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Life and the Space of Reasons: On Hegel's Subjective Logic

Karen Ng

Abstract

This paper defends Hegel's positive contribution in the Subjective Logic and argues that it can be understood as presenting a compelling account of the space of reasons as a form of second nature. Taking Hegel's praise of Kant's conception of internal purposiveness and its connection to what he calls the Idea as a point of departure, I argue that Hegel's theory of the Idea that concludes the *Logic* must be understood in direct reference to Kant's argument in the third *Critique* that purposiveness defines the space of judgement's power. I take up two arguments that help to understand Hegel's appropriation and transformation of Kant's purposiveness thesis: first, Hegel's contention that internal purposiveness must have primacy over external purposiveness when considered in relation to judgement; and second, Hegel's presentation of a logical concept of life as the immediate form of the Idea.

In the midst of a renewed scholarly interest in Hegel's daunting magnum opus, the *Science of Logic*, the second and concluding volume of that text, the Subjective Logic or the Doctrine of the Concept, poses particular problems.[1] Whereas the first volume, or the Objective Logic, is often read as a continuation of Kant's project of the critique of metaphysics, the Subjective Logic appears to venture into the wide and stormy ocean that Kant called the native home of illusion.[2] In the concluding volume of his *Logic*, Hegel praises the idea of an intuitive understanding, defends the ontological proof for the existence of God, and explicitly incorporates conceptions of teleology, life and totality into his infamous notion of the absolute Idea. As one prominent scholar has put it, 'does not the Doctrine of the Concept represent … a return to a non-critical metaphysics', where taking up the standpoint of Hegel's absolute resembles an entry into 'a strange and grandiose philosophical novel' (Longuenesse 2007: 162, 217)?

In this paper, I will try to defend Hegel's positive contribution in the Subjective Logic and argue that it can be understood as presenting a compelling account of the space of reasons as a form of second nature. For Hegel, the logical space of reasons is an actualization of the domain of organic life, or in his own,

somewhat enigmatic words: 'The concept of life … is the immediate Idea', where the 'Idea' is Hegel's term for objective truth (*WL*: 679/6:474). We can understand the space of reasons here as interchangeable with the domain of judgement, of normativity, and ultimately, of freedom: it is the domain in which justification takes place by means of reasons alone. In claiming that life represents an immediate form of objectivity and truth, Hegel is suggesting that human reason is an actualization of natural life more generally, or to borrow the words of John McDowell, that 'exercises of spontaneity belong to our way of actualizing ourselves as animals' (McDowell 1996: 78).[3] The aim of my paper will be to come to an understanding of this claim through the lens of Hegel's Subjective Logic.[4] More specifically, I suggest that Hegel presents a novel version of this Aristotelian thought that operates at a distinctively logical register, which can be most clearly discerned by considering his logical treatment of the concept of life in the *Science of Logic*.

In order to understand Hegel's discussion of a logical concept of life, I argue that the Subjective Logic is best understood in reference to a line of argument from Kant's *Critique of Judgement* that the purposiveness of nature is a necessary condition for the operation of judgement. Indeed, I will suggest that Kant's purposiveness thesis provides the key for interpreting the central contribution of the Subjective Logic, namely, Hegel's theory of what he calls the 'Idea'. The primary aim of the Subjective Logic is to demonstrate that the theoretical and practical activities of self-conscious cognition are actualizations of the form of life-activity in general, a claim that provides the grounding framework and concluding argument of Hegel's *Logic* project as a whole. With respect to Hegel's strange and grandiose novel, then, the focus of my paper will be to defend the role of teleology in the Subjective Logic, presenting the concept of inner purposiveness as the key for understanding how reason can be a form of second nature. In framing my discussion in terms of Kant's third *Critique*, I should note at the outset that the aims of this paper will be largely programmatic. Rather than offering an exhaustive account of Hegel's Subjective Logic or his theory of the 'Idea', my goal is simply to set the stage for a reading of the *Logic* in which the logical concept of life plays a central and foundational role.[5] To that end, I focus mainly on how Kant's purposiveness thesis informs Hegel's understanding of life as a logical concept, defending its importance as a frame for the trajectory of the Subjective Logic.

My paper will proceed as follows. First, I provide an overview of the problem of purposiveness in the context of Kant's third *Critique*, introducing the idea that purposiveness and judgement should be understood as reciprocal concepts. Second, I consider Hegel's arguments for the primacy of internal purposiveness (exhibited in the form and activity of organic life) over external purposiveness (exhibited by the designer/artefact model) when considered in relation to

judgement. This will allow us to see the ways in which Hegel departs from Kant's original framing of the purposiveness problem, as well as lay the groundwork for Hegel's own approach to life and cognition in the *Science of Logic*. Finally, I provide a brief analysis of Hegel's claim that the logical concept of life is the immediate form of the Idea. In this context, I develop two lines of argument in particular: first, that what Hegel calls 'the original judgement of life' (*das ursprüngliche Urteil des Lebens*) establishes life as the ground and first actuality of judgement; and second, that the logical concept of life establishes a set of form-constraints for the actualization of self-conscious cognition and its acts of judgement.

I. Kant's great service to philosophy

In the chapter on teleology in the *Science of Logic*, Hegel suggests that we should view the distinction introduced by Kant in the *Critique of Judgement* between external and internal purposiveness as one of his 'great services to philosophy'. He writes:

> One of Kant's great services to philosophy consists in drawing the distinction between relative or *external* purposiveness and *internal* purposiveness; in the latter he opened up the concept of *life*, the *Idea*, and by so doing has done *positively* for philosophy what the *Critique of Reason* did but imperfectly, equivocally, and only *negatively*, namely, raised it above the determinations of reflection and the relative world of metaphysics. (*WL*: 654/6:440–41)

In this passage, Hegel lauds Kant for his concept of *internal purposiveness*, associating it not only with the concept of life and the Idea, but further suggests that it serves as the positive counterpart to the negative aims of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which sought to delimit the powers of cognition and warn us off from extending our knowledge in illegitimate ways. In assigning a positive function to the concept of inner purposiveness, Hegel seems to be suggesting that the negative work of the first *Critique* does not stand alone, but requires a positive account of the concept of life as part of the same philosophical project. In addition to claiming that this concept plays an important role in resolving the antinomy between necessity and freedom, of which the antimony between mechanism and teleology is a version, Hegel further claims that inner purposiveness allows us to conceive concrete universality, providing the basis for judging objectively. If we take Hegel at his word, it appears that the concept of inner purposiveness holds the key not only for his reading of

Kant, but also for his own philosophy in which the 'Idea' plays an arguably foundational role.

