-form, therefore, is the implicit result of the objective movement of the social in its historically specific character. The mediations between labor-forms and property-forms in their active realization discloses the ways in which social human bodies shape their *form of belonging*. This belonging-form, in turn, involves itself as a determinate mediation of social consciousness, where social consciousness develops its own immanent presuppositions of things belong. In becoming-appropriated, our own consciousness absorbs and internalizes the *order of relations of the sociality in which we are immersed*, and therefore tendentially develops conceptualizations of how things belong to each other in their determinate relationality.

To be sure, the social human body is always *social* and, therefore, *historical*. In being social and historical, the social human body is always a *political* body delineated by the peculiar determinations of social organization that determine the relationship *between* social human bodies and their respective activities in the process of social reproduction. Moreover, the social human body *appropriates* the objects of its needs and, therefore, satisfies its needs through its immersion in a given social formation. That is, a social human body is always in a determinate *social positionality* within the network of social relations of a given social formation. In that sense, the social human body is an *economic* body. As a *social, historical, political, economic body occupying a determinate positionality, the social human body necessarily retains*

and expresses a form of belonging, a belonging determined by the political-economic arrangement of a given social formation. The form of belonging, together with the aforementioned determinations, underlies the *social identity* of a social human body. And, thus, the social human body is a determinate body riddled by social determinations: gender, race, class, and so on, and the assumptions of how those identities *belong* to each other. To be sure, a belonging-form implicitly structures our social consciousness in such a way as to problematize the possibility of developing *alternative forms of belonging*. In this sense, it carries a phenomenological dimension: one's determinate social consciousness's relationship to an object (either a material object or theoretical object) is implicitly mediated by the way in which the object is assumed to belong.

The combination of these determinations, as expressed in a historically specific social formation, constitute the immanent social reason through which *a form of belonging is conceived*. In capitalist society, for example, we face an alienated belonging-form, a separated and disconnected belonging. Indeed, precisely because of the way in which labor-forms and property-forms along with other determinations are objectively materialized through capital, *the objective subjectivity of capital's sociality is one of non-belonging*. Presupposed as individualistic and atomistic, the struggle for the appropriation of one's life under capital is a practical struggle for belonging. We see here the difficulty involved in the struggles of various identities in terms of their belonging insofar as the structure of capital is equally a structure within which racialized, sexist, and hetero-normative delineations are embedded. The issue, then, with a focus on identity as separate from the *universality* of human *activity* too easily compartmentalizes and fragments the ways in which the struggle against capital can occur. In this way, class struggle, as also the struggle against racist and sexist structures of oppression, is a struggle against capital's non-belonging-form, a struggle for an integrative reconstruction of the way in which social human bodies can come to *belong* in ways that enhance their creative-aesthetic sensibilities in heterogenous communal forms.

Indeed, the difficulties of belonging have a long history mired by the immanent social reason that dictates the presupposition of how *different* social human bodies *ought* to belong. The determinacy of a given social human body is perceived with these implicit presuppositions and assumption which mediate social interaction. Here lies so much of the difficulty with conceptualizing one's own identity in relation to the capitalist social form, a form which does not accept the universality of belonging at all but demands an *exclusionary* belonging-form predicated on the private property as its own-most property form, on the wage-labor/capitalist relation form of labor, and so on. Under the dictates of capital's social mediations, self-perception is already premised on a kind of exclusionary form of

belonging—all the more so if one's body is already socially marked in the lower rankings of capital's hierarchical order.

In capital, we simply do not belong. We operate on the premise of non-belonging. In fact, in order to satisfy our physiological and aesthetic needs, we have no choice but to operate, in varying degree, by the exclusionary model of capital's own belonging-form. And, capital's belonging-form has been historically shaped by a hierarchy of belonging in terms of various other social identities, all of which are in one way or another *mediated* by the labor-forms and property-forms specific to capital's process of production and reproduction.

The impetus toward deploying the category of the mode of appropriation, as both a historical analytic and theory of social transformation, is a critical orientation towards conceptualizing how we belong. How we belong both to each other and to our immediate socialized nature is fundamentally grounded on the *mode by which we appropriate both things and our own social life*. In its historical-analytic capacity, the mode of appropriation seeks to reveal not just other labor-forms, property-forms and belonging-forms but rather the *relationality* through which they are expressed. In this way, it can provide a more complex and nuanced analysis of the unfolding of history, of the uneven and combined development of distinct social formations, and thereby disclose the *changing forms of social consciousness* in terms of *relational activities*.

However, I do not view the mode of appropriation as a mere historiographical device. Applying the mode of appropriation, as a triadic structure, to contemporary social analysis has the potential to reveal the *already existing contradictions of the capitalist social form*, in which alternative labor-forms, property-forms, and belonging-forms are already present and in development. Considering these alternatives, i.e., thinking through labor, property, and belonging as *forms*, makes explicit the *transformative potential* retained by our own appropriative essence expressed *universally*. Indeed, in understanding these categories as forms, not as fixed representational concepts, provides the theoretical ground for considering their *actualization* by means of a *universally oriented social praxis*.

