

## Preve's Uses of Lukács: Rethinking a Marxian Tradition

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### Abstract

This essay examines Costanzo Preve's uses of György Lukács' *Ontology of Social Being* and related writings from the same period as both provocations and, to some extent, foundations for Preve's project of the *deduzione storico-sociale delle categorie* (historical-social deduction of categories), which Preve named *ontologia dell'essere sociale* (ontology of social being). This essay shows how Preve's discussion of Lukács and his work changes from *La filosofia imperfetta* to *Una nuova storia alternativa della filosofia* and how, in several respects, at the conclusion of their lives and reflections Preve and Lukács are on opposite trajectories as regard the understanding and evaluation of the idealism-materialism continuum. Both thinkers share the urgency and need of a rethinking and refoundation of the Marxian tradition, one which needs to address many aspects of social reproduction beyond the economic.

*Keywords:* Costanzo Preve, György Lukács, ontology of social being, materialism, teleology, labor.

There are a number of reasons that led me to focus on Costanzo Preve (1943–2013).

First, Preve and his work are almost unknown in the English-speaking world, especially in the United States. Second, Preve worked most of his life teaching philosophy in a high school, not in the academy. This is one of the perspectives and experiences that nourish his approach to philosophy and its many relations to education, civil society, politics, and the possibilities of informed, probing, and constructive dialogue as a foundation for the *polis*; he is not concerned with professional self-promotion, careerism, and exclusive and exclusionary “domain building” and enclaves for self-referential involution and devolution. Third, Preve also spent most of his life in the militant Marxian left in Italy. Unlike many, he did not simply sell out and try to find a higher or highest bidder for his “technical skills,” nor did he dwell in nostalgia and try to explain the many reasons for defeat and failure as being exclusively due to “external enemies.” On the contrary, he tried

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to examine some of the root causes within the movements and tradition itself that might pinpoint internal shortcomings, forms of blindness, arrogance, mythologization, and inertia, all of which were fundamental for leading these movements and this tradition astray, rendering them unable to build more dynamic and lasting forms of institutional, social, political, and economic legacy. They also did not foster a legacy of reflections on social interaction and community building. Obviously, many dominant powers in capitalist social formations and modes of production have always targeted the revolutionary Marxian left. Following the misnamed “end of the Cold War,” they have done and continue to do everything in their power to erase any and all memories of serious political alternatives to their rule. Preve always remained committed to the political, emancipatory, and revolutionary *telos* of the Marxian tradition, unlike a very large number of superficially “Marxist” schools and tendencies, who essentially made their peace with devolving into almost exclusively verbal and nominal academic “differences” while playing by all the rules of the institutional “games” within. Fourth, Preve explicitly polemicalizes with a number of *idées reçues*, which have mostly become dominant in progressive “public” (but especially within academic) discourse, and which all have their origins in postmodern identitarianism,<sup>1</sup> an almost exclusively “verbal” “left” that, in its accommodations with capitalist and imperialist power, simply either dismisses the history and existence of decades (actually, almost centuries) of a militant, organized, and institutionally extremely influential and incisive (for better and for worse) Marxian left, or pretends it never existed. This is one of the major reasons why, within both academic philosophical discourse and public political and civic discourse, Preve’s existence is neglected, vilified or (ensoriously) omitted. One of the many reasons Preve values Lukács so greatly is precisely because he considers Lukács as someone who continues the great tradition of “not” separating the understanding and practice of philosophy and philosophical reflection into one centered around a *Schulbegriff* (for the bureaucrats of the mind), on the one hand, and a *Weltbegriff* (philosophy and philosophical questions seen as central to all human coexistence and social dialogue, “community,” and shared

