

Marx, Hegel and Teleology

Andy Blunden

The Marxist tradition is continuously returning to drink from its source, the writings of Karl Marx, and especially at crucial moments, the Marx-Hegel nexus. Possibly the concept which has been the subject of most criticism in relation to Marx's appropriation of Hegel, is the idea of teleology in history.

How problematic (and rich) is the Hegel-Marx nexus was demonstrated by *Hegel's Logic and Marx's Capital* (2015), in which 12 articles put forward 12 conflicting interpretations of the relation, while each writer had to deal with the inconvenient fact that almost everything Marx had to say on his relation to Hegel minimized the relationship.

The difficulty of interpreting Marx's relation to Hegel and recovering the insights he drew from Hegel is also complicated by the fact that Marx was frankly not a philosopher and made no effort to formulate a systematic philosophy, sometimes contradicting himself from one occasion to the next. It is remarkable that despite this, Marx's appropriation of Hegel remains the most important legacy that today's social philosophers have inherited from the past.

We present-day Marxists, on the other hand, seek consistent answers to our philosophical questions, and Hegel was the systematic philosopher par excellence. The problem with system-building philosophers is that they like to stretch otherwise valuable insights to a point at which they become untenable abstractions. It was such abstractions which Marx denounced at one moment but alluded to positively at another, and these exaggerations became the favorite target of postmodern critics of Marx and Hegel.

But are these totalizations what are really of interest for us in the Marxist tradition today? Does it matter whether "Man is the Subject of History"? And does it matter whether Marx or Hegel believed it to be the case? There is much more to draw from this well, including a rational conception of teleology.

In matters of science, it is best not to pay too much attention to the final chapters of Hegel's books — the Absolute Idea, World History or whatever, when he invariably overreaches himself. And when reading Hegel's *Logic*, rather than thinking of actors like Man or History, etc., imagine more mundane subjects: forms of human practice such as branches of science, social movements, corporations, individual persons, parties, and so on. If one looks past grand notions like World History and the Absolute Idea, and so on, then one can see that Hegel offers us perfectly rational, defensible, practical insights into social and political development. Hegel's notion of teleology is one such gem.

Some Marxists hold that up until now, and for some time into the future, human affairs are subjected to the "clash of blind forces ... governed by necessity," but at some future time, a new epoch will open in which human beings collectively "make their own history" (Sayers 2019, pp. 55-56). In this view, Necessity and Freedom are rendered as a dichotomy and projected on to separate historical epochs: present reality marked by unmediated causality, and a utopian future marked by conscious design. So conceived, there is no useful place for teleology in social science. Equally, the behaviorist tradition in psychology claims to explain human behavior without any reference to consciousness. In fact, however, the achievements of strictly behavioral psychology are trivial and lie at the margins of human science – human behavior can only be rationally understood on the presumption that actions are mediated by consciousness. Teleology is therefore an ineliminable aspect of human life.

Necessity and Freedom

The question of teleology raises the question of the relation between freedom and necessity. Hegel showed (1830, §158n.) that far from Freedom and Necessity excluding one another, Freedom presupposes necessity, and a subject is free only insofar as the subject knows what it *must* do. As Engels put it: “Freedom is the insight into necessity” (1877, p. 105). Only to the extent that the subject can rely on external necessity is it possible to make a rational decision about one’s own action.

But further, this conception takes as given that the subject pursues its *own aims*, and insofar as the subject’s aims and desires are given to it by external nature, then the subject remains a prisoner of external necessity. Marx and Hegel agree that achieving freedom from external contingency and natural needs is a long drawn out social struggle, but it would be a mistake not to recognize the manifestation of freedom in a subject which gradually gains self-conscious control over external contingency and its own needs. Indeed, it cannot be otherwise, for freedom which is not freely chosen, but which is the gift of another party or in pursuit of needs imposed by others, is not genuinely freedom.

Freedom not only presupposes necessity, but also self-consciousness. Freedom cannot extend further than the horizons of self-consciousness. A form of self-consciousness is attained as human beings mature into adults and take their place in the community. But even then, their social situation limits the scope of their self-consciousness which is necessary a collective attainment mediated through family, community, social class, profession, etc.

