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# A Critical Reflection on James Kreines's Interpretation of Hegel's Account of 'Mechanism'

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## Abstract

James Kreines's *Reason in the World* (2015) offers an engaging and thought-provoking examination of Hegel's ambitions in the *Science of Logic*. However, it has gone unnoticed that there are two fundamental misinterpretations in his account of 'Mechanism' from the *Logic*. First, Kreines interprets the chapter as beginning with a 'pure mechanism' hypothesis that investigates the coherence of a purely mechanistic explanation of the world that makes no appeal to the immanent concept of things. Thus, according to Kreines, the Concept is absent from the beginning of 'Mechanism' and only appears in the final section of the chapter, in 'C. Absolute Mechanism' in the subsection on the law, what Kreines conceptualizes as 'reasonable mechanism'. Second, within his overall interpretation of 'Mechanism' as the development from the 'pure mechanism' hypothesis to 'reasonable mechanism' Kreines claims that there are logical moments that are explanatorily relevant and some that are not. Thus, Kreines will want to claim that Hegel's analysis of 'pure mechanism' reveals that 'pure mechanism' fails to be explanatorily relevant because, a) the logical moments do not have a concept immanent to them, and b) have 'indifference'. It is only in the law that mechanistic explanations become explanatorily relevant because of the appearance of the Concept and the disappearance of 'indifference'. I argue against both these positions. First, I think that there is no textual support for the idea that 'Mechanism' begins without the Concept immanent to it. Second, I think that Kreines is mistaken to equate 'indifference' with explanatory irrelevance and the absence of the Concept. My approach in this paper is to give my own analysis of the relevant passages from 'Mechanism' and, in doing so, to both show the misgivings of Kreines's interpretation and to offer an alternative way of reading the chapter.

James Kreines's *Reason in the World* (2015) gives an account of Hegel's metaphysical ambitions in the *Science of Logic*<sup>1</sup> whilst also contextualizing his arguments within the history of philosophy, especially in Hegel's relation to Kant. Kreines's account has

the virtue of bringing Hegel's, oftentimes obscure, work in the *Logic* into conversation with contemporary philosophy. That said, it has gone unnoticed in the literature<sup>2</sup> that there are three fundamental misinterpretations in Kreines's account of the chapter of 'Mechanism'<sup>3</sup> in the *Logic*. Briefly, they are: 1) that the *Concept* is not immanent to section 'A. The Mechanical Object', 2) that 'indifference' is used only to express a lack of explanatory power, and 3) that the *Concept* only becomes immanent in section 'C. Absolute Mechanism'.

In the introduction to his book, Kreines outlines what he takes Hegel to be doing in the *Logic*. Kreines reads the *Logic* as giving a 'metaphysics of reasons': 'Philosophical inquiry into explanatory reasons, or reason in the world, and ultimately into their completeness' (2015: 9). Kreines understands Hegel to want to claim that the world is rational in-itself and that its rationality is comprehensible. This amounts to claiming that things are explained by appealing to their immanent concepts: what Kreines identifies as Hegel's '*Concept thesis*' (2015: 22). Kreines is also sensitive to the 'method' of the *Logic*. He states that the *Logic* proceeds dialectically and by means of this dialectic displays the productive nature of contradictions, which lead to a systematic unity of knowledge and 'which turn[s] out to be independent of experience in a specific respect' (2015: 5). Finally, he also states that this development is a necessary one and connects the necessity of the development with the claim that the conclusions of the *Logic* can be independent of experience (2015: 26).

I agree with much of Kreines's understanding of the *Logic*. Hegel does claim that the world is rational and, therefore, comprehensible, and that the 'method' by which we come to learn about the reason in the world is the dialectical method of revealing contradictions to be productive rather than limiting and that, ultimately, the aim is to reach a systematic unity of knowledge. And, whilst I would prefer to identify Hegel's project as an ontology rather than as giving 'explanatory reasons [for] why things do what they do, or are as they are' (Kreines 2015: 3), I do not think that our readings are fundamentally at odds with one another. The *Logic* does explain the being of things and, therefore, gives an account of 'why things do what they do, or are as they are' (Kreines 2015: 3). Where we might differ, however, is in how we present Hegel's arguments. Kreines presents the development of 'Mechanism' as proceeding according to philosophical problems (more of which in Section I). I, however, choose to present the arguments of the *Logic* differently. I prefer to present the *Logic* as the immanent self-development of the *absolute idea*. This amounts to saying that Hegel's *Logic* proceeds by the immanent development of one determination of thought and being to another determination of thought and being. This development is necessary because the reasons for why one determination develops into another is immanent to *that* determination. Thus, what the *Logic* shows us is that determinations are related to each other through their very constitution. The reason why I think that it can be fruitful to present the *Logic* in

this way is because the justification for why a determination is ‘such and such’ is given in the necessary development from one determination to another—and it is this necessary development that is at the core of Hegel’s innovative project.<sup>4</sup> In the course of this development, Hegel’s position regarding numerous philosophical problems becomes apparent, and it is in this way that an exposition of the *Logic* that proceeds by philosophical problems can be fruitful. However, Kreines focuses entirely on the presentation of the *Logic* as responding to philosophical problems and does not give sufficient space to the necessary development of the determinations of ‘Mechanism’. This is not to criticize Kreines’s choice to present the chapter in the way that he does but, rather, to criticize the fact that he does not pay sufficient attention to the immanent development of ‘Mechanism’. My approach to showing the shortcomings of Kreines’s exposition will be to provide an account of the immanent development of ‘Mechanism’.<sup>5</sup>

The paper is divided into five sections. The first section sets out Kreines’s interpretation of ‘Mechanism’ and provides a brief overview of my criticisms of his account. The second section deals with the first misinterpretation: Kreines’s interpretation of ‘Mechanism’ as presenting the ‘conceptless mechanism’ hypothesis. I then provide my account of ‘A. The Mechanical Object’ to show that the *Concept* is, in fact, immanent to the *mechanical object*. The third section deals with the second misinterpretation: Kreines’s reading of ‘indifference’ as opposed to the immanence of the *Concept* and as denoting explanatory irrelevance. By going through the rest of ‘A. The Mechanical Object’, I show that indifference is not opposed to the immanence of the *Concept*, and that it does confer explanatory relevance. The fourth section addresses Kreines’s point that it is only in ‘C. Absolute Mechanism’ that the *Concept* becomes immanent and indifference disappears: the third point of misinterpretation. I give an analysis of the *centre* and the *law* to show that the significance of ‘C. Absolute Mechanism’ is not that the *Concept* finally becomes immanent but that the *Concept* becomes the self-determining *Concept*, and that indifference confers explanatory power even in this section. Finally, I conclude this paper with some reflections on the implications of my interpretation of ‘Mechanism’ as a feature of the world that has the *Concept* immanent to it and ‘indifference’ as a central aspect of what it is for something to be mechanical.