1. Preve polemicalizes with the fads and superficial thought of much academic research in the humanities that is founded on the influence of postmodernism (and one of its major “fallouts,” identitarianism) in many of his later works. See, among others, *La crisi culturale della terza età del capitalismo* (Pistoia: Petite Plaisance, 2010), *Elementi di politicamente corretto*, da *Nuovi signori e nuovi sudditi* (Pistoia: Petite Plaisance, 2010), *Filosofia del presente* (Rome: Edizioni Settimo Sigillo, 2004), *La teoria in pezzi. La dissoluzione del paradigma teorico operaista in Italia (1976–1983)* (Bari: Dedalo, 1984), but for the most recent analysis, and perhaps the one most focused exclusively on postmodernism, see the next to last chapter (XXXIX) *Il postmoderno filosofico spiegato ai bambini e agli adulti*, in *Una nuova storia alternativa della filosofia* (Pistoia: Petite Plaisance, 2013), 427–52.

and sharing forms of interaction) on the other.<sup>2</sup> This is a distinction that originated with Kant, whereas, as Preve argues, Hegel, some other great thinkers in the German Idealist and Marxian traditions, and a few others intentionally worked against it.

György Lukács is a central figure in Preve's later work for both biographical, philosophical, and political reasons. Preve considers Lukács to be the preeminent Marxist philosopher of the twentieth century, and he specifically uses the Hungarian philosopher's later work(s), namely, *The Ontology of Social Being*<sup>3</sup> and some related works, as a foundation for his project of the *deduzione storico-sociale delle categorie* (historical-social deduction of categories). Preve also uses the terms *ricostruzione ontologico-sociale* (social-ontological reconstruction) and *genesi sociale delle categorie* (social genesis of categories), and states that for him, *ontologico-sociale* (social-ontological) and *storico-genetico* (historical-genetic) are basically equivalent.<sup>4</sup> Preve honestly and explicitly states that his ontology differs significantly from Lukács'; yet, it is quite obvious that he also considers it very important to claim this "ancestry." Preve strongly empathizes with Lukács as someone who was and has continued to be treated as an outcast during his later life in Hungary for not adhering to an orthodox (neo)Stalinist party line and philosophical dogma about what the legacy of Marx and Lenin was (in other words, in the "East") and, in the "West," for challenging the many fads and protected academic enclaves of "Western Marxism" through a more philologically informed and problematic account of the relations between Marx and Hegel. This challenge occurs especially in Lukács' later works like the *Ontology*, which move towards an explicitly and clearly materialist line of inquiry compared to his much more Hegelian and idealist early works, for instance, his classic *History and Class Consciousness*.<sup>5</sup> This latter work was,

2. Preve's polemics against academism and the academization of philosophy are longstanding and form part of his efforts to preserve the role of philosophy in its most encompassing sense in the "public sphere" (though Preve obviously would not be comfortable with the public vs. private dichotomy) while possibly expanding its public role in the renewal of a Socratic dialogue as one of the foundations for future cohabitation and community, that is, a contemporary *polis*. Throughout his last work, *Una nuova storia alternativa della filosofia* (Pistoia: Petite Plaisance, 2013), he emphasizes the importance of the negative consequences of the separation of the *Schulbegriff* from the *Weltbegriff* in understanding philosophy, its status, role, and relations with the broader world of human praxis.

3. I will provide both English and Italian bibliographical references to Lukács' late works as some have not even been translated into English, and others, like *The Ontology of Social Being*, have been translated only very partially, whereas, generally speaking, Italian versions do exist and they are much more complete. György Lukács, *The Ontology of Social Being* (London: Merlin, 1980), *Prolegomeni all'ontologia dell'essere sociale* (Milan: Guerini, 1990) and *Ontologia dell'essere sociale* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1981).

4. See Preve, *Una nuova storia alternativa*, 5, 10 ff.

5. György Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971.

symptomatically, always much better received in the West, as were all his early works, while, also symptomatically, the *Ontology* and the *Prolegomeni all'ontologia dell'essere sociale* (*Prolegomena to the Ontology of Social Being*) have been basically almost completely ignored.

