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Rethinking Non-Teleological Art after Kant

Abstract: This paper begins from a closer analysis of how teleology features in Kant's third Critique, following this theme narrowly in each section to explore its interrogation by three major figures of Continental thought. It discusses how the relationship between art and teleology went on to be questioned by the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (specifically in his 1927 – 1935 lectures) in his attempt to rethink art outside the realm of aesthetics. Finally, in the third degree of their separation, art and teleology were rejected altogether by French intellectual Michel Foucault in 1966, culminating in his notion of art as "*anti-monde*" or "anti-world," in which art is tasked with escaping the boundaries of representation, collective meaning and social utility altogether. Moving from one case to another reveals a marginalised and overlooked continuity running between these significant thinkers, in respect to art, its ends, and its purposes. I conclude by briefly re-evaluating these ideas with respect to artificial intelligence.
Keywords: Immanuel Kant, Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault, teleology, aesthetics, philosophy

Three centuries later, describing Kant's third critique as a meditation on beauty, art and aesthetics is not considered incorrect or wholly inaccurate. Yet it risks overlooking a secondary component that the present work addresses, with the hope of pushing it closer to the foreground of discussion. Namely, the element of teleology in respect to art. Derived from the Greek word "*telos*" (referring to an end or purpose), if we continue to dismiss this element of Kant's thinking as nothing more than the haunted vestige of bygone ideas, then we run the risk of restricting ourselves from recognising its centrality to the genealogy of subsequent ideas on the subject.[1]

[1] See: Butts, R. E., 1990. Teleology and Scientific Method in Kant's Critique of Judgment. *Noûs* 24(1), pp. 1 – 16. "To be sure, he peoples his discussion with 18th century figures now thought to be nothing more than ghosts of earlier ways of thought. There can be no doubt, however, that his

To qualify this more clearly, it is my suggestion here that be concentrating on this somewhat side-lined element of Kant's aesthetic project and following its reception into the 20th century, it can be shown how two towering figures of Continental thought interrogated its premises to rethink aesthetics entirely: asking what a nonteleological aesthetics would look like, could be imagined as, what it could become, rejecting along the way the teleological premise upon which Kant's aesthetic critique was built.

I will therefore begin with a closer look at teleology in Kant's third Critique in my first section, assessing where it came from and the impact it has on his argument. This is followed by section II, which considers how the German philosopher Martin Heidegger sought to construct what I refer to as 'an aesthetics in all but name.' This can be understood as part of Heidegger's larger project to reimagine a pre- (or post-) Socratic philosophical language. Despite aesthetics being established as a conceptual category by Alexander Baumgarten in 1735,[2] Heidegger nonetheless suspected that the category of aesthetics, too, deserved some serious revision. Section III rediscovers a timely interview. Here, the French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault was interviewed in Paris on the eve of surrealist poet André Breton's death. Emerging from his discussion is a strange conception of art that refutes teleology so completely as to describe it as something that is '*anti-monde,*' or 'anti-world.'

Considering these three central figures of European thought comparatively, as three degrees of separation between art and teleology, I am forced here by geography and chronology to discuss each case fairly discreetly from one another; those in search of an account of how each thinker impacted the other more directly can be pointed in the direction of texts that treat their connections with more depth and erudition than is possible here.[3] As a preliminary discourse, it may not be entirely accurate to categorise these thinkers as "anti-aesthetic," yet I nonetheless insist that they were attempting to rethink the formal appreciation of art in ways that bear

discussion of the rationality of scientific prospects created the seed bed for later philosophical dialogue on the same problems.", p. 13.

[2] Alexander Baumgarten, an 18th-century German philosopher, first introduced "aesthetics" as a distinct philosophical discipline in his 1735 work "*Meditationes Philosophicae de Nonnullis ad Poema Pertinentibus*," aiming to systematize the study of sensory experience and beauty.