## I. Kreines’s interpretation of ‘Mechanism’

Kreines’s exposition of ‘Mechanism’ proceeds by way of philosophical problems. Whilst this is not the way that Hegel sets out the development of ‘Mechanism’ in the *Logic*, Kreines’s approach has the advantage of making Hegel’s arguments intelligible in contemporary terms. If, as Kreines suggests, the core of Hegel’s argument in the *Logic* is the claim that there are immanent concepts in the world that explain

why it is that things do what they do, Hegel's '*Concept thesis*' (2015: 22), then a mechanistic philosophy that does not appeal to such concepts to explain why things do what they do would be a threat to Hegel's project. The threat of a mechanistic philosophy finds its form, according to Kreines, in the beginning of 'Mechanism', 'A. The Mechanical Object', where Hegel shows that 'conceptless mechanism' fails to meet the standards that it sets for itself (2015: 40). The failure of 'conceptless mechanism', Kreines goes on to argue, shows that an immanent concept is required to explain why some objects do what they do. The most primitive form of such an immanent concept within the sphere of mechanistic relations is expressed in 'C. Absolute Mechanism', what Kreines calls 'reasonable mechanism'. Thus, the *Concept* is not immanent to 'A. The Mechanical Object' which means that the reasons for why objects do what they do cannot be explained. It is not until 'C. Absolute Mechanism' that the *Concept* becomes immanent to 'Mechanism' and we are able to explain why some objects do what they do (Kreines 2015: 36).

This picture of 'Mechanism', however, does not stand up to scrutiny when it is compared to what Hegel writes in the *Logic*. The fundamental issue is that Kreines's presentation of 'Mechanism', as beginning with the 'conceptless mechanism' hypothesis, ignores the fact that according to Hegel there is no such thing as non-conceptual mechanism. This is my first point, that the *Concept* is actually immanent to the *mechanical object* from the beginning of 'Mechanism'. If Hegel is right, it is not simply the case that there are some mechanistic explanations of the world that fail because they do not appeal to immanent concepts to explain why things do what they do, rather it is that explanations of the world that do not appeal to immanent concepts are *not* properly mechanical. Because what it is for something to be mechanical or to be explained mechanistically is for it to have a concept immanent to it. Hegel's point, then, is that we should eschew the non-conceptual mechanistic versus conceptual mechanistic dichotomy because the former is not an actual feature of the world.

Let us look at an example that Kreines uses to illustrate this opposition: Sagittarius, the constellation, does not affect my mood because there is no concept 'Sagittarius affects my mood', despite the correlation that might appear between the presence of Sagittarius and my poor mood. There is no immanent concept of the kind 'Sagittarius affects my mood' because Sagittarius is indifferent to my mood (2015: 51). An immanent concept, then, is something that would explain why something happens—why is my mood unaffected by Sagittarius? Because there is no immanent concept of the kind that could explain that. How does my reading of Hegel affect this example? Put simply: if it is the case that there is no immanent concept of the kind 'Sagittarius affects my mood', then, it is *not* just because the object does not have a concept immanent to it but because it is not mechanistic. The lack of the immanence of a concept does not bear on the *kinds* of mechanistic explanations available but on whether something is mechanical in the first place.

Related to Kreines's reading of the beginning of 'Mechanism' as being conceptless is his reading of indifference (*Gleichgültigkeit*) as being opposed to the immanence of the *Concept* and as being explanatorily irrelevant. Above, Kreines writes that the reason why Sagittarius does not affect my mood is because it is indifferent to it. According to Kreines, 'indifference' in 'Mechanism' is a by-word for explanatory irrelevance: 'In what cases are there immanent concepts for things? The answer is simple: in those cases where things fall under a concept, or belong to a kind, toward which what they do is not indifferent' (2015: 50). Sagittarius is indifferent to my mood because what it is for Sagittarius to be is conceptually indifferent to what my mood is.

Indeed, there is some textual support for Kreines's view. The *mechanical object* is indifferent to other objects and so the determination of one object is indifferent to the determination of another object. It is because of this that Kreines writes that 'indifference' expresses explanatory irrelevance. However, this is too negative an interpretation of 'indifference'. 'Indifference' does not *just* express explanatory irrelevance but it tells us *why* certain mechanical objects are the way that they are. This is my second point, that 'indifference' does not merely describe explanatory irrelevance but is crucial to explaining why some objects do what they do. 'Indifference' *is* explanatorily relevant because it tells us why a thing is the way that it is.

Kreines's further point regarding 'indifference' and the immanence of the *Concept* is that the *Concept* only becomes immanent in 'C. Absolute Mechanism', what Kreines labels 'reasonable mechanism'. According to Kreines, 'reasonable mechanism' is the section of 'Mechanism' in which Hegel presents us with an image of mechanistic explanations that have the *Concept* immanent to them:

This is a mechanistic phenomenon in the reasonable sense: it can be explained in terms of all the matter composing that system, insofar as this means that the reason it rotates is the immanent concept of matter, and the power or force inherent in that concept. (2015: 36)

The appearance of the immanence of the *Concept* is accompanied by the disappearance of 'indifference'. Thus, according to Kreines, 'reasonable mechanism' can only obtain when the *Concept* is immanent to the objects involved *and* when they are no longer indifferent to each other.

This understanding of 'indifference' and 'C. Absolute Mechanism', however, is at odds with the text. This is my third point. Having already argued against the idea that the immanence of the *Concept* is opposed to 'indifference', I further argue that it is not the case that the *Concept* merely becomes immanent in 'C. Absolute Mechanism'. What is new in this section is that the *Concept* is now self-determining. If we want to preserve Kreines's point about the novelty of 'reasonable

mechanism', then, what distinguishes 'reasonable mechanism' from previous forms of mechanism is not the immanence of the *Concept* but the fact that the *Concept* is now self-determining.

This concludes my summary of Kreines's interpretation of 'Mechanism'. In what follows I aim to show: (a) that the *Concept* is immanent to the beginning of 'Mechanism'; (b) that 'indifference' is not opposed to the immanence of the *Concept* and that it is not just a by-word for explanatory irrelevance; and (c) that 'C. Absolute Mechanism' deals with the self-determining *Concept* and not the immanent *Concept*.

## II. The immanence of the *Concept* in 'Mechanism'

I begin by outlining Kreines's reading of the role of the *Concept* in 'Mechanism' before going on to give my reading of the section. According to Kreines, mechanistic explanations of the world pose the greatest threat to Hegel's '*Concept thesis*' because they do not 'appeal to anything like a form or quality and its action, but rather purely [to] the movement of the parts 'alone' (2015: 37). Since all explanations of why a thing does what it does can be found in the parts of the thing alone, any appeal to the immanent concept of a thing is superfluous since it does not provide any further explanation. Kreines calls this position 'pure mechanism' or 'conceptless mechanism'. Kreines opposes 'conceptless mechanism' to Hegel's '*Concept thesis*', which holds that 'the reasons that explain why things are as they are and do what they do are always found in immanent "concepts" (*Begriffe*), akin to immanent universals or kinds (*Gattungen*)' (2015: 22). Now, Kreines states that in 'Mechanism' Hegel considers 'conceptless mechanism' as a 'hypothesis or thought experiment' (2015: 38) and that the aim of the chapter is to investigate whether a conception of mechanism which does not refer to immanent concepts is coherent. It is true that Hegel writes about determinism or 'conceptless mechanism' in the third paragraph of subsection two of 'A. The Mechanical Object'. However, this paragraph does not form part of the immanent, conceptual development of the *mechanical object*. Instead, it is the kind of external remark where Hegel is reflecting on the implications of the *Logic*'s immanent development for philosophical positions that wrongly take a moment of the *Concept*'s development to be absolute. Kreines, then, is right to identify a criticism of 'conceptless mechanism' in 'Mechanism'. Crucially, however, Hegel's criticism of 'conceptless mechanism' does not form part of the immanent development of the *Logic* and is, therefore, not an actual feature of the world—'Mechanism' does not begin with the 'conceptless mechanism' hypothesis but begins with the *Concept* immanent to it. The development of 'Mechanism', then, is not the development from there being no *Concept* that is immanent to the *mechanical object* to an immanent

*Concept* but from the immanent *Concept* to the self-determining *Concept* (this will become clearer in IV.i).