The importance of Lukács for Preve, from his break with “scientific” tendencies in the Marxian tradition (Louis Althusser, Lucio Colletti) in the 1980s to the most important and concluding chapter of his final work, is documented in his research. Preve devotes the concluding and densest section of *La filosofia imperfetta* (*The Imperfect Philosophy*)<sup>6</sup> to reflections on Lukács and, most specifically, the *Ontology*; and the final, longest, most ambitious, and most autobiographical chapter of what was to be Preve’s last work, namely, *Una nuova storia alternativa della filosofia* (*A New and Alternative History of Philosophy*), is mostly dedicated to Lukács, the *Ontology*, and Preve’s own research projects centered around the *deduzione storico-sociale delle categorie*. One should add that, in several respects, Preve’s project resembles Lucien Goldmann’s genetic structuralism, which was also strongly indebted to Lukács’ thought, and which attempted to correlate mental and artistic categories with elements of the specific mode of then–contemporary production.

There is a noticeable difference, however, in the manner in which Preve treats Lukács and the *Ontology* in *La filosofia imperfetta* and in his concluding *Una nuova storia alternativa della filosofia* (one should also note that there is an almost thirty year interval between the two works). In *La filosofia imperfetta*, Preve engages in a contrastive/comparative examination of Lukács (and his work) against Martin Heidegger and Ernst Bloch while addressing a number of the important philosophical specifics of Lukács’ text.

Martin Heidegger represents the union of alienation and *intranscendibilità* (non–overcomability) in his critique of the present/capitalism by using a form of *pensiero destinale* (destinal thinking) that is a form of inverted historicism.<sup>7</sup> Heidegger’s position is the formalization of a (non/anti)teleological drive towards a point of origin. I would add that this retrogression is one that intentionally attempts to destroy the process of historical construction and accretion of concept–building and knowledge, that is, it is very purposely — Preve also calls it “teleological” — and irrationally directed against all the heritage of the Enlightenment. Preve’s assessment of Heidegger as a philosopher–critic, however, is much more positive than Lukács’ own evaluation.

Preve then looks at the thought of Ernst Bloch as specifically opposed to Heideggerian *destinalismo* (destinal orientation) in the sense that it purposely

6. Costanzo Preve, *La filosofia imperfetta. Una proposta di ricostruzione del marxismo contemporaneo* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1984).

7. Preve, *La filosofia imperfetta*, 16–17.

seeks to reconsider/resurrect/reinterpret the “forms of possibility” contained in the past (in this sense in opposition both to more traditional forms of Marxism and to what he calls *critica differenzialistica* [differential critique], a phrase which captures certain dominant paradigms of postmodern theorization). For Preve, the crucial distinction in Bloch is between *non-contemporaneità* (non-contemporaneity) and *arretratezza* (backwardness), where Bloch chooses the first over the second, and thanks to this “multiversum,” Preve argues that Bloch manages to avoid the pitfalls of historicist temporality (and its major ideological support, abstract humanism) as well as those of both “grand narrative” and “determinist–naturalist” kinds of theoretical structure. Bloch also reinserts *giusnaturalismo* (or the theory of natural rights) as one of the main sources of the Marxian tradition (which Lenin had omitted). In addition, Bloch adds the strong proposal/endorsement of utopia, and utopian actions, in the present, and he also helps eliminate the polarity between “Eastern” and “Western” Marxisms. Finally, Bloch is oriented towards an ontological foundation of *praxis*. Preve makes one pointed criticism of the German utopian thinker, namely, his not conceiving of *praxis* as labor. And this is one of the reasons for his turning towards the thought of the late Lukács as a way out of the most serious impasses.

And, finally, Preve turns to the *Ontology of Social Being* itself. He specifically says that he will not be dealing with the first Lukács (which he associates with *History and Class Consciousness*) or with the second Lukács (which he ties to *The Destruction of Reason*), but instead with the “third and last Lukács,” namely, precisely that of the *Ontology*. What Preve, however, does not underscore is that in Lukács’ own view, he was moving in very important ways beyond both his early idealist period(s) and his somewhat more “orthodox” Marxist period (influenced by the Eastern context) toward a more intentionally materialist “return” to Marx. This move was helped in important ways by his referring to the work of the very unorthodox neo-Kantian Nicolai Hartmann (who, to my mind, is in many respects closer to materialism than to Kant).