In general, Freedom cannot be the attainment of an individual, but is rather the conquest of a struggle in which an entire social formation is entailed. As Hegel explains in the Introduction to the *Philosophy of Right* (1821, §§. 1-32), the natural will (i.e., the will as manifested by all living organisms) is not free, and therefore not genuinely will because freedom of will is integral to the concept of will. The natural will can be transformed into a genuinely free will only by making itself (i.e., the will) its own object, that is, the subject determining what aims it is to pursue. Free will is the outcome of this process which exists in embryo in the construction of the earliest human cultures, because it is by means of culture that beings are able to subject their own behavior to control. The contradiction here is that while freedom presupposes *conscious* determination of the will, this is achieved only by means of the creation and use of material means of action. Individuals control their own will by means of artifacts (tools, words and signs) which they have inherited from their own culture. This is how it comes that many individual wills can cohere into a shared will and a collective consciousness.

Thus, although a form of teleology is manifested in all of human life, the teleology which is of interest in social and historical science is the teleology implicit in the free determination of entire social formations of their own shared destiny.

Teleology and Directedness

Hegel demonstrates a number of different forms of movement in the *Logic* and other works (some of which are also described in natural science), and most could not be described as teleology. The category which Hegel actually calls Teleology – third phase of the Object, following Mechanism and Chemism in the *Logic* – refers to subject-object relations which are characteristic of the biosphere and within a stable social formation. Nowadays, we would refer to these relations in terms of Ecology or Organism: many different subjects pursuing their own aims constituting a stable, coherent, self-sufficient system. I will leave aside this concept of teleology.

Given that Hegel specifically rejected the evolution of species, it is self-evident that he did not have in mind the story of Genesis or “intelligent design” here or any interpretation of Darwinian evolution. Teleology in the sense of evolution is no part of

Hegel's view, let alone Marx's. Nevertheless, as is well-known, Hegel did conceive of development in History, although not in Nature. It is in Hegel's conception of History that we must look for his conception of Teleology, not in natural processes which *appear* to be directional. And whatever Hegel may have thought, there is no teleology in Nature beyond the limited form of teleology manifested in the striving of individual animal organisms.

The teleological conception which is most powerful and significant in Hegel's writing is the idea of concepts as self-conscious forms of social practice, in which properties which are initially implicit or undeveloped, become explicit and concrete in the course of development and realization. These concepts, as forms of human practice, are subjects whose self-consciousness is self-created in the course of their own genesis.

The term 'emergence' is often used to characterize this kind of self-created autonomy (e.g. Sayers 2019), in contradistinction to heteronomy. It is only this self-determining directionality rather than the fulfillment of external plans, whether natural, human or divine, which is of interest in a discussion of teleology, but as explained below, I avoid the term 'emergence'. Processes which take on the *appearance* of directionality (such as evolution of species) cannot be described as teleological, even though they *appear* to be teleological and for many purposes they can be rationally understood *as if* they were teleological. The elements of intentionality and purpose are essential to the concept of teleology. For example, obesity manifests a growing prevalence in almost all countries at the moment, but no-one would suggest that anyone, either individually or collectively aims to increase the rate of obesity; it is the unintended outcome of individual and collective decisions motivated by quite different aims; even though food producers may be indifferent to the obesity epidemic they have contributed to producing, they did not *intend* to do so. So it would be absurd to describe the 'obesity epidemic' as teleological. On the other hand, the secular decline in the death rate as a result of traffic accidents in Australia, is the result of multiple policy decisions, several of which have been intended to produce these results, and consequently can be characterized as teleological. The recent reversal in that decline, possibly caused by the use of devices while on the road, does not cancel the teleological element of the trajectory. It simply means that social processes incorporate both elements which are teleological and those which are not.

Thus, teleology is in no way synonymous with directionality.

The Subject of Teleology

Like many other Marxist-Hegelians, I take the subject matter of the *Logic* to be forms of social practice, and there is nothing of substance in Hegel's works which is inconsistent with this interpretation, so it doesn't matter whether or not Hegel really thought this too. No-one knows what was in his head, so arguing about Hegel's intentions is fruitless. An interpretation of 'spirit' is needed which makes sense for *our* times. Marx seems to have seen concepts in terms of social practices, too, but again, some of Marx's statements suggest otherwise. Such a reading can make sense of Hegel, today, for our times. Puzzling over totalizations like the Absolute Idea and World History is redundant while more productive approaches are available to us.