How exactly are we to understand Hegel's praise of Kant's concept of purposiveness, and why is inner purposiveness in particular put forward as the centrepiece of Hegel's own project? In the third *Critique*, Kant introduces the principle of purposiveness as the solution to a problem faced by judgement that was left unaccounted for by the first *Critique*. Judgement in general is defined by Kant as the capacity to think the particular as contained under the universal,[6] but this leaves open two distinct possibilities for how judgement actually operates: either the universal is given and judgement applies a concept, subsuming the particular under it (what Kant calls determining judgement); or a particular is given, and judgement must 'ascend from the particular in nature to the universal', or 'find the universal' (what Kant calls reflective judgement) (*KU*: 5:180, 179). Although this distinction appears initially to be rather straightforward, it turns out that the domain of reflective judgement is rather difficult to delimit, and raises immediate questions for Kant's definitions. First, with respect to the range of objects that fall within the scope of reflective judgement, the contents of the third *Critique* suggest that Kant primarily has in mind the judgement of beautiful and organic objects, whose respective investigations make up the two parts of the book (the Critique of Aesthetic Judgement and the Critique of Teleological Judgement).[7] The beautiful and the organic are already rather inclusive categories, but Kant in fact casts his net even wider, suggesting that the scope of reflective judgement includes empirical nature as a whole, and 'experience itself as a system' (*EE*: 20:209). Thus, it is not clear that *any* object falls outside the scope of reflective judgement, which makes its operation coextensive with judgement as such. Second, and with this expansive conception of reflective judgement in mind, the distinction between determining and reflective judgement, while readily available at the level of analysis, is more difficult to discern at the level of the actual operation of judgements. More specifically, Kant suggests that determining judgement in fact depends upon reflective judgement, that judgement could not apply a concept or subsume a particular without the capacity to first reflect upon contingent particulars and ascend to something more general or universal.[8] From the perspective of considering judgement's power—the actualization of the capacity to judge—reflection and determination in fact operate in tandem. Reflective judgement now appears to be operative in *all* instances of actual (theoretical) judgement, for while there can be a merely reflective judgement that does not determine (for example, judgements of the beautiful), there can be no actual determining judgement in which reflection is not operative at the same time.[9] Far from being an afterthought of the critical project, or a project interested primarily in aesthetics, understanding the possibility of reflective judgements is thus of the utmost importance for securing the possibility of experience as such.

We can call the problem that is left unaddressed by the first *Critique* the problem of underdetermination by the categories.[10] That is, although judgement applies the categories of the understanding *a priori*, Kant claims that the 'objects of empirical cognition are … determinable in all sorts of additional ways', leaving us with an infinite diversity and heterogeneity of nature that could frustrate the powers of judgement that seek to find appropriate concepts for contingent particulars (*KU*: 5:183).[11] To answer the threat faced by reflective judgement in the face of nature's 'disturbingly unbounded diversity', Kant introduces a new transcendental principle of purposiveness, which becomes the condition under which judgement is able to ascend from particulars to universals (*EE*: 20:209). Stated in its most general form, the purposiveness of nature is defined as a principle of 'the unity of what is diverse' or the necessity and 'lawfulness of the contingent' (*KU*: 5:181, 404). What the principle of purposiveness allows us to presuppose is that amidst the manifold diversity and sheer contingency of empirical nature, order, unity and a system of concepts can be found that satisfies our demand for knowledge and prevents the possibility that the powers of judgement are ineffectual and futile. In addition to a very general principle concerning the unity of diversity and the lawfulness of the contingent, I want to highlight two further aspects of the more specific definition of purposiveness that are important for understanding Hegel's appropriation of this idea.

1. First, Kant suggests that in all of our reflection upon the objects of nature, judgement presupposes that nature is itself sufficiently organized—for example, divided into genera and species—such that 'for all natural things *concepts* can be found that are determined empirically' (*EE*: 20:211). What judgement presupposes, then, is that natural objects have a *form* that is amenable to our powers of cognition.[12] The thought here appears to be that if we assume the opposite, judgement itself would become powerless, its capacities rendered idle and ineffective (no longer an Urteils*kraft*). Purposiveness is thus at once an ascription of a cognizable order to nature and a self-ascription of power that judgement confers upon its own capacities.
2. Second, purposiveness denotes a specific relation of fit between concepts and objects. In the case of a purposive relation, the relation between concept and object is *internal* and *necessary* rather than external and contingent. The most perspicuous instance of this relation is one where a concept has causal powers with respect to its object, or in Kant's words: 'in so far as the concept of an object also contains the ground for the object's actuality, the concept is called the thing's *purpose* and a thing's conformity with that character of

> things which is possible only through purposes is called the *purposiveness* of its form' (*KU*: 5:180).[13] The standard within the history of philosophy for thinking about this type of relation between concepts and objects is, of course, artefacts: a concept is taken to be the cause of an object (the ground of its actuality) when a designer conceives of the concept in advance, creating the object in conformity with the preconceived concept. Thus, Kant will sometimes describe purposiveness as the view of 'nature as *art*' or as a principle of 'the *technic* of nature' (*EE*: 20:215).

Now this second understanding of purposiveness taken as an approach to nature is clearly problematic. Viewing nature as art flies in the face of our most intuitive understanding of what nature is, namely, that nature is *not* artifice and stands in contrast to it. If we return to what Hegel referred to as Kant's great service to philosophy, we can recall that Hegel's praise of purposiveness is restricted to what he calls *internal* purposiveness, and in fact, he spends much of the chapter on teleology criticizing conceptions of purposiveness that rely on a designer/artefact model. In the following sections, I will try to make sense of two key Hegelian claims that are central for understanding the Subjective Logic: first, that inner purposiveness, interpreted as the form of life-activity, should be taken as the primary sense of purposiveness; and second, that inner purposiveness, properly understood, should be viewed as the ground for the actuality of judgement—what Hegel referred to as the positive side of the negative aims of the first *Critique*.