Having outlined Kreines's reading of the beginning of 'Mechanism', I will now present my reading of the immanent development of the first determination of 'Mechanism', the *mechanical object*. By doing this I hope to convincingly show that (a) 'Mechanism' does not begin with the 'conceptless mechanism' hypothesis, and that in fact (b) 'Mechanism' begins with the *Concept* already immanent to it.

## II.i. 'A. The Mechanical Object', subsection 1

The first category of 'Mechanism' is the *mechanical object*. The *mechanical object* is first an immediate identity. It is immediate because it is the result of the '*yllogism*, whose mediation has been sublated [*ausgeglichen*]' (SL: 711/410).<sup>6</sup> What this means is that the determinations of the *Concept* that comprise the *mechanical object*: *universality*, *particularity*, and *individuality*, do not develop into each other but are immediately each other. To understand the significance of their immediate identity we have to first recall the way the three determinations are shown to be both identical and mediated in relation to each other in the chapter of the 'Concept'.

Consider the concept of a tree. A universal concept of a tree will hold the most essential determinations of a tree (an elongated trunk, the ability to support photosynthetic leaves or branches, etc.). In short, things that we will generally agree upon as giving 'tree-ness'. Thus, it is the case that particular trees, oak trees, and willow trees, for example, will have 'tree-ness', *i.e.*, they will have an elongated trunk and the ability to support photosynthetic leaves or branches. This is the sense in which *universality* and *particularity* are identical, the essential determinateness (to use the Hegelian terminology) of the universal concept of a tree is to be found in the particular instances of a tree. However, particular trees cannot *just* be understood in terms of the essential determinateness of their universal concept because that would ignore important aspects of their own being that the universal concept fails to capture. Thus, some species of trees are oak trees and others are willow trees. This is the sense in which *particularity* is different to *universality*. Finally, within the species of oak trees there are individual oak trees like the oak tree in my garden or *that* oak tree in the park. Each of these individual oak trees are identical to the *universal* conception (since they are trees) and the *particular* conception (since they are oak trees) but are also different to these conceptualizations since they do not include the specific determinations of the oak tree in my garden. Each determination of a tree is also mediated by the other determination: to think of the *universal* concept of a tree I must have seen *particular* and *individual* instances of trees and generalized across them to reach a *universal* concept. Similarly, to think of the *particular* instance of a tree I must have a *universal* concept of a tree under which to understand this *particular* instance of a tree as a tree; and so on and so forth.



In ‘Mechanism’, however, these differences are sublated, and the determinations of the *Concept* are identical with each other—in other words, all trees are taken to be the same regardless of any differences that might make them conceptually distinct. If each moment is identical there is no mediated move from one way of thinking of a tree to another. The mind moves from the *universal* to the *individual* without distinction, without mediation—my general concept of a tree is no different to my individual concept of the oak tree in my garden. We move immediately from one to the other as if we were not moving at all. This is what Hegel has in mind when he conceptualizes the *mechanical object* as a ‘universal that pervades the particularity and in it is immediate individuality’ (SL: 711/410). Not only is there no sign of ‘conceptless mechanism’ but, in fact, *pace* Kreines, what it is for something to *be a mechanical object* is for it to *be* the immediate identity of the *Concept*.

Now it logically follows from the immediate identity of the *mechanical object* that it is indeterminate. ‘Determinacy’ expresses the negative relation between two logical moments that are united through their identity but also held apart because of their differences, ‘indeterminacy’ expresses the absence of this relation. The *mechanical object* must be indeterminate since the equilibration (*ausgleichen*) of mediation into immediate identity means that there is no ‘determinate opposition’ (SL: 712/411) within it. If there is no opposition between the determinations of the *Concept* then the *mechanical object* must necessarily lack determinacy.

Thus, the *mechanical object* is the immediate identity of the determinations of the *Concept* and it lacks determinacy. However, the determinations of the *Concept* are not simply reduced to one another since there is still a minimal degree of determinacy between them. In fact, the determinations of the *Concept* are ‘essentially determinate’ (SL: 712/411), *i.e.*, it is in their nature to be different to and opposed to one another. This ‘nature’ or ‘essence’ of theirs is not merely assumed but is the result of the chapter on the ‘Concept’: it is, thus, logically grounded by the *Logic* itself. Their essential determinacy was fundamental to the development of ‘Concept’, ‘Judgement’, and ‘Sylogism’ and is preserved as sublated in the *mechanical object*.

Now, however, we are in the sphere of ‘Mechanism’ where mediation has been sublated and they are an immediate identity. Therefore, the determinations of the *Concept* are no longer just essentially determinate but now also have the moment of indeterminacy as part of their logical structure: ‘In so far as the [Concept] is essentially determinate, the object possesses determinateness as a manifoldness which though complete is otherwise indeterminate’ (SL: 712/411). Their indeterminacy is at the fore since we are within the sphere of ‘Mechanism’, but their essential determinacy must not be forgotten and, indeed, is the reason for why the *mechanical objects* are united. Thus, the determinations of the *Concept* retain their essential determinacy but are also indeterminate because they are immediately identical when understood through the prism of ‘Mechanism’: ‘Because this indeterminate determinateness [*diese unbestimmte*



*Bestimmtheit*] is essential to the object' (SL: 712/411). Thus, not only is the *Concept* immanent to the *mechanical object*, but it is the essential determinacy of the *Concept* that acts as the side of the *mechanical object* that is a unity, a manifoldness.

This brings us to the end of subsection A.1 in 'Mechanism': I will briefly summarize the salient points of the development. First, we understood the *mechanical object* as an immediate identity because the mediation that has hitherto been a feature of the determinations of the *Concept* has been sublated. Second, because of their immediate identity they were indeterminate. Third, despite their immediate identity and indeterminacy the determinacy of the determinations of the *Concept* is an essential aspect of their being and so the *mechanical object* has determinacy. Fourth, since each determination of the *Concept* is an immediate identity, and the *mechanical object* is itself an immediate identity, it follows that each determination of the *Concept* is a *mechanical object*. Fifth, if each object is immediately identical to each other object, then, they can also be considered as one *mechanical object*. Sixth, the *mechanical object* is not simply the reduction of the other three objects since they are essentially determinate and so the *mechanical object* is also essentially determinate. Finally, since the *mechanical object* is essentially determinate it is a manifold or an aggregate because the individual objects are not reduced to a single identity, i.e., the *mechanical object*, but are each an object that make up the *mechanical object*.