As was the case with Hegel, one should always remember that, for Preve, the history of philosophy is absolutely crucial to the philosophical enterprise and, in Preve’s case, is more clearly and explicitly inserted into a wider cultural, socio-ontological, framework and context. For this reason, it is also important to understand his periodization of the broader history of capitalism, which he analyzes always as an economic, political, and cultural totality. He divides it into three “phases”:

- a) the abstract phase (17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries);
- b) the dialectical phase (from 1789 to 1991), which exhibits the devolution of the bourgeoisie and is comprised of a proto-bourgeois

Enlightenment and Romantic phase; a “middle”–bourgeois phase (positivist from 1848 and existentialist from ca. 1914); and a “late”–bourgeois phase (from ca. 1968 to 1990), which is increasingly individualistic and libertarian;

- c) and, lastly, a “speculative” phase from 1991 onwards (a phase that is both post–bourgeois and post–proletarian). In this phase, capital concretizes and consolidates its absolute dominance, expanding beyond the previous dichotomies: towards the right in the economic sphere, towards the “center” politically, and towards the “left” culturally.

The major reasons Preve resorts to the *Ontology* are as follows:

- a) Lukács refuses, simultaneously and symmetrically, both Eastern and Western Marxism;
- b) he acutely sees the main characteristics of contemporary philosophy as based on the *solidarietà antitetico–polare* (antithetical–polar solidarity) of neopositivism and existentialism (which are essentially the dominant traits of analytical and continental philosophy, or their founding roots, respectively);
- c) probably the key point (and relation) of the *Ontology*, for Preve (but I would venture for any attentive reader of the work), is the central position given to labor (language is therefore also viewed in its relationship to labor–praxis), to concrete human activity as a way of overcoming the abstract polarities between causality and teleology as well as those between necessity and chance. Preve underscores that this implies the passage from an understanding of historical materialism as focused on the commodity form to a historical materialism focused on the “forms” of labor in the capitalist mode of production;
- d) a more flexible and adherent concept of “reproduction” (in the Marxian sense), which refocuses it as the “dominant reproductive practice,” and which informs the underlying social practices while accounting for them in a flexibly dialectical manner;
- e) an incisive conceptualization of ideology that extends beyond the anthropological path of humans as “symbolic animals” to the “real existence of the ideal moment” in the process of reproduction of contemporary capitalism, which also takes into account the dominance of relative surplus value (Aglietta) and the loss of meaning of labor in contemporary capitalism (Harry Braverman);
- f) and, finally, a theory of alienation/estrangement that is a historico–ontological conception: under capitalism, individuality is no longer connected to/specified by castes, strata, corporations, and so on but is much more “casual” as to placement, and therefore capital-

ism tries to repress the “universalistic” tendencies in individuals; in his later works, Preve talks increasingly about *disintegrazione* (disintegration), *frammentazione* (fragmentation), and so forth. Preve emphasizes these forms of devolution in the latest contemporary period of capitalism, the post-bourgeois and post-proletarian phase, which is also that of the most deep-rooted dominance and lack of transparency of the global capital relation itself. In other words, the ever more pervasive power of the capital relation to “dissolve” all previous historical, social, institutional, sedimented, and accrued forms of bond, cohabitation, and practice ultimately extends to the cultural, inter-individual sense of identity and relation to the world of individuals who once would have identified, however minimally, with at least some remnants of the heritages and practices of “their” classes. This is what Preve, partially basing himself on Lukács, argues is occurring in contemporary global capitalism.

In using this comparative/contrastive approach, one could state, simplifying somewhat, that Preve uses Heidegger as the representative of a focus on the past and origins, Bloch as focused on the (utopian) future, and Lukács as focused on and working in the present.

The extremely important role this work of the late Lukács has for Preve is centered around the fact that the labor-teleology relation allows for a much more penetrating analysis of the relation between individuals and labor process(es), as well as more inclusive social groups, and all the extremely varied non-directly economic aspects of the labor-processes itself: it therefore moves towards and opens onto all areas of social reproduction that Marx himself and the most important thinker in the Marxian tradition never really had the time, opportunity or, in some cases, interest to focus on.

