The Logic of Vanishing:
Becoming in Hegel and Deleuze

By

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This is a treatise on ontology – that is, the systematic study of being – that argues for the role of “vanishing” in the metaphysical structures of reality. The notion of vanishing might appear to have no more significance than as a descriptor of phenomenal, empirical, or perceptual reality. The thesis that vanishing has a place in ontology – one that is not grounded in the already formed structure of human experience, but is rather presupposed by it – therefore might not seem apropos. However, as we argue throughout this work, vanishing has indeed had more than an implicit role in the elaboration of many key philosophical and metaphysical problems. To make this case, this project offers a close study of two ontologies that we argue, in their own yet confluent ways, make vanishing operative as a metaphysical process: G. W. F. Hegel’s *Science of Logic* (1813/1832) and Gilles Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* (1968). Given what is predominately regarded as an antithetical relation between Hegel and Deleuze’s philosophical projects, this work traces the notion of vanishing between their arguments in order to complicate this established picture of their opposition. What we argue, in the final instance, is that in both cases vanishing involves a concern with developing an ontology of becoming in which the movement of disappearance is constitutive of reality as such. To make this case, we study four major notions of Hegel’s *Logic* where vanishing has a central role (being, finitude, infinite, and ground) and correlate Hegel’s insights with Deleuze’s account of “finite” and “infinite representation” in *Difference and Repetition*. 
To my mother and father,

for the long game,

and for not needing the details

to know the importance

of all this.
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It would not be possible to acknowledge all the people and things that made this possible, except by noting that this would never have happened alone, even in its most isolated moments. I hope to be able say enough here to recognize some of these unrepayable debts. For lack of a better method, I will try to follow the order of time.

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There is a multiplicity that makes a world. I like to think that it is also, perhaps, the
multiplicity that one is. “Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd.” Debt is
less the balance that I owe than the excess through which I have been. For this reason, I have
decided to use the pronoun “we” in what follows.

C. F.
May 2016
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References to Gilles Deleuze’s work will be cited in text, following the abbreviation scheme below, with English/French pagination. All translations are the work of the English translators unless otherwise indicated as modified or our own. When there is a single pagination included, this refers exclusively to the German or French of Hegel and Deleuze’s texts.

**List of Abbreviations**

**Works By Gilles Deleuze**
- B Bergsonism
- C1 Cinema 1: The Movement-Image
- C2 Cinema 2: The Time-Image
- CC Essays Critical and Clinical
- D Dialogues
- DI Desert Islands
- DR Difference and Repetition
- EP Expressionism in Philosophy
- F The Fold
- KCP Kant’s Critical Philosophy
- LS The Logic of Sense
- N Negotiations
- NP Nietzsche and Philosophy
- PS Proust and Signs
- SPP Spinoza: Practical Philosophy

**Works By Deleuze and Félix Guattari**
- AO Anti-Oedipus
- TP A Thousand Plateaus
- WP What Is Philosophy?

**Works By G. W. F. Hegel**
- EL Encyclopedia Logic
- Ph Phenomenology of Spirit
- SL The Science of Logic
- WL Wissenschaft der Logik

**Works By Other Authors**
- CPR Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*
- E Spinoza, *Ethics*
- BT Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*
Introduction: Ontology and Evanescence

1. The Problem of Vanishing
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“being, the last smoke of evaporating reality […]”
– Nietzsche

“The gradual crumbling that left unaltered the face of the whole is cut short by a sunburst which, in one flash, illuminates the features of the new world.”
– Hegel

“So when things rise and emerge into existence, the faster they grow to be, the quicker they rush towards non-being. This is the law limiting their being.”
– Augustine

PART I: VANISHING

1. The Problem of Vanishing

This is a treatise on ontology – that is, the systematic study of being – that argues for the role of “vanishing” in the metaphysical structures of reality. The notion of vanishing might appear to have no more significance than as a descriptor of phenomenal, empirical, or perceptual reality. The thesis that vanishing has a place in ontology – one that is not grounded in the already formed structure of human experience, but is rather presupposed by it – therefore might not seem apropos. According to this suspicion, vanishing has significance not for being universally, but for the beings that can perceive and for whom the apprehension of phenomena poses a merely empirical problem. In this case, vanishing would then have only a limited scope of

applicability. The notion of vanishing has not appeared explicitly in the canon of metaphysics’ lineup of key concepts and problems, such as “existence,” the “one and the many,” “objects and properties,” “causality,” or “finitude and infinity.” However, as we argue throughout this work, vanishing has indeed had more than an implicit role in the elaboration of many of these key philosophical problems. To make this case, this project offers a close study of two ontologies that we argue, in their own yet confluent ways, make vanishing operative as a metaphysical process: G. W. F. Hegel’s *Science of Logic* (1813/1832) and Gilles Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* (1968).

Given what is predominately regarded as an antithetical relation between Hegel and Deleuze’s philosophical projects (see §3 below), this work traces the notion of vanishing between their arguments in order to complicate this established picture of their opposition. What we argue, in the final instance, is that in both cases vanishing involves a concern with developing an ontology of becoming in which the movement of disappearance is constitutive of reality as such.

### 1.1. Thought in the Face of Vanishing

Vanishing poses a unique problem for thought. There is a predominant conception of thought that sees it has having a necessary relation to a given object. The object is the requisite correlate for the possibility of judgment and meaning. To be taken up and analyzed, the phenomenon must be present. Since sensibility presupposes the givenness of its object, it is the object that must present itself to be sensed. Yet in the act of disappearing, the object not merely vacates its givenness, but undermines the very objective grounds of thought itself in apprehending, and thus corresponding or adequating, what must be thought. If vanishings are often considered to be a matter of common sense, it is because the phenomenon of vanishing, as

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opposed to the phenomenon that makes itself present, is an intrinsic part of experience that does not always provoke thought to follow its lines through the strangeness of suddenly vacant spaces, amidst lingering traces, and toward unknown destinations. If the disappearance of the object has any philosophical importance, it is because it forms a problem that at once indicates a limit to representational thought and forces it beyond this limit toward something indeterminate. When something vanishes, the object of thought changes. Thought is no longer drawn to the object in its given presence, but to the dynamic presentation in which the object is given to us under determinate conditions, whether it is the limits of sensibility or the evanescent nature of the object itself. Vanishing thus accentuates not merely the availability of the object, but foremost the limits of thought itself. If thinking exhausts its intrinsic power at this limit, is it not also at this point that thought is incited in its questioning?

We are constantly concerned about vanishings, and yet at the same time we are indifferent toward them. Vanishings are effectuated everywhere, from the commonplace to the exceptional. We must admit empirically that things disappear in many ways. The ship that vanishes at the horizon line does not have the same quality or affection as the once remembered event that is forgotten. There seems to be a difference in kind that corresponds to the faculties at work in apprehension, whether it is sensation or reflective memory. In addition to this formal diversity, vanishings phenomenologically form a strange type of certainty. We habitually live in the domain of vanishing forms as if these are simply an incontrovertible part of our experience. At every moment, figures populate our perspective. Caught in the flow of sidewalk, individuals emerge and vanish at the limits of our sight and path. Strictly speaking, this is unexceptional. We know where they disappear to if only because we vanish for them correlative in the same expected departure, in the regularity of being in places apart. Our visual field opens a space in which the reality of things is presented to us, but this opening is neither unbounded nor
absolutely continuous. Empirical thought is constituted within the consistency of a horizon of presence that is always more, or perhaps less, than what it is for us. The subtraction of the vanishing object from our experience thus implies for us the excess of a world beyond our own immediacy.

René Descartes, concerned fundamentally with securing for knowledge an indubitable foundation, recognized the epistemological problem with sense experience in the flow of bodies no less than the mutability of bodily forms. Not merely do the figures moving outside the window leave the limits of my view, but the certainty of their humanness vanishes beneath the mechanical flow of their motions and the homogenous apparel of their presentation (black hats and raincoats). Apodictic certainty of the object is lost, for Descartes, when the empirical distancings, obscurities, movements, and obstructions endemic to sense experience force us from immediate apprehension to empirical inferences that are always subject to the possibility of error. Following from a long established epistemological insight, rationalism thus seeks to position truth acquisition in the domain of eidetic intuition by which ideas can be grasped indubitably and independently of the sense experience in which the appearance of things is prone to vanish and alter in its presence. For a certain epistemological tradition, the objective movement of vanishing and emergence, as the contingency of sensibility, forms a negative criterion for metaphysical thought (see §1.3 below). This normative standard sets the course of philosophical thought in pursuit of truth beyond the limits afforded by sense and toward a domain that does not vanish, but rather endures in-itself.

The question that we will be pursuing throughout this project concerns whether there is not another metaphysics that, in departing from the determined world of sensibility to think

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“being” as it is in-itself, will also confront the phenomenon of vanishing where being was thought to abide and thus hold the promise of enduring truth. Such an ontology, we maintain, would no longer be an ontology of being as presence, but an ontology of becoming, that is, of what eludes the present (Deleuze, *LS* 1/9). Before laying out the terms by which we propose to advance such an ontology through the work of Hegel and Deleuze, it is necessary to recognize the place that vanishing has in our more general experience of the world.

**1.2. Worldly Vanishings**

Despite the normative value that has often been philosophically attributed to the permanent, the present, and the self-identical, vanishing forms a regular feature of our most fundamental experiences of the world. This regularity of vanishing is attested to, perhaps most systematically, in the temporality of lived experience. Experience is tied intimately to the present, since it is always from the present moment that we apprehend anything in time, whether it is the reflection of a past instance recalled or the anticipation of something to arrive here and now though *not yet*. Yet experience in the present is never wholly present since it involves the passage or flow of time. The flow of time, however, is manifold. We should say, from the angle of disappearance, that the present moment is the presence of the present’s own vanishing in time, the retention of vanished presents, as well as the present anticipation of further vanishings (cf. Ch. 1 §4 and Ch. 4 §6.5). When I form a conception of myself, it is always from the pivot of the

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7 *Logique du Sens* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1969); *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990). Deleuze’s text opens with a reflection on the paradoxical sense of the confluence of contrary properties in the same subject (Lewis Carroll’s Alice grows larger and smaller at the same time). For Deleuze, this is the “simultaneity of a becoming whose characteristic is to elude the present. Insofar as it eludes the present, becoming does not tolerate the separation or the distinction of before and after, or of past and future. It pertains to the essence of becoming to move and to pull in both directions at once [...].”

8 John Russon puts it well in terms of the self-coherency of temporal experience as never being fully “mine”: “This way that the past has always been *converted* to ‘my’ past points to a loss (i.e. a nonretrievable disappearance). But this inability of the I actually to be equal to itself, this irretrievability of the
present in which I am, here and now. However, this self-conception cannot be divorced from the series of forms of self that have disappeared: relinquished habits, abandoned styles, over-grown aspirations, outmoded ideas, surpassed limitations of capacity. These traces in memory trail behind my present image like the smoke of a jet engine that fumes at the base of my propulsion forward and dissipates at the tip of the tail. Just as the present is weighted by a time past, it is also oriented by the expectation of the arrival of an indeterminate time to come. Time promises a future. Through projection and anticipation, the future can be experienced as a determinate present to be realized (the adult to become, the job to acquire, the project to finish). Yet minimally, the experience of the future is the assurance that this present – in fact, any present – does not exhaust time, but must give way to something other than what it will come to be. It is thus by reflecting on what has disappeared, and by anticipating that this present will and must cease, that the present in lived time acquires meaning and significance. Life is lived through the expectation of the impermanence of things.

There is no temporality without the present, but the present is fundamentally compromised by its becoming other than itself in two directions at once. There is no present that is not already informed by something other. It is not sufficient to say that these extra-present dimensions of time – the past and the future – are deficiencies of a present that alone has being. A vanished moment may only later obtain significance when it is recalled, just as the indeterminacy of the future can be charged with the value of hope or anxiety. And yet even memory itself – the human faculty for retaining traces of what has disappeared from the present

immemorial past in principle, is the very possibility of another memory, of self-transformation. / The impossibility upon which the I am I is founded is itself an exposure in principle of that I to an alterity that is a testament in principle to the insufficiency of the sense of self and an impulsion to transformation.”

in the movement of time – is subject to degrees of forgetting that, highly variable and involuntary, often prove necessary to human life. While some phenomena disappear irretrievably because they are too small, insignificant, or not potently affective enough to be retained, other events are so large and intense that they can and must disappear in an altogether different fashion: necessary vanishings that make a certain type of life livable by inhibiting the eruption of a past trauma in the present. In this sense, what Sigmund Freud and the psychoanalytic tradition identify as “repression” involves a kind of “infantile amnesia – the forgetting which veils our earliest youth from us and makes us strangers to it.”

Rather than our consciousness being passive in relation to the movement of time, “the disappearance of the original aim” through repression is an active faculty for concealing the past trauma as the “precondition” of the symptoms of our present neuroses (clinically) and our sense who we are (existentially).

While we are in many ways passive subjects in the flow of time, it is through human language that we obtain a unique capacity for retaining – that is, for continually making present – cultural meaning that otherwise would disappear into the oblivion of an untraceable and ineffable history. For all the theoretical attempts to analyze the given structure and consistency of a particular tongue in itself and in static relation to others, language remains subject to the variability of human life and expression in which language inheres. These variations can sometimes be swift, as when a language disappears with the cataclysmic annihilation of a people. More often they are slow, as when an ancient language – through the gradual migrations of


peoples through history, place, and the diverse encounters with other dialects – effectively disappears in becoming new, distinct vernaculars. And yet the “death” of a language – its more or less definitive disappearance as a culturally active form of verbal communication – can still persist in the etymological, syntactic, and phonological traces it leaves in those extant tongues marked by their encounter with what has vanished. Languages contain the traces of vanished others, but they also bear, at their own peripheries, a more ambiguous zone in which certain phonetic features are on the verge of or “on route to” disappearing – “phonèmes en voie de disparition” – and which are thus regarded by certain linguists as “problematic” or “endangered.”

Much like the previous incapacities, anxieties, and impotencies that necessarily disappear through our becoming newly capable of a task, language itself emerges from the disappearance of a unique and irretrievable capacity that is pre-linguistic. It is in this sense that, as Roman Jakobson observes, there is a mode of vanishing at the inception of language acquisition in young children as they pass from the “apex of babble” to the “first articulation of words” determined by the phonetic system of their milieu. Prior to language acquisition, Jakobson notes that

13 Quoted phrases from Martin Riegel, Jean-Christophe Pellat, and René Rioul, Grammaire méthodique du français (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994), 41. Cf. Heller-Roazen, Echolalias, 27-32. This is less a problem of practical language use, with its almost imperceptible adaptation to historical vocal changes, than it is for linguistic categorization. A language must determine the phonemes that it includes and those that it excludes, but it also has a “third class” of “problematic phonemes” that, Heller Roazen notes, are no “longer full members of the set of sounds in a language,” yet they are “not yet utterly foreign to it” (28). These tertiary phonetic elements “inhabit the indistinct region at the limits of every sound system,” residing “in the phonic no-man’s-land that both separates and joins every language to what is is not.” The common example is French’s “e” which for linguists goes by many varied names: “silent,” “obsolete,” “unstable,” “optional,” and the “lubricant” “non-tonic.” In some words, it may or may not appear without changing the phonic recognition of the word – as in “la fenêtre” (window) – while in other circumstances it endures silently to preserve the musicality and rhythmic metric of poetic language. “Having fallen silent in its language, having retreated from sight even in its final abode in poetry,” Heller-Roazen notes that the “absence of sound” remains in its disappearance, and it is the task of poets to shape it as they draw from the vanishing letters of their language the matter of their art” (32).