Against the interpretation I have just put forward, Kreines quotes Hegel from §195 in the *Encyclopaedia Logic* to support his reading that the *Concept* is not immanent to the *mechanical object*: 'The object, taken first in its immediacy, is (1) the concept only in itself, it has the concept at first as something subjective outside it, and every determinacy is posited as an external determinacy' (EL: §195, 270). This sentence certainly seems to support Kreines's point: the *Concept* is outside of the object; consequently, the *Concept* only relates to the object as external to it and is not immanent to it.

However, §195 seems to give two opposed readings of the *object* (the object in the EL is the *mechanical object* in the SL. For the sake of clarity, I refer to the *object* when discussing the EL and the *mechanical object* when discussing the SL). On the one hand, it is the *Concept* in-itself, but on the other hand, the *Concept* is something that is outside of the *object*. The latter confirms Kreines's interpretation, that the *Concept* is not immanent to the *object*, whilst the former challenges his view by locating the *Concept* as being the *object* in a one-sided manner and, therefore, immanent to it. Clearly, both of these things cannot be true at the same time. The *Concept* cannot be outside of the *object* such as to not be immanent to it, and at the same time be immanent to the *object* as the *Concept* that is in-itself. I think that a very convincing case can be made for the idea that the *Concept* is in-itself the *object*. Before I continue, I should say a few words on what it means for the *Concept* to be in-itself the *object*.

Without wishing to give a broad definition of what 'in-itself' (*an sich*) means throughout the *Logic*, I restrict myself to its usage in 'Mechanism'. I have already

explained that the *Concept* that is properly itself is the *Concept* whose determinations are fully mediated. This means that each is the other in being itself as well as the negation of the other in being itself. The oak tree in my garden (the individual) is in a sense identical with the general concept of a tree (the universal) because it shares the essential features of being a tree. But in another sense, it is different to the general concept of a tree because what it is for it to be the oak tree in my garden goes beyond the universal determination of the tree. Thus, what it is for the oak tree in my garden to be is the mediation of its being between its universal conception as a tree and its individual conception as the oak tree in my garden (there is also the particular conception, which I have omitted for the sake of brevity). The *Concept* that is in-itself is the *Concept* in which the determinations of the *Concept* are not mediated with each other. This is what it means for the *object* to be the *Concept* that is in-itself.

Now, I argue that Hegel's talk of externality does not pertain to the immanence of the *Concept* within each *object* but to the relation of *objects* with each other. It is *because* the *objects* are external to each other, and *because* each *object* is the *Concept* in-itself that Hegel claims that the *object* has 'the concept at first as something subjective *outside it*' (EL: §195, 270). This is suggested in the sentence that follows: 'As the unity of differences, it is thus something composite, an aggregate, and the effect on another remains an external relation' (EL: §195, 270). And is explicitly stated in the previous paragraph:

It is in itself the totality and, at the same time, since this identity is the identity of the moments but an identity that only is in itself [*ansichseiende*], it is just as indifferent to its immediate unity. It breaks down into differentiated [moments], each of which is itself the totality. (EL: §194, 268)

The *object* is both a single totality as the immediate identity of the determinations of the *Concept* but is also merely an in-itself identity that 'breaks down into differentiated [moments]' (EL: §194, 268). Why does the in-itselfness of the identity lead to the differentiation? Because the lack of mediation between the determinations of the *Concept*, which are the moments of the *object*, means that they stand apart from each other. It is because they are external to each other *and* because each is an *object* in its own right that the *Concept* is said to be outside of the *object*. Thus, despite appearances, the EL confirms that the *Concept* is immanent to the *mechanical object*.

My analysis of 'A. The Mechanical Object' has shown that the *Concept* is immanent to the *mechanical object*. Thus, what 'A. The Mechanical Object' shows is not a thought experiment that investigates the coherence of a 'conceptless mechanism' but a moment of the development of the *Logic* that examines how the *Logic* proceeds from the immediate identity of the *Concept* in the sphere of 'Objectivity'.

This is a substantially different reading to what Kreines suggests is going on in 'Mechanism':

For Hegel's argument here is very different. Hegel's argument is stronger because pure mechanism itself sets the standard for what counts as explanatory, specifically by holding that the initial appeal to immanent concepts and the like is of no explanatory relevance because the real explanatory work is done by underlying mechanisms. (2015: 40)

Contrary to what Kreines says, there is no 'conceptless mechanism' hypothesis that is investigated in 'Mechanism'. But more to the point, what 'Mechanism' shows us is Hegel's argument for why we should eschew the non-conceptual mechanistic versus conceptual mechanistic dichotomy. Such a distinction is not a real feature of the world and, if Hegel is right, all mechanistic explanations must refer to the immanent *Concept* to explain why things do what they do, or are the way that they are.

The second section of this paper will engage with the opposition between the immanence of the *Concept* and 'indifference' that is asserted to be a feature of 'A. The Mechanical Object' by Kreines.

### III. 'Indifference' as explanatorily relevant

Section III of this paper is concerned with how Kreines understands the logical term of 'indifference' (*Gleichgültigkeit*) in 'Mechanism'. As above, I will first present Kreines's reading of 'indifference', and then provide an exegetical account of the rest of 'A. The Mechanical Object' with the task of showing how 'indifference' is actually used.

According to Kreines, 'indifference' is Hegel's term for a 'lack of explanatory relevance' (2015: 38). In other words, 'indifference' is a term that plays a part in describing the inability of the 'conceptless mechanism' thesis to provide an explanation for why things do what they do by appealing to underlying properties of things. Kreines also equates Hegel's usage of 'indifference' with 'externality' in 'Mechanism'<sup>7</sup>: 'any nature of any whole or connection is external, or explanatorily irrelevant, to what things do' (2015: 38). Finally, Kreines opposes indifference, *i.e.*, lacking explanatory relevance, to a thing being explained by appeal to immanent concepts: 'In what cases are there immanent concepts for things? The answer is simple: in those cases where things fall under a concept, or belong to a kind, toward which what they do is not indifferent' (2015: 50). Kreines calls these non-indifferent cases of mechanism 'reasonable mechanism': '[Hegel] argues that some things (not all) are explicable in mechanistic terms, but precisely in virtue

of their immanent concepts, and most prominently the immanent concept of matter; I call this “reasonable mechanism” (2015: 35). According to Kreines, the archetypal example of ‘reasonable mechanism’ is the rotation of the solar system and he alludes to section ‘C. Absolute Mechanism’ as expressing the ontological examination of ‘reasonable mechanism’. It is in this section where the lack of ‘indifference’ and the immanence of concepts, according to Kreines, finally afford explanatory relevance to mechanistic explanations of things (which I investigate in section IV).

Now, I do not necessarily disagree that ‘indifference’ might refer to a lack of explanatory relevance in a relation. Indeed, Kreines quotes many passages from ‘Mechanism’ and elsewhere in the Hegelian corpus that support such a reading (2015: 38, 39, 46, 48, 49, 51, 54). One concern, however, is that interpreting ‘indifference’ as a lack of explanatory relevance ignores the fact that ‘indifference’ is not *just* that. Hegel uses ‘indifference’ to describe an aspect of the being of the *mechanical object* (and, indeed, of many more complex logical structures later in the *Logic*). ‘Indifference’ is an ontological description that expresses the lack of self-determination of a logical structure and understanding a logical structure as indifferent *is* explanatorily relevant since it explains why an object does what it does. I begin by giving an analysis of the rest of ‘A. The Mechanical Object’ to support my argument against the idea that ‘indifference’ should not be opposed to the immanence of the *Concept* and that it cannot be reduced to whether a relation is ‘explanatorily relevant’.