II. Hegel's critique of external purposiveness and the primacy of inner purposiveness

In turning to Hegel's argument for the primacy of inner purposiveness, it should be noted that Kant's account is potentially plagued by a tension, one that Hegel fully exploits. On the one side, Kant grants an unprecedented scope and power to purposiveness, claiming that it 'is [the] condition under which it is possible to apply logic to nature' (*EE*: 20:212, note). Henry Allison echoes Kant, writing: 'the principle of purposiveness defines the "space of judgement" since it provides the framework in which alone rational reflection on nature is possible' (Allison 2001: 40). In so far as purposiveness defines the space of judgement, or to use the term I invoked earlier, the space of reasons, we can begin to discern Hegel's rationale for framing his theory of the Idea with discussions of teleology and life. More specifically, Hegel's radical transformation of Kant's thesis is that purposiveness and the power of judgement are reciprocal concepts, a reciprocity that defines the horizon of the space of reasons.

On the other side, although Kant appears to grant an unprecedented scope and power to the principle of purposiveness, he simultaneously sets rather strict limits upon its operation, as well as leaves its exact definition somewhat ambiguous. With respect to the limits, Kant states that the principle of purposiveness is merely regulative and not constitutive for judgement. The issues surrounding the regulative/constitutive distinction in Kant are far-reaching and complex, but for our purposes, what this entails is that purposiveness regulates the *subjective* activity of judgement without thereby constituting the *objects* of actual judgement.[14] The key point of contrast here are the *a priori* categories of the understanding, which actively constitute the objects of experience.[15] Hegel will contest this Kantian limitation as untenable, arguing that it effectively undermines the very aims of the principle of purposiveness to provide the conditions for judgement's power, and misunderstands the nature of their reciprocity.

With respect to Kant's ambiguous definition of purposiveness, the question concerns whether he means to define his principle in terms of external or internal purposiveness. Whereas external purposiveness is understood according to the designer/artefact model, internal purposiveness is modelled according to the self-organizing structure and activity of living things, or what Kant calls natural purposes (*Naturzwecke*). The distinction between these two models of purposiveness is not original to Kant, but hearkens back to an Aristotelian way of thinking about the structural similarities and differences between artefacts and nature. For Aristotle, both art and nature exist for the sake of some purpose, function or end, but the key difference lies in their modes of generation, or different ways of coming to be. Whereas art depends upon an external principle for its existence and shape, one determined and conceived in advance of its generation, living nature appears to govern its own activity and generation, operating according its own inner principles, and setting its own ends. As Aristotle likes to say, a house cannot beget another house but a human begets another human and a horse begets another horse. Unlike an artefact, the purpose of which is determined by an artisan and designed for the sake of fulfilling a particular function conceived ahead of time, nature determines and fulfils its own ends—most notably, individual and species survival—according to its own self-determined rules and standards. Although these rules and standards are not consciously or intentionally determined,[16] they constitute an inner rather than an external sense of purpose in so far as they are actualized, and become manifest, only through the self-organizing activities of organisms within particular species. Nature, then, as Aristotle says, is a 'principle in the thing itself' (Aristotle 1984b: 1070a8). Across nearly all of his writings, Kant too defines life as an inner principle or inner capacity of spontaneous activity and self-movement. For example, in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, Kant writes: '*Life* is the

faculty of a *substance* to determine itself to act from an *internal principle*' (Kant 2004: 4:544). Likewise, in the third *Critique*, Kant defines a natural purpose as '*both cause and effect of itself*', where '*everything is an end and reciprocally also a means*' (*KU*: 5:370, 376). In short: whereas external purposiveness exhibits the activity characteristic of artefact creation and instrumentality more broadly, internal purposiveness exhibits a form and self-producing activity characteristic of life.

Which understanding of purposiveness is primary with respect to Kant's principle? In the official discussions of purposiveness in both the first introduction and the published introduction of the third *Critique*, Kant generally associates his principle with external purposiveness in so far as he claims that we ought to judge nature *as if* it were art, that the attribution of purposiveness to nature is done by way of an analogy with art and the designer/artefact model (*KU*: 5:193; *EE*: 20:215–18). However, in the Critique of Teleological Judgement, Kant claims that judging nature according to the principle of external purposiveness, where nature is viewed 'as a means that other causes employ purposively', is both 'reckless and arbitrary [*ein sehr gewagtes und willkürliches Urteil*]' (*KU*: 5:367, 369). To avoid judgements such as God made snow so that we could travel by sleigh, or (a favourite example of Hegel's) cork trees so that we might have bottle stoppers, it now appears crucial that there be arguments in place that establish inner purposiveness as the primary sense of purposiveness, lest judgement's powers rest upon entirely spurious grounds.[17] At this stage, at least from the Hegelian perspective, Kant's story struggles to accommodate the legitimate worries concerning external purposiveness, and despite his own acknowledged reservations, Kant ultimately chooses external over internal purposiveness as definitive for his principle of judgement.

Hegel's own strategy in arguing for the primacy of inner purposiveness is twofold: negatively, Hegel must demonstrate the implausibility of the designer/artefact model as an approach to nature from the perspective of judgement; positively, Hegel will propose that inner purposiveness, properly understood, has primacy specifically in relation to the human power of judgement in the sense of being its *first actuality* or its *ground*. This, very roughly, is how I think we should interpret Hegel's enigmatic but all-important statement in the Subjective Logic that the concept of life is the immediate Idea. Before we can unpack that claim, let us first consider Hegel's negative and positive arguments in turn.