“babbling children” are capable of a seemingly infinite capacity for non-linguistic vocalization, accumulating “articulations which are never found within a single language or even a group of languages: consonants with the most varied points of articulation, palatized and rounded consonants, sibilants, affricates, clicks, complex vowels, diphthongs, and so forth.” However, in passing to the linguistic stage, the child “loses nearly all of his ability to produce sounds.” This leads to what Daniel Heller-Roazen describes as a “partial atrophy of the phonic abilities,” a “forgetting” and “disappearance” of even those abilities to “form sounds common to his babble and the adult language.” While the construal of childish babble as an infinite phonetic potential risks being hyperbolic on Jakobson’s and Heller-Roazen’s parts, the significant point remains that the acquisition of something so pivotal as the mother tongue requires developing a more closed determination of speech from a less determined, and significantly more open, reserve of phonetic abilities. In order to become the linguistically meaningfully beings that we are, it is necessary that we relinquish what, at the point of becoming native speakers, is designated as an ostensibly un-meaningful capacity. This occurs much in the same way that the embryonic state of the organism vanishes in the emergence of the sexually and physically determined body with its differentiation of organs. The vanishing of a state is thus the condition of possibility for becoming tout court, which, as we will show, is intrinsically a becoming-other.

Beyond the context of phenomenal experience, vanishing pertains more intrinsically to the very movement of things in their emergence. Vanishing is the deteriorative side of the coming-to-be of a world. The bud vanishes in the bloom of the rose whose unfolding can only be effectuated by the cessation of what was before a mere potential, an inclination toward being. Without the disappearance of the bud in the opening of the bloom, the rose as such could not be the thing whose blossoming form, for instance, draws adoration from strollers in the Spring. So

\[15\] *Echolalias*, 10.
too does the fullness of its unfolded petals decline, in the very instant of its birth, toward the vanishing of maturity in mutable speeds of decomposition. In the moment in which the “bud disappears in the bursting-forth of the blossom” (Ph 2/10 ¶2), Hegel sees the essential insight about philosophical thought coming to the maturity of its self-reflection: thinking is realized not as something “fixed and enduring,” but as developing insofar as it “passes over into its dissolution” as a fixed state (Ph 34/40 ¶55). Thought becomes philosophical properly at the point at which it apprehends itself as both “Substance” and “Subject,” the unity of grasping itself as this very “movement” or “passage” as its “concrete existence” (Ph 10/18 ¶17). Thought discovers itself as “the process of its own becoming” (Ph 10/18 ¶17), a “whole” which is “nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development” (Ph 11/19 ¶19), “becoming its own immanent content” by “becoming an other than itself” (Ph 32/38 ¶53). To understand something in its becoming is thus to grasp it not merely in the linear stages through which it emerged in the present, but foremost to elucidate the moments of vanishing that make such a development possible and to which all becoming is inevitably destined for a content that is living.

What unites these different encounters with vanishings, on one reading, is that they pertain to our phenomenal experiences as beings in a dynamic world. As we have seen, this could be through the experience of being in time, of developing and losing our organic bodies, or the way that our experience is given meaning through language, which, like the beings that actualize themselves in and through it, proves to be structurally mutable. In one sense, because we are beings that experience objects from a spatially delimited perspective, objects can emerge and vanish from the limits of our sight, or we may hear sounds that resonate in the depth of our auditory field and diminish until they have gone. We are faced with the quandary that things vanish because our perspective is a limitation of a whole that exceeds us, yet the experience of vanishing itself reveals this excessive wholeness and the limitation of it that we primarily are. If
our techno-scientific community, with its incessant expansion of surveillance, can be left without explanation for an event like the vanishing of an airliner over the depths of an ocean in night-flight, it is because the magnitude of the world to be investigated by default exceeds our empirical capacities for verification, for excavating and re-presencing what has vanished into the depths of the world. In another sense, human experience would not be what it is without relations with the world defined by vanishing. Could the affective love that accompanies the impression of my mother be possible without having forgotten the pain of childbirth and the regular termini of breast-feeding? Would forgiveness be possible without an openness to letting the resentment over a previous harm disappear from one’s affective attention? Can a decision be made without the instantaneous vanishing and closure of the infinite field of alternative possibilities? In short, can something become anything at all without manifold passages of evanescence that are both involuntary and decisive?

Already we can see the diverse set of ideas, valuations, and concerns that accompany the experience of vanishing. Most basically, vanishing indicates both a state of change, insofar as a phenomenon alters in the degree of its presence, as well as an extremity of change or vanishing point in which the rate of change itself leaves presence altogether, becoming imperceptible. As such it reveals the temporal discontinuity of that which vanishes – something’s diminishment in time – as well as its spatial disparateness or displacement. Logically, vanishing entails something more than the mere negation of a reality, since something can only disappear if it can simultaneously remain spectrally as the presence it was and become the absence it will be. Affectively, vanishing evokes a sense of loss regarding something that was valued in its presence, and the absence of what we expect or hope to remain. Such a loss can be experienced in many ways. The disappearance of an object from our view might be a matter of inevitability or necessity, while the abrupt disappearance before our eyes might appear as contingency, magic, or invisibility, as when
something becomes too small, is rarefied, or is covered over. In many of these senses, vanishing indicates a kind of *negativity*, both logically and affectively, and an *indeterminacy* regarding what reality is becoming. What vanishes carries with it the possibility of its reappearance. In short, vanishing has the nature of a *problem*.

The question remains whether the problem of vanishing is exclusively a concern for the phenomenological investigation of the finitude of human experience, or whether it pertains also to an ontological investigation. Both routes are certainly worthy and necessary, and by no means incompatible, but our investigation will predominately follow the latter as a single path so that we might, in the end, open the way to others. How can vanishing have any bearing on the nature of thought or being, rather than signaling merely the unique limits that define and accompany sense perception or human life? The study of metaphysics, as the thought of the underlying structures of reality as such, must foremost elucidate the very being of the world as it is. As we will see, classical philosophical thought has often assigned a privilege to what endures and to what is present in the account of being. If traditional metaphysics has led to an inextricable and continual impasse, perhaps this is due to a speculative alliance between being and absolute presence, that is, the absolute coincidence of thought with its object. Vanishing on all accounts poses a problem for thought. The problem not only indicates thought’s own limits in regard to an unknown, but also compels it beyond its limit in anticipation of a solution. We must now consider the way that an ontology of vanishing has been precluded in the history of metaphysics before turning to the ontology of becoming that we propose to investigate.

16 Immanuel Kant indicts “metaphysics” in the *Critique of Pure Reason* as a “wholly isolated speculative cognition of reason” that “elevates itself entirely above all instruction from experience […] through mere concepts […] where reason thus is supposed to be its own pupil. […] For in it reason continually gets stuck […]. In metaphysics we have to retrace our path countless times, because we find that it does not lead where we want to go […]; on this battlefield no combatant has ever gained the least bit of ground, nor has any been able to base any lasting possession on his victory” (Bxv). *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and eds. by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
1.3. The Ontology of Presence

There is a long epistemological tradition that, in an attempt to locate the ground of truth, moves away from the empirical realm of experience, where everything is changeable and fleeting, to the realm of the mind where ideas are clear and durable. The instability and impermanence signaled by the vanishings in the phenomenal realm have formed a negative normative criterion for the project of philosophy. This division between the fleetingness of sense and the permanence of ideas undoubtedly was first systemized by Plato, and perhaps finds its culmination in Cartesian epistemology. Classical thought readily acknowledged that there are beings in the world that are corruptible, subject not only to coming-into-being but inevitably destined to decay and perish.¹⁷ Finite existence discovers in itself the “law of its being,” the parabolic line in which life’s rate of emergence finds, on the other side of its apex, its corresponding rate of disappearance toward the ground from which it came.¹⁸ However, this recognition raises the question of whether there is not, endemic to the unique capacity of the human being, a higher faculty that would give it access to a domain that was incorruptible, which by its nature does not vanish and which can be thought.

This tradition arguably begins with Parmenides’ single thought, fragmented yet perennial: χρὶ τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ’ ἐόν ἔμεναι.¹⁹ “All that is to be said [λέγειν] and thought

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¹⁸ “For wherever the human soul turns itself other than you, it is fixed in sorrows […]. Things rise and set: in their emerging they begin as it were to be, and grow to perfection; having reached perfection, they grow old and die. Not everything grows old, but everything dies. So when things rise and emerge into existence, the faster they grow to be, the quicker they rush towards non-being. This is the law limiting their being.” Augustine, Confessions, 61.

¹⁹ The Presocratic Philosophers, eds. G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 247 [Fr. 6, line 1].
In the convergence of the two human capacities—"to speak" or to give an account, and to "think" about the nature of reality—Parmenides isolates "being," or what "is," as the essential object of philosophical inquiry. Moreover, he emphasizes the "two ways" or paths that human thought encounters: either we follow the idea of being to recognize the unwavering insight that being is "changeless," "uncreated," and "imperishable," the "unshaken heart of well-rounded truth," or we set out on the path of contradiction in which things will both be and not be. From this juncture, metaphysics is given its measure: to obtain truth is to grasp being in its unwavering presence. Aristotle defines metaphysics as a commitment to thinking "being as being" [ὅν ὑν], a labor much greater and more treacherous than that of the specific sciences (such as mathematics or biology) that are content to "cut off a part of being and investigate the attributes of this part." The thought of being qua being must pursue the "first principles and highest causes." Metaphysics must pass to the absolute to which these attributes of "existing things [...] belong in virtue of its own nature." Yet, as Aristotle recognizes, raising the question of being does not discover a static and unchanging whole of being without qualification. Rather, it requires specifying the categorical difference between the "many ways" in which being is said of a world that exhibits states of change, whether these changes are emergent properties, variations of degree, or the definitive perishing of things (see Ch. 2 §5 below). For Aristotle, τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικὰ conjoins with Φυσικὴ ἀκρόασις in the recognition that being pertains to things, or substances, that emerge in the world of their own accord and whose becoming is a quintessentially philosophical problem. To speak

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20 Ibid., my translation. Kirk et al. translate the line more literally, emphasizing the necessity of the "must," but rendering the English grammar awkward: "What is there to be said and thought must needs be."

21 Ibid. For the "unchanging" and "imperishable" nature of being, see Fr. 8 (lines 249-51); for the "ways" of thought and "unshaken" truth, see Fr. 1 & 2 (lines 242-5). For a further discussion of Parmenides in relation to Hegel’s notion of "pure being," see Chapter 1, §2.1.1 below.

22 Aristotle, Metaphysics (Vol. 2), 1584 [1003a20-25].
then of emergence ("coming-to-be") and vanishing ("ceasing-to-be") as "unqualified" is aporetic, since these categories have meaning only insofar as they predicate a substrative substance that emerges, vanishes, or endures variations of its own state.  

When Martin Heidegger in Being and Time (1927) announces the "task" of a "destruction of the history of ontology" (BT 44/23) through a return to and repetition of the "question of being," it is first a matter of recognizing that not only has being as such been conceived temporally, but it has been understood merely in relation to a "definite mode of time," namely, the "Present" [Gegenwart] (BT 47/25).  

If thought is comported essentially to the "being of beings," Heidegger argues that this being "in the highest degree" has been "synonymous with permanence in presence." Heidegger signals two interrelated problems with this traditional understanding of being as presence. First, it presupposes temporality, yet it has not provided an adequate interpretation of the "fundamental ontological function of time" that gives meaning and structure to this understanding of Being (BT 48/26). Second, the relation of thought to Being is not merely a matter of apprehending what is always already present and given. Thought comports itself to the world in such a way that allows Being to be apprehended as what "shows itself in itself," what makes itself "manifest" so as to be grasped, as what "announces itself" to be "brought to the light" (BT 51-52/28-9). But this "phenomenal" aspect of Being also entails that

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23 "[...] coming-to-be and passing-away must occur within the field of that which can be and not be. This, therefore, is cause in the sense of matter for the things which are such as to come-to-be; while cause, in the sense of their end, is their figure or form—and that is the formula expressing the substance of each of them." On Generation and Corruption, 549 [335b1-5]. At the end of the treatise, Aristotle makes the important argument that coming-to-be must be infinite, unlimited, and uninterrupted: “God therefore [...] fulfilled the perfection of the universe by making coming-to-be uninterrupted; for the greatest possible coherence would thus be secured to existence, because that coming-to-be should itself come-to-be perpetually is the closest approximation to eternal being,” that is, to “circular motion” (551-552 [336b30-337a1]).


what shows itself most primordially “does not show itself,” but remains “hidden” or “concealed” \( (BT\ 59/35) \). There is no appearance without some aspect of the phenomenon that “remains hidden in an exceptional sense, or which relapses and gets covered up [Verdeckung] again, or which shows itself only ‘in disguise’ [verstellt]” \( (BT\ 59/35, \text{translation modified}). \) However, we will misunderstand the implications of Heidegger’s point if we take this to imply a “Being” that remains hidden and un-presentable in the illusory semblances that show themselves to us. For Heidegger, only “as phenomenology, is ontology possible” \( (BT\ 60/35-6) \).26 That which conceals itself does so only in the same act of revealing itself. Ontology becomes phenomenology through the immanence of appearance in which concealment forms the inverse side of any presentation of things. Being can no longer be examined as mere presence, but must be investigated in the “ecstatic” temporality that unfolds as the “primordial ‘outside-of-itself’ in and for itself” \( (BT\ 377/328-9, \text{translation modified}) \). Rather than foreclosing the project of ontology, Heidegger’s insight demands that we read its history without the presupposition that Being will necessarily equal presence and the entailed ground of self-identity. “Dasein must, as itself, become—that is to say, be—what it is not yet” \( (BT\ 287/243) \). The transcendence of the ego from its world gives way to the immanence of the world of what appears. Phenomenology rediscovers an ecstatic ontology in which being must be examined in its vanishing no less than its coming-to-presence, in the linguistically referential, spatially displaced, and temporal existence of a being in a world whose opening or showing is entangled with its own concealment and withdrawing.

2. **Aims of the Project**

The aims of this project are to argue for an ontology of vanishing, and to determine the extent to which one has been stilted or achieved in the history of metaphysics. What does it mean

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26 Heidegger shortly after defines the project of philosophy as “universal phenomenological ontology” \( (BT\ 36/38) \).
to suggest an ontological status for vanishing? The traditional approach, following Aristotle, is to see vanishing as one possible state of change for a substance that is ontologically primary. The unattended pot of boiling water can gradually disappear into steam only because the substance of H₂O permits evaporation under specific heat conditions. Alternatively, as we saw above, vanishing can be explained in terms of perspective, as the loss of an object for experiential apprehension. In this case, vanishing does not pertain to things themselves in their being, but to the way they are perceived for a subject of experience. Both routes see vanishing as secondary to a substance or subject that grounds it as a deviation from presence. What we will argue is that Hegel and Deleuze provide accounts of vanishing that see it as a movement or dynamic of being that is more primary than that which becomes as a result. Our opening hypothesis is that vanishing is an essential facet of primary difference, the ontological movement in which things themselves are generated. The stakes of this provisional claim we sketch out below and throughout this work.