In terms of the existing ecological crisis and the various political and economic struggles we currently face, I contend that we need to think of alternative modes of appropriation, alternatives that may help us form the theoretical basis through which the practical realization of a socially sustainable and integrative mode of social life is possible. Alternatives that treat seriously the ontological basis of the human species-essence, a basis which in its very capacity as a positive universality can still hold together the heterogenous forms by which sociality differentiates itself, achieves itself, and through which the objectively social subjectivity of human social life is expressed as a manifold of creative and

aesthetic forms. Maybe, in this way, the ‘class of producers’ can develop a new mode of appropriation across heterogenous social formations which, as Marx and Engels argue, “...deprives no man of the *power to appropriate* the products of society,”⁹⁴⁴ and, through the exertion of this *essentially* human power participate in the struggle of reshaping society anew.

⁹⁴⁴ Marx and Engels, *MECW Vol. 6*, 529.

[7] Concluding Remarks: *The Drama of the Dialectic*

[7.1] A Brief Overview

This dissertation has reconstructed dialectical materialism in terms of a *relational ontology* by means of the development of a *theory of appropriation*. I have argued that the human species-essence is ontologically defined by appropriation as an activity; specifically, as *creative-aesthetic activity*. At this level, emphasis has been given to *metabolic motion* and the determinate *relationality* through which the human species-essence transforms itself. The ontological dimension of appropriation consists of the back-and-forth movement between *appropriating* and *becoming-appropriated*, wherein the social human body is both consciously and unconsciously subsumed by and through its social activity. Through the social ground necessary for appropriation as activity, the *theory of appropriation* has disclosed the socio-historical *modality* of sociality's own-most heterogeneity: *the mode of appropriation*. Indeed, the *mode of appropriation* describes the historically specific, geopolitical character through which the ontological dimension of the human species-essence expresses itself.

In Part I, chapter I, I argued that the *drama of the dialectic* takes on a philosophically sophisticated form with Schelling's critical remarks on Hegel's *Science of Logic* found in his lectures on the *Philosophy of Revelation*. Schelling's concern with a return to positive philosophy led him, in my view, to a rather hasty and unfair treatment of Hegelian logic. Ultimately, in Schelling's view, nature and history lose their philosophical relevance in Hegel's system as a result of the overly rational and formalist character of Hegelian thought. Specifically, Schelling's criticism revolves around the claim that Hegel's system develops through an anticipatory logic, where each category already fixes the trajectory of thought and presupposes what is to come. Consequently, for Schelling, Hegel's system is seen as speculative and incapable of articulating an ontological system since it is assumed to not retain any positive ground, namely, the positivity of being that precedes thought.

It is my contention that Schelling's claims simply do not hold: Hegel is neither as rationalist nor as formalist as Schelling suggests—specifically in the *Science of Logic* and the *Philosophy of Nature*—and that Hegel's dialectical logic is remarkably *immanent* rather than anticipatory. Further, I also showed how Hegel's system does in fact concern itself with an ontological foundation, a commitment that becomes central to my own *materialist* reading of Hegel. However, there is a more precise issue that Schelling implicitly identifies but does not articulate: the tension between Hegel's ontological presuppositions and his understanding of historical development. I tackled this issue in the conclusion to chapter 4. Schelling's own solution concerns an emphasis on intuition over-against reason. This initiated a significant philosophical concern that developed well into the 20th century, what has been

hitherto to designated as irrationalism. Against this dichotomy, I demonstrated that Hegel's dialectical logic does not abandon intuition but rather sublates it, tethering it to the unfolding of an *immanent rationality*. In this way, the formalist character of Hegelian thought is undermined to reveal a complex and sophisticated analysis of the relationship between intuition and rationality in terms of the relationship between ontology and epistemology.

Part I also traced the influence of Schelling's critique. Through a brief overview of the history of philosophy (from 1841 to the 1930's) I demonstrated how Schelling's reading of Hegel became rather commonplace, through Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, among others. The *drama of the dialectic*, then, unfolds such as to frame Hegelian dialectics according to the Schellingian critique. Indeed, the closure of German Idealism has been here read as a struggle between Schelling and Hegel, a struggle that led, in my view, directly to Alexander Kojève's articulation of Hegel and Marx in his famous seminars. Indeed, Kojève's Hegel, though original in its own right and an attempt to revitalize its importance, in fact reproduced a Schellingian version of Hegel in which ontology is abandoned. In short, Kojève presents a Schellingian Hegel, though unlike Schelling defends it positively. Kojève also brought forth a depiction of Marx hermeneutically tethered to this Schellingian Hegel. In this way, both the Hegel and Marx disseminated throughout 1930's France lost very important nuances and carried implicitly the Schellingian understanding of Hegel now transposed onto Marx.