[3] McQuillan, J. C., 2016. Beyond the Analytic of Finitude: Kant, Heidegger, Foucault. *Foucault Studies*, pp. 184 – 199. Vaccarino Bremer, S. F., 2020. Anthropology as critique: Foucault, Kant and the metacritical tradition. *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 28(2), pp. 336 – 358. Luna, W., 2023. *Anthropology and Enlightenment: Kant's significance in Foucault's work*. Dissertation. Sydney: UNSW. Louden, R. B., 2021. Foucault's Kant. *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 55, pp. 507 – 524.

specifically on (what Heidegger and Foucault considered, in their own times, as) outmoded ideas of art's teleology.

Heidegger and Foucault's interpretation of teleology differed, shaped inexorably by their broader projects and the intellectual milieu in which they worked. Suffice it to say, both shared an inherent distrust toward the idea of art having a definitive end, means or purpose. This notion may well have seemed intuitive to Kant, his predecessors and his contemporaries.[4] Against the background of German Expressionism in Heidegger's Germany,[5] or the spectre of surrealism in Foucault's Paris,[6] however, new and challenging artistic forms demanded from their respective audiences and intelligentsia a new critical apparatus with a correspondingly new vocabulary applicable to these new aesthetic horizons.

Moving between these three figures but restricting myself to the dimension of teleology in art, I will argue that they mark a sequence whereby art is first occluded with teleology in Kant's account, before Heidegger attempts to rethink aesthetics from the ground up with partial success, before Foucault attempts to rethink art outside of teleology altogether. These three degrees of separation, as I colloquially refer to it, reflect the scientific and aesthetic attitudes of their respective eras, while also demonstrating the inherent limitation of such inquiries. Which leads me to end by asking the question, three centuries after Kant: Even if he was originally misguided or incorrect, can *we* conceive of art outside of teleology ourselves today?

I: Teleology in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*

Across the *longue durée* of Western thought, Kant's critical project stands as a monumental attempt to reconcile the claims of reason with the fragile, trembling capacities of the human imagination. Yet Kant's delineation of aesthetic judgment—universal, disinterested, seemingly untouched by the specificities of time and history—seems, in the end, to leave art somehow suspended between two worlds: one of moral imperative and the other of sheer purposeless beauty. *Kritik der Urteilskraft* is pivotal in understanding aesthetics, today as it was in 1790.

Reflective judgment is central to Kant's teleological framework, as it

[4] McDonough, J. K., ed., 2020. *Teleology: A History*. Oxford University Press.
[5] Pollmann, I., 2017. *Cinematic Vitalism*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
[6] Talib, N., Fitzgerald, R., 2022. The art of illusion as government policy. Analysing political economies of surrealism. *Critical Discourse Studies* 19(1), pp. 19 – 36.

provides the means for interpreting purposiveness in both nature and art. Pippin notes that Kant's reflections, particularly after 1789, showed that judgments like "this rose is beautiful" required a non-conceptual, reflective activity of the subject, moving beyond surface-level aesthetic experiences.[7] This reflective activity does not rely on the subsumption of a particular object under a universal concept; rather, it reveals a purposiveness that emerges through the harmony of our cognitive faculties, without being directed towards any definitive end. This is the basis for Kant's idea of "purposiveness without a purpose," where we sense an order or harmony in an object without attributing it to a preordained design or goal.[8]

Understood in this manner, reflective judgment is not only limited to aesthetic experiences. Teleology, as adopted from the works of Blumenbach and Leibniz, shapes Kant's approach to how we engage with both art and nature. Blumenbach's concept of a *Bildungstrieb* [formative drive] in living organisms influenced Kant's teleology by reinforcing the idea that biological systems appear self-organizing and purposive, although Kant treated this as a necessary heuristic for human cognition rather than an ontological reality.[9] Leibniz's notion of 'pre-established harmony' and his use of final causes shaped Kant's teleological thinking by providing a framework where nature could be understood as purposefully organized, though Kant reinterpreted this as a reflective judgment rather than an inherent property of nature.[10]

Specifically, teleology serves as an interpretative method that allows us to consider the purposiveness of natural phenomena, without necessarily asserting that nature operates with a predetermined purpose. Kant also uses it to explain how we perceive nature as a system of organized beings, particularly in biological organisms. This recognition of unity within diversity is, itself, a teleological judgment; yet it remains bound by the reflective nature of our cognitive faculties. Thus, reflective judgment extends far beyond aesthetics to structure our scientific understanding of the world.[11] Kant's teleology suggests that meaning arises from the activ-