The method of the argument we provide is both historical and philosophical in nature. Following Heidegger’s cue for a “repetition” of the “question of being,” we are interested in the way that the tradition of ontology has moved to challenge the conception of being as presence and the principle of identity involved in this equation. To do this, we closely examine two ontological projects that directly employ “vanishing” in a way that is metaphysical rather than simply metaphorical or phenomenally descriptive: Hegel’s Science of Logic and Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition. We are compelled to think differently about the relation between two thinkers and texts that have largely been regarded as diverging paths in the tradition of post-Kantian European philosophy (see §3 below). Despite the often noted antitheses between Hegel and Deleuze’s metaphysics, we maintain that they share a convergent orientation in the tradition of ontology by providing methodologically distinct critiques of the form of identity in the conception
of being. More significantly, we maintain that the conclusions of their positive projects promote a primacy of the movement of immanent becoming over the transcendent presence of being. We argue for the centrality of becoming in both of their ontologies by textually following the encounter between their respective insights, and by showing the consistency and development of vanishing as a process throughout.

In tandem with this co-reading, we attempt to excavate ontological vanishing in the history of metaphysics that directly informs both projects. Introducing the notion of vanishing into the canon of ontology requires demonstrating its consistent occurrence and constitutive function within it. We argue that vanishing has in fact been an important problematic, however minor, of traditional metaphysical accounts, but it is Deleuze’s innovative work that draws our attention it. To make this historical case, we provide short interpretations of canonical texts – of Aristotle, Spinoza, and Leibniz in particular – to show a consistent but largely unappreciated role of vanishing in metaphysics. However, our primary goal is not to provide comprehensive accounts of these metaphysical systems. Rather, we aim to (a) lay the groundwork for further work that would trace the history of vanishing in ontology, and (b) to use these thinkers to draw more precise contrasts with the specific arguments provided by Hegel and Deleuze with which we are primarily concerned.

The second half of this introduction is dedicated to sketching the terms of our project. In §3 we will first consider the difficulties posed by reading Hegel and Deleuze together by briefly contextualizing the theoretical antagonisms between their philosophical projects as they were set out by Deleuze himself and later reinforced by scholarship on Deleuze. We briefly survey the field of scholarship that has more rigorously advanced the study of the relationship between Hegel and Deleuze. We then clarify (a) the method through which we read Hegel’s *Logic* and Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* simultaneously, (b) how this method differs from the types of
comparative analysis found in existing scholarship, and (c) some of the difficulties and shortcomings of our approach. In §4 we explain the general aims and orientations of Hegel and Deleuze’s projects. Our position is that both texts should be regarded, with certain important qualifications, as ontological projects. Moreover, they should be understood as beginning from common philosophical concerns about both the dogmatic point of beginning in philosophy and the uncritical affiliation of thought to the foundational principle of identity. Having established ontology as the orientation of our analysis, §5 summarizes the role of vanishing in both Hegel and Deleuze’s systems. Lastly, §6 provides an outline and summary of the central claims provided by each chapter.

**PART II: HEGEL AND DELEUZE**

3. **Hegel, Deleuze, and Their Tradition(s)**

But truly to escape Hegel involves an exact appreciation of the price we have to pay to detach ourselves from him. […] We have to determine the extent to which our anti-Hegelianism is possibly one of his tricks directed against us, at the end of which he stands, motionless, waiting for us.²⁷

3.1. **Deleuze Against Hegel**

The difficulty in reading Hegel and Deleuze together stems directly from the unequivocal ways in which Deleuze himself stresses the philosophical and personal antipathy that his project has in relation to Hegel and the tradition of Hegelianism in France.²⁸ Deleuze prefaces *Difference and Repetition* by suggesting that the recent fruition of a philosophy of difference – against the predominant focus on the “negative” and “contradiction” – is attributable to a “generalized anti-Hegelianism” (*DR* xix/1). Interviews with Deleuze show a frankness regarding his distaste for

Hegelianism (§6), a negative sentiment uncommon for a thinker who elsewhere claims that if you do not love something then you have no business writing on it. His seminal monograph on Friedrich Nietzsche culminates in an unwavering attack on the “nihilistic” drive in what he sees as Hegel’s reduction of difference to opposition, negativity, and contradiction. This sentiment later forms the linchpin of Deleuze’s more precise account of Hegel in *Difference and Repetition*. In order both to resuscitate and to create an affirmative philosophy of difference, Deleuze clearly regarded it as necessary to differentiate, and at times intractably oppose, the form of difference provided by the dialectics of negation that had come to concern much of contemporary French philosophy. There will not be a discovery of a hidden taste for Hegel in Deleuze’s work. However, as we maintain throughout, this does not mean that there are not moments of acknowledged and unacknowledged affinity between their projects (see §4 below).


30 “Writing caries out the conjunction, the transmutation of fluxes, through which life escapes from the resentment of persons, societies and reigns. […] One only writes through love, all writing is a love-letter: the literature-Real” (D 50-51/62).


32 For accounts of the philosophical tradition of French Hegelianism, see Bruce Baugh, *French Hegel: From Surrealism to Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 2003), especially his excellent eighth chapter (147-173) on Deleuze, Foucault, and what Baugh isolates as the challenge of a “new empiricism” to the inadequacies of the abstraction of immediacy arguably provided by Hegel’s *Phenomenology* (see §3.2.1, Ch. 1 §3.3, and Ch. 4 §6.1 below). For other excellent accounts, see John Russon, “Dialectic, Difference, and the Other: The Hegelianizing of French Phenomenology,” in *The History of Continental Philosophy, Volume 4: Phenomenology: Responses and Developments*, ed. Leonard Lawlor, 17-42 (Durham: Acumen, 2010); and Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2012). Each piece examines the influence of Hegel on French thought according to distinct conceptual issues: Baugh isolates the experience of self-division in the moment of “unhappy consciousness” in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, against the primacy given to the master-slave relation by Kojève’s notorious reading; Russon focuses on the role of subjectivity and otherness in phenomenological experience; and Butler, drawing more heavily from the psychoanalytic tradition, focuses on the structure of desire.
While *Difference and Repetition* can be seen in important respects, among the multiform tasks it sets for itself, as a response to and engagement with Hegel’s *Logic*, Deleuze’s most intense criticisms of Hegel come in the context of the opposition he stresses between the spirit of Nietzsche’s philosophy and Hegel’s “dialectics,” with the former representing a central axis of Deleuze’s own philosophy. *Nietzsche and Philosophy* culminates with the frequently noted account that the principle of negativity leads only to a “reactionary” and “nihilistic” thought (*NP* 156-159/180-183; cf. 52-58/59-65) against the “affirmation” of difference and becoming provided by Nietzsche’s “will to power” (*NP* 173-178/199-203, 186-189/213-217). For Deleuze, the motor of dialectics, with its “labour of the negative,” can merely offer a “coarse approximation” to the thought of difference (*NP* 157-158/181). Negativity “inverts” difference (*NP* 56-57/64; cf. *DR* 51/72, 55/78) in such a way that, through “an art of *ressentiment*” (*NP* 160/184), prevents the affirmation of the field of differential forces that constitute life and thought. “The negative is the image of difference, but a flattened and inverted image, like the candle in the eye of the ox” – a philosophical “eye” Deleuze likens to a “dialectician dreaming of a futile combat” (*DR* 51/72). For Deleuze, affirmation must be defined independently of the negative, and the idea of difference “in itself” realized beyond the limits of contradiction.

These remarks have drawn attention from few scholars that wish to defend Hegel against the challenge, to the extent that any possible agreement between Hegel and Deleuze appears to hinge on whether one’s reading of Deleuze is Nietzschean or not. Acknowledging the feasibility of Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche, Stephen Houlgate reproaches Deleuze’s mobilization of

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33 There are just as many references to Hegel in *Difference and Repetition* as there are individually to Plato and Kant.
34 “We will misunderstand the whole of Nietzsche’s work if we do not see ‘against whom’ its principle concepts are directed. Hegelian themes are present in this work as the enemy against which it fights” (*NP* 162/187). These remarks mirror Deleuze’s reflection in his “Letter to a Harsh Critic” that his engagement with Kant was the composition of a “book about an enemy” (*N* 6), though an enemy from which he acknowledges drawing more significant insights than he is prepared to recognize in Hegel.
Nietzsche against Hegel, arguing both that Deleuze misconstrues Hegel’s notion of negativity while also presupposing the negativity of opposition in his own account of affirmative difference. Houlgate argues that despite Deleuze’s intention to oppose Hegel theoretically, Deleuze “in practice confirms Hegel’s dialectical view, for he also determines affirmation as essentially opposed to negation (in the sense of the negative will to power),” thus “logically incorporating the moment of negation (in the sense of opposition) within itself.” With Houlgate, himself an erudite and careful reader of Hegel, we find a type of criticism that is paradigmatic in taking up the relation between Hegel and Deleuze: any direct engagement with Hegel on Deleuze’s part, in an attempt to free dialectics from the negative (DR 157/204, 161-162/210, 164/213, 178-179/231-232, 188/243-244, 268/344-345), is already anticipated by Hegel’s system and cannot help but show a constitutive negativity that it explicitly wants to avoid. Going further, Judith Butler argues that Deleuze’s account of difference and desire fails ultimately to distinguish itself from the philosophy of identity marked by what she regards as the “Hegelian effort to transvaluate or supersede all negativity into an all-encompassing Being.” Butler argues that this is because Deleuze’s philosophy of desire orients itself toward an “elusive and tantalizing”

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35 Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Criticism of Metaphysics (London: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 8. To support the essentiality of “opposition” to the “affirmation” of the will to power, Houlgate cites two passages from Nietzsche and Philosophy (NP 176/203, 188/216), but he also does not aim to seriously analyze Deleuze’s point that difference constitutes itself independently of real oppositions.

36 However, this type of reading is ineffective for two reasons. First, it opts for a thin Deleuzian reading of Hegel at the cost of a more robust and interesting reading of Hegel provided in Difference and Repetition; in short, it collapses Deleuze’s more interesting arguments into less interesting polemics. Second, it does this without any sustained consideration of Deleuze’s attempt to think difference affirmatively – that is, without appeal to the negative – or of a possible Hegelian response to such an attempt. Such a Hegelian response to a more generous reading of Deleuze, while certainly more interesting and rigorous, would also potentially challenge simpler readings of Hegel as merely a philosopher of the reconciliation of opposites.

37 Subjects of Desire, 217.
‘beyond’,” a “version of absolute presence, albeit internally differentiated” that remains the “final aim or telos of desire”⁴⁸ that “[dreams] of reconstituting that lost unity of Being.”⁴⁹

Against the challenges to Deleuze by Houlgate and Butler, Michael Hardt reads Deleuze’s early critique of Hegel not as an inadvertent relapse to the terms of “partial” opposition in which what is opposed is “preserved,” but as a strategic “evasion” or “nondialectic opposition” geared toward a “separation that prohibits the recuperation of relations.”⁵⁰ For Hardt, this means that Deleuze should be read in “total opposition” to the terms of the dialectic’s problems and in light of the consequent prerogative to “move away from” and “to forget the dialectic” altogether in the construction of a history of ontology with divergent routes containing “real discontinuities, veritable differences of nature.”⁵¹ Between the extremes of Houlgate and Hardt, Pierre Verstraeten’s work aims to show that Deleuze’s equation of difference with contradiction in Hegel flattens and sterilizes the properly productive element of negativity.⁵² By pushing for a more engaged encounter between them, Verstraeten opens the possibility, through Deleuze’s own work, for seeing more difference in Hegel than Deleuze would permit, and also

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⁴⁸ Ibid., 216.
⁴⁹ Ibid., 217. Butler’s argument here is paralleled in important ways by Alain Badiou and Peter Hallward’s critiques of Deleuze (see §4.5), and in a related but different spirit by Baugh (see Ch. 4 §6.4).
⁵⁰ Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 52.
⁵¹ Ibid., 53. Methodologically, Hardt’s interpretation of Deleuze charts an ontological course back from Bergson through Nietzsche and Spinoza.
⁵² According to Verstraeten, Deleuze emphasizes the “autonomy of difference” at the cost of “believing that this concept is absent in Hegel and above all to believe that the contradiction of negation can work otherwise than the differentiation he supports.” “Indeed, if for Hegel every determination is negation, it is certainly in the sense that every determination is the negation of negation.” However, Verstraeten emphasizes that this negativity cannot be understood in Hegel as the “indetermination” or indifference of an infinite substance opposed to the finite modes defined as mere “limitations” of it, since for Hegel the “mot d’ordre” against Spinoza is that substance must “become” subject through its own self-differentiation (see Chapter 4 §3.2 below). “La Question du Néгatif Chez Deleuze,” in Gilles Deleuze, eds. Verstaeten and Isabelle Stengers (Paris: Libraire Philosophique J. Vrin, 1998), 184 [my translation]. The most systematic studies on this subject of difference and negativity in Deleuze and Hegel are provided by Juliette Simont, Essai sur la quantité, la qualité, la relation chez Kant, Hegel, Deleuze: Les “Fleurs Noires” de la Logique Philosophique (Paris: Éditions l’Harmattan, 1997); and Véronique Bergen, L’Ontologie de Gilles Deleuze (Paris: Editions l’Harmattan, 2001). Simont pursues their accounts of difference and intensity in the context of Kant’s transcendental philosophy, while Bergen situates them in terms of their ontological orientations.
more of a role for negativity in Deleuze’s own account of determination. We are not arguing for any necessary disparity between Deleuze’s conclusive views on Hegel in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition*. Rather, our interest is in the way the latter text discovers, beneath the terms of negation, a movement of becoming (vanishing and appearance) that contributes an innovative and more nuanced reading of Hegel than Deleuze earlier provided.43

Despite the critical character of Deleuze’s remarks about Hegel in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze’s engagement is more often philosophical than merely polemical or historical. As we will see (in Ch. 4 below), *Difference and Repetition* develops its own account of difference from what Deleuze takes to be the inability of Hegelian dialectics to adequately break from the principle of identity. However, this failure occurs at the end of what Deleuze sees as a successful labor of Hegel’s *Logic* in challenging the identity of essences, as systematized by what Deleuze calls “finite representation” (see Ch. 2), by taking difference to the limit of the infinite (see Ch. 3), that is, as far as Deleuze thinks difference can go within the bounds of representation: “Hegelian contradiction appears to push difference to the limit, but this path is a dead end which brings it back to identity, making identity the sufficient condition for difference to exist and be thought. […] The intoxication and giddiness are feigned, the obscure is already clarified from the outset” (*DR* 263/338-339). In this encounter, there is thus more than a dispute over the articulation of difference as negativity: what Deleuze wrestles with Hegel over, albeit in a highly brief but rich way, is the constitutive relation between finite and infinite reality. This philosophical problem is essential not only to the 17th century metaphysical systems of Leibniz and Spinoza from which

43 Catherine Malabou proposes to move in this direction. “Who’s Afraid of Hegelian Wolves?” in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, ed. Paul Patton, 114-138 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996). Malabou characterizes her method as a “non-critical” crossing, one which does not preside over a decision, but results from (just as it causes it) a complication. In complicating the relation between Deleuze and Hegel one manages to show how the two thinkers form one against the other, or one with the other, something like a “block of becoming,” one of those heterogeneous and unnatural combinations that Deleuze is wont to speak of” (119-120).
Deleuze draws heavily for this own theory of difference. Moreover, it is a problem that finds a novel and central articulation in Hegel’s *Logic*. As we will argue further, this philosophical encounter concerns how becoming should be thought and articulated, and how much vanishing and obscurity an ontology should contain.

Deleuze raises a number of distinct philosophical criticisms against Hegelian dialectics throughout his career. These varied moves against Hegel are often pivoted through thinkers such as Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Bergson, thus making any analysis of Deleuze’s encounter with Hegel potentially oblique. Without exhausting Deleuze’s claims, it is nonetheless clear that the essential dispute involves whether the ultimate form of difference involves negativity, which is a fairly uncontroversial reading of Hegel that Deleuze advances, or whether, as Deleuze himself maintains, difference must be thought independently of any form of negation. From this basic problem of understanding the form of difference, there are two central philosophical objections that frame Deleuze’s critical reading of Hegel in *Difference and Repetition*. These criticisms concern: (1) the shortcoming of the method of Hegel’s logic, and (2) the inadequacy of its result.