### III.i. ‘A. The Mechanical Object’, subsections 2 & 3

What follows picks up the thread of the development of ‘Mechanism’ given above in II.i. In subsection 2 of ‘A. The Mechanical Object’ Hegel introduces ‘indifference’, which explains the logical consequence of the *mechanical object* being indeterminate and essentially determinate. If the *mechanical object* is indeterminate then it must be indifferent to determinateness. Let us pause for a moment and ask: Why is the next logical step that of ‘indifference’ instead of a moment that emphasizes the object’s determinacy? Because we are in the sphere of ‘Mechanism’ where the determinations of the *Concept* are immediately identical and indeterminate. To emphasize their essential determinacy, their *Concept*-determinations, would be to pluck the *mechanical object* out of ‘Objectivity’ and to drop it back into ‘Concept’. Thus, the objects are indifferent to their essential determinacy because they are indeterminate and immediately identical.

The *mechanical object*, then, is a totality that has its determinateness reflected within itself. However, it is also indeterminate and, therefore, indifferent to the determinateness that is reflected within itself. The *mechanical objects* that comprise the *mechanical object* are also indeterminate and indifferent to the essential

determinacy that is fundamental to each determination of the *Concept*: i.e., the moment of *universality* as a mechanical object is indifferent to the moment of *particularity* as a mechanical object or the moment of *individuality* as a mechanical object. Since they are indifferent to their essential determinacy, then, they are effectively external to it. External, in the sense that they do not relate to it as if it were part of their identity: 'but the form that constitutes their difference and combines them into a unity is an external, indifferent one' (SL: 713/412). In fact, it is this sentence that Kreines uses to make his point regarding 'indifference', he writes:

It is just that this feature [the determination that is indifferent] would be irrelevant to what the salt does, because what it does would always be determined independently of the features of any such whole—by the underlying components of the salt, for example. (2015: 38)

However, Kreines fails to take account of the fullness of this determination, that whilst the objects are indifferent to their determinateness, they are also essentially related to each other *as* indifferent. An example might help to elucidate the notion of 'indifference' and how it relates to the immanence of the *Concept*. Consider a teenager that rebels against his family by disregarding them. The teenager is being indifferent to his 'essential determinacy' since his family form an essential part of his identity. By being indifferent to them he behaves as if *that* part of his identity were no longer his. Nevertheless, despite his indifference he is still related to them, albeit externally, because the essential determinacy still forms a part of his identity. In much the same way, each *mechanical object* is indifferent to its essential determinacy and, therefore, externally related to each other object, yet it is nevertheless related to it. The *mechanical object* is, therefore, the tension between being a totality that has its determinateness reflected within itself and being indeterminate and indifferent to that essential determinateness.

What it is for a *mechanical object* to be is for it to be indifferent to its essential determinateness. This means, as we saw above, that it relates to its essential determinateness as something external to it. Thus, the tension between each object's essential determinacy and their indeterminacy is resolved by 'moving' their essential determinacy externally. Each *mechanical object* necessarily relates to each other *mechanical object*, because of their essential determinacy, but that relation is a merely external one.<sup>8</sup> To relate to one another is to determine one another, which effectively means to negate the determinateness of the other with one's own and in the process to receive the other's determinateness within oneself. Consider our angry teenager. By negating his essential determinacy, he negates his connection to his family, but does not thereby become independent from them but instead relates to them in a purely negative sense: 'part of what he is *is* that he does not want to be a member of his family'. Similarly, every *mechanical object* is externally

determined by every other *mechanical object* in spite of their ‘indifference’ to each other. Moreover, the external determination of every *mechanical object* is guaranteed by the essential determinateness of every other *mechanical object*. What is crucial for Hegel is that the relation between *mechanical objects* is one of external, indifferent determination, and not self-determination. As Hegel writes: ‘there resides no self-determination [between *mechanical objects*]’ (SL: 714/413). If the *mechanical objects* were self-determining then there would be mediation between them and not ‘indifference’ in the face of their essential determinacy. Since, however, they are indifferent to and external to their essential determinacy they cannot determine themselves.

Looking now at the external determinateness between objects in subsection three of ‘A. The Mechanical Object’, it is immediately clear that it is an identical determinateness in two related senses. First, it is identical because it is always the relation between two *mechanical objects* that are immediately identical, indeterminate, and indifferent. In short, it is identical because each object is indifferent to its difference (their essential determinateness). Second, since their mode of relation is identical it follows that each object contains the same determinate content as every other object: ‘the determinateness is merely *doubled*, once in one object and again in the other, something utterly *identical*’ (SL: 714/413). The identity of their determinateness, however, manifests a contradiction. The *mechanical objects* are supposed to be indifferent to each other and yet they are identical. This contradiction, then, lies firmly at the core of the *mechanical object* since it is precisely through being what it is that it has generated its own contradiction. The reinstatement of each object’s separate identity is because of its ‘indifference’ to every other object’s external determinateness, whose very ‘indifference’ is the reason for the self-subsistence and externality to and from other objects.

The *mechanical objects*, thus, are in a negative unity. A ‘negative unity’ is one in which the moments of the unity negatively relate to each other because they both share an identity and are different to each other. Here, the objects are identical with each other and are in a unity or a totality. Now, however, this unity includes the negativity of difference between objects because of their separate identity: hence, they are in a *negative* unity. This negative unity of the identity of determinateness and ‘indifference’ to external determinateness is called the *formal mechanical process*.

Let us now reconsider Kreines’s interpretation of ‘indifference’ based on the above analysis. Again, I do think that Kreines is partly right to interpret ‘indifference’ in ‘A. The Mechanical Object’ with a lack of explanatory relevance. Indeed, the fact that the essential determination of an object is not posited in its relation to another object seems to be a clear indicator that one cannot explain the reason for their relation through the content of its essential determination. That said, an aspect of the ontological examination of the category is lost if we *just* understand ‘indifference’ as the lack of explanatory relevance. For, as I have shown above,

'indifference' is a positive aspect of the *mechanical object's* being that does in fact explain why the *mechanical object* develops in the way that it does: it is because the object is indifferent to external determinateness that it enters into a negative unity with another *mechanical object* whose contradiction generates further determinations in 'B. The Mechanical Process'. Moreover, 'indifference' is perfectly compatible with the *Concept* being immanent to the object. If we do not frame 'A. The Mechanical Object' as a thought experiment of the 'conceptless mechanism' thesis and instead understand it as the examination of the ontological structure of a *mechanical object*, then, knowing that it has 'indifference' explains rather a lot about what a *mechanical object* is.

Let us take as an example to explain how exactly my understanding of 'indifference' plays out differently to Kreines's by looking at the case of a pile of rocks. Let us say that we see a pile of rocks, we might ask: why are they arranged in this way? A mechanistic explanation of this would refer to the underlying parts of the rocks and these, in turn would refer to their underlying parts. We would expect these underlying parts to *mechanically* explain why the pile is arranged in the way that it is. Hegel's point, however, is that because we are treating all of our terms identically, they are all equally objects, that there is no way for us to designate one object or the other as *the* explanation for why they are arranged into a pile. This is where I think Kreines is right to point out that indifference is a by-word for explanatory irrelevance: *because* the objects are indifferent to each other's determinateness (since they are taken as identical), *none* of the objects can be pointed out as the mechanism that explains their configuration.