[7] Pippin, R., 2017. The Dynamism of Reason in Kant and Hegel. *Kant on Persons and Agency*, p. 192.
[8] Menting, T., 2020. *Purposiveness of nature in Kant's third critique*. Potsdam: Universitätsverlag Potsdam.
[9] Fisher, N., 2021. Kant and Schelling on Blumenbach's formative drive. *Intellectual History Review* 31(3), pp. 391 – 409.
[10] Bianchi, S. De, 2022. Kant's functional cosmology: teleology, measurement, and symbolic representation in the Critique of Judgment. *HOPOS: The Journal of the International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science* 12(1), pp. 209 – 224.
[11] Pippin, R., 2017. The Dynamism of Reason in Kant and Hegel, ibid., p. 193.

ity of judgment itself, from the way we impose order and purposiveness on the world, rather than from any external goal. In Sabrina Vaccarino Bremner's recent reading, this reflective capacity is a form of autonomy, a self-legislating activity of reason that organizes our experience of the world.[12]

Turning this idea to the sphere of aesthetics, Kant's teleology focuses on how we judge beauty and the sublime. Kant's analysis of the sublime further complicates this relationship. The sublime, especially when faced with the perceived formlessness of originality or experimental art, seems to resist purposiveness entirely. Kant suggests that experiences of the sublime, particularly those which are "contrapurposive," challenge our cognitive faculties by overwhelming them. From Katerina Deligiorgi's perspective, this confrontation with the formless leads us to abandon sensibility and to occupy ourselves with ideas that suggest a "higher purposiveness" within reason itself.[13] The sublime, then, does not follow the same teleological framework as beauty; rather, it reveals the limits of human cognition and the potential for moral ideas that transcend sensory experience. Thus, teleology in aesthetic judgments, whether of beauty or the sublime, underscores Kant's broader claim that our encounters with nature are shaped by our reflective capacity to impose purposiveness – and this is true even when no such purpose objectively exists:

> Hence, when I draw a figure *in accordance with a concept*, or, in other words, when I form my own representation of what is given to me externally, be its own intrinsic nature what it may, what really happens is that I introduce the purposiveness into that figure or representation. I derive no empirical instruction as to the purposiveness from what is given to me externally, and consequently the figure is not one for which I require any special end external to myself and residing in the object. But this reflection presupposes a critical use of reason, and, therefore, it cannot be involved then and there in the judging of the object and its properties.[14]

In this experience, we perceive an object as if it were purposive, though without a clear purpose. In this way, aesthetic judgments reflect a subjective universality—they are valid for all but not tied to a specific con-

[12] Vaccarino Bremner, S., 2021. On Conceptual Revision and Aesthetic Judgement. *Kantian Review* 26(4), pp. 531 – 547.
[13] Deligiorgi, K., 2014. The Pleasures of Contra purposiveness: Kant, the Sublime, and Being Human. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 72(1), p. 31.
[14] Kant, I., Walker N., 2008. *Critique of Pure Judgement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 192 – 193.

cept. The sublime, on the other hand, represents a different mode of teleological experience. It occurs when we encounter something vast or formless that overwhelms our sensory faculties, yet at the same time it simultaneously incites reason to reflect on ideas that go *beyond* sensory experience. Kant's treatment of the sublime essentially showcases the dynamism of reason: the experience of the sublime prompts us to think beyond the empirical and towards higher moral or rational ideas.[15]

This experience is "contra-purposive," meaning that it does not align with any apparent teleological structure in the object itself. In this sense, and for present purposes, Kant opens the door toward a conception of art that is not bound by traditional notions of form or purpose. Martin Heidegger's statements on aesthetics, slim and un-systematic as they appear when placed in the shadow of Kant's third critique, nonetheless demonstrate a determination to free art from teleology's embrace.