Concepts are norms of forms of social practice; as 'thought forms', they are ideals implicit in those forms of practice, and people acquire them as forms of their own thinking and acting by means of participation in or interaction with the relevant forms of practice. Social change, therefore can be understood in terms of the realization of concepts as both norms of practice and forms of thought.

The concept of teleology therefore entails the idea of subjects which are constituted, not as groups of individual people, as forms of social practice, aggregates of actions. All institutions are essentially forms of social practice; the individuals who 'belong' to an institution are transitory and inessential; the laws and other artifacts such as buildings,

land, documents and so on may be necessary to the practice but constitute an institution only insofar as they are used in the practice. Also essential to the concept of teleology is the idea of ‘self-consciousness’ of institutions or practices, how the social practice recognizes, comprehends and expresses itself and its aims.

To understand how a social practice, made up of millions of individual actions, can be ‘self-conscious’ entails the distinction Hegel makes between the general and the universal. In general, not all the individual actions in a social practice are motivated by the exact same purpose or intention, not every action implies exactly the same object.

For example, the aim of a capitalist firm is to expand its capital, but to do so it pursues various subsidiary aims (services) and provides wages to its employees. Thus there will be a variety of concepts of what, say, James Hardy Ltd., is aiming at, but an analysis will show that it is neither the provision of building material nor the welfare of its employees, but the accumulation of capital which is its aim, its intention. (Hegel distinguishes between ‘purposes’ such as asbestos production or wage-earning) and ‘intentions’ which provides the motivation for the diverse purposes (Hegel 1821, §§ 114-128).

So, a ‘collective subject’ is not a group of people but a social practice. An entire community is seen then as an aggregate of social practices. A social practice is an aggregate of purposive actions, united by their sharing of a common intention or motivation. From this standpoint, it is self-evident that social practices are autonomous, self-conscious and teleological.

Teleology in the life cycle of social practices / concepts

Consider a concept like ‘science’. Although the word had been around for two hundred years, it was with the Copernican Revolution that Science, in the sense of an ideal and an institution, a system of practices and ideas, crystallized. The basic concept of knowledge based on a rational analysis of experience was refined over the succeeding centuries and continues to develop today, more and more nuanced, more and more precisely defining and concretizing itself, and exhaustively refining its practices as a broader range of people identify with it. The development of Science is not a causal process. Witness the tenacious fight that Copernicus himself had to publish his epoch-making work. And at every step along the road, Science has demanded conscious, intentional striving against opposition, corruption and error. But all the while, just like the content of Science itself, it has been *necessity* which determined the path. Not *causal* necessity, but *logical* necessity – what was implicit in the concept of ‘Science’ itself. *Thought* is required to determine, from the concept of ‘science’ how each step in this development had to go; doubtless each successive step was accompanied by disputation and passions were involved, but it remained essentially a conceptual process. The actor all along has been Science – an increasingly self-conscious social practice, or *concept*. By way of contrast, the various ‘social problems’ which result from unplanned development or failures of social policy and unintended consequences, are *not* teleological and could be called ‘causal’.

Consider for a moment the concept of ‘nuclear deterrence’. For all the hypocrisy entailed in this concept, it is a fact that since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, no nuclear weapon has been detonated in war. This cannot be explained by causality – the “clash of blind forces.” It necessarily entails the self-conscious (in)action of leaders to avoid their use, in full understanding of the MAD logic of nuclear deterrence.

Two hundred years ago human industry began to *cause* climate change, but once these changes began to impinge on social consciousness, and people began calling for action to limit climate change, then there began a *teleological* process, and one which has the potential to embrace the entire world.

So the initial, preparatory stages of formation of a social practice are unself-conscious and not teleological; a number of individuals who share some social situation begin acting in the same way, but have not yet given a name to the practice, or recognized it as something that exists outside the personal experience; it might be observed by social commentators, but it is not yet self-conscious. This is the first stage, which Hegel described in the first book of the *Logic*, *Being*. But once the concept is formed, it develops with increasing self-consciousness.