However, this is not the only way to talk about 'indifference'. If Hegel wants to critique determinism or the 'conceptless mechanism' hypothesis then it makes sense for him to target explicability since the virtue of mechanistic theories is supposed to be that they offer simpler explanations for why things do what they do. But Hegel is not just critiquing determinism (that forms only a small remark of the 'A. The Mechanical Object'); the bulk of what Hegel is doing is to give an account of what mechanism *is* by showing the immanent development of the determination of mechanism. If we look at things this way, then it is clear that 'indifference', alongside other terms such as 'immediate identity' and 'indeterminacy', is a crucial element to our understanding of mechanical objects. If we see a pile of rocks and ask ourselves: why are they in the way that they are? Hegel provides us with a very strong answer: because what it is for a *mechanical object* to be is for its moments (the other rocks) to be immediately identical and indeterminate to each other such as to be arranged in an aggregate wherein each is indifferent to the other. This is why piles of rocks do not rotate around each other. Since each rock has the determination to be external and indifferent to each other rock then there is no way that they could affect each other. Getting clear on this prepares us nicely to understand the significance of the *centre* in 'C. Absolute Mechanism'.



The *centre* inaugurates self-determination in the *Concept* and paves the conceptual pathway for an understanding of *mechanical objects* that can affect each other through their own determination. I now turn to the fourth section of the paper.

#### IV. 'C. Absolute Mechanism': the rise of self-determination

I now examine 'C. Absolute Mechanism' to offer textual support for why I think that Kreines is mistaken to claim that 'C. Absolute Mechanism' is distinctive for inaugurating the immanence of the *Concept*. He claims this to support his idea that Hegel preserves 'reasonable mechanism' as a form of mechanical explanation that is acceptable (2015: 35). It is true that this section marks a decisive development in 'Mechanism' but what is decisive about this section is not the appearance of the immanent *Concept* in the object but the development of the object that has the self-determining *Concept* as its determination. I begin with the examination of the *centre*, the first section of 'C. Absolute Mechanism', where we will see that the *centre* is self-determining. This also runs counter to Kreines's interpretation of 'reasonable mechanism' as the domain in which there is no indifference. In section IV.ii I will look at the *law* in 'C. Absolute Mechanism', where we will see how the development of each object as self-determining leads to them no longer being indifferent.

##### IV.i. *The Centre: self-determination and indifference*

At the end of 'B. The Mechanical Process' the *mechanical object* becomes the *product* of the mechanical process, and it is this *product* that we must examine at the beginning of 'C. Absolute Mechanism'. The first aspect of the *product* is its determination as the '*posited totality of the [Concept]*' (SL: 721/422). This refers to the fully developed negative relations between the determinations of the *Concept*: they are no longer merely immediately identical but are mediated. Thus, the *product* has as its determinateness the negative mediation of the determinations of the *Concept*. Before, the *mechanical objects* determined each other purely externally, but now that the determinations of the *Concept* are posited and mediated the development is a self-development; *universality* is no longer immediately identical with *individuality* but developed, externally, into *individuality*. By developing into *individuality*, it has made explicit its mediation with *individuality*. This movement from *universality* to *individuality* as different moments is a self-determining moment.<sup>9</sup>

It is not just self-determining, however, since it is still a *mechanical object*. As a *mechanical object* it is also indifferent to determinateness, even its own, and as such is still a manifold of *mechanical objects*. The development of these two determinations

of the *product* takes us out of 'B. Mechanical Process' and into 'C. Absolute Mechanism' where, accordingly, the *product* becomes the *centre*.

The *centre* is self-determining, but also external and indifferent to determinateness: 'in so far as the object as an immediate totality retains its indifference to determinateness, the latter is present in it also as unessential or as a mutual externality of many objects' (SL: 722/423). Therefore, we have to hold these two fundamental determinations in mind when we begin to think about the *centre*. As self-determining it no longer is merely externally determined but has the source of its determinateness immanently within itself. At the same time, however, the *centre* is indifferent to its determinateness and, therefore, is still a manifold. It is not, however, a manifold of *centres* but a manifold of non-self-subsistent objects that have their essential determinacy in the *centre*.

The *centre* is the 'pervading immanent essence of the objects' (SL: 722/423) because it is identical to the non-self-subsistent objects and as identical is their essential determinateness. The *centre*, as self-determining, is 'the essential determinateness [...] by which they are united in and for themselves, and is their objective universality' (SL: 722/423). It is through the determinateness of the *centre* that the non-self-subsistent objects are united with the *centre*. The determinateness of the non-self-subsistent objects, on the other hand, is that of mutual externality and is unessential to the unity of the objects with the *centre*.

First, let us consider the ways in which the non-self-subsistent objects relate to their *centre*. The *centre* is identical to the non-self-subsistent objects because it is their essential determinateness.<sup>10</sup> Their identity with the *centre* is their '*being in their centre*' (SL: 722/423): another way of expressing the fact that their essential determinateness, their being, lies in the *centre*. It is crucial to recall at this point that their identity is not posited, so as to open up their difference, but is immanent to them both. Positing would 'open up their difference' because positing one side in a unity determines the other side and thus makes explicit the fact that there is a difference within the unity. The non-self-subsistent objects are immediately identical to the *centre* and in a unity which is their 'absolute [Concept]' (SL: 722/423).

Finally, we must reconcile the posited externality of the objects with each other with their immanent identity with the self-determining *centre*. This is accomplished by emphasizing the partial finitude of their relation to the *centre* because of their mutual externality. Thus, their unity with the *centre* is 'merely an *ought-to-be*' and 'their consequent *striving* towards the centre is their absolute universality' (SL: 722/423). Their being in their *centre*, therefore, is a striving towards that *centre* whence their essential determinateness arises, but only a striving since their determinateness also includes externality, i.e., their determinateness is external to the essential determinateness of the *centre*.

In this self-determining unity, then, it is misleading to continue to think of the *centre* as a 'mere' (SL: 722/424) *mechanical object* (*bloßes Objekt*) that has a manifold of

indeterminate and indifferent *mechanical objects*. Despite their externality with each other, the non-self-subsistent objects have their essential determinateness in the self-determining activity of the *centre*. Thus, their unity is not a ‘mere *order or arrangement* and *external connexion* of parts [but] a genuine One’ (*SL*: 723/424). Now, the fact that the non-self-subsistent objects are identical with the *centre* leads to two reciprocal moments. First, the ‘non-self-subsistent [...] are likewise by the regress of the [Concept] determined into individuals’ and the ‘identity of the central body with itself which is still a *striving*, is infected with *externality*’ (*SL*: 723/424). Since they are in fact identical, then it logically follows that the *centre* must have as its determinateness the externality of the non-self-subsistent objects and that the latter must be self-determining *centres* in their own right.

The non-self-subsistent objects, then, are determined as individual *centres*. However, they do not relate to each other as *centres*. To be a *centre* means being the essential determinateness of unessential non-self-subsistent objects. Therefore, every relative *centre* is also a non-self-subsistent object for other relative *centres*. Crucially, the unity of the relative *centre* with the non-self-subsistent objects is brought about by the original determinateness of the absolute *centre*. This is because the absolute *centre* is the essential determinateness of the non-self-subsistent objects, and it is only from *that* determinateness that they become relative *centres*.