Hegel's arguments against external purposiveness are extremely dismissive, and he suggests that the more teleological principles are reliant upon an 'extramundane intelligence' and therefore 'favoured by piety', the more it 'depart[s] from the true investigation of nature' (*WL*: 652/6:438). Hegel appears to be affirming the distinction between what is natural versus what is created, where viewing nature as something created would undermine its very character as natural. More specifically, Hegel suggests that nature must be comprehended according to '*immanent determinacies* [immanente Bestimmtheiten]', or species-concepts that

stand in a necessary rather than contingent relation to their objects.[18] This relation between concept and object is the key for understanding what is inadequate about external purposiveness as a principle of judgement. Earlier, Kant claimed that judgements of external purposiveness—snow was made for the purpose of sleigh-travel, cork-trees for the purpose of having bottle stoppers—are arbitrary (*willkürlich*): these judgements are arbitrary because the relation displayed here between concepts and objects is entirely contingent. Snow can be for the purpose of sleigh-travel, but can equally well serve the purposes of snowball making, skiing, and snowshoeing; cork trees can be used for the purposes of bottle stopping, but can equally well serve the purposes of providing shade, climbing or treehouse-building. In so far as our original worry concerning reflective judgement was the sheer contingency and heterogeneity displayed by nature's forms, external purposiveness does little to allay those fears, and instead, simply confirms the arbitrary and contingent nature of judgement's powers. Now one could say that from the perspective of God *qua* architect of nature, the concept/object relation exhibited by nature's externally purposive forms is not contingent, but necessary. However, as Kant repeatedly stresses throughout all his writings, we can have no knowledge whatsoever concerning such a perspective. In fact, the entire problem of reflective judgement and the principle of purposiveness would never even arise for a God-like mind, which means that as far as *our* judgement is concerned, external purposiveness does not suffice *for us* to quell the contingency of nature that threatens to make the powers of judgement ineffectual or arbitrary.[19]

The importance of what Hegel calls immanent determinacies lies in the necessary relation between concept and object exhibited in cases where a purpose can be identified as internal to the organization and functioning of an object in a non-arbitrary fashion. In Kant's original definition of natural purposes, he employs the example of a tree in order to illustrate the structure and activity of living things in three stages: first, at the level of the species, a natural purpose is the cause and effect of itself in so far as a tree will produce another tree of its own kind (for example, by producing acorns); second, at the level of the individual, a natural purpose is the cause and effect of itself in so far as a tree maintains, generates, and develops itself by assimilating materials from its environment (by means of photosynthesis and by absorbing water and minerals through its root systems); third, a natural purpose is the cause and effect of itself in the mutual dependence and reciprocal causality between its parts, for each part of the tree is at once a cause and effect of every other part of the tree (the leaves could not do their photosynthetic work without the water and minerals absorbed by the roots and vice versa) (*KU*: 5:371–72). Living things exhibit self-organization and internal purposiveness because the ends they pursue (here: their purpose or concept) stand in a necessary relation to the means employed in pursuing them (here: the organism as an object, or more specifically, its various

processes and activities). As briefly noted above, the most perspicuous self-determined purpose or concept in question is individual and species survival: living objects stand in a necessary relation to their species-concept such that the concept has causal powers with respect to its objects, and in that relationship, as Kant says, 'everything is an end and reciprocally also a means'. Unlike the arbitrariness of judgements of external purposiveness, judgements of internal purposiveness, at the very least, satisfy judgement's demand for a fit between concepts and objects that is *necessary*, thereby empowering judgement in its abilities to achieve the same relation of fit between concepts and objects in its own cognitive activities of concept application and ascent. Thus, when Hegel claims that 'purpose [*Zweck*] is the Concept itself in its concrete existence', this must be understood in connection with the concept/object relation exhibited by internally purposive objects: in so far as their very form displays a necessary relation between concept and object, an internal purpose represents an instance of a concretely existing concept, or a concrete universal (*WL*: 652/6:438). In emphasizing the concrete nature of concepts in the case of internally purposive objects, Hegel means to set this in contrast to Kant's understanding of concepts in the first *Critique*, which are figured as decidedly empty and abstract. This is the background against which Hegel will build what I called his positive claim with respect to inner purposiveness, namely, that it has primacy in so far as it is the first actuality or ground of the human power of judgement.[20]

In the chapter on life in the *Science of Logic* that forms the basis of his discussion of the Idea, Hegel largely follows Kant's account of natural purposes and divides the chapter into a discussion of first, the living individual; second, the life-process; and third, the process of the genus or species. However, before turning directly to Hegel's logical concept of life, I want to note three important differences from Kant that are central for Hegel's positive understanding of inner purposiveness. First, in affirming the internally purposive character of organic life, Hegel is not thereby affirming hylozoism, the idea that *all* matter is imbued with life. Worries concerning hylozoism are present throughout Kant's works, and in his discussion of natural purposes in the third *Critique*, Kant specifically cites this worry as the reason for curbing the concept of inner purposiveness and its direct association with life (*KU*: 5:374–75). There are two things to keep in mind here with respect to Hegel's positive account. First, Hegel is, throughout all his writings, highly critical of appealing to notions of force and living force as explanatory paradigms. Far from imbuing all matter with life or viewing nature as one big giant organism, Hegel, in a modernized Aristotelian vein and consistent with a contemporary scientific division of labour, distinguishes carefully between physical/mechanical processes, chemical processes, and biological/organic processes, demonstrating a subtle understanding of their connections and disconnections, their relations and their differences. This is most clearly illustrated in the Subjective

Logic itself, which contains separate discussions of mechanism, chemism and teleology under the heading of 'Objectivity'. But second, and more importantly, I want to suggest that the key for understanding the primacy of inner purposiveness in Hegel lies not in a theory of matter or a philosophy of nature at all, but in a *theory of form*, in a theory of conceptual form and activity, that is, in a science of logic. For Hegel, identifying the form of life-activity constitutes a crucial step on the path to articulating the form of rational, conceptual activity. Thus, when Hegel describes his logic-project as 'thought thinking itself', what underlies this is the claim that thinking cannot grasp its own activity without first coming to a grasp of the activity characteristic of life, for without the activity characteristic of life, there would be, properly speaking, no activity to speak of at all.