Kojève was an extreme influence on the development of continental philosophy, and Chapter 2 of Part I addresses some of the reactions to the Kojèvean reading of both Hegel and Marx. Indeed, the reaction was significant and opened the door to a wide array of rich philosophical explorations, I focus specifically on Althusser, Deleuze, and Foucault. These thinkers, each in their own way, were responding to various problems laid out by both Kojève and Hyppolite. In engaging these thinkers, I aimed only to demonstrate that their rejection or ossification of the categories of essence, necessity, universality, telos, and reason (categories that, in my view are central to the conception of a dialectical ontology) led them to a strange relationship both to Hegel and Marx, a relationship predicated, once again, on a Schellingian understanding of Hegel. In approaching these specific thinkers, I sought to highlight the ways in which they misunderstood Hegelian dialectical logic, a misunderstanding that was then transposed onto Marx. In the case of Althusser, a turn away from Hegel led to the formation of a structuralist Marxism that approached dialectical materialism not as an ontology but rather as a theory of knowledge. In the case of Deleuze, the removal of the dialectic—and thereby the abandonment of the categories of essence and necessity—led to an overemphasis on multiplicity and contingency. For Foucault, discourse and power became predominant but in a way that dematerialized

the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity. Again, my point here was not to reject any of these thinkers wholesale, but only to show that their suspicions of categories pertinent to dialectical logic (namely, essence, necessity, universality, telos, and reason) represented a misleading characterization of both Hegel and Marx attributable to the initial Schellingian critique.

Consequently, Part II provided my own reading of Hegel. Given that the aforementioned philosophical suspicion of Hegel concerned the rejection of the categories of dialectical logic, I chose to focus on reconstructing the anti-representational character of Hegelian dialectics through reconceptualizing Hegel as a relational ontologist. This required, in Chapter 3, situating my reading within contemporary debates concerning whether or not Hegel is an ontological thinker. I argue that not only is Hegel concerned with ontology, but that we can find in his work a thoroughly relational ontology of the utmost sophistication. To better demonstrate this insight, I focused on the anti-representational character of Hegel's dialectics. There, I showed how Hegel is concerned with *transformative character of subject-objects*, their relational unfolding, and how his system is able to carefully account for the forms of change undergone by various entities. I concluded Chapter 3 with an explication of Hegel's Absolute Method which, in my view, can be understood as the *science of Spirit* (Spirit here read as *sociality*). This methodological note concerns the human-nature relation and lays the ground for my own approach to Hegel's *Science of Logic* in the following chapter.

Chapter 4 initiated my own *materialist* interpretation of Hegel's *Science of Logic*. My concern here was to tease out of Hegel, the *logico-theoretical structure* through which the human species-essence can be ontologically defined. I argued that *appropriation* is the category that most adequately captures the multifaceted form of human species-activity, its essence, that is both necessary and universal and at the same time is precisely the underlying ground for the heterogeneity of human sociality. To be clear, I do not claim that Hegel himself is articulating appropriation as the definition of the human species-essence. Instead, I sought to *reach the point at which appropriation can be theoretically explained as a coherent ontological category within the framework of a dialectical relational ontology*. Appropriation thereby served as the guiding thread of my reading of Hegel, as the mediation through which I tether together his own ontological categories: essence, necessity, universality, telos, and reason. Indeed, this is a *materialist* interpretation of Hegel. But, this is not to suggest that Hegel himself is a materialist. On the contrary, Hegel's own system prevents him from going in that direction; and this concerns his own struggle with the role of reason in historical unfolding. Nonetheless, my interpretation of the *Science of Logic*—focusing on essence, necessity, universality, telos, and reason—shows that Hegel's objective idealism contains within it a number of materialist insights in embryonic form. Consequently, I argued that

Hegel's systematic exposition of dialectical logic and ontology must be considered as the underlying *logico-theoretical* background to the development of the works of Marx and Engels.