Consider the evolution of any artificial device – washing machine, car, chair, telephone – once invented, over time every one of them has developed out of necessity through processes that passed through the minds of users, designers and makers at every point, recognizing what was necessary for their function. The development of each of these devices and their interaction with other aspects of social life, is of course, dependent on the development of other products – the smart phone depended on the invention of WiFi along a completely different trajectory and its impact on sociality flows not from the phone itself but from its interaction with other aspects of the whole.

Insofar as any teleological process exists in isolation, it develops on a more or less regular path towards self-realization. However, teleological processes never exist in isolation, and are necessarily subject to breaks, reversals and set backs of all kinds. They remain teleological despite the impact of contingency and externalities on the course of their self-unfolding.

The difference between causality and teleology

Causality is fundamentally different from teleology. Causality means that something does not exist for itself but is the effect of another; that other also is the effect of yet another. The concept of causality thus leads to an infinite regress in which nothing exists in and for itself, but is the effect of something else. Causality is thus an extremely limited mode of understanding the world, but nonetheless has a relative truth. All material processes contain causality as moments within itself, but causality cannot attain the level of a social practice. Causality must pass through the stage of ‘reciprocity’ in which the chain of cause and effect ‘bends back on to itself’ so that the entire process becomes equally both cause and effect, and through this it may become a *causa sui*, a cause of itself, a self-sustaining process, though not necessarily a teleological process.

But human purposive activity can never be deemed simply an effect of a cause.

For example, the defence counsel may plead that their client’s crime was a result of their disturbed childhood, and consequently the client is not responsible for the crime. A politician witnessing the case may agree and take action to protect children and reduce poverty, but were the judge to excuse the defendant on this basis it would amount to treating them as less than human, as not responsible for their actions, which are consequently always the effect of some external cause. Lack of knowledge of relevant conditions may limit responsibility, and the question as to whether a teleological or causal explanation of the defendant’s behavior is appropriate may be a complex problem for the court.

The distinction between teleology and causality in each case is not cut and dry, but the principle is clear enough: insofar as a response to a situation passes through a thinking consciousness, it is teleological not causal. Nothing forces a person to make any particular response to their situation; they simply have certain options. Hegel takes the whole of the *Philosophy of Right* to elaborate how the will can become genuinely and fully free, and it entails not just the powers of an individual but a social transformation. Nonetheless, insofar as a person weighs their options and has insight into their own desires and the conditions of their action, then only an account of their will formation can make their action intelligible. An enquiry into the conditions in which they acted

can make their action intelligible only to the extent of showing what would be rational response. But the person must still decide and their response may not be rational.

The difference between logical necessity and causal necessity

The sociologist Anthony Giddens claimed that the predictability manifested in social life is largely ‘made to happen’ by strategically placed social actors, not in spite of them or ‘behind their backs’. Far from people being driven to do what they do by remote or invisible ‘structural forces’, Giddens showed that “all explanations will involve at least implicit references both to the purposive, reasoning behavior of agents and to its intersection with constraining and enabling features of the social and material contexts” (1984, p. 179). Giddens’ research shows that individuals are generally well aware of the possible consequences of their actions, and are experts in the often lamentable situations in which they find themselves. Sociologists use Game Theory to study the various traps which confront people when are deemed to act as isolated individuals and they do gain certain insights into social problems. However, human society is not an aggregate of isolated atoms, and all manner of collective action from neighborhood solidarity to government action create and change the arrangements within which such ‘rational actors’ act. The situations in which the individuals make their decisions are the products of policy of strategic institutions. The rationality at work in the creation of institutions and customs is not a ‘univocal’ reason, but reflects a diversity of social interests and identities.