Now, it has just been said that the determinateness of the relative *centres* is brought about by the absolute *centre* and that each relative *centre* has its own non-self-subsistent objects. Before, we saw that it was the determinateness of a non-self-subsistent object to strive for the *centre* because of its identity with it. The same is true for the relative *centres* and their non-self-subsistent objects: ‘the relative individual centres [...] subsume[s] under [themselves] the non-self-subsistent objects whose superficial or formal individualisation [are] supported by it’ (*SL*: 723/425). This striving, however, is also a striving for the absolute *centre* since it is from the absolute *centre* that the relative *centres* receive their determinateness.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the non-self-subsistent objects have returned into the absolute *centre* through the mediation of the relative *centres*. This return, and the process whence it comes, is understood by Hegel as *free mechanism*. The process is a ‘free’ one because it has come about through the self-determining activity of the absolute *centre*, which determined the previously non-self-subsistent objects as centres as self-determining and no longer as merely external to the self-determination. What we now have to consider is the determinateness of the non-self-subsistent objects and relative *centres*. This is examined in the *lam*.

Let us consider an example that might help to elucidate the significance of understanding the role of ‘indifference’ in the *centre*. Why is it that the planets rotate around the Sun? Simply put because the Sun is their essential determination as the self-determining centre. What makes a *centre* what it *is* is the fact that it is not

externally posited but entirely self-determined as the *centre*. Now, the planet is entirely indifferent to this relation since it is not itself a self-determining object. This is an interesting case of indifference and self-determination going together. Crucially, it is not the case that the same object is both indifferent and self-determining. Rather, it is that the Sun is self-determining and is in a relation to indifferent planets. Specifically in relation to Kreines's point regarding indifference, it is the indifference of the planets that accounts for why they are planets. Because, if they were not indifferent, they would not be merely subsumed under the self-determining determinateness of the Sun but would be Suns, *i.e.*, *centres*. Thus, it is *because* there is a moment of indifference that we can explain *why* there are planets that rotate around the Sun. Now, things change with the *law*. In the *law* the objects cease to be indifferent and become moments within a self-determining whole. To this we now turn.

#### IV.ii. *The Law: how self-determination logically removes indifference*

*Free mechanism* is the conclusion of the *centre*. The 'freedom' of the mechanistic relations is based on the fact that the objects, despite being different, have their determination in the objective universality of the *centre*. Thus, the *centre* is 'a unity that sunders itself into the *specific differences of the [Concept]* and abides within its self-identical universality' (SL: 724/426). It is only with the conclusion of the *centre* that the negativity of *Concept*, and by extension the negativity of its determinations (what I have, hitherto, called the 'essential determinacy'), is made explicit. It has been made explicit because its essential determinacy, the negativity of its determinations, is now identical with itself as the *lawful* object. The point is not just that they are identical with each other, for they were identical from the beginning of 'Mechanism', but that they are identical through their difference to each other—they are mediated. The determination that has come about by their mediated relation is self-determination, and therefore, free. Therefore, what was hitherto a merely external relation between the various objects, what Hegel calls 'order', has now passed over into 'the determination that is immanent and objective; this is law' (SL: 724/426).

Now we have to consider the more precise determinations of the *lawful* objects. Firstly, a negative unity with the *centre* is formed once the relative *centres* returned into the absolute *centre*. Their return into the absolute *centre* after expressing their moments of difference or particularity as relative *centres* results in the *centre* that is '*expanded within its pure ideality by difference*' (SL: 725/426). The ideality or essential determinateness of the *centre* has been expanded by the difference introduced to it by the particularization of the *centre* into relative *centres*. The 'pure ideality' of the *centre* refers to its determinateness as immanently pervasive: according to Hegel, a relation is 'ideal' when it is not merely posited but immanent. Though the

determinations of the *Concept* have posited each other in order to reach this point of mediation, and immanence, it is the result of a mediated positing and not positing as such that results in the ideality of the *lawful* object. Positing is part of ideality in so far as it is the positing that has thoroughly made explicit the relations of the determinations of the *Concept*, by expressing their differences: only then does positing lead to immanence.

Second, this difference is no longer that of a striving towards the *centre* but of a ‘difference in its essential nature [that is] taken up into pure universality’ (*SL*: 725/426). The difference is now part of the essential determinateness of the absolute *centre*, the ‘pure universality’, and as such is immanently a part of the objects. *Law*, then, is not a mere *ought*, i.e., a mere striving towards unity, but is itself a unity that is *universal* through the ideal relation with different individuals.

Third, the ‘expanded’ determinateness of the *centre* is now a negative unity with the other objects because of their expressed difference, ‘which divides itself into *subjective individuality* and *external objectivity*, maintains the former in the latter and determines it in an ideal difference’ (*SL*: 725/427). The essential determinateness of the *centre* (‘subjective individuality’) is maintained within the objects (‘external objectivity’) through the ideality of their difference. Again, their difference is an ideal one because it is immanent to all of them and not merely posited.

The *law*, then, is the immanent determinateness that binds the *centre* with the external objects. Both have the same essential determinateness that now includes as its own the difference between them. Their difference is an ‘ideal’ one because the *centre* does not posit the objects, or vice versa, as different. Rather, their difference was immanently sublated within the essential determinateness of the *centre*. This means that any relation of the object to another object or of the object to the *centre* is a self-relation since they all have the same essential determinateness: the objects are, therefore, no longer indifferent to each other. This immanent self-relation is the self-determining, ‘imperishable source of self-kindling movement’ (*SL*: 725/427), that Hegel identifies as *free mechanism*. Their self-determining relation to each other is what guarantees their freedom. However, caution must be given to ascribing absolute freedom to this relation because it is nevertheless a relation between external objects. Thus, whilst Hegel calls this moment ‘free’ he does not mean that it is completely free, rather he means that it has ‘*free necessity*’ (*SL*: 725/427). The kind of freedom involved is a ‘necessary’ one because it is between externally related objects and not the same object relating to itself, as was the case in the *universal concept*.

The above analysis of the *law* has shown two points. First, that the fundamental aspect of the *law* is the immanent self-determination between the objects and not merely the immanence of the *Concept*, as Kreines argues. Second, it is only in the *law*, where we have a thoroughly self-determining relation between the objects and the *centre* that the objects are no longer indifferent to each other. Unlike Kreines’s notion of ‘reasonable mechanism’, then, it is not the presence

of the immanent concept that dispels the 'indifference' of the objects, for that is already present from the start of 'Mechanism' and the *centre*, but their explicit self-determination that means that they are no longer 'indifferent'.

## Concluding Remarks

I will now make some concluding remarks about what I hope to have argued for in this paper. The objective of this paper was to show three misinterpretations of Kreines's account of 'Mechanism' in *Reason in the World* that have gone unnoticed in the literature.

First, I argued against Kreines's interpretation that 'Mechanism' begins with 'conceptless mechanism' as a hypothesis. I did this by giving an analysis of the first subsection of 'A. The Mechanical Object' which begins with the *Concept* immanent to the *mechanical object*.