These open precisely onto the relationship between *comunismo* and *comunità*, the latter being a term which I think it would be very reductive to see merely as *Gemeinschaft* as some, I think, more polemical critics of Preve have attempted to do. For Preve, the human dimension, which in turn implies social and historical contextualization with all of its specificities, is always a part of philosophical interpretation and appraisal, and eventually judgment. In *Una nuova storia alternativa della filosofia*, it is these human/existential characteristics of Lukács and much more general and overarching characteristics of his philosophy that Preve examines, and the *Ontology* is only the canvas that Preve uses to depict them. So, the existential and human characteristics of Lukács the man also enter into Preve's judgment of the philosopher. The philosophical-existential concepts, categories, and practices which Preve focuses on in the last chapter of his last work in relation to Lukács and his philosophy are:

- a) *serietà* (seriousness);
- b) *passione durevole* (enduring passion);
- c) alienation (and Lukács' fundamental decision not to participate in his own alienation: *Ich mache meine eigene Entfremdung nicht mehr mit*);
- d) Lukács' being one of the greatest practitioners of the fusion of philosophy understood as *Schulbegriff* with philosophy understood as *Weltbegriff*;
- e) his refusal to accept any sort of verdict given by the "judgment of the facts" (that is, the contingent dominance/prevalence of certain forces and interests at specific moments in history).<sup>8</sup>

A number of directions that the reflections of the later Lukács were taking are what I think made him especially attractive to Preve (a more detailed account can be found in the concluding chapter of *Una nuova storia alternativa della filosofia*). Hegel remained a central philosophical reference, even for the later Lukács, though in Preve's case this "preference" is taken to an entirely different level, one which, as Preve himself honestly admits, would probably not have found Lukács' support. The *Ontology of Social Being* also attempted to explore the relations between labor (and by implication language) and the economic reproduction of the species, and other areas of human social existence, something which was clearly part of Marx's interests and overall project, but something which Marx's published research, and especially his most influential works addressed mostly only tangentially. Lukács' attention to the everyday and, more generally, to human subjects across a broad spectrum rather than those restricted to working class domains are another significant element in Preve's attraction to the Hungarian philosopher's later works. On more than one occasion, Preve makes the connection to Gramsci's reflections on "common sense" and, to my mind, this is very symptomatic. Both Lukács and Preve were all too aware that the major revolutions that had taken place while identifying with or appealing to the Marxian tradition (the Russian and Chinese being the most significant and emblematic) had not occurred in countries in which the capitalist mode of production was dominant, and in fact had almost exclusively taken place in countries on the periphery of the centers of capitalist production and exploitation and its imperialist forms of expansion. And both Lukács and Preve clearly wanted and needed to take such a macroscopic historical fact into account in their individual rethinking/re-elaboration of the Marxian project. The mythologization of the proletariat as the agent of revolutionary change had very clearly come up against historical realities in the capitalist "West." In this sense, both Lukács and Preve once more underscore the Marxian idea of humans as *Gattungswesen*.

8. Preve, *Una nuova storia alternativa*, 459, 461, 468, and 472.



On a more concrete philosophical level, Preve repeatedly stresses his debt to Lukács for a number of insights into the landscape of contemporary philosophy. One important example of this is the *solidarietà antitetico polare* of neopositivism and existentialism as complementary forms of distortion of a deeper philosophical analysis and understanding, both of which are instrumental to capitalist (bourgeois in the earlier stages, but Preve argues that today we are witnessing and living in a post-bourgeois and post-proletarian form of globalized capitalism) domination of the philosophical and derivatively ideological landscape.

Significantly, Preve sees his own later work(s) and those of Lukács as committed to a philosophy of *emancipation* and as being premised on the centrality of the concept of *alienation* in Marx; theirs are also philosophies which refuse the (academic, bureaucratic) division between philosophy understood as *Schulbegriff* and as *Weltbegriff*. The philosophical trajectories of Preve and Lukács are, however, almost complementary or diametrically opposed to one another. Whereas Lukács moved away from idealist and Hegelian origins towards forms of research into a materialist re-foundation, Preve moved away (as he states in *Una nuova storia alternativa della filosofia*)<sup>9</sup> from what in his later life he considered a “scientific” form of Marxism represented by the thought of Althusser and Colletti to research that gave ever more prominent positions to Hegel and the German idealist tradition and, in several ways, tried to make Marx into the ultimate idealist and the culmination of this very idealist tradition itself.