Any given social arrangement has an inherent ‘logic’ which constrain the actions of all the particular actors; no-one ‘forces’ any actor to act in a certain way (indeed they would not be actors at all if they were forced), but the social arrangements constrain them in what can be called ‘logical necessity’: “You don’t have to do X, but look at your options. You’d be well advised to do X.” But it does not stop there; people endeavor to change arrangements which do not suit them. Responses to institutional arrangements are a kind of practical critique of the concept on which the institution was based. Institutional arrangements will be changed in response to such critique and the changes decided upon by rational deliberations, however imperfect, will respond to the practical critique explicitly in the form of thinking and argument. Institutional change in modern societies is not like crowd behavior, but takes place according to what is found to be necessary in the circumstances. Institutions try to *do what they have to do* according to their concept, rather than simply striving to maintain a status quo.

The only senses in which causal necessity can make sense in this context are (1) genuinely rare, unpredictable and unmanageable natural disasters, and (2) actions by individual and corporate actors which are senseless and delusional and which have extensive consequences. Such events could be deemed to be the cause of their results and do undermine the teleological character of history. But insofar as all corporate actors only do as they must, we can describe social history as the unfolding of ‘logical necessity’ inherent in the concepts of the various institutions and the relations between them. The question remains: how to theorize this ‘logical necessity’?

Freedom as the motivation of History

Hegel’s claim for the genesis of social formations is bold: he claims that human beings are *implicitly free*, that is, that the concept of ‘humanity’ essentially entails the striving for Freedom and determines the formation of States and their gradual perfection as the guarantors and enablers of Freedom. That this tendency towards the realization of Freedom is a driving force of human history turns out in fact to be a perfectly rational insight into the character of historical development, and it differs in essential aspects from the alternative notion of the “clash of blind forces,” while at the same time *not excluding it*. It should just not be pushed to the extreme, as if contingency and externality had no part in history.

It should be observed that this kind of development is never what one might call a 'linear' or 'inevitable' one: According to Hegel, the development of the Ethical Life depends on the independent development of the conditions for personal rights and on the development of moral subjects; the development of the State in turn depends on the development of the Family and a mature Civil Society, not to mention all manner of 'externalities,' from invasion by rival states and natural disasters to the peculiarities of cultural development and natural conditions. Nonetheless, there is a logic which can be discerned in historical developments. But whether or not, at some future time, all the stars will align, and the perfectly free state, with the perfect family and perfectly moral subjects, etc., etc., are found on Earth is a matter utterly unworthy of debate and was never envisioned by Hegel.

What is this *logical* mode of development? A certain concept, i.e., a form of human practice organized around an idea, symbol, artifact or material condition of some kind (See Blunden 2016), comes into being as a result of some predicament arising from foregoing conditions, and once formed, unfolds (*enfalten* or *entwickeln*) according to a logic which is implicit in the original concept itself, a logic described by Hegel in the *Logic*. Further, that this unfolding, although necessary, takes place through the conscious actions of human actors, participating in and/or reacting to the practice, even though, what those individual actors had in mind at the time may have been diverse and far more mundane.

For example, W. E. B. Du Bois, a Marxist and an Hegelian, showed how slavery in the South of the USA was abolished, not due so much to the efforts of the Abolitionists, but rather as the necessary outcome of a war begun solely in defence of the Union. As the war unfolded, Lincoln discerned that the Union could only be preserved by the Union armies freeing the slaves. He then enforced this policy with great determination. Without that consciousness in the leader of the Union, emancipation could not have been achieved, and indeed it was largely unwound in the wake of Lincoln's assassination. The concept upon which the United States was founded, despite the perceptions of the founders, was essentially incompatible with slavery, and thanks to the Civil Rights Movement, the USA increasingly became conscious of this.

The *self-actualizing concept* is a powerful teleological conception which is part of the legacy of Hegel. 'Conscious design' in human history, taken as a whole, does not exist at the outset, and nor does it gradually 'emerge', but it is born piecemeal, a little bit at a time, as people collectively take more and more control over the unfolding of this or that aspect of their lives, are more and more freed from the "clash of blind forces," even if from time to time and here and there, to a greater or lesser extent human beings are overwhelmed by natural or socio-political disasters and oppression, or institutions are weakened or collapse. Class consciousness, national consciousness, cultural and community consciousness, scientific consciousness, moral consciousness, ... are not born all at once, and yet all are presupposed in the notion of a millennial human consciousness.