This brings us to a second important departure from Kant: in Hegel's account, the primacy of inner purposiveness is claimed explicitly in relation *to us* such that there is a necessary reciprocity between the form of activity of life and the activity and power of judgement.[21] Although this is indeed suggested by Kant at various points of the third *Critique*, it remains undertheorized in his account as well as subject to a series of limitations that arguably undermine the force of his arguments.[22] Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, it is Schelling who states this point most clearly when he writes in the introduction to his *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* that 'purposiveness is conceivable only in relation to a judging intellect' (Schelling 1988: 32). That is, the primacy of inner purposiveness should be considered within the general idealist purview of the Copernican turn, in which, broadly speaking, all objects conform with our forms of knowing. However, inner purposiveness retains a special status in contrast to other concepts in so far as grasping the necessity and lawfulness of inner purposive form is directly connected with judgement's ability to grasp anything at all, including most importantly, its own reflexivity and self-activity. Inner purposiveness of form is therefore the first actuality of judgement in the sense that it provides the necessary ground for the exercise and realization of judgement's powers. In the following section I will suggest that this is how we should read Hegel's concluding discussion of the Idea in the *Logic*, which presents the powers of self-conscious cognition as an actualization of the internally purposive form of life.

Third and finally, in what is probably Hegel's most radical departure from Kant, the primacy of inner purposiveness is essentially related to what Hegel calls 'the Concept' (*der Begriff*), his technical term for the self-relation characteristic of self-consciousness or the 'I', which is the organizing theme of the Subjective Logic or the Doctrine of the Concept. In the introductory section of the Subjective Logic called, 'On the Concept in General', Hegel praises another one of Kant's philosophical insights, saying that '[i]t is one of the profoundest and truest insights to be found in the Critique of Reason that the *unity* which constitutes the *essence of the Concept* is recognized as the *original synthetic* unity of *apperception*, the unity of the

"*I think*," or of self-consciousness' (*WL:* 515/6:254). This central passage establishes first, what Hegel takes to be the continuity between Kant's idealism and his own, where both claim, very roughly, that all consciousness and unity of experience presuppose self-consciousness; and second, this passage also provides an important clue for our understanding of the Subjective Logic, which can be read as a theory of the actualization of self-consciousness in its logical dimension, where this refers primarily to judgement and the power of its forms to produce objective truth. However, in the pages immediately following Hegel's praise of Kant, he also introduces an important qualification that marks a fundamental departure from Kant's conception of self-consciousness. Hegel writes:

> [T]he Concept is to be regarded not as the act of the self-conscious understanding [*Verstandes*], not as the *subjective understanding*, but as the Concept in and for itself which constitutes a *stage* of *nature* as well as of *spirit*. Life, or organic nature, is the stage of nature at which the Concept comes on the scene, but as blind, as unaware of itself and unthinking; the Concept that is self-conscious and thinks pertains solely to spirit. (*WL:* 517/6:257)[23]

Here Hegel aims to emphatically disassociate his own conception of self-consciousness or the Concept from what he views (fairly or not) as Kant's merely subjective conception, which Hegel associates with *Verstand* or the understanding, or what falls under Kant's discussion in the Transcendental Analytic. More positively, Hegel is insisting on the essentially double character of self-consciousness such that the internal purposiveness of life constitutes a necessary stage of the Concept's self-actualization. It is important to note that Hegel's reference to the two stages here—of nature and spirit—should not be regarded in a linear fashion, as if the second stage of spirit simply follows from and supersedes the first stage of nature. Rather, and as I will suggest in outline below, life is constitutive of self-consciousness's *ongoing actualization*, which means first, that the very relation between life and self-conscious Concept can be understood on the model of internally purposive form, and second, that in its actualization, what Hegel calls the Concept is always doubly constituted as both life and self-consciousness at once. Borrowing from (and now rewriting) Kant's famous words, we can say that self-consciousness without life is empty, and life without self-consciousness is blind.

III. A logical concept of life

I have been arguing that Hegel's project in the Subjective Logic should be understood against the background of Kant's argument in the third *Critique* that

purposiveness defines the space of judgement, or the space of reasons, providing the framework within which judgement's powers can be understood as non-arbitrary and efficacious. This thought can be summed up in the claim that judgement, and now, speaking more broadly in Hegel's terms, logical cognition itself, *presupposes life*.[24] We can ask: in what sense does cognition presuppose life? And what exactly does Hegel mean in suggesting that the concept of life is the immediate Idea?

When we hear the claim that judgement presupposes life, there is a worry that this claim amounts to something trivial, namely, that self-conscious judgers are living beings, or that aliveness is a necessary condition for self-conscious acts of judgement. These claims look like they are trivially true, but accepting them doesn't seem to get us very far in the way of understanding how judgement actually operates. However, it is important to see that Hegel's claim is not simply the trivial observation that self-conscious cognition is alive; rather, in suggesting that judgement presupposes life, Hegel is suggesting that rational activity, from its most basic manifestations to its most sophisticated forms, is fundamentally shaped by the form of inner purposiveness characteristic of life. Inheriting and transforming the Hölderlinian conception of judgement as original division—*Urteil* as *ursprüngliche Teilung*—Hegel contends that the very distinction and relation between subject and object, which forms the basis of our thinking about the relation between mind and world, is a distinction that derives from the activity characteristic of living beings. Thus, Hegel writes: 'the original *judgement* of life [*das ursprüngliche* Urteil *des Lebens*] consists in this, that it detaches itself as an individual subject from objectivity, and in constituting itself as the negative unity of the Concept, makes the *presupposition* of an immediate objectivity' (*WL*: 678/6:473). What Hegel calls the original judgement here is the following act of self-constitution that establishes the basic categorical framework for all experience and knowing: a living thing constitutes itself as an internally purposive individual subject by distinguishing between itself and the immediate surroundings that confront it; the distinction between subject and object is the original judgement enacted by life itself. Although we might suspect that Hegel is overextending certain metaphors here, we can compare what Hegel is calling the original judgement of life with Fichte's classical treatment of the self-positing activity that at once constitutes I and not-I as the fundamental schema of self-consciousness and its relation to the world. Hegel's own understanding of self-consciousness is often thought to be indebted to Fichte's (which is surely the case), but we can also interpret what Hegel calls the original judgement of life as a corrective to Fichte's account. That is, while Hegel agrees that self-conscious cognition must at bottom be understood as a kind of self-positing or self-constituting activity that sets up an opposition between self and world (I and not-I), a necessary presupposition of the actuality of this activity is the internally purposive

activity of life. Judgement thus presupposes life in two related senses: first, in so far as the subject/object distinction and relation enacted by life supplies the very form of judgement; and second, in so far as this original division is the ground and first actuality of self-conscious acts of judgement. In Hegel's own terms, life is judgement that is immediate, blind and unconscious; in its actualization, life becomes self-conscious judgement—life that is aware of, and that can reflect upon, the original judgement of life. We can now see that Hegel's approach to the problem of judgement is in fact much broader than Kant's, even while he draws inspiration from Kant's original framing of the principle of purposiveness.