While Preve gives Lukács enormous credit in being able to overcome the “messianic extremism” of his early *History and Class Consciousness* in this late phase of his thought, Preve tends to minimize the fact that Lukács was actually moving “away” from idealism and Hegel, not closer to them. And while Preve honestly states several times that this is his own interpretation of a project related to the *Ontology*, and that Lukács himself might very likely not have agreed, it is only if/when one compares the works of the two authors in some detail and in the context of the overall trajectory of the two philosophers that one realizes the extent to which these trajectories are actually complementary.

Lukács's *Ontology* explicitly gives a lot of credit to the thought of Nicolai Hartmann, who was an, albeit extremely idiosyncratic, neo-Kantian with very pronounced materialist tendencies, and certainly not a Hegelian by any stretch of the imagination. Moreover, very significant portions of the *Ontology* are dedicated to an examination of the relations among the different levels of being: the inorganic, the organic, and the social (human social). This examination is very clearly in line with a strong materialist strand that, starting with Marx, passes through the works of Engels, Antonio Labriola,

9. Preve, *Una nuova storia alternativa*, 8.

and a number of important thinkers in the Marxian tradition worldwide (in Italy, just some of those one could mention are Nicola Badaloni and his idea of “humanized nature” or various reflections by Sebastiano Timpanaro on materialism and the levels of being).

This ontological examination is clearly open to a dialogue with the natural sciences as well as the socio–historical sciences and philosophy, unlike ontological projects such as Martin Heidegger’s. Lukács’ late reflections also clearly point to the complexity of the relations within this “stratified” ontology, and its different levels and kinds of foundation (the inorganic providing the foundation for the organic, and the organic for the social). Lukács endorses a reflection theory of truth, as did the majority of the most influential thinkers in the Marxian tradition, and this is a version of the correspondence theory of truth. Preve criticizes Lukács for doing so.<sup>10</sup>

Preve is also not always consistent in his description of Marx’s thought and the legacy of his tradition. Mostly, he sticks to variants of this account: “[...] *dentro* Marx, e non solo *dentro* la lettera, ma anche *dentro* lo spirito, coesistono contraddittoriamente statuti teorici diversi, si intrecciano insieme una scienza filosofica della totalità espressiva ed una scienza non–filosofica delle strutture dei modi di produzione sociali.”<sup>11</sup> But while he often acknowledges that this non–philosophical science is an essential component of Marx’s legacy, and that it is connected, albeit as most socio–historical sciences that deal with human agency in very complex ways, to standards of “truth” of the natural sciences, he far from infrequently insists on privileging the “philosophical” strand of the legacy, and uses this as the foundation for Marx’s being pre–eminently an idealist.

Had Preve dealt more in depth with the materialist and stratification aspects of Lukács’ *Ontology*, then perhaps a whole series of his own conclusions — from those regarding the reflection theory of truth, to those basically completely divorcing and separating the materialist grounds for truth in the natural sciences from more mediated and ultimately complex criteria for truth (related to “praxis” and human agency) in the socio–historical sciences, not to speak of those related to values and evaluation at the very least in philosophy, and therefore trying to defend an, essentially and paradoxically (given Preve’s project of the genetic reconstruction of the origins of the categories), rather autarchical and “privileged” conception of philosophy (for laudable reasons connected to a defense of a shared and communal Socratic dialogue, to a, curiously rather Kantian, theoretical attempt at a prevention of philosophical manipulation and

10. Preve, *Una nuova storia alternativa*, 478.

11. Preve, *Una nuova storia alternativa*, 496.

“contamination”) — might have taken a different direction. Yet I think that what I would regard as “exaggeration” in his turn towards Hegel and idealism can be viewed, in a manner that is precisely dialectically opposed to the trajectory of the later Lukács, as a way of underscoring his break with his “scientistic” earlier period, that is, as a way of wandering between Althusser and Colletti. On the level of philological detail, I think it is a fairly serious mistake by Preve to tend to conflate Colletti with Della Volpe: while there is justification for a critique of Della Volpe as excessively anti-Hegelian in his interpretation of Marx — I would argue as a way to distance himself from the prevailing historicist and “Gramscian” perspectives in the parties of the left during Della Volpe’s life — Della Volpe’s contributions in the areas of logic and “indeterminate abstraction” are, I think, much more original and fruitful than Preve’s omission(s) would allow. His ontology and much of his later thought explicitly tries to found and defend a “specificity” for the philosophical enterprise that is connected to his personal vision of “ontological research” and the reconstruction–genesis of categories of thought.