Unlike in causal processes, in teleological processes the actions which constitute a social practice essentially entail self-consciousness, and that some concept of the relevant practice is implicated in that consciousness. Concepts are actualized only to the extent that people grasp them in thought. People are not stimulus-response organisms, but are, in general, beings morally responsible for their own actions. The knowledge of all the stimuli and 'boundary conditions' acting on a person is in general insufficient to determine their response. However, the teleology which is implicit in every human action I take to be *trivial*, in the sense that it is consistent with individuals also being captive to their own desires. It is projects which persist across generations and despite human failings which exhibit teleology at a level which is interesting for social theorists.

Teleology in *Capital*.

All the contributors to the aforementioned “Marx’s *Capital* and Hegel’s *Logic*” agreed on one thing: that the most important evidence Marx left us of his relation to Hegel was the passage in the *Grundrisse* known as “The Method of Political Economy.” This passage is a synopsis of Hegel’s *Logic* expressed as the essential, necessary history of Political Economy, and in fact, of *any* science, and in general terms, of *any* social formation. Marx’s aim in the passage was to locate his own place in the progress of Political Economy, namely, in the dialectical reconstruction of political economy from its abstract concept, value, or its simplest social form: the exchange of commodities. Marx identified himself with this science, albeit as an internal critic, and applied intellectual work to its furtherance. Marx, like other economists, were not caused to do so by “blind forces”; it was a commitment, an act of will and intellect.

Marx did not read the *Logic* as a propositional logic, but as the logic of social and cultural development. This interpretation of the *Logic* is not idiosyncratic; Marx read it this way and so do many contemporary Hegelians. But in what way is it *teleological*?

The *Logic* is obviously not teleological in the heteronymous sense, with some outside agent directing a practice according to a preconceived plan, but rather in the sense of a subject whose self-consciousness is lacking at the very outset, when it is constituted by others, gains self-consciousness in the very process of actualizing itself and objectifying itself until it is simply one aspect of universal consciousness. The subject in question is a *social practice* – not a ‘collective subject’ in the sense of a group of individual persons, but as a coherent aggregate of actions oriented around a common object – that is, *teleologically*.

The development of the subject is necessarily mediated by consciousness, in the form of conceptions of the object, and entails acts of will, judgments mediated through shared products. It advances not because it is pushed along by others, but through its own action in the working out of an idea, a concept, a realized idea, manifested in actions.

Marx’s interpretation of the ‘cunning of reason’ is notable. In a footnote to Chapter 7 of *Capital* he points out that the logic of economic development is lodged in the material properties of the means of production. This was Hegel’s view as well, as expressed in what he called the “syllogism of action.” According to this idea, thoughts become effective in the world only by using one material object or process to change another material object or process. But just as the history of ideas is necessarily mediated by material things and processes according to their own nature, conversely, material products and practices develop *historically* only because they are mediated by consciousness.

Marx showed how, under certain social pre-conditions, workers may be forced to sell the use of their labor power and a labor market. These conditions could only be created by driving peasants off their land and using their vulnerability to exploit them. Once these practices are in place the opportunity arises to buy and sell again at a profit and generate masses of accumulated capital. Initially, these processes take place based only on individual responses to material situations, although they are not universal – not every culture took the same road of capitalist accumulation as did Europe. But once concentrations of capital (firms) were formed a new self-conscious power came into being, capable of self-conscious social action. On the other hand, the conditions of the workers militated against organization, but at the same time generated the desperate need for such organization. The formation of these class organizations manifested the unfolding of class consciousness and teleological forms of development on the side of the working class. Marx was able to draw the outlines of what was necessary given the situation of each class. In the broad sweep of social history, people did what was necessary given their social position. The maxim that “freedom is insight into necessity” ensured that the teleological process which manifested capitalist development took on

the appearance of structural necessity. This ambiguity is manifested in the fact that the capitalist 'mode of production' has developed differently in different countries.

There are of course also material processes (evolution of species, crystallization) which have nothing to do with human consciousness, and these processes develop *as if* they were teleological, but according to distinct forms of movement. Likewise, there are processes in social development (for example, corruption, disease, resource depletion) which cannot be understood in a teleological way (other than trivially), but rather by the action of "blind forces." Marx pointed to these corrupting processes in his 1843 "Feuerbachian" *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Both processes are at work in history.