Part III aimed to articulate a *dialectical materialist relational ontology* in the works of both Marx and Engels. Through using appropriation as a guiding thread, I showed the complexity of their relational insights that are applicable to understanding historical transformation, political-economic criticism, and *revolutionary social transformation*. Chapter 5 argued for the necessity of retaining an ontological basis in Marx and Engels, specifically with appropriation as a central and definitive ground of the human species-essence. Throughout this analysis, the Hegelian logico-theoretical structure came to the fore but now more politically and socially salient in terms of the critical materialization of all the Hegelian categories. This materialization required a reconceptualization of the ontological basis of dialectical materialism through a focus on appropriation. I first articulated appropriation's ontological ground through the triadic structure of 'nature-sociality-history,' which serve as necessary and ever-present *mediations* through which appropriation eventuates as *historically specific activity*. This led to a more specific investigation into the dialectic internal to appropriation itself, i.e., the dialectic between appropriating and becoming-appropriated. There, it is shown that the social human body always already—i.e., innately—comes to belong to its sociality through processual and relational *practical activity*: appropriation. However, such belonging also depends on the stratifications of a particular social form, its history, and the mediations peculiar to it. The chapter thereby concluded with a broader account of how appropriation underlies the historically specific character of self-consciousness, and therefore *social consciousness*, ontologically and thereby universally; but, at the same time, this very universality marks the development of social particularity, i.e., the heterogeneity of sociality itself through the historically specific *mode through which appropriation expresses itself*.

The last chapter concerned the articulation of the the logico-theoretical ground of the *mode of appropriation* as constituted by *labor-form, property-form, and belonging-form*. There, I argued that the mode of appropriation solves a number of theoretical difficulties, and implicitly responds to a number of criticisms of Marxism, by serving as the *mediation* between the categories of *mode of production* and *social formation*. I then argue that every historically specific *mode of appropriation* consists of the inter-affective and inter-determinate relationality between *labor-forms, property-forms, and belonging-forms* that operate co-extensively and simultaneously within a determinate mode of production. That these categories take on *forms*, as opposed to static attributes, means that they are subject to change, to transformation; indeed, they *determinately oscillate as a result of political and economic relational arrangements*. In highlighting

this point, I am demonstrating the open-endedness and non-dogmatic character of a dialectical materialism conceived as a relational ontology with appropriation as a guiding category.

Concluding with Marx and Engels represents a critical return to the beginning of the work, namely, with Schelling's critique of Hegel and the influence and scope of its impact on philosophy. Reading Marx and Engels as relational ontologists provides a very different picture of their analysis, where their contribution to the development of philosophical thought can be further articulated with the precision and nuance that belongs to both dialectical and historical materialism. Far from the claim that Marx and Engels have abandoned philosophy, my analysis demonstrates that their turn toward political-economic and historical analysis required a sophisticated treatment of philosophical thinking, a treatment whose rigor I have here hoped to do some justice.

[7.2] What is to be done?

The development of a dialectical materialist relational ontology centered on appropriation and the mode of appropriation serves a number of purposes. First, it provides a reading of Marx and Engels that takes seriously their own systematicity in terms of establishing an ontological basis. Second, it aims to show the multifaceted and heterogeneous forms of *human creative-aesthetic activity*. In considering appropriation (as creative-aesthetic activity) as the defining feature of the human species-essence, a number of political considerations arise. How do we construct a society in which creative-aesthetic activity is allowed to flourish? What are the mediations involved in capitalist society that impede such flourishing? Thus, with a focus on the realization or actualization of creative-aesthetic activity in terms of the production of social life, the question of what is to be done about those political and economic mediations that exploitatively reduce creative-aesthetic activity to mere quantitative, economic value can be raised in terms of the emphasizing the liberating dimension of creative-aesthetic activity as the *re-appropriation* of social life hitherto dominated by alienation and exploitation.

Moreover, in considering the mode of appropriation as part of a *social ontology* that ascertains the historically specific character through which relations between labor-forms, property-forms, and belonging-forms are realized, we are able to *problematize* the peculiar character of each of these forms. To be sure, in a capitalist society we belong to each other only in an alienated form, as a result of the predominance of wage-labor and private property. Thinking through how *forms of labor, property, and belonging* relate to each other informs our ability to critically approach alternative developments of these very forms. Here, then, issues of social identity, of race, gender, and sexuality, also become paramount to understanding the historical and ideological ways in which these forms relate to each other, how

we become unconsciously subsumed by certain implicit or explicit normative commitments that reproduce the problematic *forms* through which we belong (and how this specific form of belonging corresponds to certain forms of labor and of property that are themselves mediated by the historical unfolding of racialized and gendered relations). In this regard, appropriation and the mode of appropriation serve as heuristic devices through which *social transformation* can be rigorously and carefully thought through.

Additionally, as heuristic categories grounded in a relational ontology, I think that appropriation and the mode of appropriation serve as relevant categories to historical investigation. In understanding the human species-essence through appropriation, as creative-aesthetic activity, and the mode of appropriation as the combination of labor-forms, property-forms, and belonging-forms, we can rigorously identify the complexity of causal interconnections that instantiate social transformation historically, how these changes correspond to changes in the mode of production, but also how they are peculiar to the social formation in question. Indeed, the universality of appropriation is also the way in which we can identify the particularity through which different social formations self-transform. To be sure, much remains to be done and this work comprised only the theoretical background for a number of philosophical, political, and historical investigations that I intend to further develop.

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