**1. Method.** Deleuze claims that since Hegel begins in abstraction, dialectical logic can never provide an account of the real. As we will demonstrate (in §4.2 and Ch. 1 §2 below), Hegel’s method in the *Logic* does in fact explicitly begin with an abstraction from the concrete that he sees as necessary for thought to begin without presuppositions, and thus to set metaphysics on a non-dogmatic “foundation.” Since Deleuze himself embraces the same “critical” move (in the Kantian sense) of challenging the structural presuppositions of a “dogmatic image of thought” (*DR* Ch. 3; see §4.4 below), it is important to see Deleuze’s challenge to Hegel here as an appraisal not merely of its point of beginning, but of what Deleuze sees as the terms of its unfolding. Deleuze claims that Hegel “creates movement, even the movement of the infinite, but because he creates it with words and representations it is a false
movement, and nothing follows” (*DR* 52/74). This critique is obscure, since it is not immediately clear what it would mean for a philosophical exposition to effect movement *without words*. Despite the thinness of this formulation in *Difference and Repetition*, it is important to make a number of observations.

First, the demonstration of the “movement” of thought is a common goal between Deleuze and Hegel, and the dispute that Deleuze founds concerns how this movement is effectuated and expressed. Second, Deleuze thinks Hegel falters in giving an account of this movement because it is generated by abstract terms rather than the terms being chosen through their adequacy to the movement that they express and of which they are not the cause. Rather than suggesting a purely ineffable route to difference, we argue that Deleuze’s critique here hinges on his critique of the efficacy of the “concept.” Third, for Deleuze, the “representational” movement that Hegel claims to effectuate immanently (by way of negation) misses a more fundamental movement proper to reality (by way of difference): Hegel, Deleuze claims, succeeds only in approximating the real “epiphenomenally” (*DR* 52/74). In short, despite Hegel’s extreme caution of beginning “purely” – that is, without presuppositions – Deleuze offers what he takes to be a critique that Hegel, in spite of his aims, in fact presupposes a mode of thinking, an image of what thought is that determines the course of his presentation.

(2) *Result.* By “mediating” the infinite movement of difference through what Deleuze regards as the “infinite circulation of the identical by means of negativity” (*DR* 50/71), Hegel is appraised as accomplishing only a “false movement” of difference (*DR* 52/74; *B* 44/38). Ultimately, for Deleuze, this particular movement of difference consummates itself in a “whole”

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44 “One can always mediate, pass over into the antithesis, combine the synthesis, but the thesis does not follow: it subsists in its immediacy, in its difference which itself constitutes the true movement. Difference is the true content of the thesis, the persistence of the thesis. The negative and negativity do not even capture the phenomenon of difference, only the phantom or the epiphenomenon. The whole of Phenomenology is an epiphenomenology” (*DR* 52/74).
defined by the form of identity that mediates differential negativity and checks the movement of vanishing in the “return of the same.” It thus, for Deleuze, cannot think difference “in itself.” Prior to these conclusions, Deleuze provides a challenging and nuanced reading of the “infinite representation” afforded by Hegel, from which we argue Deleuze draws an important and largely unacknowledged resource for assigning vanishing a positive role in the philosophy of difference. Until recently, less scholarship has been devoted to Deleuze’s demanding reading of Hegel in these passages. The core of this work concerns elucidating the philosophical parameters of “infinite representation” (see Chs. 3 & 4 below).

It is not the aim of this project to definitively solve the antagonism produced by Deleuze’s critique of Hegel along these two lines. Much work has been done, and more has recently begun, toward working out these issues according to the terms that Deleuze has provocatively established. Rather, we propose to problematize this reading in another way: not by turning Hegel on Deleuze, but by pushing Deleuze’s more nuanced reading of Hegel further to generate a different reading of Hegel – a Hegel dedicated to becoming rather than being – that Deleuze makes possible in his efforts to banish him without recourse from the philosophy of difference. As we will see below, one way of understanding vanishing in Hegel is as the effect of something’s intrinsic negativity. If this is right, then this leaves open the question of how Deleuze can incorporate vanishing into his own account of difference without also incorporating negativity (see Ch. 4 §6.4 and Conclusion §3 & §4).

3.2. Scholarship on Hegel and Deleuze

Scholarship on the relation between Hegel and Deleuze has been predominately geared toward appraising the compatibility of their different orientations. Following Deleuze’s cue,

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45 This opposition is noted frequently in Deleuze scholarship, so we have chosen not to reference those pieces that merely re-state Deleuze’s positions against Hegel, for which Deleuze’s own claims are
there has been a consensus that Hegel and Deleuze provide fundamentally incompatible forms of thought grounded in distinct philosophical temperaments and conceptual resources.\(^\text{46}\) A significant body of scholarship on Deleuze, following this sentiment implicitly or explicitly, has tended to orient Deleuze’s thought in an alternative philosophical lineage – composed of what Smith calls Deleuze’s “philosophical allies” – that purports to offer an affirmative ontology of difference capable of either bypassing Hegel’s own contribution (e.g. through Bergson or Nietzsche)\(^\text{47}\) or evasively anticipating it in advance (through Spinoza).\(^\text{48}\) It has thus become customary to begin such a study as this by situating the two thinkers according to series of terms that indicate their conceptual divergences: opposition, negativity, contradiction (Hegel); or multiplicity, difference, becoming (Deleuze).\(^\text{49}\) Despite this tendency, this work begins with the common problems that we argue motivate their thought without presupposing their irreconcilability (for our own method, see §3.3 below). In this section, we survey some of the important work that has been influential in better understanding the relation of Deleuze’s

\(^{46}\)Hardt’s reading is the most unequivocal instance. Similarly, Manola Antonioli asserts that there is “no encounter possible” between Hegel and Deleuze insofar as Hegel’s “recourse to the negative and to contradiction is irreconcilable with the affirmative presuppositions of the Deleuzian philosophy” (my translation). \textit{Deleuze et l'histoire de la philosophie} (Paris: Kimé, 1999), 80.

\(^{47}\)For Deleuze’s appeal to Bergson, see Hardt, \textit{Apprenticeship}, 1-25. For Deleuze’s appeal to Nietzsche against Hegel, see for instance Nathan Widder, “Thought After Dialectics,” \textit{The Southern Journal of Philosophy} XLI (2002): 451-476; and Hardt, \textit{Apprenticeship}, 26-55.

\(^{48}\)Hardt, \textit{Apprenticeship}, 56-111; and Simon Duffy, \textit{The Logic of Expression: Quality, Quantity, and the Intensity in Spinoza, Hegel and Deleuze} (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006). Duffy follows Pierre Macherey’s seminal study in arguing that Spinoza’s ontology provides an early alternative route in the ontology of immanence that eludes Hegel’s accomplishment of immanence through negativity: \textit{Hegel ou Spinoza} (Paris: Librairie François Maspero, 1979); \textit{Hegel or Spinoza}, trans. Susan M. Ruddick (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011). Macherey’s text was certainly informed by Deleuze’s work on Spinoza in the late 1960s, but also served as an important ally for Deleuzian scholarship afterward.

\(^{49}\)Until very recently, less work has been devoted to carefully analyzing the often intricate arguments that each offer and which frequently converge on common problems. Interest in working out their relation more closely has seen the publication of an important volume dedicated to the topic from a diverse number of angles: Karen Houle and James Vernon, eds., \textit{Hegel and Deleuze: Together Again for the First Time} (Illinois: Northwestern Press, 2013).
philosophy to Hegel and the tradition of post-Kantian German philosophy.\textsuperscript{50} In particular, we focus on Deleuze’s method of transcendental empiricism (§3.2.1), and its significance for Deleuze’s relation to the problematics of Kant’s transcendental project (§3.2.2). These two avenues of approach to Hegel and Deleuze will then allow us to properly orient our project as ontological (§4). As we will see, Hegel and Deleuze are concerned with providing genetic accounts of experience and thought.

\subsection*{3.2.1. Transcendental Empiricism}

Deleuze appeals to an affirmative conception of difference as power through Nietzsche’s philosophy to skirt the irreducible movement of negativity he sees in Hegel’s. Positively, \textit{Difference and Repetition’s} appeal to the method of “transcendental empiricism” (\textit{DR} 56-58/79-81; cf. 139-141/181-184) promises an account of worldly experience predicated on the “concrete richness of the sensible” (\textit{D} 54/68) rather than the abstraction of conceptual mediation.\textsuperscript{51} This means that Deleuze’s philosophy has been situated in light of Hegel’s account of immediacy and the critique of empiricism in the \textit{Phenomenology of Spirit} (\textit{Ph} 58-66/63-70 /\textit{90}-110). Given that this problem of empiricism has served as a key linchpin in the important scholarship on Deleuze’s relation to Hegel’s philosophy, it is necessary to give a brief, though by no means resolving treatment of it here. This problematic has been advanced with significant clarity and persuasion by Bruce

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{50} There are three noteworthy works that offer excellent and systematic analyses and which have been highly influential to our specific approach in this work: Jay Lampert, “Limit, Ground, Judgment... Syllogism: Hegel, Deleuze, Hegel, and Deleuze,” in Houle and Vernon, eds., \textit{Hegel and Deleuze}, 183-203; Henry Somers-Hall, \textit{Hegel, Deleuze, and the Critique of Representation} (New York: SUNY Press, 2012); and Simont, \textit{Essai sur la quantité, la qualité, la relation}. Rather than summarizing these here, we engage with them throughout this work.

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Baugh who sees Deleuze, following the existential empiricism of Jean Wahl, as advancing a “post-Hegelian empiricist metaphysics” that, in accounting for the “real conditions of actual experience” without basing “all knowledge on generalizations from experience,” would be “immune to Hegel’s critique of empiricism as the poorest and most empty kind of knowledge.” If Hegel shows that the immediate remains empty of determinacy until it is mediated – as universal, concept, and subject – then Deleuze alternatively sees in the immediacy of experience an infinite richness of “relations” that maintain an irreducible “exteriority” to the “terms” they effectuate in reality (D 54-55/68-69). For Deleuze, the nexus of these relations in which we become forms a “strange world” – in short, a “life” – that “does violence to thought” because what we are compelled to think, as the conditions of our existence, does not conform to the “abstract principles” with which we are accustomed to knowing the world. The “abstract does not explain, but must be explained” (D vii; cf. B 44/38). In this section we wish to briefly clarify a number of points about transcendental empiricism: what problem it concerns, how the method implicates both the logical and the existential, and how vanishing is situated between both dimensions.

Thought begins, Deleuze argues, with a “fundamental encounter”: “Something in the world forces us to think” (DR 139/182). The truth is that the majority of the things we “encounter” in our experience do not “force” philosophical thought. We are accustomed largely to passing over things without consideration. The reality of the world is, for us in our

52“Transcendental Empiricism,” 133; cf. Baugh, “Beyond Hegel? Deleuze, Foucault, and the New Empiricism,” French Hegel, 147-173; and “G. W. F. Hegel,” in Deleuze’s Philosophical Lineage, eds. Graham Jones and Jon Roffe, 130-146 (Edinburg: Edinburgh Press, 2009). We will have opportunity to consider Hegel’s account of “sense-certainty” – and the readings of Hyppolite, Deleuze, and Baugh – more adequately in their own right (see Chapter 1 §4).
53 Deleuze attributes this idea as the definition of “empiricism” provided by A. N. Whitehead.
54 “‘Everybody’ knows very well that in fact men think rarely, and more often under the impulse of a shock [le coup] than in the excitement of a taste for thinking” (DR 132/173).
everyday lives, already settled and understood. I reach for the glass in the cupboard not because it poses a problem of perplexity when I encounter it, but because its functional reality is already determined as the solution to the problem of thirst that overtakes me. If I am sometimes prone to error in judging what things are – as those squinting eyes in the sun of **agora** might be when they mistake the approaching figure of Theaetetus for Theodorus (**DR** 149/193) – it is only under the condition that my sensation can be subsequently corrected with the proper recognition. Deleuze’s concern is that if thought is reduced to the form of recognition – that is, the empirical judgment in which the experience of something immediately present is to be identified with its concept – then we remain in a “natural stupor” (**DR** 139/181). For Deleuze, then, under what conditions, and in relation to what singular type of object, are we “forced” to think? It is the job of **Difference and Repetition** as a whole to answer this question, and as we will show, this object is not reducible to sensation even if it is encountered fundamentally in experience. Here we will merely sketch provisionally the terms of its answer so as to open us onto the significance of Deleuze’s conception of thought and what he intends by “difference” as the ground of thinking (see §4.3 and Ch. 4 §6 below).

The encountered object is reducible neither to a “concept” or an object of “recognition” (**DR** 139/181), nor is its significance merely a matter of epistemic certainty or empirical doubt.\(^{55}\) Judgment has two poles – the object of sensibility and the concept of the understanding – and knowledge is produced when these elements are united and identified in the proposition (e.g. “**This** is an **orchid,**” or “Its petals are round.”). When we form an empirical judgment, we are fundamentally passive in relation to the singularity of what shows up in our experience (designated as “**this**”), and yet from the vantage point of the faculty of understanding the world, we are active insofar as we are able to recognize precisely what the sensed object is (identified as

\(^{55}\) Cf. Descartes, **Meditations**, 12-23.
“orchid”). Through the concept we come to have knowledge about the world, and through the concept the world in its given diversity takes on meaning as something intelligible. For Deleuze, there are two problems with this model of thought.

(1) Deleuze is not concerned with whether judgments of recognition are possible, but rather: a) Following Kant, how and under what conditions are they possible? And b) departing from Kant, does the form of recognition as such exhausts what it means to think? As we will see shortly (§4.3), judgment can be performed only by presupposing the structure and condition of its own thinking, that is, by not yet thinking philosophically. “Common sense” thereby does not advance immediately to the determination of the conditions of its own possibility. One route for resolving this problem is exemplified by Kant’s transcendental project, which aims to elucidate the transcendental structures of judgment, or the a priori operations of the faculties that condition the possibility of an object being given and formed in sensible intuition. In this procedure, it is precisely the categorical order of the concept and the architecture of cognition that is discovered beyond immediate experience as always mediating it. In significant ways, Deleuze’s appeal to the “transcendental” domain of experience promises, like Kant and Hegel before him, to elucidate the structures of the real that subtend and make possible representational thought (see §3.2.2, §4.2, and §4.3 below). “All our false problems,” Deleuze writes, “derive from the fact that we do not know how to go beyond experience toward the conditions of experience, toward the articulations of the real” as what “differs in kind” and “on which we live” (B 26/17). However, for Deleuze, what makes thinking possible is not a concept, but an “extra-being” (D 57/71) of “sub-representational” “relations” or “becomings.”

(2) By reducing thought to judgments of recognition, representation can link concepts with objects of possible experience infinitely within experience, but it cannot account for the original “impulse” to think. In other words, as Baugh argues, it does not think the “concrete
richness” of the immediate in its own right, but resolves the singularity of the immediate through the concept. Thought discovers and obtains in the object only what was already given in the abstraction of the concept. For Deleuze, the object that genuinely provokes us does so because it presents us with a reality that exceeds our conceptual resources for recognizing and knowing it. Thus, for transcendental empiricism, it is an object whose “primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed” (DR 139/182); it is the “thesis” of the immediate as such in its “being” (DR 52/74), rather than the categorical being conferred upon it by the understanding. And yet, Deleuze maintains, what can “only be” grasped by sensibility is the “imperceptible” [l’insensible] (DR 140/182). Our particular interest concerns the nature of this imperceptible object and its way of rendering empirical thought “metaphysical,” that is, as opening thought onto the “being of the sensible” [l'être du sensible].