Thanks to the 'ratchet effect' of material products, including land, crops and livestock, technology and buildings and above all writing, ideas and practices outlive the individuals who first conceived them, and have histories that, all going well, unfold their potential over centuries.

Of course Marx understood this. *Capital* identified the essential concepts of bourgeois society, namely commodity and capital, which was useful knowledge only because these relations have a real logic which is revealed by a critical examination of them *as concepts*, showing that implicit in them is growing concentration of capital and inequality. 'Commodity' and 'capital' are concepts, irrespective of any "geometrical, chemical, or any other natural property," and economic life proceeds according to their logic except insofar as the citizens determine to overcome this logic by regulating production and exchange.

The unfolding of these practices in historical time manifests logical necessity, but is teleological not causal. Of course, the outcome is more often than not different from what participants imagined, and can be derailed by the intervention of other projects, or simply fail to realize itself. But the relatively indeterminate character of social processes does not belie their essentially teleological character. Any design project is subject to the same contingency and does not thereby cease to be teleological in character.

The strongest evidence that Marx saw teleology as central to historical development is his life-long participation in the communist movement and the workers' movement generally. The *Communist Manifesto* did not simply describe the tendencies of the workers' movement but raised a banner around which millions of workers would rally in future generations. At the same time, he readily amended the *Manifesto* in the light of the real movement itself, such as after the Paris Commune. That is, Marx understood that political struggle is not only an effort to realize an aim, but also an exercise in discovering and concretizing the aim. And it is in this that Marx differed from Hegel, whose attitude to the world was exclusively theoretical, not practical.

'Emergence'

'Emergence' is the idea used by atheists to fill the gaps which religion fills with God – "I don't know how this property of some complex organism is produced, it emerged naturally." Emergence is a category of processes which includes a wide variety of intelligible processes which have little in common with each other, other than not being explicable solely in terms of causality. It is generally associated with processes which only occur when the number of individual components, causal iterations or level of complexity passes a critical level. It is then often falsely concluded that this complexity functions as the cause of the phenomenon concerned, being an efficient explanation for its occurrence under the relevant conditions. It should be noted that causality is not synonymous with intelligibility. In this sense, part of the role of 'emergence' is to restore 'causality' to its hegemonic role in positivist science. Another motivation is the problem in Analytical Philosophy as to how a collection of objects can exhibit a property which is not present in any one of the component objects individually, or in the

precursor collections. For example, evolution proceeds for millions of years without any organism exhibiting consciousness, and suddenly homo sapiens ‘emerges’. Did God inject consciousness into Man, or did it ‘emerge’ naturally? Obviously the latter. However, to say that consciousness *emerged* at a certain point in evolution no more explains consciousness than does Divine intervention.

‘Emergence’ is also intended to counter the reductionist refusal to grant relative independence to sciences which rest on ‘emergent’ forms of motion. ‘Emergence’ means that ‘mental phenomena’ can be described and explained without any reference to ‘physical phenomena’ or explanation of the phenomena in physical terms. It is here that the concept of emergence acts specifically as a barrier to science because it functions to sanction the idea that there is *no* intelligible explanation for the ‘emergence’ since ‘emergence’ itself functions as such an explanation.

Darwin would hardly be remembered as a founder of modern biology if *The Origin of Species* had simply proclaimed that new species ‘emerged’ because biological processes were ‘complex’. He is remembered because he observed that off-spring resemble their parents, and formulated the idea of natural selection of variations in inherited characteristics. Even though it is evidently ‘directional’ in that it tends to produce more and more elaborate organisms, evolution is not teleological, because it does not act through consciousness. But nor is evolution causal, in that it relies on the *random* nature of variations and the *accidental* impact on survival of each mutation. For example, as many mutations made the necks of okapis shorter as made their neck longer, but on average, only those whose necks got longer were ‘selected’ in the competition for tree-top foliage and led to the evolution of giraffes. This arbitrariness of the mutations is essential to the efficacy of natural selection. Evolution by natural selection is a specific form of movement, which is distinctly different from causality because each incremental change in the phenotype is not the effect of an external being, but is internal to the life form in itself. Emergent processes are therefore generally ‘spontaneous’ and ‘autonomous’ or ‘autopoietic’, but again, like ‘emergent’, these concepts are not explanatory, but merely descriptive. The business cycle could be described as an emergent process of market relations, but in this case the randomness of response is *not* the key to the phenomenon, though the independence of responses *is* essential. On the other hand, the emergence of trade unions and cartels is precisely *not* reliant on the independence of responses. Each ‘emergent’ process demands a unique explanation if it is to be intelligible.