While Preve, I think, is undoubtedly right to emphasize the dialectical–relational nature of much of Marx’s thought, and the fundamental debt it owes to Hegel, I do not believe this is a valid argument against those who believe, as I do (and even Preve partially admits to this when he talks about a “non–philosophical science” in Marx), that Marx fundamentally overcomes and goes beyond Hegel in a materialist direction. I think that Preve is fundamentally mistaken when he attributes a “philosophy of history” to Marx (and to his most original and intelligent followers in the Marxian tradition). The science of the “modes of production” and its foundation in history considers what has accrued in human history so far, which consequently forms a foundation and path that opens onto only a certain spectrum of options for the future (this is completely compatible with the observation that human beings do not make history in circumstances of their own choosing). Though obviously this is at a completely different ontological level, because we are dealing with human agency and history, the accrual and “direction” of history, from the history of the *cosmos*, to the history of geology, to, perhaps above all, the (natural) history of forms of life on our planet, all point to genetic histories and forms of accrual and sedimentation that are *not* reversible and cannot simply be wished away. They therefore significantly restrict the categories of the “possible” in the future. And when Marx does reflect upon *teloi* for the political and social future of human beings, he does so mostly in (I would argue, intentionally) very generic inclusive and shared goals of emancipation, not through specific, let alone predetermined or preformed eschatological points or stages of realization/conclusion/arrival.

Preve's instinct in wanting to emphasize that philosophy deals with (and needs to be allowed to deal with) practice, research, sharing, and dialogue in/with the *carattere storico-disvelativo della verità* (historical–disclosing character of truth)<sup>12</sup> is undoubtedly very important and commendable in its own right. But in his later appraisal of Lukács's *Ontology*, Preve seems to forget many of the materialist teleological features that had been at least partially examined in *La filosofia imperfetta*. Lukács' materialist, stratified ontology deals with teleological issues precisely in a non–theological manner, in connection with the complexities of temporality and history, always attentive to the historical, contextual, and circumstantial specifics of human agency, in a fashion that is not reductively deterministic in the sense of a (neo)positivistic understanding of the natural sciences. The historical and *veritativo* characteristics of philosophy as reflection, research, dialogue, sharing, and practice could find a place within this Lukácsian framework and ontology, whereas Preve's extremely strong return to Hegel and the Greek foundations, while it certainly does propose some interesting and provocative hypotheses in the area of *deduzione storico–sociale delle categorie*, seems at the very least to flirt with borderline theologically inclined conceptions of teleology.

Regardless of these ambiguities in Preve's later philosophical trajectory, I think Preve's re–evaluation and focus on the work(s) of the later Lukács is extremely important and constructive as, I think, is his attempt to rethink/refound the Marxian project, even when taking some of its biases and shortcomings into consideration. I personally think that this opening onto the individual and social construction of the individual in a historical context politically opens the Marxian tradition in very interesting ways; also opened are some of the most interesting materialist strains of frequently marginalized but highly original thinkers such as Raymond Williams or, in terms of artists and craftsmen, William Morris. Such an openness and attention are mostly absent from, for instance, the dominant French traditions (with the partial exception of Lucien Sève, but he is hardly a dominant presence in larger French thought).

Preve's focus on the later Lukács is a constructive proposal for opening up the Marxian tradition against and away from the rigidities of the academic *Schulbegriff*, the dogmas and coercions of the institutional privileges of political forms of sedimented power (in the “traditional” parties of the “left”) and instead orienting it toward the dialogical, shared, praxis–oriented research, commitment, and engagement of the *Weltbegriff*.

12. Preve, *Una nuova storia alternativa*, 461.