From the empirical side, Deleuze’s account of thought here gives an important priority to the faculty of sensibility, with its grasp of the way we are “affected” by the world in a “range of affective tones” (“wonder, love, hatred, suffering”) [DR 139/182], over the ideal faculty of the understanding with its deployment of “spontaneous” concepts of recognition (Kant, CPR A68/B93, B129-132). It is not our intention here to substantiate Deleuze’s own account, in response to Kant, of the “doctrine of the faculties” (DR 131-146/171-192; KCP as whole)\textsuperscript{56}, nor do we intend to systematically follow his account of “actual experience” except at the conclusive point of this work regarding the notion of “becoming-imperceptible” (see Conclusion §4 below). We merely wish to note here an important feature of what Deleuze regards as “problematic” objects (DR 163-164) – or what he calls “signs” (DR 139-140/182; PS 15-25/23-35)\textsuperscript{57} – that incite


thought in its activity of questioning through a “violence inflicted upon thought” (*DR* 139/181-2). These could be, for instance, objects of memory or affection. When we encounter an object that evokes a memory of a past event, this could be a matter of simple recognition or association. For instance, I could immediately identify the orchid in the florist shop after having seen Kaufman’s Laroche hunting through Florida swamps for “ghost orchids.” Inversely, Proust’s Narrator recalls his early life in Combray upon the taste of the madeleine. These experiences could be unexceptional, or they can be the site of an intensity that disturbs thought by signaling something that cannot be represented or thought, as when a perceived object evokes a feeling of horror or revulsion because of its unconscious association with an early trauma that we have repressed. What is remarkable about these encounters, for Deleuze, is that they reveal more than what is immediately given to sensation and what is afforded by the concept of the thing itself: they reveal the dynamic temporality in which life unfolds and disappears. These “signs” draw our attention not to simply answer the question of what something is, but to their feeling as signs of “alteration and of disappearance” [*d’altération et de disparition*] (*PS* 19/28). The encounter involves a temporal disorientation: we are “involuntarily” forced beyond our presence in time because we are affected by something that has vanished – the present object as the mark of irredeemable “time lost.” “It is plain that the truth I am seeking lies not in the cup but in myself,” Proust’s Narrator realizes upon reflection.

The drink has called it into being, but does not know it, and can only repeat indefinitely, with a progressive diminution of strength, the same message which I cannot interpret […] what it could have been, this unremembered state which brought with it no logical proof, but the indisputable evidence, of its felicity, its reality, and in whose presence other states of consciousness melted and vanished.

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Deleuze likes to construe the essential jealousy of love as “unceasingly [preparing] its own disappearance [disparition],” destined to “act out its dissolution [rupture]” (PS 19/27). Jealousy is not merely an expression of love itself toward a determinate person, but love “oriented to the future,” the “repetition” in advance “of the outcome” that “we will still be enough in love to enjoy the regrets of the person we shall have stopped loving.” They are signs because they designate an object that is not representable from the vantage point of the concept, yet they are affectively real.

Empiricism becomes “transcendental” or “metaphysical” (Deleuze sometimes conflates the two) precisely at the point at which what is encountered poses a problem for recognition by revealing structures of experience that exceed both the present experience in time and the ability of thought to conceptualize its own object adequately. Something about the world exceeds the concept and the present. For Deleuze, philosophy is “born,” or “borne” along already, in the “apprenticeship” of thought and the world of signs (PS 16/24). In this encounter, concepts or judgments about the world realize their own impotency, giving way to a becoming with something outside our established understanding of the world that does not promise in advance the integrity of our “image.” Perhaps it is the unique paradox of Deleuze’s thought of immanence that this is the encounter with an irreducible outside – in short, the “fortuitousness” of a “world” (DR 139/181). It is the central thesis of Deleuze’s work here that thought proceeds primarily through difference – as an encounter with difference – rather than an encounter with the identical, that is, with what we already anticipate as the “possible” instantiation of a concept in experience. According to Deleuze, then, to “learn” is never to recognize, to recollect, or to memorize, since in these cases what one claims to learn is already possessed in the form of the concept that sets the terms for adequacy. To learn is to differentiate oneself, to become other through an encounter with something that does not guarantee in advance that one will be
adequate to it. Accordingly, the child can never learn to swim by watching the simulated movements of the instructor on shore, forming a concept of what must be accomplished, and then replicating it in the water. It is only by being forced into the sea, forced into an encounter with the power of the waves, that the child realizes its own lack of knowledge and the necessity of learning. The outcome is that one learns by “conjugating” or adapting the multiplicity of one’s body (with its muscular habits of movement) in relation to the multiplicity of the water (with its currents, swells, and waves).60 One changes one’s multiplicity, or one disappears definitively; and yet, one can only learn by vanishing as the inept habit-body that one was into the buoyant figure that one becomes, borne with the current in an apprenticeship of suspended recognition.

One must learn. All men hold in common the ability to feel pleasure and pain. But this resemblance is for each only a probability to be verified. And it can be verified only by the long path of the dissimilar. I must verify the reason for my thought, the humanity of my feelings, but I can do it only by making them venture forth into the forest of signs that by themselves don’t want to say anything, don’t correspond with that thought of that feeling.61

The analysis of experience, for Deleuze, reveals a dimension that inaugurates it but which by its natures eludes the terms of being represented or conceptualized, and in doing so, initiates the experience of thought. The singularity of Deleuze’s endeavor is that it wants to be both an empiricism and a transcendental logic – in short, a “logic of relations” (D 56/70) and of existence in which relations are not primarily between a concept and its given object in sensibility, but between extra-conceptual terms endemic to the real itself. Rather than regarding the outside of representation as ineffable and unknowable, Deleuze goes further to argue that the real can be

60 “To learn […] is to conjugate the distinctive points of our bodies with the singular points of the objective Idea in order to form a problematic field. This conjugation determines for us a threshold of consciousness at which our real acts are adjusted to our perceptions of the real relations, thereby providing a solution to the problem” as a worldly “field” of “ultimate elements of nature and the subliminal objects of little perceptions. As a result, ‘learning’ always takes place in and through the unconscious, thereby establishing the bond of a profound complicity between nature and mind” (DR 165/214).

known, even if philosophy must “create concepts” (WP 2/8) to articulate its singularity and irreducibility to thought. Furthermore, rather than being an undifferentiated matter, what can be thought about the ground of reality is structured in its difference and according to difference as such (see Ch. 4 §6). As Baugh argues, it is “Deleuze’s greatest achievement to have rendered the richness of concrete being both rational and thinkable without conflating being with thought,” to “grasp empirical actuality through determinate causal processes.”

In what follows we largely follow the speculative or logical side of Deleuze’s thought, rather than pursuing Deleuze’s suggestion that we employ transcendental empiricism to see what it can accomplish and discover in the world. However, our aim is not to reduce Deleuze to the terms of logic or idealism, but rather to investigate the way in which Deleuze creates or “invents” a new logic (D 56/70) of thought no less than the real in a single field of immanence. The charge will be leveled that Deleuze’s method will be incommensurable with Hegel’s equation of “thought and being” at the beginning of the Logic. However, our hypothesis is that vanishing as such pertains to this apprenticeship in which thought is compelled beyond the given to what is “imperceptible” from the vantage point of recognition, and yet which “must be thought” insofar as it constitutes reality in its becoming. In short, we want to know what place vanishing has, and what it reveals, in a logic of becoming, and what such a logic allows us to understand differently, not just about Hegel and Deleuze, but about a world that must be both thought and lived.

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62 “[P]hilosophy is the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts” (WP 2/8) that are “always new” (WP 5/10). “Concepts are not waiting for us ready-made, like heavenly bodies. There is no heaven for concepts” (WP 5/11). “Every creation is singular, and the concept as a specifically philosophical creation is always a singularity” (WP 7/12).

63 “Transcendental Empiricism,” 142.

64 “What counts for a great novelist [...] is that things remain enigmatic yet nonarbitrary: in short, a new logic, definitely a logic, but one that grasps the innermost depths of life and death without leading us back to reason” (CC 82/105). Critique et Clinique (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1993); Essays Clinical and Critical, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
3.2.2. The Post-Kantian Tradition

Rather than seeing Deleuze as a wholesale departure from German Idealism, recent scholarship has shown the indebtedness of Deleuze’s philosophy to the problematics of the post-Kantian tradition. As Juliette Simont,65 Daniel W. Smith,66 Daniela Voss,67 and Henry Somers-Hall68 demonstrate distinctly, Deleuze’s project in *Difference and Repetition* orients itself to certain problems in Kant’s transcendental project, especially as articulated in the early “meta-critique” provided by Salomon Maimon in 1790.69 Following Maimon, Smith summarizes Deleuze’s insight that “in order for Kant’s critical philosophy to achieve its own aims, a viewpoint of *internal genesis* needed to be substituted for Kant’s principle of *external conditioning*.”70 Kant’s speculative project effectively charts the transcendental conditions of “possible experience” — that is, how the *a priori* categories of the understanding structure, “form,” or “condition” empirical intuition of an object. Maimon maintains, however, that this procedure does not succeed in accounting for the “genesis” of this cognition immanently. This means two fundamentally interrelated things. First, specific to the aims of Kant’s own project, it means that Kant does not succeed in immanently demonstrating the applicability of concepts to intuitions, since these distinct objects correspond to

65 *Essai sur la quantité, la qualité, la relation*, 281. The Kantian orientation allows Simont to situate Deleuze with Hegel’s *Logic* in terms of their accounts of difference as intensity.


68 *Critique of Representation*.

69 Maimon’s explication and critique of Kant can be found in his central essay, *Essay on Transcendental Philosophy*, trans. Nick Midgley et al. (London: Continuum, 2010). Maimon’s reading of Kant in this collection of texts is complex, but it is worth noting a number of important claims for Deleuze: “Difference pertains to all things; or all things must be — or must be thought — different from one another, for it is just because of this that they are things” (97). Further, he maintains that it “is an error to believe that things (real objects) must be prior to their relations” (102). He thus distinguishes his project from transcendental idealism which, he claims, “understands by matter what belongs to sensation in abstraction from the relations in which it is ordered,” whereas Maimon maintains that what “belongs to sensation must also be ordered in relations if it is to be perceived,” even if one “cannot directly perceive these relations” (109).

cognitive faculties that differ in nature, despite the claims of Kant’s “schematism” to accomplish exactly this “homogeneity” (*CPR* A137/B176). Second, and more generally, it means that the absence of an immanent procedure of “application” or “subsumption” amounts to an inability to account for the genesis of thinking as such.\(^{71}\) There is much to be said here about Maimon’s critique of Kant, his own attempt to do away with the autonomy of sensibility for an “intellectual intuition” or “infinite understanding,” and Deleuze’s own appeal to this “rationalist” procedure.\(^{72}\) We will return to important issues below concerning the importance of ontology, the infinite, and a non-representational, genetic ground. Here we wish to note the importance of Maimon’s challenge concerning genesis as providing a common problematic that orients both Hegel’s *Logic* and Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition*, with all their differences aside, as seeking to give immanent accounts of the genesis of thought beyond the terms of a representational model of experience. If correct, it means that Deleuze is closer to Hegel than Deleuze would explicitly anticipate.

Following this problematic, Henry Somers-Hall has contributed an immense resource for re-evaluating Hegel and Deleuze by showing how their metaphysical projects share the common problematic of overturning “classical,” representational thought.\(^{73}\) His analysis eruditely

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\(^{71}\) Kant admits this limitation as a problem, that while of “great importance” to the first *Critique*, he believes nonetheless “does not belong essentially to it” (*CPR* A xvii). Here he contrasts two questions. First, “the chief question”: “What and how much can understanding and reason cognize free of all experience?” Second, the excluded question: “How is the faculty of thinking itself possible?” In likening the second question to looking for an unconditioned cause of an effect, it is given metaphysical ambitions beyond the restricted and restrictive terms of transcendental logic. As a consequence, for Kant, “in logic […] the understanding has to do with nothing further than itself and its own form” (*CPR* B ix).

\(^{72}\) The affiliation of Deleuze’s critique of Kant with Maimon has been particularly stressed. In particular, see Sauvagnargues, “The Problematic Idea, Neo-Kantianism and Maimon’s Role in Deleuze’s Thought,” in *At The Edges of Thought: Deleuze and Post-Kantian Philosophy*, eds. Craig Lundy and Daniela Voss and trans. Voss, 44-59 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015); and Voss, “Maimon, Kant, Deleuze: The Concepts of Difference and Intensive Magnitude,” *At the Edges of Thought*, 60-84.

\(^{73}\) *Critique of Representation*. Somers-Hall succeeds at not only historically situating the development of their projects through critiques of the classical image of thought, but also at carefully considering Hegel and Deleuze’s own arguments in relation to each other to assess their compatibility as philosophies of
demonstrates the ways their logics of contradiction and nonrepresentational difference respectively take up and challenge the priority of judgment in both classical and modern logic: for Deleuze, he argues correctly, “judgment is not merely incomplete [but] is a false approach to the world, once it is severed from these genetic conditions” as a “moment outside of representation.” Somers-Hall concludes that an examination of Hegel and Deleuze’s logics alone cannot suffice to appraise their fundamental difference. While Somers-Hall shows the “novelty of Deleuze’s philosophy” and the “asymmetry between their positions,” these do not, he argues, “on purely logical grounds entail a rejection of Hegelian dialectic.” In light of the failure of a purely “logical” “test,” Somers-Hall concludes by pursuing a different type of assessment to determine whether their distinct logics are more or less adequate to explaining complex dynamics in the actual world, namely in terms of the theory of the evolution of the organism, for which he concludes that Deleuze’s form of difference has more explanatory import and that the “limitations of Hegel’s account of the organism must be seen as stemming from limitations of the more abstract metaphysical categories” that render the dialectic “impotent” or unable “to explain positively the contingency of nature, which is vital to our modern understanding of the world.”

The context in which we are writing, therefore, is one in which Hegel and Deleuze are no longer seen as incommunicable rivals, but as respondents to a common set of historico-

difference. His analyses of Deleuze’s engagement with the history of logic, mathematics, and evolutionary biology are particularly outstanding and instructive.

74 Ibid., 242.
75 Ibid., 210.
76 “While purely in terms of coherence, no decision is possible between Hegel and Deleuze,” while in the “empirical” one can see a “radical dissimilarity.” Ibid., 243.
77 Ibid., 211-238. Somers-Halls elsewhere takes this analysis further to compare Hegel’s logic of the infinite and Deleuze and Guattari’s account of the rhizome in terms of plant life to show that the latter’s logic of conjunctive relations de-centers organic growth without falling prey to the “linear series” of the “spurious infinite.” “The Logic of the Rhizome in the Work of Hegel and Deleuze,” Hegel and Deleuze, eds. Houle and Vernon, 54-75.
philosophical problems. Nonetheless, this body of work has given us crucial resources for specifically exploring the critical and compelling notion of “vanishing” that is central not only to Deleuze’s challenging reading of Hegel, but which is also an affirmative and operative element of both of their ontologies. It is the goal of this project therefore to provide a focused consideration of the idea of vanishing.