With this in mind, we can begin to unpack what it means when Hegel claims that life is the *immediate Idea*. As the concluding section of the *Science of Logic*, the Idea is presented by Hegel as the unconditioned ground of the contents of the *Logic* as a whole, as well as the foundation of his larger philosophical system. Hegel defines the Idea as 'the objectively *true*, or the *true as such*. When anything whatever possesses truth, it possesses it through its Idea, or, *something possesses truth only in so far as it is Idea*' (*WL*: 670/6:462). More specifically, 'the Idea is the unity of Concept and objectivity', and in elaborating on his understanding of this relation, Hegel cites the unity of soul and body as one of his leading examples (*WL*: 671/6:464). In claiming that the Idea is the unity of Concept and objectivity, we can recall here that what was originally at stake in the concept of inner purposiveness was the possibility of identifying a relation between concept and object that was both internal and necessary, with the aim of empowering judgement to establish similar relations between concepts and objects in its own cognitive activities. What Hegel is calling the Idea here is simply the same inner purposiveness of form established earlier as having primacy over external purposiveness, from the point of view of judgement's powers. Life is the immediate Idea in so far as it expresses the necessary relation between concept and object sought after by judgement in its pursuit of truth. It should be emphasized that although Hegel's notorious notion of the 'absolute Idea' is often discussed and much derided, most observers entirely overlook the fact that the foundation and organizing principle of Hegel's system is framed by a discussion of the basic form of activity characteristic of life. Before we can understand what Hegel means by the 'absolute Idea', which constitutes his conclusion concerning the form and operation of the space of reasons, I want to first further specify what is distinctive about Hegel's *logical* concept of life.

Talk of a *logical* concept of life is, to be sure, quite idiosyncratic, and Hegel tries to distinguish the logical concept of life from other perspectives in which life might be a characteristic consideration. The most immediate points of contrast for Hegel are first, life as a topic of the philosophy of nature, and second, life as a topic in connection with spirit, or the social, historical, and cultural life of human beings. Life as a topic for the philosophy of nature can be associated with what

we would now think of as a biological conception of life, or life as a topic of investigation from the point of view of biology. Clearly this type of investigation far exceeds the bounds of a science of logic, but it can be noted that Hegel reserves a pride of place for the biological conception of life, saying that 'in nature, life appears as the highest stage' (*WL*: 677/6:471). Short of human beings, the realm of organic life is, for Hegel, nature at its most complex, and in the section on 'Organics' that concludes the philosophy of nature, Hegel emphasizes that this realm should be understood as continuous with the philosophy of spirit. Life as a topic in connection with spirit concerns the dimensions of human activity that are most closely associated with our animal existence—for example, our embodied life as discussed under the heading of the 'natural soul' in the Anthropology, but perhaps the most characteristic discussion of life in relation to spirit takes place for Hegel generally under the heading of drives and desires (*Triebe, Begierden*), which form the basis of self-conscious acts of thinking and willing.

How, then, should life be understood as a distinctively *logical* concept? The first very general point that can be made is that life as a logical concept refers primarily to judgement, rather than to nature or spirit. This is indicated by Hegel first, in his reference to the original judgement of life discussed above, but also, second, by his suggestion that the concept of life at stake here is the one presupposed and necessitated by the activity of logical cognition (*WL*: 676–77/6:470).[25] Hegel's suggestion that the activity of logical cognition presupposes and necessitates a logical concept of life can be understood in direct connection with Kant's thesis that purposiveness is the condition under which it is possible to apply logic to nature, that purposiveness is the condition of judgement's efficacy. But second and more specifically, I want to suggest that Hegel's logical concept of life refers specifically to a *theory of form*, one in which form is understood as an activity-of-form (*Formtätigkeit*). In using the term activity-of-form, Hegel is putting forward an anti-dualistic understanding of the relation between form and content that he takes, in an Aristotelian vein, to be most clearly exhibited in the activity of living organisms. Earlier, Hegel employed the example of the unity of soul and body to articulate the unity characteristic of the Idea. What Hegel means by 'soul'—both here and in other references to the soul throughout his works—is simply activity, and determinate instances of activity are instantiated in specific bodies. The central thesis of the logical concept of life outlined in the Subjective Logic is the following: life-activity places specific *form-constraints* on the activity of cognition as it pursues self-conscious acts of theoretical and practical knowing. It is important that these constraints are not understood as externally imposed; nor should they be understood as empirical constraints in so far as the concept of life under discussion is logical, belonging to the science of logic and not to the philosophy of nature or spirit. Rather, life as 'original judgement' is an internal

self-constraint that is a condition for the actualization of cognition, a constraint that is constitutive of cognition's activity and necessary for its self-realization. Hegel's theory of form is thus founded on two claims: first, that life is the ground or first actuality of judgement; and second, that as the ground of judgement, life places specific constraints on the form of judgement's operations that are constitutive of self-conscious cognition.