II: Heidegger: An incomplete departure

If Kant's teleology can be seen as the final, exquisite refinement of a tradition that places the subject at the heart of meaning-making, Heidegger stands as the one who dares to darken that radiance, to draw the human figure back into the shadows of Being itself. Kant, after centuries of abstraction, still assumes that nature, life, and art are seen through the lens of purposiveness: a sublime geometry wherein the faculties of human understanding trace patterns of meaning upon the world. Heidegger's diminishing of the artist's centrality, meanwhile – his deliberate effacement of the individual creator's primacy – echoes with a resonant critique that reverberates through the long corridors of Western metaphysical thought.

Heidegger's most famous work, *Sein und Zeit [Being and Time]*, was published in 1927; in 1935 – 37, he would deliver a series of lectures in Frankfurt and Zurich, that would eventually be published as *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes [The Origin of the Artwork]* in 1950. Between these key texts, Heidegger also delivered lectures on Friedrich Nietzsche from 1927 to 1935. There is a notable sense, at times, that it is difficult to know where Nietzsche's influence ends and Heidegger's own philosophical ideas begin, that the former serves as a formative material for new ideas, as in the fascinating passage below.

[15] Pippin, R., 2017. The Dynamism of Reason in Kant and Hegel, ibid., p. 193.

> The highest value is art, in contradistinction to knowledge and truth. It does not copy what is at hand, does not explain matters in terms of beings at hand. But art transfigures life, moves it into higher, as yet unlived, possibilities. […] We must not take "world" in an objective or psychological sense; we must think it metaphysically. The world of art, the world as art discloses it by erecting it and placing it in the open, is the realm of what transfigures. What transfigures, transfiguration, however, is what becomes. It is a becoming that lifts beings, that is, what has become fixed, stable, and congealed over and beyond to new possibilities.[16]

Here, the teleological arc of modernity, so masterfully encapsulated in Kant's architecture, finds itself unravelling. In this profound reflection, Heidegger posits that art is not merely a mirror to reality, but rather an alchemical force that transfigures the fabric of existence itself. This assertion positions art as a realm of potentiality, a space where lived experience is elevated beyond its immediate, empirical confines. Here, Heidegger deftly dismantles the notion of art as a mere representation of "beings at hand," inviting us to perceive it instead as a dynamic interplay of becoming. In asserting that art moves life into "higher, as yet unlived possibilities," he evokes a sense of the sublime—a recognition that art is not to be confined within a teleological framework that demands practical utility, externally assigned outcomes or predetermined ends. Rather, art emerges as an uncharted territory, a liminal space where the fixed and stable congeal into the fluidity of potential, beckoning humanity toward a transformative engagement with Being itself.

Heidegger's insistence on a non-teleological perspective reverberates with the conviction that true art exists in a realm beyond mere cognition or utilitarian function. To approach art metaphysically, as Heidegger urges, is to acknowledge its role as a site of disclosure, a space where new worlds are erected and placed in the open. This act of "transfiguration" becomes a metaphysical undertaking, whereby what has become solidified is lifted to reveal latent possibilities, inviting an engagement that is as much about uncovering truth as it is about experiencing the ineffable. The very process of appreciating art, then, shifts from a judgment based on predetermined criteria of value to an awakening to the inherent dynamism of creation itself. In this sense, art is not an end in itself, nor is it a mere conduit for knowledge, but rather an ontological event that beckons us toward an understanding of existence that is ever in flux, ever becoming. Through this lens, Heidegger challenges us to embrace a richer, more profound engagement with art—

[16] Heidegger, M., Krell, D. F., 1991. *Nietzsche Vol. III & IV*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, p. 81.

one that acknowledges its transformative power and its capacity to reveal the deeper mysteries of our existence. Art ceases to be an object of judgment, a vessel for the pleasure of our cognitive faculties. In Heidegger's vision, the autonomy of art is not merely its liberation from practical ends but a profound autonomy from human desire itself. The artwork discloses not the beautiful, the pleasurable – but Being in its stark, unfathomable truth.