3.3. On Our Method

There are many ways in which the relation between Hegel and Deleuze can be analyzed, and this project by no means claims to provide a definitive one. We do believe, however, that following Deleuze’s lead, by confining ourselves to the terms of his own critique of Hegel, would now be both redundant and a philosophical impasse. Nor do we intend to merely play the neutral mediator between the ultimate ideas associated with each under the desideratum: negativity or difference? Catherine Malabou is right to recognize the need for a different type of reading that follows the method of unnatural philosophical encounters and “becomings” that motivate so much of Deleuze’s own methodology in relation to the history of philosophy.78

Our analysis endeavors to forge an encounter through a close textual study that would be capable of identifying lines of confluent argument and points of divergence. The aim of this project is at once overly ambitious and yet succinct: to read Hegel’s Logic and Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition simultaneously. Given the scope and density of the former, and the tortuous and innovative structure of the latter, this task faced many organizational difficulties. Interpreting a text in many ways requires submitting to the trajectory of its logic, to its route(s) of problems and consequences. Reading two texts, on the other hand, requires a dissonance not only between logics and structures, but moreover between problems themselves. While the two texts are by no means isomorphic, there is nonetheless a set of common problems that entangle them.

Furthermore, while Deleuze’s antipathy to Hegel is made clear, there is nonetheless a continued engagement with Hegel’s *Logic* that is rooted throughout *Difference and Repetition* from beginning to end. To most clearly elucidate this root-system, the chapter structure of this project follows the conceptual coordinates through which Deleuze engages Hegel, explicitly and implicitly, in Deleuze’s text: (1) being and becoming, (2) finitude and limit, (3) the infinite, (4) ground (see §6 below). However, the order of presentation of these ideas follows the presentation provided by Hegel’s *Logic.*

If there has been a major tradition of interpretation that revolves around Hegel and Deleuze’s irreducible opposition, then the interest of this project is to pursue the question against the grain, with a different set of ideas, in order to propose a more minor tradition of interpretation. We proceed neither to achieve in advance a definitive disjunction nor a consummate reconciliation. Rather, what we hope to effect is a problematization — one in which their similarities perhaps prove to be more compelling than their differences. In this sense, our method is essentially Deleuzian insofar as we see intellectual history in terms of the becomings of contingent encounters that provide the condition for the emergence of new problems. The

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79 It was inevitably necessary to set aside or give short thrift to many essential parts of these works. Regarding Hegel, we have regrettably neglected the final book of the *Logic, The Subjective Logic.* The reasons for this are twofold: on our interpretation, Deleuze’s engagement with Hegel is largely confined to the *The Objective Logic,* up until the culminating moment of the “Doctrine of Essence.” The spatial constraints of the project pushed us to opt for an interpretative focus on those sections where their projects most closely encountered one another. Given Deleuze’s core criticism that the *Logic* provides only an abstract and conceptual movement that cannot explain the differential process of existence as such, the cost of this is significant. Any final appraisal of Hegel’s system, and a testing of many of Deleuze’s criticisms, relies on a serious working out of the end of the *Logic* in which, Hegel claims, the system of ideas “explodes” into the concrete world of “nature.” Since our primary goal is not to resolve a comprehensive comparison of their systems, we hope that our more focused remarks in the present work serve as motivations for developing a more systematic interpretation. We have not emphasized Deleuze’s important work on such thinkers and their traditions as Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Bergson in order to more closely work out the tradition of modern philosophy fruitful for the metaphysical interpretation of vanishing that we argue is a common problematic in both Hegel and Deleuze. To this end, we have chosen to emphasize Aristotle, Spinoza, and Leibniz. These choices function in a specific way for our project, rather than as definitive for what an interpretation of Deleuze should be. It is our position that all the diverse resources Deleuze mobilizes play an essential role in his thought.
question of whether we must choose between Hegel or Deleuze is strictly speaking a false choice, one rooted in a compulsion to decide between, and to pledge in advance to the true or the false, the successful and the failed, as if all projects were rooted in a single veridical test. It therefore misses not only the spirit of both Hegel and Deleuze’s projects, in all their proximity and distance, but also the becoming that motivates thinking in the first place, the historicity in which ideas are situated as complex points of emergence. One could say that the excluded is included in its exclusion, or that becoming is intrinsically a matter of multiplicity: as Deleuze and Félix Guattari note, “Becoming is always double [par deux]” (TP 305/374-375). An event such as pollination, for instance, requires that the wasp become with the orchid, to take upon itself the orchid’s reproductive cells, simultaneously as the orchid becomes through the wasp that transports it to new territories (TP 10/17; D 2-3). Self-identities explain little about becoming, which requires an irreducible relation, even if it is identities that become. Our basic hermeneutical method, following a methodological insight provided by Jay Lampert, is the following: What can we see differently in Hegel’s work having passed through the achievements of Deleuze’s?

PART III: ONTOLOGY

4. Ontology, Logic, and the Conditions of Thought

Our thesis in this work concerns the contributions that Hegel and Deleuze make toward realizing the ontological significance of vanishing. We thus emphasize the ontological


81 Lampert employs this method to re-think the role of contingency and multiplicity in Hegel’s Logic. “Hegel on Contingency, or, Fluidity and Multiplicity,” Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain 51-52 (2005): 74-82. The spirit of our reading of Hegel was also significantly influenced by Jean-Luc Nancy’s book which, though not composed explicitly in light of Deleuze, offers a powerfully new take on Hegel that is complementary of the philosophy of becoming found in Deleuze. Hegel: The Restlessness of the Negative (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).
orientations of their philosophical projects over other facets of their work. Thus far we have situated both thinkers first in regards to the scholarship that has placed them in diverging lines of thought, and second in terms of a common problematic set out in the wake of Kant’s speculative philosophy. This double commitment of their projects – as at once critical and ontological – raises a problem considering the challenge to traditional metaphysics posed by Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason. In §4.1 we briefly consider the challenge posed to ontology by Kant. In §4.2 we contextualize the project, aims, and significance of Hegel’s Logic. In §4.3 we consider some of the challenges to reading the Logic as an ontological work. In §4.4 we outline some of main aims of Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition, focusing specifically on its claim to provide a non-dogmatic, presuppositionless account of thought through the necessary ground of an a-conceptual difference. Finally, in §4.5 we consider and provisionally respond to critiques of the ontological nature of Deleuze’s project.

4.1. Kant and the Problem of Ontology

Hegel and Deleuze have been situated as responding to common problems in the wake of Kant’s speculative philosophy, and we have proposed to take them up ontologically. However, for Kant the metaphysical search to think the absolute – that is, what is “in-itself” – has altogether left the “touchstone” of experience (CPR A12/B26, A295/B352) and has thus led to insurmountable, antinomic problems (CPR Avii; A406/B432-A460/B488). In principle, for Kant, this is the result of the failure of metaphysical thought to question the legitimate conditions of possibility for the type of knowledge that it seeks. What Kant calls the “transcendental analytic” has this “important result”:

[The] understanding can never accomplish a priori anything more than to anticipate the form of a possible experience in general, and, since that which is not appearance cannot be an object of experience, it can never overstep the limits of sensibility, within which alone objects are given to us. […] [The] proud name of ontology […] must give way to the modest one of a mere analytic of the pure understanding (CPR A446-447/B303).
As we have noted, the elucidation of the “transcendental domain” thus intends to establish the formative conditions of cognition and their applicability to empirical intuition. Such conditions ensure that the faculties of knowledge can ground knowledge of experience \textit{a priori} and systematically without thought exceeding the bounds of possible experience.\footnote{In Chapter 4, we take up Deleuze’s interpretation of the \textit{Critique of Pure Reason} to indicate the way that the \textit{Critique} goes beyond these limits itself, and the ways that Deleuze draws from “pre-critical metaphysics” to show the necessity of an extra-critical ontology.} We argue that both the \textit{Logic} and \textit{Difference and Repetition} go beyond the Kantian propaedeutic while remaining significantly informed by the critical approach. Both projects are concerned with grounding the actuality of thought and the thought of the actual, but they do so by distinct appeals to the reality of \textit{being} as such. Moreover, both projects advance systems of ontological immanence that, to ensure critically that thought and being are not modeled on a dogmatic image of thought, or on experience formed by a presupposed function of judgment, propose to consider being “in itself.” However, our aim throughout this work is not to interpret Hegel and Deleuze through the architectonic of Kant’s philosophy. Significant work has been done in this vein.\footnote{For work on Hegel and Deleuze’s relation to Kant, see in particular: Simont, \textit{Essai sur la quantité, la qualité, la relation}; and Somers-Hall, \textit{Critique of Representation}, 14-23, 125-135, 179-185. For work on Deleuze’s relation to Kant, see Edward Willatt and Matt Lee, eds., \textit{Thinking Between Kant and Deleuze: A Strange Encounter} (London: Continuum, 2009); Willatt, \textit{Kant, Deleuze, and Architectonics} (London: Continuum, 2012); for Deleuze’s specific concern with “internal difference,” see Somers-Hall, “Deleuze’s Use of Kant’s Argument from Incongruent Counterparts,” \textit{The Southern Journal of Philosophy} 51.3 (2013): 345-366; and for the importance of Deleuze’s revision of Kant for understanding Deleuze’s engagement with contemporary phenomenology, see Joe Hughes, \textit{Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition: A Reader’s Guide} (London: Continuum, 2009). For the relation between Hegel’s \textit{Logic} to Kant, see: Béatrice Longuenesse, \textit{Hegel and the Critique of Metaphysics} (London: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and Russon, “Subjectivity and Objectivity in Hegel’s \textit{Science of Logic},” in \textit{Infinite Phenomenology: The Lessons of Hegel’s Science of Experience}, 256-270 (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2016).} Rather, here we want to indicate the importance of their concerns with the question of being in order to establish the ontological significance of vanishing as it appears in their systems. In Hegel’s case, vanishing will indicate a movement of becoming-other that is irreducible to the terms of identity, that is, the becoming that immediate identity shows itself to be. In Deleuze’s case, it will indicate
the relation of thought and the actual to its differential, “sub-representative,” and excessive ground.

4.2. Beginning and Method: A Labor in Shadows

The beginning of Hegel’s Logic warrants attention insofar as it has the ambition of not only grounding the categories of logic and metaphysics employed uncritically in various disciplines, but also of defining the essence of thought as such.\(^{84}\) In order to give an account of “pure thought” [\(\text{reine Gedanke}\)] (SL 39/33-34), the beginning must be made by bracketing all preconceptions regarding what thinking is and how it operates. Only an immanent critique can ensure that philosophy ceases to be dogmatism in order to become an autonomous, self-determining enterprise. The arduousness of this task rests in excavating and suspending all prior assumptions that pertain not only to conceptions of objectivity, but also to subjective images of thought itself. “Philosophy lacks the advantage, which the other sciences enjoy, of being able to presuppose its objects [\(\text{Gegenstände}\)] as given by representation” and its “method of cognition as one that is already accepted” (EL 24/27 §1).\(^{85}\) This methodological skepticism is “absolute” and

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\(^{84}\) Fully articulating the philosophical and historical context that gave rise to Hegel’s systematic philosophy would not be possible here, nor would noting all the important commentaries that have allowed us as students to appreciate it. We would like to note the following works that have been invaluable to our understanding of Hegel’s thought and time, and will continue to be of value to students of Hegel in the future: H. S. Harris’ monumental works, *Hegel’s Development: Toward the Sunlight, 1770-1801* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972) and *Hegel’s Ladder* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997); Russon’s two elucidating studies on Hegel’s *Phenomenology: Reading Hegel’s Phenomenology* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), and the recent and invaluable *Infinite Phenomenology*; Houltage’s definitive commentary on the project of the greater Logic in *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic* (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2006); Dieter Henrich’s lecture series *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*, ed. David S. Pacini (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Frederick. C. Beiser’s tomes on the tradition of German Idealism, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987) and *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781-1801* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002).

\(^{85}\) Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke: Enzyklopädie Der Philosophischen Wissenschaften Im Grundrisse* (1827), band. 19, eds. Wolfgang Bonsiepen and Hans-Christian Lucas (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1989); *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Science with the Zusätze*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris (Indiana: Hackett, 1991). While the *Science of Logic* is the primary text that we appeal to
“scientific” to the extent that it must suspend any prior knowledge that would pre-figure both what the object is like, as well as how thought operates in its orientation, structure, or laws. For Hegel, the minimal condition is the simple “resolve, which can also be regarded as arbitrary, that we propose to consider thought as such” (SL 70/56). Philosophy, in its critical and mature form, begins with the decision of thought to think itself outside of doxa, in the suspension of all “common sense,” opinion, or familiar expectation that thought, after speculative study, will turn out to be what we commonly think it is. However, thinking “thought” by no means should suggest an idealism that would be de facto cut off from the real, since for Hegel being and thought form the same object which is, at least implicitly, also the subject of the investigation (see Ch. 1 §§1-2 below).

The promise of this method is that we are able to grasp being in its autonomous, self-defining activity without relying on unjustified grounds, without thought being “unfreely” determined by an external image (cf. SL 38/16). For Hegel, the principle of “logic” [Die Logik] is thus “the element of thought that is free and for itself, in pure knowing” (SL 68/54). If there are laws to thought (e.g. a principle of non-contradiction, a law of the excluded middle, a principle of identity), then these principles must prove their legitimacy through a deduction from an adequate beginning. Logic thus will seek, insofar as it “seeks” anything at all in advance, to trace the structures of thought not in their empirical deployment, but rather in “the system of pure reason” (SL 50/34) purged of all empirical residue. As such it is “the realm of shadows” [Reich der Schatten], the “world of simple essentialities, free from all sensible concreteness” (SL 58/42). If speculative thought has a method of approaching its content, then it is more of an anti-method: it is a giving up of all prior plans in a surrendering of oneself completely to the self-presentation of the idea for our analysis, we occasionally make reference to the shorter Encyclopaedia Logic where there are useful remarks for understanding Hegel’s project.
without the safety of guiding it from a distance.\textsuperscript{86} Hegel can abjure “method” as “rule of procedure that be specified prior to its application to a given content,” as Stephen Houlgate clarifies,\textsuperscript{87} precisely in order to achieve immanent systematicity.

The beginning must be “unconditioned.” It must be a ground of that which follows, but it itself must not be grounded (\textit{SL} 70/56). That with which the beginning is “made” therefore must be an \textit{immediate givenness} that is ungrounded and indeterminate. The reasons for this are not difficult to stipulate. Thinking must proceed from \textit{givenness} because a minimal degree of presence or availability, even if this “presence” proves to undermine itself, is the sole condition of thinking the unconditioned as such. It must be \textit{immediate} because any mediation will entail thinking the beginning through a different idea that would be implicitly presupposed, unaccounted for, and thus unthought. Furthermore, to be grounded is to be mediated by some prior, distinct condition that either lacks an account or becomes infinitely regressive. If it were \textit{determinate} then its reality, along the lines of mediation, would be constituted in relation to other, different realities that demarcate its limits and differentiate it from what it is not. Hegel calls this immediacy “pure being” [\textit{Seyn}, \textit{reines Seyn}] (\textit{SL} 82/68; see Ch. 1 \S2 below). Since we cannot presume that “pure being” is the object of and thus other than thinking, it must be posed as the mere “is” \textit{as} thought, pure and simple. The wealth of the \textit{Logic}’s beginning rests in the presuppositionlessness of this

\textsuperscript{86} For analyses of the status of “method” in Hegel’s \textit{Logic}, see William Maker, \textit{Philosophy Without Foundations: Rethinking Hegel} (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 99-100; and Houlgate, “Presuppositionless Thinking,” \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 29-53. For Maker, a “method” entails that the way of approaching content “be justified, formulated or learned in abstraction from the subject matter to which it is applied.” For Hegel, the only method is the surrendering of thinking to the content that “spontaneously develops itself in a scientific method of knowing” (\textit{SL} 27/9-10, trans. Miller). Maker and Houlgate both argue that, in this sense, Hegel lacks a speculative or dialectic method. It is only from the absolute vantage point of the system, and not merely one of its particular moments, that we can grasp retroactively what the system proved itself to be as a whole in and through the passages of its parts. As readers, we can never lay claim to this principle in advance; all we are warranted is to follow the movement of the system’s self-determination. This leaves open the paramount question of how to critique the movement immanently, on its own terms.