In the chapter on life in the *Logic*, Hegel outlines the form-constraints that constitute the conditions for the actuality of judgement under the three headings mentioned above: the living individual, the life-process, and the process of the genus or species. Under the heading of the living individual, Hegel specifies that individual corporeality (*Leiblichkeit*), in the sense of lived embodiment, is a necessary form-constraint on the activity of judgement. Thus, while earlier Hegel argued for what he called the original judgement of life, the actualization of this original judgement always takes place in a specific body, the relevant case for our purposes being, of course, the human body and its relevant capacities, including sensibility and understanding. Under the heading of the life-process, Hegel discusses the form-constraint of standing in a necessary relation to the external world. Through various means we seek to make the external world conform with the form of the self, with the key being that the living thing '*finds* that the externality at its disposal *corresponds with it*. This externality may not correspond with the subject's totality, but at least it must correspond to a particular side of it' (*WL*: 685/6:482). Finally, under the heading of the genus- or species-process, Hegel specifies that judgement is always actualized in relation to other members of one's own species, or for us, in relation to other self-conscious judgers. These logical features of life identified by Hegel *formally constrain*, *without thereby exhaustively determining*, the self-conscious acts of judgement carried out by cognition. That is, they provide the form for the actuality of judgement without determining any specific content in advance. Self-conscious cognition is actualized for Hegel along these three dimensions, and perhaps most importantly, self-consciousness itself is actualized through its awareness of the form constraints that constitute the actuality of judgement's powers. Hegel's thesis concerning the logical concept of life can thus be understood as a direct transformation and appropriation of the principle of purposiveness, with the Subjective Logic in particular taking up Kant's challenge to launch a full-scale critique of judgement.

IV. Conclusion: Life and the space of reasons

I began by making reference to the McDowellian idea that the space of reasons can be understood as a form of second nature, that certain exercises of our spontaneity—in particular our capacity to judge—belong to our way of

actualizing ourselves as animals. In presenting the logical concept of life, Hegel presents us with an original and distinctively post-Kantian way of understanding how this might be the case, arguing that life and self-conscious cognition (or inner purposiveness and the power to judge) must be grasped as mutually constitutive concepts. Further, in grounding his theory of form, his science of logic, in a logical concept of life, Hegel further answers McDowell's challenge of what he calls our 'craving' for rational constraint, lest the operations of rational spontaneity become a 'frictionless spinning in a void' (McDowell 1996: 11, 18). Self-conscious acts of judgement are indeed subject to a series of form-constraints delimited by life-activity in general, but such constraints do not originate from 'outside' the domain of judgement. Instead, such constraints constitute the ground of judgement's actuality and are taken up in self-conscious acts of judgement in the manner of internally purposive form.

Lastly, we are finally in a position to understand what Hegel means by the absolute Idea, which, despite sounding quite extravagant, turns out to be much less strange and grandiose than initially thought. As the foundation of Hegel's system, the absolute Idea can be understood as his term for the operation of the space of reasons, which is actualized in the reciprocity between life and self-conscious cognition. In more straightforward terms, Hegel claims that this reciprocity provides a philosophical method with which to approach the remainder of his philosophical system, and it is this method that the Subjective Logic aims to provide.[26]

Karen Ng
Vanderbilt University, USA
karen.ng@vanderbilt.edu

Notes

[1] Abbreviations used:
EE = Kant, *First Introduction to the Critique of the Power of Judgement*, trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)/*Erste Fassung der Einleitung in die Kritik der Urteilskraft*, vol. 10 of *Werkausgabe in zwölf Bänden* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974).
KU = Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000)/*Kritik der Urteilskraft*, vol. 10 of *Werkausgabe in zwölf Bänden*, ed. W. Weischedel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974).
PN = Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature: Part Two of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970)/*Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830): Zweiter Teil. Die Naturphilosophie mit den mündlichen Zusätzen*, vol. 9 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986).

WL = Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. G. di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)/*Wissenschaft der Logik*, vols. 5 and 6 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986).

Translations have been occasionally amended without notice. In amending translations, I have also turned to A. V. Miller's translation of the *Science of Logic* (Amherst NY: Humanity Books, 1969).

'Concept' and 'Idea' are capitalized throughout only to distinguish between Hegel's technical uses and ordinary uses of these terms.

[2] On the Objective Logic as corresponding in part to Kant's transcendental logic, see *WL*: 40/5:59.

[3] Here I am adopting the spirit rather than the letter of McDowell's text. In *Mind and World*, McDowell is interested in the relation between spontaneity and receptivity in activities that would fall within the purview of Hegel's Subjective Spirit (in particular, the section on Psychology), rather than the *Science of Logic*. On McDowell's understanding, second nature is a non-dualistic approach to the relation between spirit and nature and does not speak directly to Hegel's concerns in the Subjective Logic. Nonetheless, I suggest that McDowell's Aristotelian approach to rational spontaneity as an actualization of our mode of living, where our mode of living is inextricably tied to our being animals, is a helpful framework for approaching Hegel's understanding of the relation between life and cognition in the Subjective Logic. For precedence on this score, Terry Pinkard has also argued that Hegel's absolute Idea can be understood with reference to the idea of the 'space of reasons' (Pinkard 2002: 249, 263–65). For a similar view see Pippin 2008: 97.

[4] For a defence of a similar approach to second nature in Hegel with respect to practical philosophy and the problem of freedom, see Khurana 2017.

[5] The programmatic aims of this paper are pursued in detail in my forthcoming book-length study, *Hegel's Concept of Life: Self-Consciousness, Freedom, Logic*.

[6] 'The power of judgement in general is the faculty for thinking of the particular as contained under the universal' (*KU*: 5:179).

[7] On the unity of the two major parts of the third *Critique*, see Zammito 1992 and Zuckert 2007.

[8] See the discussion at *EE*: 20:212. Although judgement in the first *Critique* can already be viewed as involving reflection, there the 'transcendental schematism … provides [judgement] with a rule under which it subsumes given empirical intuitions'.

[9] For the classic defence of the view that even determining judgement involves reflection, see Longuenesse 1998. See also Allison's discussion in (2001: 16–18). The issue is in fact much more complicated. Reflection in the first *Critique* does not require its own principle but is guided by the transcendental schematism; the principle of purposiveness only applies to reflective judging in its empirical function. Thus, the cooperation of determination and reflection on its own is not enough to establish the wide scope of the principle of purposiveness for judgement as such, which is the direction in which my argument is headed. However, for the purposes of this paper, my goal is simply to open up a path within Kant's theory of judgement for why *Hegel* attributes such importance to purposiveness. This path in

Kant is further supported by a reading of the Appendix of the Transcendental Dialectic in the first *Critique*, in which Kant discusses the principles of homogeneity, specification and continuity, all of which concern the kind of unity indicated by the principle of purposiveness, and without which 'we would have no reason, and without that, no coherent use of the understanding, and lacking that, no sufficient mark of empirical truth' (A651/B679). Thus, although adjudicating the issue in Kant would take us far beyond the aims of this paper, it suffices for my purposes here that there is room in Kant for expanding the role of reflective judgement and the principle of purposiveness beyond what look like their strictly delimited scope.