One of the most egregious examples of where the concept of ‘emergence’ has acted as a barrier to science is in relation to the phylogenetic emergence of consciousness and language, that is, of homo sapiens in the evolution of species. The problem has posed a philosophical problem for Analytical Science because it makes a primary dichotomy between the mental and the material and then asks about the relation between the two. Once posed this way, the question has no rational solution, so recourse may be had to ‘emergence’ as part of the ‘solution’. In the *Subjective Spirit*, Hegel uses three successive forms of movement to explain how consciousness arises in natural organisms. The oft-repeated claim that consciousness appeared when the level of an organism’s ‘complexity’ passed a critical level explains nothing. Equally, the formation of self-conscious social practices, such a social movements or welfare institutions does not arise, like the business cycle, from uncoordinated individual decisions, like the business cycle. To ‘explain’ the emergence of trade unions and social movements by the label ‘emergence’ is to place a block in front of the development of the important science which endeavors to understand how social movement are born and grow.

In the successive books of the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel formulated different forms of movement of which teleology is but one example. I have described (2015) 13 such distinct forms of movement, any of which could be characterized as ‘emergence’.

A rational conception of Teleology

The *substance* of human life is teleological rather than causal. That is, in the main, everyone determines their own actions rationally having regard to the conditions under which they find themselves. Causal determination of people's actions plays a minor role when physical force, natural events or irrational decisions intervene in the course of events.

That human life is substantially teleological does not in itself mean, however, that the institutions and conditions of social life unfold in any coherently teleological way. The intelligibility and coherence of history arises more from the fact that human beings create customs and institutions of various kinds which are transmitted down the generations by means of material culture. "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past" (1852).

The various forms of social practice which make up social life and its institutions and which are transmitted from the past thanks to material culture, are grasped in the form of *concepts*. As such, the nature of the historical unfolding of social practice takes the form of a rational critique of the relevant concepts. The rationality of this critique is guaranteed by the clash of diverse interests implicated in institutions and their various forms of formal or de facto collective decision making. As such then, historical developments manifest a teleology. Teleology is most marked in superstructural activities such as science, religion, art and philosophy; these activities however exert a power influence over the unfolding of social history.

Several factors mitigate against the teleological character of historical development however. Insofar as an institution or form of practice develops in isolation the course of its development will be as described by Hegel's *Logic*, but this is never the case. Numerous institutions interact with one another, each at different stages of development. This can result in chaotic paths of development with retrograde periods and sudden collapses and transformations. I would say that this contributes to making historical development unpredictable and irrational, without cancelling the fundamentally teleological character of developments.

Secondly, the social process is itself the most powerful 'calculator' and it transcends the power of any individual or group to foresee the outcome of events, even in the short term. Again this does not in principle cancel the teleological character of historical development but it does give history the *appearance* of a 'higher logic' which escapes mere human intelligence. Marx recognized this and drew his conclusions about the course of the Revolution by careful observation rather than speculation. That is, he took Hegel's advice about the Owl of Minerva much more to heart than did Hegel himself.

Thirdly, no institution is immune to the corruption of its aims by the material interests of individual and particular participants. The path to realizing its concept is often a rocky one. But there is reason to believe that the rational path tends to win out in the end against corruption, fads and the impact of alien institutions.

Finally, events do intervene in ways that are beyond the capacity of human beings to control – volcanoes erupt and send clouds of dust across the planet, and chance itself always plays a role in how things work out.

Conclusion

Hegel's ideas on teleology, adopted with important qualifications by Marx, provide valuable insights into social and historical development. But to gain these insights requires a careful reading of Hegel, rather than rash characterizations of Hegel's more expansive declarations.

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