\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Opening of Hegel’s Logic}, 33.
notion, but the promise of the Logic’s achievement is in the notion’s own presentation as more
than it is immediately, namely, the whole of onto-logical reality in a wealth of self-determining
and “self-differentiating” forms.

The stakes for the beginning of the Logic – of beginning properly – are therefore high: the
beginning must be an unconditioned “ground” [Grund] (SL 70/56) and “foundation” [Grundlage]
(SL 71/57) of a system of “pure knowledge in the entire range of its development” (SL 69/55).
Ostensibly this situates Hegel within the tradition of first principles. Yet, as the complex course of
the beginning shows, this logical ground is a “vanishing” [Verschwinden] notion: being is the
“movement of the immediate vanishing [...] into its other” and its other into it (SL 60/70). The
circularity of the logic, its increasingly determinate unfolding of itself, proves to be a “retreat into
the ground” [ein Rückgang in den Grund] (SL 71/57). The core questions of our work are as follows:
How can a disappearing foundation – a foundation as disappearance – ground anything at all? If
the ground is vanishing, and the ground is preserved in what it grounds, then what role does
vanishing have in the course of the Logic’s unfolding?

4.3. Hegel and the Return to Ontology

We have stressed above the Logic’s intention to account for Being through pure thought, and
the importance placed on the presuppositionless nature of its beginning. As we justify further in
this section, this endows Hegel’s project from its inception with a metaphysical significance. This
means three important things. (1) Historically, it means that Hegel pursues the thought of being
without conforming, strictly or in advance, to the parameters of transcendental logic which,
following Kant, aims to deduce the applicability of the conceptual categories of the
understanding to that of sensible intuition.88 (2) Philosophically, this means minimally that the

88 While not making this claim as robustly, John W. Burbidge’s short commentary on the Logic examines
Hegel’s philosophical movement frequently in terms of the faculties of cognition. This method clarifies
Logic should be understood not merely as a completion or dialectical development of Kant’s transcendental idealism, but as an ontology in its own right that would advance thought beyond the limits set by it. It means maximally that the Logic is able to achieve an immanent genesis of thought that arguably remains only implicit in Kant’s procedure. (3) Textually, if the Logic thus has more than a “conditioning” function in relation to the terms of experience – namely, an immanent and genetic function – then the role of “vanishing” in the Logic would need to be appraised ontologically. Vanishing could not be interpreted then as serving a mere “anticipatory” function in relation to experience as it does, for instance, in Kant’s account of the “intensive magnitude” or potential “degree” of sensation.\(^8^9\) While reading the Logic ontologically is certainly warranted by the terms set by Hegel’s text itself, as we will show, it however risks neglecting a number of interpretations and critical insights about the overall nature of his project that are therefore important to recognize here.

Following Kant’s claim to correct the course of traditional metaphysics, there is a line of scholarship that sees the Logic as primarily developing a conditioning or constitutive role in relation to possible experience, thus having transcendental rather than ontological significance. On this reading, what Hegel accomplishes is the fulfillment of the Critique itself by showing the deductive movement of the fundamental categories of thought as they progressively develop from the most presuppositionless idea achievable.\(^9^0\) Hegel would thus add genetic movement to Kant’s

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\(^8^9\) Cf. the use of “vanishing” in what Kant calls, under the heading “Anticipations of Perceptions,” “intensive magnitudes” or “intensive quantities” (\textit{CPR} A165/B208-A176/B218; A143/B182-A144/B183).

\(^9^0\) This is a matter of debate whether Kant’s Critique provides a “deduction” of the categories themselves, or whether their completion and arrangement are presupposed.
“architectonic.” In this way, Hegel is able to dialectically show the immanent development of the transcendental categories by which the empirical world is conceptualized, but he does so from a presuppositionless ground in the spirit of Kant’s own critique of dogmatism. This interpretation, however, can lead to one possible interpretation that the whole of the Logic, following the terms set by Kant, should be understood non-metaphysically. This position has been advocated in particular by Robert Pippin, who argues that Hegel’s Logic takes as its central “theme” Kant’s “unity of transcendental apperception” and the “‘spontaneously’ self-conscious […] character of all possible human experience.”91 Thus, for Pippin, rather than falling back into pre-critical “substantive metaphysical commitments,” Hegel, as a transcendental “idealistic,” “extends and deepens Kantian antiempiricist, antinaturalist, antirationalist strategies.”

The central insight behind Pippin’s anti-metaphysical reading aims to not fall prey to the tendency, which Kant criticizes in traditional metaphysics, of abstracting thought from the conditions of experience that Kant insists set the benchmark for thought’s legitimate exercise. The ontology of the Logic cannot adequately be disjoined from the human experience on which it confers meaning, just as experience cannot simply and dogmatically set the terms for what the Logic discovers in its speculative demonstration. Understanding the importance of the Logic therefore requires seeing its relation to the “science” of experience. In this sense, John Russon demonstrates with precision how the tripartite structure of Hegel’s Logic – as a treatise on “Being,” “Essence,” and “Concept” – at once symmetrically maps onto and dialectically develops the demonstrative structure of Kant’s transcendental deduction.92 For Russon, both texts show the “inherent demands of the objectivity and intersubjectivity that characterize our

91 Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 6. Pippin cites a body of German scholarship that he sees as advancing similar interpretations of the Logic as non-metaphysical “category theory,” primarily work by H. F. Fulda, Michael Theunissen, and Klaus Hartmann (see Pippen, 262, note 10).
92 “Subjectivity and Objectivity,” Infinite Phenomenology, 256-270.
experience.” Russon draws from Kant’s distinction in his tables of categories between “mathematical” and “dynamical” categories to show three important things. First, that Kant’s categories are not merely a haphazard arrangement, but rather a two-fold and holistic account of what it means for reality to be constituted as it is experienced, namely, as having a certain immediacy (that something is) and a determinate relation (that something is in and through other immediacies that are). Second, that the unity of intuition and reflection is accomplished in Kant through an argument that is ultimately an account of “transcendental subjectivity,” which presents a “field of ‘the real’ that is not comprehended” by the categories of the understanding. Russon is thereby able to call us to notice how Hegel’s “doctrine of the concept” is a “subjective logic that exceeds and grounds [immediacy and reflection] but is not itself reducible to their terms.” Third, that the central insight of Hegel’s “absolute idea” is an intersubjective or vital structure of “reality” whose being “is worked out immanently through the life of things,” that is, as the “reciprocity” of existence “only as being-through-another, an identity accomplished as a communication between intrinsically opposed members.”

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93 Ibid., 257.
94 “Mathematical” categories fall under the headings of “quantity” and “quality,” which deal with the terms in which reality is experienced as “immediacy,” while “dynamical” categories fall under the headings “relation” and “modality,” which deal with “discursive” relations between immediacies themselves (Kant, *CPR* A80/B106-B116).
95 “Kant is able to show both what the ‘logic’ must be of anything that can bear the title of ‘reality,’ and also why reality itself can only be comprehended by the coordinated efforts of both sensibility and understanding: reality itself is both immediate and reflected (in Hegel’s terms) and therefore can only be apprehended by a cognition that is both intuitive and discursive.” *Infinite Phenomenology*, 258.
96 Ibid. 259.
97 Ibid. 261.
98 Ibid. 268. Elsewhere Russon provides a reading of Hegel and Deleuze and Guattari that astutely shows how the latter’s account of “desiring-production” mirrors, develops, and critiques Kant’s account in the *Critique* of the “syntheses” through which reality is constituted. He concludes that while Deleuze and Guattari’s account of desire is largely correct, it nonetheless presupposes the “phenomenon of ‘mineness’ without being able to account for it adequately,” which he argues Kant’s *Critique* and Hegel’s philosophy is precisely able to achieve. Answering Russon’s important challenge would mean providing an account of the production of subjectivity in Deleuze and Guattari’s work. “Desiring-Production and Spirit: On Anti-Oedipus and German Idealism,” *Hegel and Deleuze*, eds. Houle and Vernon, 152-172.
A comprehensive appreciation of the *Logic* will therefore involve seeing its relevance for understanding human experience, but it must also involve following the project as it presents itself to us, namely, as an autonomous and presuppositionless study of the nature of “being.” The consequences of this latter commitment will involve appreciating the extent to which Hegel revitalizes metaphysical problems for human thought, and the way these problems allow us to problematize and delve deeper into the nature of reality and thinking. Doing so means taking the text’s claim to follow the ways that being shows itself without presupposing that the terms of its presentation will and should elucidate the structures of reality as we may commonly understand them. We argue that the *Logic* should not be divorced from its ontological frame and significance. The association of “*Logik*” with ontology is clear enough from Hegel’s own prefatory remarks that “logic coincides with metaphysics” (*EL* 56/49 §24) and that “the science of logic […] makes up metaphysics proper or pure speculative philosophy” (*SL* 9/7), “the science of things grasped in thoughts” (*EL* 56/49 §24). This is attested to further by both Hegel’s principled beginning with the immediate and presuppositionless idea of “pure being,” as well has his association with the classical unity of thought and being: “thinking in its immanent determinations, and the true nature of things, are one and the same” (*SL* 25/29). The problem is less about whether the *Logic* has metaphysical ambitions than it is about what these ambitions make possible for understanding more about the nature of reality and the restrictions placed upon it by modes of thought that presuppose their own conditions, ends, and principles.

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99 Houlgate argues that while Hegel and Kant do share a commitment to giving accounts of the categories of thought through which experience is structured, they nonetheless differ significantly in their accounts of “pure thought”: while Kant restricts thought to “only conceive of what is possible” and “know nothing of being as such,” for Hegel “pure thought can intuit the true nature of being itself.” For Houlgate, contra Pippin, Hegel’s *Logic*, as a truly presuppositionless science, proves Hegel to be “more of a critical philosopher than Kant himself,” but precisely because Hegel realizes an immanent ontology of thought and being that Houlgate believes allows us to think the “actual” from which Kant barred himself. “Logic and Ontology,” *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 128.
The spirit of Hegel’s mode of beginning – the appeal to a presuppositionless ground – must be understood not as a prejudice in favor of robust foundationalism, but rather as a critique of what it means to think. As we will show, the result overthrows the very possibility of a stable, self-identical foundation in metaphysics without abolishing the possibility of metaphysical knowledge. It is executed from the critical demand that we cannot merely assume that thought is constituted in some way, or that it will necessarily lead to an expected result. If philosophy is to begin, and truly to surmount dogmatism, it must begin purely, that is, without preconceptions of either the content of its initial object or the form in which the object is thought. This must even go as far as abandoning the presupposition that thought is something different from the object as such. In consequence, a pure beginning must be a notion that is absolutely irreducible, necessary, and universal in its sense; it cannot waver according to subjective preconceptions about what is entailed by the word or concept according to the tastes of the day. In many ways, Deleuze’s account of the genesis of thought could not be further from the pure beginning, with its unity of thought and being, that we find in Hegel’s Logic. However, as we will show below, it also shares an important affinity with it, namely, in terms of a critique of presuppositions regarding what Deleuze calls the “image of thought” as “representation.”

4.4. Deleuze and the Critique of Thought

A becoming is always in the middle; one can only get at it by the middle (Deleuze, TP 293/360).

Where does Deleuze’s philosophy begin? The very structure of his thought eludes a decisive beginning. Taking “repetition” as its opening clue to the problem of difference, Difference and Repetition begins already in the middle, since one always repeats between past and future cases. Further, it is only in the text’s axial chapter, “The Image of Thought,” that Deleuze raises the question of “beginning in philosophy” (DR 129/169). As we saw above, the method of transcendental empiricism aims to account for the affective genesis of thought in relation to the
problem. Furthermore, scholarship has oriented Deleuze’s efforts in *Difference and Repetition* in terms of completing the Kantian transcendental project by replacing the conditioning function of judgment with a genetic account of differential constitution. These are key elements for understanding Deleuze’s text, and they are important especially for seeing his engagement with the problematics of post-Kantian tradition that culminates with Hegel’s system. However, they do not exhaust Deleuze’s objectives and arguments.

There are three arguments in *Difference and Repetition* that our genealogy of vanishing will engage throughout this work. (1) Deleuze provides a diagnostic of the modes of representational thought to show the structure by which the world is determined and the limits of this determination. The key argument provided throughout is that when thought takes the form of identity as its organizing and mediating principle, then the process of difference (and vanishing consequentially) is represented as an effect of a primary identity (whether it is a substantial form or a conception of the whole). As a consequence, thought does not advance to a determination of the entire sphere of differences in the world, and the ground of the movement of difference itself is left unexplained. For Deleuze, identity is an “effect” of difference (*DR* xix/1). What a philosophy of difference should show is how identities are produced by the play of difference and how infinite, potential differences subsist “virtually” in the actualizations to which they give rise. (2) In moving toward a ground of difference, the movement of the infinite is irreducible, and finite reality by its own logic attests to an excessive, “unlimited” ground in which determinations are generatively formed and vanish in a movement of de-formation. (3) It is in the theory of a manifold, “co-existent” time that this holistic structure of vanishing and emergence provides a sufficient account of determination. As we will show throughout, Hegel offers valuable insights in these three directions in the *Logic*. In this section, we would like to note briefly the way that
Deleuze reflects an important similarity with Hegel’s project in the *Logic* concerning the issues of beginning immanently without presuppositions.

Hegel and Deleuze, in their purportedly irreconcilable distance, share a common problematic: How does one begin to think? Beginning in philosophy is a “delicate problem” (*DR* 129/169) because it does not have the convenience of merely presupposing the object of its investigation. Insofar as philosophy is distinct from the empirical sciences that rely on an “objective” presupposition in the form of a given, limited object to be studied, philosophy’s object is not something outside itself, but is the very condition and activity of its own thinking. Both Deleuze and Hegel define the task of philosophy as the “project of breaking with doxa” (*DR* 134/175; cf. *Ph* 23/31 §40). Here the two “pure metaphysicians” momentarily speak the same language: beginning is “rightly” a problem worthy of careful consideration because it necessarily requires “eliminating all presuppositions” (*DR* 129/169; cf. *SL* 70/56), even if what this commits us to in the end is, as Deleuze suggests, the labyrinth of an unraveling circle in which we are “powerless truly to begin” and condemned to repeat this powerlessness at every curve of thinking (*DR* 129/170).  

It is here that Deleuze briefly meets Hegel regarding the question of beginning on Hegel’s own terms.