[10] On the problem of underdetermination, I am indebted to discussions in Allison 2001, Ginsborg 2006, Neiman 1997, and Zuckert 2007.

[11] See the distinction drawn by Allison between the problem of transcendental chaos (the problem addressed by the first *Critique*, particularly in the transcendental deductions) and empirical chaos (the problem addressed by the third *Critique*) (2001: 38–39).

[12] 'Now this principle can only be that of [nature's] appropriateness for the power of judgement itself' (*EE* 20:215).

[13] See also *KU*: 5:220: 'a purpose is the object of a concept in so far as we regard this concept as the object's cause (the real ground of its possibility); and the causality that a *concept* has with regard to its *object* is purposiveness (*forma finalis*)'.

[14] On the regulative/constitutive distinction in Kant, see Friedman 1992.

[15] See *EE*: 20:220.

[16] Aristotle writes: 'in the animals other than human: they make things neither by art nor after inquiry or deliberation' (Aristotle 1984a: 199a20–21).

[17] See *PN*: §245 Addition. See Foot (2001: 26) on the related difference between our judgements of 'natural' or 'intrinsic' goodness in contrast with judgements of 'secondary' goodness. Whereas in the former case our judgements refer only to the species to which the object of judgement belongs (judging *this* cork tree in relation to its own species), in the latter case they are judged 'in a relationship to members of species other than their own'. Judgements of internal purposiveness follow the former path whereas judgements of external purposiveness follow the latter path.

[18] On Hegel's understanding of immanent concepts, see Stern 1990 and Kreines 2015. My view differs from Stern's in arguing that Hegel's understanding of substance-kinds or species-concepts is essentially related to the purposive activities of judging subjects, where judgement, as discussed below, will be treated by Hegel in a much broader sense than Kant's. I am sympathetic with Kreines's view of immanent concepts, but (all too) briefly, my account differs from his on two important fronts. First, as I discuss below, I think Hegel's concept of life largely follows Kant's concept of a *Naturzweck*, and I disagree that the dispute between them hinges on the intimacy of biological type/token relations, an idea that is clearly present in Kant, and which Kreines suggests is the key to Hegel's rejoinder (Kreines 2015: 93–97). Second, I disagree with Kreines's suggestion that the relation between logical life and logical spirit should be understood in terms of the incompleteness of life relative to spirit with regard to

explanation. In trying to establish the reciprocity between purposiveness and judgement, or life and logical cognition, I defend the idea that the latter are, in an Aristotelian vein, actualizations of the former, and as actualizations, the two must share a certain identity of form.

[19] Thompson (2008: 79) notes that even if it turned out to be true that a divine mind created (for example) cork trees for bottle-stopping, this would not in fact change our natural-historical judgements concerning that form of life. Moreover, even with the presence of a divine mind we could still draw a distinction between internal and external purposiveness with respect to our judgements concerning cork trees; that is, we understand the difference between processes of photosynthesis and the growth of root systems on the one hand, and the uses to which cork trees can be put on the other.

[20] It can still be objected against Hegel here that establishing the primacy of internal purposiveness is not enough; indeed, I have been suggesting that a careful reading of Kant's own account of the issue reveals that he also affirmed the primacy of internal purposiveness in a certain (qualified) sense. Rather, Hegel needs to show further that we can have real, objective knowledge of inner purposiveness and that the *concept* of inner purposiveness can be constitutive of objects. This is a large and complicated issue (one that deserves an independent treatment) and in the next section, I present a rough outline of one possible Hegelian approach to this problem by suggesting that life is incorporated into Hegel's theory of form. Without being able to present a full defence of Hegel's account here, in general I think he employs two argumentative strategies to make the case for inner purposiveness as constitutive. The first is to suggest that both mechanical and externally purposive explanations presuppose internal purposiveness such that the former are not self-sufficient forms of explanation. On this approach, see DeVries 1991, Yeomans 2012, and Kreines 2015. The second is to incorporate life and inner purposiveness into his understanding of self-consciousness and logical form, revealing how the activity and power of judgement is an actualization of internally purposive activity-of-form. This second strategy is discussed at length in my forthcoming book, *Hegel's Concept of Life*.

[21] See Zuckert 2007: 130–69.

[22] See *KU*: 5:404 on the necessary connection between purposiveness and the human power of judgement, and *WL*: 655/6:442–43 for Hegel's emphasis of the same in his reading of Kant. Although Kant insists on the connection between purposiveness and the human power of judgement, two major obstacles prevent Kant from articulating this reciprocity to its fullest extent: the regulative character of purposiveness, and ongoing appeal to an extramundane intelligence in his understanding of teleology.

[23] Hegel goes on to say that the logical form of the Concept is 'independent' (*unabhängig*) of both spiritual and non-spiritual shapes, which is to say that the logical form of the Concept is independent of the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of spirit, or independent of *Realphilosophie*.

[24] Hegel writes: 'the Concept refers to the Idea as *presupposed* or *immediate*. But the immediate Idea is *life*' (*WL*: 676/6:470).

[25] 'To this extent the necessity of treating of the Idea of life in logic would be based on the necessity, otherwise recognized, too, of treating here of the concrete concept of cognition' (*WL*: 761/6:470).

[26] Earlier drafts of this paper were presented at the University of Toronto, the University of Pittsburgh, the New School for Social Research, and the 2017 Hegelkongress in Stuttgart. Thanks to the audiences at those institutions and events. A very special thanks to the organizers of the 'Reconsidering Hegel's Logic' conference at the University of Pittsburgh, and also to Jay Bernstein, Richard Bernstein, Matthew Congdon, and an anonymous referee for the *Hegel Bulletin* for helpful comments.

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