Thus, what Heidegger offers is no less than a reckoning. A summons to stand at the precipice of metaphysical certainties, where the artist is no longer a creator of meaning but a witness to the profound unfolding of that which lies beyond all human *telos*. Heidegger dislodges the artist from this sovereign position. It is not for humanity to project purpose onto the world, nor to claim dominion over the unveiling of truth through aesthetic mastery. Instead, Heidegger gestures toward an altogether different conception of art. The artwork, for Heidegger, is no longer a mirror to human understanding but a portal through which the world itself speaks. The teleological dream, so long nurtured in the West, fades here. What remains is not the triumph of human subjectivity, but the silent, inexorable presence of Being itself, waiting to be disclosed.

Yet by the time that Heidegger delivered his lectures on art in Frankfurt and Zurich, his departure from teleology was not quite as radical as it appears in the extract above. Heidegger's exploration of art reveals, instead, an intriguing continuity with Kantian aesthetics.[17] In contrast to Kant's emphasis on beauty as an end in itself – emerging from the delicate balance between form and purpose – Heidegger articulates a different understanding: art becomes the medium through which the truth of Being is disclosed, wherein the artwork serves not merely as an object of beauty but as a gathering place for the essence of existence. This transformative act of revealing suggests that the purpose of art is not abandoned but reimagined, positing that the essence of the artwork lies in its capacity to unveil the hidden depths of reality.

By this conclusion, I do not mean to evaluate Heidegger's attempts to rethink aesthetics as a failure, but it does draw our attention to a contradiction. From my own perspective, it is better understood as reflecting a tension between epochs. Kant's human-centred purposiveness presupposed a stable subject capable of making sense of the world, a subject through whom nature's hidden order is revealed. Heidegger destabilizes this premise: art is no longer a reflection of human judgment, nor a vehicle for projecting purpose onto the world.

[17] Young, J., 2001. *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The shift from Kantian aesthetics to Heidegger's vision suggests not merely a reorientation of purpose but an unsettling ambivalence: can the act of revealing truly transcend the very structures of meaning that art seeks to dismantle? Rather than merely unveiling truth, art serves as a battleground for competing narratives, a dialogue that transcends the boundaries of Being and beckons us to confront the multiplicity of meanings that reside within each work.

III: Foucault: The Avant-Garde as "*Anti-Monde*"

If Heidegger, as second degree of separation, sought to pull art back to the ground of existence, to root it in the soil of Being itself, it should be expressly recalled that both Kant and Heidegger, for all their genius, left us with an art still weighed down by a sense of destiny, a *telos* towards which it must continue approaching. Michel Foucault, standing at a different threshold of thought, proposes another direction. His art, and his vision of its criticism, carries with it no such burden. For Foucault, art does not fulfil a historical mission; it does not serve the ends of human progress or the slow, inexorable unfolding of some vague but ultimate truth. Yet, to properly recover his strange idea, one must first reconstruct the site of its enunciation. His idea has, to the best of my knowledge, received no serious critical attention before now.[18] Especially for a popular figure so broadly cited, this reveals an unusual gap in Foucault's reception, which the present contribution hopes to contextualise accordingly.[19]

In the wake of André Breton's death in September 1966, Claude Bonnefoy interviewed Michel Foucault for the *Arts et Loisirs* journal. Rereading Breton in a revolutionary milieu, Foucault finds Breton's revolutionary quality precisely in his *refusal* to be revolutionary. What followed was, on three levels, a meeting of worlds: that of 1920s surrealism with the politicised upheavals of 1960s Paris; then, the distance between what Foucault broadly distinguished as '*l'écriture*' [writing] and '*savoir*' [knowledge], before outlining what he saw as Breton's contribution to this binary; most interesting, though, was Foucault's conviction that the

[18] A notable and eloquent exception is found in: Spiridopoulou, M., 2021. La conception du langage chez les surréalistes: données et réflexions. *Σύγκριση* 30, pp. 87 – 103.

[19] See: Hanania, R., 2024. *Why is Foucault Our Most Successful Intellectual?* [Accessed: 2024-10-01]. Available at: https://www.richardhanania.com/p/why-is-foucault-our-most-successful. 'According to a recent analysis, Michel Foucault has 1.36 million citations on Google Scholar. This is 70% more than any other author in history.'

work of art could be "*anti-monde*" or "anti-world," an object resistant to its context and the mundane geographies of the everyday.