Second, I argued against Kreines's conceptualization of 'indifference' as being opposed to the immanent *Concept* and as *just* expressing that a thing lacks explanatory relevance. Following the same strategy as above, I argued against this reading by giving an analysis of the appearance of 'indifference' in 'Mechanism' and showed how 'indifference' is, in fact, much richer in its conceptual significance than Kreines suggests and does, in fact, explain why it is that a *mechanical object* is the way that it is.

Third, Kreines further claims that what distinguishes 'C. Absolute Mechanism' from the rest of 'Mechanism' is the appearance of the immanent *Concept*. It is not the appearance of the immanent *Concept*, however, that is significant in 'C. Absolute Mechanism' but the appearance of the *Concept* that has self-determination. I began with an exposition of the *centre* where it was also shown that the non-self-subsistent objects were indifferent to each other and that their indifference was crucial to explaining why they are the way that they are. Finally, in the *law* we examined how the conferment of self-determination amongst all of the objects removed any indifference between them.

Most of the paper has focused on the *Logic*, though at times I have sought to tease out the concrete implications of my reading and how it differs from Kreines's so as to show more clearly what precisely is at stake in our competing readings of 'Mechanism'. The most pertinent difference that my account has brought out is that there is no such thing as non-conceptual mechanism. All mechanistic explanations of the world must necessarily invoke an immanent concept to explain why it is that objects in mechanistic relations do what they do. An explanation of why things do what they do that does not appeal to immanent concepts, what Kreines calls 'conceptless mechanism', would be more appropriately located in 'The Essential Relation', where Hegel discusses the relation of the whole to its

parts (*SL*: 513–17/166–71) and the relation of force to its expression (*SL*: 518–23/172–79)—not in ‘Mechanism’.

Hegel also has a strong answer for why certain objects are the way that they are. By situating the *Concept* as immanent to the *mechanical object* and showing that it is compatible with the indifference of the *mechanical object*, Hegel provides an ontological ground for why a pile of rocks, for example, is the way that it is. Why are the rocks in a pile and not simply independent objects that stand apart from each other? Briefly, because of their respective essential determinacy (their immanent *Concept*) as a pile of rocks—what it is for them to be a pile of rocks is the very fact that they are externally joined into a pile. Moreover, the reason for why they remain a pile of rocks and do not become anything else is because they are indifferent to each other. What it is for each rock to *be* is for it to be a rock that is indifferent to the external determinateness of the other rocks whilst being externally united with them in a pile.

This is why we do not see piles of rocks orbiting each other. There is no moment of self-determination in a pile of rocks. It is not until we have an object that acts as a *centre*, as a source of self-determination that is related to other, non-self-determining objects, that we get such a thing as a solar system. Moreover, it is *because* the *centre* is self-determining, and not merely immanent, that it is the *centre* of the non-self-subsistent objects, and it is *because* the other objects are indifferent to the determinateness of the *centre* that they remain the objects of the *centre*.

I have generally focused my examples on classically ‘mechanical’ examples but this need not be the case. Hegel is clear that ‘Mechanism’ is an ontological relation that manifests in all manner of different cases—such as the state.<sup>12</sup> However one wishes to investigate the ramifications of ‘Mechanism’, it is clear that the immanence of the *Concept* to objects, the indifference of objects to each other, the possibility of a self-determining object that relates to indifferent objects, or the lawful relation between self-determining objects, will all play a central role within any explanation.<sup>13</sup>

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations used:

*SL* = Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1989)/*Wissenschaft der Logik*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel, 2 vols. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1969) (*Theorie Werkausgabe*, Vol. 6).



EL = *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline, Part 1: Science of Logic*, trans. and ed. K. Brinkmann and D. O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)/*Enzyklopadie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* (1830). *Erster Teil: Die Wissenschaft der Logik*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970) [*Theorie Werkausgabe*, Vol. 8].

<sup>2</sup> See Bowman, Kreines, Pinkard and Tolley (2016); Knappik (2018); Ng (2018); Giladi (2019).

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this paper I will italicize categories of the *Logic*, such as the *Concept* or the *mechanical object*, and will put in quotation marks headings and sub-headings of the *Logic*, such as ‘Mechanism’ or A. ‘The Mechanical Object’.

<sup>4</sup> Thus, I follow interpreters of Hegel’s *Logic* such as Stephen Houlgate (2021), who argues that the *Logic* is the immanent self-development of the *absolute idea* and that it is by following the immanent development of the determinations of thought that we grasp the significance of Hegel’s arguments in the *Logic*. Houlgate and Kreines can be said to fall within the ‘revised metaphysics’ camp of Hegel interpretation and I align myself with such an approach. This approach is to be distinguished from the kind of non-metaphysical ‘epistemology-first’ view found in Hartmann (1972), Pinkard (2012), and Pippin (2019). That said, it should be emphasized that even within the ‘revised metaphysics’ camp there are important methodological distinctions and it is in these differences that my approach to interpreting the *Logic* departs from Kreines.

<sup>5</sup> I consider the most in-depth account of ‘Mechanism’ in the Anglophone literature to be found in Ross (2008: 60–97). I recommend his accounts of sections ‘B. The Mechanical Process’ and ‘C. The Transition to Chemism’ for readers who wish to fill in the gaps of my reading and get a holistic picture of the development of ‘Mechanism’.

<sup>6</sup> Miller is aware that his translation of *ausgeglichen* as ‘sublated’ is a compromise. It is true that the mediation of the determinations of the *Concept* are *sublated* within the *mechanical object*. However, in writing ‘*ausgeglichen*’ instead of ‘*aufgehoben*’ Hegel seeks to express that each determination of the *Concept* has been equilibrated in the *mechanical object*.

<sup>7</sup> Though, this does not hold for all of the *Logic*, in “Life”, for example, the living individual is external to the presupposed Objective world but is not indifferent towards it (*SL*: 770/481). Whilst ‘indifference’ entails ‘externality’, ‘externality’ does not always entail ‘indifference’.

<sup>8</sup> Again, *pace* Kreines (2015) who reads the externality of the *Concept* to the *mechanical object* as their separation, the *Concept* is external to the *mechanical object* in so far as each determination of the *Concept* is a *mechanical object* that is external to every other determination of the *Concept*. It is in *this* sense that the *Concept* is external to the *mechanical object*.

<sup>9</sup> See Ross (2008: 84–89) for a clear account of the development from the ‘Formal Mechanical Process’ to the transition into ‘C. Absolute Mechanism’.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Their [the non-self-subsistent objects] identity with the central body is...’ (*SL*: 722/423).

<sup>11</sup> ‘These non-self-subsistent objects [...] are the link between the absolute and the relative central individuality to the extent that the latter has in them its externality by virtue of which the *relation-to-self* is at the same time a *striving* towards an absolute centre’ (*SL*: 723/425).

<sup>12</sup> This is the direction in which Ross takes his account of ‘Mechanism’. He discusses at length the relationship between ‘Mechanism’ and Hegel’s account of the relation of civil society and the state (Ross 2008: 98–124).

<sup>13</sup> My thanks to Dr Filip Niklas and Dr Mert Yirmibes for reading an earlier draft of this paper. Also a sincere thank you to the anonymous reviewers for their comments and criticisms that helped to improve this paper.

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