What was Breton's relevance today? In response to this question, Foucault bombastically compares him with Goethe. If Goethe wanted to appropriate the world to the size of the human, Breton (according to Foucault) offered to go in the opposite direction, enlarging the self to encompass the world. As the interview progresses, Foucault seems keen to push a spatial metaphor: more specifically, the extension of space as metaphor for the enlargement of consciousness through '*savoir*.' How? Only, as Foucault insists, by rejecting the idea of Breton as 'a poet of unreason.'[20] Extending his globular metaphor, he quips that

> there is a writing so radical and sovereign that it faces the world, equilibrates it, compensates for it, even destroys it absolutely and scintillates outside it. […] One finds in Breton this *experience of the book as anti-world*, and it contributes strongly to changing the status of writing. And in two ways: first, Breton somehow re-moralizes writing by demoralizing it completely. The ethic of writing no longer comes from what one has to say, from ideas that one expresses, but from the very act of writing. In this raw and exposed act, the whole liberty of the writer finds itself engaged at the same time that a counter-universe of words is born.[21]

Here, art no longer reflects the world but stands apart from it, an object self-contained, autonomous, and yet poised forever on the edge of the abyss. In this striking move, Foucault introduces the concept of the "*anti-monde*." The avant-garde movements, particularly surrealism, which captivated Foucault's intellectual imagination, embody this strange exile of art from a world of purpose. These movements sought to dissolve the boundaries of reason and rationality. The "*anti-monde*", in some sense, represents art's ultimate solitude. It no longer participates in the historical process, in the narrative arc of human achievement. It has nowhere to go, and no end at which it must arrive. Paradoxically, in this very refusal to fulfil a purpose, it reveals something profound about the human condition. For what is human life if not an endless struggle with the demands of time, or without the necessity to make meaning? At the same time, should we leave this idea in the heady blur of 1966; should we necessarily

[20] Bonnefoy, C., 1966. "L'homme est-il mort." *Dits et Écrits (org. Daniel Defert et François Ewald)* 1, pp. 540 – 544.

[21] Lotringer, S., Hochroth, L., Johnston. J., 1991. *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews (1961-1984).* New York: Semiotext(e), p. 11, emphasis mine.

forbid ourselves from the possibilities that this "anti-world" aesthetic, or anti-representational art, could provoke, from the potentialities it could stir today?

Those questions will have to remain rhetorical for now. Another inquiry comes to mind: Can we to safely assume that the source of Foucault's thinking here is Breton himself? I think not.[22] Nowhere in this interview (or elsewhere, to my knowledge) does he mention any work by André Breton specifically. His lecture on René Magritte may sound like a relevant place to look, but even there, his analysis is more preoccupied with notions of similitude and representation already developed elsewhere.[23] In this interview, however auspiciously timed between the death of what Breton represented and the work that Foucault had recently published (*Les Mots et les Choses*), it generated a concept worthy of further elaboration, critical reapplication and perhaps a discourse of its own.

In this context, Foucault's rejection of teleology in art mirrors his broader rejection of history as the bearer of ultimate truths. In later works, Foucault relentlessly dismantles the comforting narrative that history is moving towards a final resolution, whether it be in the form of utopian liberation or the triumph of reason. In place of this teleological view, Foucault offers us an archaeology of ruptures, discontinuities, and breaks – an art that participates in this fragmentation, that reflects the fractured nature of historical time.[24] The "*anti-monde*," then, can be recognised more precisely as the culmination of this view. It stands outside of history, outside of the temporal demands that make art serve as a mirror to the progress of human civilization.

Instead, it offers us a glimpse into a realm where time itself has been suspended, where art no longer carries the weight of history but exists in a kind of perpetual present—a present that seeks nothing but its own annihilation. If Foucault's "*anti-monde*" is a radical rejection of the teleological demands of art, then the avant-garde, particularly in its surrealist form, offers a vision of freedom that is at once exhilarating and tragic. For there is, at the heart of the surrealist project, a profound tension between the

[22] Biographically, however, one *can* arguably discern a measure of similarity in Breton and Foucault's experiences and how they shaped their subsequent outlooks. Both were sceptical of the Post-War humanisms, shared a revolutionary drive that matched theory with praxis, and prioritised fluid personal transformation over programmatic consistency; also, such statements remind us of the world that both felt justified challenging, resisting and reinventing in their respective fields and through their respective approaches.

[23] Foucault, M., 1983. *This is not a pipe*. California: University of California Press.

[24] Foucault, M., 2013. *Archaeology of knowledge*. London & New York: Routledge.

desire for liberation and the inescapable recognition of human finitude. Breton and his contemporaries sought to free art from the constraints of reason, to allow it to operate in a space of pure potential. Yet this freedom comes at a cost. The avant-garde's refusal of purpose, its rejection of form and structure, places it outside the bounds of traditional meaning.

Foucault's vocal engagement with surrealism here brings us to a central concern of modern aesthetics: the power of the negative. The "*anti-monde*" is, in essence, a world of negation, a world that refuses to mirror reality, that rejects the teleological demands of representation. In this refusal, we encounter something profound: the recognition that art's power lies not in what it affirms, but in what it denies. The "*anti-monde*" is not merely a rejection of the world; it is a counter-world, a space in which new forms of existence might emerge, unburdened by the weight of historical destiny.

Michel Foucault's vision of art as non-teleological offers us a profound reflection on the condition of modernity. In rejecting the historical and philosophical imperatives that have traditionally governed art, Foucault opens up a space of radical freedom: a freedom that is both exhilarating and terrifying. The "*anti-monde*" of art stands as a testament to this freedom, a world that exists beyond the reach of purpose or the limits of finality. Yet this freedom comes with its own burden. To live without a *telos*, to create without a goal, is to inhabit a world that is, in some sense, without meaning. This is arguably the paradox at the heart of Foucault's idea: that in seeking to free art from the constraints of teleology, we may find ourselves confronting an abyss.

IV: Conclusion: Are we closer to nonteleological art today?

Having considered all three figures, traced as narrowly as possible in the foregoing sections as representing three stages of separation between art and teleology, one is forced to confront not only the limitations of this inquiry but also its possibilities in the present era. It is first worth recounting where this inquiry has taken us up to now. Kant's aesthetics are grounded in the notion of teleology, where beauty is seen as a kind of purposiveness without a specific purpose. This subtle interplay between form and end, for Kant, structures the aesthetic experience by suggesting that beauty itself gestures toward a finality, even if it resists practical function.

In contrast, Heidegger's thought seeks to distance art from teleology, redirecting it toward the disclosure of Being. Art, for Heidegger, is not the completion of an end but a site of unveiling, where truth is brought

into un-concealment, disrupting any notion of aesthetic purpose as an inherent goal. Foucault's gesture goes yet further, pushing art beyond the realm of teleology and even beyond Heidegger's metaphysical horizon. In his concept of art as the "*anti-monde*," Foucault imagines a space where art exists not to reveal or serve any end but subvert and estrange. Art becomes an act of dislocation, a force that interrupts established frameworks of meaning and exposes the voids where language and power converge. In this radical severance, art is freed from teleological constraints and enters a sphere of pure potentiality.

At the time of writing, it is simply too early to commit to any definitive claims regarding Artificial Intelligence. Still, in a strange way, this is not so irrelevant to the topic at hand as it may appear. Because, were one to ask AI to produce a work of art that is "*anti-monde*" or "anti-world," it would no doubt produce *something*. Whatever it produces, of course, would inevitably include some form of colour, shape, line or imagery. In other words, the visual production of art cannot escape the boundaries of space and time. This, incidentally, actually leads us all the way back to Kant's initial thesis in his first Critique, namely, that we cannot conceive of something outside the boundaries of space and time.[25] Paradoxically, AI, supposedly the cutting-edge of present possibilities and potentialities – even when tasked with cultivating something as impenetrable and difficult as Foucault's idea of the "*anti-monde*" – cannot help but lead us full circle, by confirming and returning to Kant's original thesis.

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