It is here that the histories of repetition and ontology that Deleuze sketches in the first three chapters find their grounding in a central task: to structurally delineate and critique the presuppositions of what Deleuze calls the “dogmatic image of thought” as the form of “representation.” Representational thought, according to Deleuze, entails an eight-fold structure

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100 For example, when Deleuze appeals to the figure of “non-sense” – embodied and lived by the “individual full of ill will who does not manage to think” – it is at least partly because “only such an individual is without presuppositions” (*DR* 130/171). However, for Deleuze, such an individual is not one that is either incapable of thinking or content to pursue the highest and most presuppositionless abstractions in thought. Rather, they are “without presuppositions” precisely because they live out an intensive thought that does not conform to the terms of knowledge, recognition, or common sense.
that subordinates “difference in-itself” to the rule of identity (summarized at *DR* 167/216-217). It is a matter of indifference what “object” thought begins with in order to ground itself as long as certain conceptions of thinking are presupposed. The first, perennial structure of dogmatism, its founding “subjective” presupposition, is the “moral” principle that thought seeks after the true, and that it in principle has a “good will,” affinity, or intrinsic capacity to acquire the true without error, even if it is also capable of falling into error when it misuses or dis-coordinates its faculties. Throughout these “postulates of representation,” Deleuze’s aim is twofold. First, they seek to demonstrate the complex structure of presuppositions that the simple operation of a judgment requires in order to produce recognition of an object (“This is a table”). Second, the ultimate goal is to show that representation is grounded in a form of thought as the “form of the same,” and thus mediated at every level by the principle of identity. The ontological priority of the movement of difference over the stasis of identity – an identity “produced” as a consequent “effect” of this play of difference (*DR* xix/1) – is the central claim of *Difference and Repetition*. The argument plays itself out in a diverse number of contexts from ontology to the experience of time, and in disciplines from psychoanalysis to mathematics, evolutionary biology, and the study of thermodynamics. Despite the difficulty of this manifold presentation, the central argument remains singular. The negative aspects of the book here converge with its positive program: “The conditions of a true critique and a true creation are the same: the destruction of an image of thought which presupposed itself and the genesis of the act of thinking in thought itself” (*DR* 139/182). In place of, or rather elucidated as prior to, representational thought, the book aims to achieve a thought of “difference in itself” that would alone be the condition of philosophical thinking and would be, most importantly, the ultimate limit to which ontology strives.
4.5. Deleuze and Evanescent Ontology

What is clear from any familiarity with Deleuze’s work is that it has no single orientation, whether it is ontological, empirical, political, scientific, or linguistic. As a whole, it must be understood in the interstices of all of these problematics. Our concern at the beginning is the feasibility and necessity of an ontological dimension to *Difference and Repetition*. Taking the text up ontologically, moreover, will allow us to examine Deleuze’s arguments in line with Hegel’s *Logic*, a text that we have maintained has primarily ontological significance.

The association of Deleuze’s project with the tradition of ontology has become interpretively problematic for reasons endemic to Deleuze’s multitudinous corpus itself. Between *Difference and Repetition* (1968) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), we find a series of statements that at once confirm his ontological orientation and indicate a continuous insistence to push traditional ontology to a different and hitherto unrealized limit. If there is an ontology of being, Deleuze argues, being must be difference. The critique of the representation of difference at the core of *Difference and Repetition* is framed in terms of whether differential being should be thought in terms of “equivocity” (plurality of categories or ways in which being is said of things) or “univocity” (the singleness of being said of all individuating differences). The positive stance of the project is that only a univocal being can succeed in freeing difference from the identity of differences in the concept, but only insofar as we think being as said of, and only of, becoming (DR 40-41/59-60).

*Logic of Sense* (1969) confirms the early concern with the “univocity of being” presented in *Difference and Repetition*: “Philosophy merges with ontology, but ontology merges with the univocity of being” (LS 179/210). Commenting on the insight of Jean Hyppolite’s reading of Hegel, Deleuze asserts, in an early review anticipating his treatises of 1968 (*DR*) and 1969 (*LS*):
“Philosophy must be ontology, it cannot be anything else; but there is no ontology of essence, there is only an ontology of sense” (DI 15/18).101

As we will see below (Ch. 1 §5.2), this equation of being (difference) with the univocity of the expression poses a challenge, since it at least potentially understands difference within the horizon of oneness. Twelve years after Logic of Sense, Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s regard for “ontology” appears to shift in A Thousand Plateaus, a text whose beginning announces the need to “establish a logic of the AND, overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings” (TP 25/37; cf. D 55-56/69-70). Perhaps recognizing the intractable affiliation of traditional ontology with the oneness and identity of being as such, the latter work proposes to move in the direction of a logic of concrete relations of difference, multiplicity, and becoming, thus abandoning the ontological orientation altogether. Yet, later in this life, Deleuze confesses that he has, throughout all the folds and turnings of his work, remained a “pure metaphysician.”102 Rather than indicating a philosophical inconsistency or an irreducible schism in Deleuze’s corpus,103 these remarks on ontology must be understood in the precise way that Deleuze intends to at once draw upon the power of ontological explanation at the same time as he overturns its representational presuppositions.


102 Deleuze’s remark was made in an interview with Arnaud Villani. Villani, La Guêpe et l’orchidée: Essai sur Gilles Deleuze (Paris: Belin, 1999), 130.

103 Slavoj Žižek argues for a break in Deleuze’s corpus between an a-political, pre-Guattari period still concerned with the traditional notion of being, and a later period of a more politically incited rejection of ontology. Organs without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences (New York: Routledge, 2004), 20-21. However, we fundamentally reject the thesis of an irreducible conceptual schism in Deleuze’s work. We argue that these two seemingly incompatible positions on ontology are indicative of a single thesis that remains consistent in Deleuze’s work despite the undoubtedly vast proliferation of new concepts and problems.
The affirmation of a Deleuzian ontology has become a site for philosophically challenging both the underlying assumptions and the success of his project. The most vehement of these attacks is levelled by Alain Badiou’s seminal reading of Deleuze in *The Clamor of Being* (1997). Through a highly polemical and selective reading, Badiou argues that despite Deleuze’s affirmation of difference and the multiple, his work is concerned ultimately with “thinking thought (its act, its movement) on the basis of an ontological precomprehension of Being as One.” On Badiou’s appraisal, the association of Deleuze’s project with the traditional “onto-theological” conception of the oneness of being has the consequence of undercutting the novel claims to an affirmation of difference as multiplicity made by Deleuze’s general project. As Miguel de Beistegui summarizes Badiou’s challenge, the “fundamental thesis” of the univocity of being in Deleuze’s thought “remains incompatible with the theory of multiplicities, the thought of difference, and the drive toward immanence.” In short, for Badiou, Deleuze’s thought fails to develop the ontology of difference toward which it aims, falling back into the ground of identity that it fights explicitly to avoid. For reasons that we aim to demonstrate throughout our study, this interpretation of Deleuze is extremely misguided.

Scholarship on Deleuze has become divided over the issue of whether it should be considered ontological or not. While certain interpretations appeal to ontology’s more concrete argumentation to buttress Deleuze’s often difficult to systematize arguments, others point to his ultimate ontological orientation as a failure to meet the break from the primacy of identity that his work claims. Against the association of Deleuze’s philosophy of difference with the traditional orientation of ontology as a “philosophia perennis,” François Zourabichvili argues that the sole


“orientation” in Deleuze’s work is the “extinction of the term ‘being’ and therefore of ontology.”106 “From a logic of being and knowledge,” Zourabichvili argues, “philosophy shifts toward a logic of relation and belief.”107 While the “auto-abolition” of the term “being” that Zourabichvili signals certainly finds its necessary place in Deleuze’s work as a critique of identity, Zourabichvili is too quick to abandon the tradition of ontology altogether. It is precisely in the sense that Zourabichvili sees Deleuze as abandoning ontology – namely, in the replacement of “becoming for being” – that we intend to take up Deleuze’s achievements within an ontology in which becoming is primary. Zourabichvili implies our direction as one of an “evanescent ontology,” that is, an ontology that “knows only becomings, transversal couplings, and mutual diversion.”108 While for Zourabichvili “evanescent ontology” implies philosophy in the disappearance of ontology, we propose an ontology of disappearance as such that follows from the movement of difference as the ground of the actual world generated from it.109 Such an ontology of becoming, we maintain, would no less challenge the tradition of onto-theology than it would by altogether abandoning it.

5. **Toward an Ontology of Vanishing**

As we maintained above, the projects of Hegel and Deleuze share a number of common problems and orientations. Both seek to account for the genesis of thought rather than

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107 Ibid., 38.

108 Ibid., 39.

109 Zourabichvili, in part following the Kantian obstruction of the domain of being, insists on the disparity between Deleuze’s “transcendental field of experience,” defined by a logic of relations, and an ontological ground. Bergen argues for a lack of “tension” or “incompatibility” between these fields: “The ascent to the transcendental field of experience—to that by means of which the given is given—is to grasp Being as Event.” “Deleuze and the Question of Ontology,” in *Gilles Deleuze: The Intensive Reduction*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas and trans. Boundas and Susan Dyrkton (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011), 8. Bergen’s more sustained treatment of this issue can be found in *L’Ontologie de Gilles Deleuze*. 
dogmatically presupposing the structures of thinking as given. Moreover, both seek to elucidate the ontological movement of determination, that is, the way in which the world is generated through a movement of differential actualization. In consequence, and perhaps most importantly, both succeed in challenging the principle of identity and the form of representational thought in favor of a movement of immanent becoming, that is, of becoming-other. Yet their conceptual vocabularies in many ways could not be more different, to the point that their respective systems are taken to be fundamentally antithetical. There is, however, a common notion that we find consistently operative in both: vanishing and disappearance. Surprisingly, the function of vanishing in both systems has received insufficient scholarly attention. It is the aim of this project to trace the appearance of the notion throughout both works and to provide an account of its significance in ontology. What the assessment brings to light, in the final instance, is the common commitment between Hegel and Deleuze for developing ontologies of becoming.

5.1. _Verschwinden in Hegel_

Vanishing _[Verschwinden]_ is everywhere in Hegel.\(^{110}\) Prior to the _Logic_, the _Phenomenology of Spirit_ shows a consistent deployment of the language of _Verschwinden_. In this work, Hegel gives account of the development of experience from its most immediate apprehension, through self-consciousness, to the realization of the self in a social, cultural, and religious world. The apprehension of the immediacy of sense in what Hegel calls “sense certainty” shows that pure immediacy is in-itself only a vanishing immediacy, and such a movement of vanishing is the condition in which consciousness apprehends a multiplicity of spatial and temporal moments, the mediation of which is the first condition of universality (see Ch.1 §2 below). Later, freed from the

\(^{110}\) The term “_Verschwinden_,” in the noun form and its various verb tenses, appears approximately 166 times in the 1832 edition of the _Wissenschaft der Logik_.

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subservience to the master consciousness, the slave, having become “skeptical” consciousness, remains unable to affirm itself in its individuality; instead, it “pronounces an absolute vanishing,” that is, an absolute negation of reality which, since this “pronouncement” has sole reality and thus “is,” skepticism proves to be nothing more than the “vanishing that is pronounced” (*Ph* 125/121 ¶205). Slave consciousness, having recognized itself in the negativity of its labor, becomes absolute negativity itself at the cost of losing an affirmative world. When “intrinsically real individuality itself” is realized in the domain of “reason,” it is as the “vanishing of the vanishing” that was skepticism, the affirmation as disappearance of the negative. Yet on the back of this won individuality, when a society of individuals attempts to realize “universal freedom,” there is a relapse to the absolute negativity that was surpassed, culminating in Hegel’s account with the French Revolution’s Reign of Terror. Such a universal freedom “can produce neither a positive work nor a deed; there is left for it only negative action,” merely “the fury of vanishing” [*die Furie des Verschwindens*] (*Ph* 359/319 ¶589, translation modified). Drawing attention to the role of Verschwinden in Hegel’s account here of the Reign of Terror, Andrew Norris argues for a systematic understanding of Verschwinden as a “term of art” that denotes a “mode of non-corporeal negation that allows particulars to reveal a universality that they, understood immediately, are not.” The non-corporeality of vanishing thus entails a logical movement that, systematically speaking, should find its ground and exposition in metaphysical terms through which phenomenal experience unfolds: in short, through a *Science of Logic*.

Given the *Phenomenology*’s purview as an account of phenomenal experience, vanishing has an understandable application there. However, its consistent appearance in the *Logic* poses a

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111 Miller translates Verschwinden here interestingly as “destruction,” highlighting the negative character of vanishing for Hegel endemic to, and perhaps always at the limit of experience as such.

more perplexing challenge of interpretation. Yet despite its frequency, little to no systematic analyses have been done on the role of vanishing in Hegel’s Logic.\textsuperscript{113} One explanation for this is that the term has been treated as synonymous with what has come to be regarded as more essential terminological foci for isolating the motor(s) of Hegel’s dialectical logic: negativity and contradiction.\textsuperscript{114} As Hyppolite argues, “Hegel’s philosophy is a philosophy of negation and negativity. The Absolute is only by determining itself, that is, by limiting itself, by negating itself.”\textsuperscript{115} “The Logos,” Hyppolite continues, is “more than itself” and “surmounts its negation” and “becomes by means of contradiction the very thought of its others.” We argue, however, that \textit{Verschwinden} in Hegel’s Logic attests to a type of logical movement that is not only distinct from and more irreducible than the specificities of negativity and contradiction, but one that is also pervasive throughout the development of the Logic. Specifically, it attests to the endurance of the movement of becoming beyond the apparent cessation of this nominal category at the beginning of the Logic proper.

The most explicit appearance of vanishing in the Logic is Hegel’s account of “pure being” in the beginning of the text (see Ch. 1 §2 below). Hegel’s famous dialectic of being and nothing shows that when we attempt to grasp being and nothing on their own, in their immediacy and purity, each proves to entail the other and thus share the same indeterminacy. As we will

\textsuperscript{113} A few commentators have contributed important insights toward a more systematic study and interpretation of vanishing in Hegel’s Logic. In his important study of the beginning of the Logic, Houlgate devotes serious consideration to interpreting \textit{Verschwinden} literally as a logical mechanism. This work is important considering that the use of \textit{Verschwinden} has not been given consideration by many of the influential commentators on the Logic. Somers-Hall’s treatise on Hegel and Deleuze, rightly picking up on the importance of the notion for Deleuze’s reading of Hegel, offers important insights about its role in Hegel.


demonstrate, this ground of the Logic – that is, what pure being proves itself to be – is the “movement” of “becoming” [Werden]: “the immediate vanishing of the one in the other […] in which both are distinguished, but by a difference which has equally immediately resolved” (SL 82-83/104). What we argue is that despite the “vanishing of the vanishing” that becoming leads to in the emergence of determinacy, the movement of becoming, and the vanishing that signals is, remains a consistent and constitutive aspect of dialectical movement throughout the Logic. To demonstrate this, and elucidating concomitantly Deleuze’s notion of “infinite representation,” we take up key moments in the Logic where Deleuze’s reading implicates itself (finitude, the infinite, contradiction, and ground). Following Deleuze’s insight, our aim is to demonstrate the role of vanishing in these central moments of Hegel’s dialectic. In the final instance, the question we will pursue is whether vanishing in Hegel’s Logic is a problem that can be resolved, or whether it remains for his system an ineradicable aspect of the movement of thought.

Vanishing is a meta-categorical movement that results from the collapse of the purity and self-identity entailed by immediacy, and it is the movement in which reality emerges by becoming other than itself. The interesting part of Hegel’s project is in showing that the grasp of ideas in their independence and purity, methodologically suspended from one another and from the empirical, are only as vanishings. In a significant sense, despite the frequency of the notion in Hegel, it is Deleuze’s work that allows us to discover it. Taking vanishing seriously in Hegel, however, is something Hegel also explicitly instructs us to do: Hegel demands in the “Preface” to the Phenomenology that we must think the “evanescent” in-itself [Das Verschwindende], to affirm the experience of disappearance that, rather than being eradicated by the drive for unity and stability, abides in and conditions thought. Here Hegel defines the project of philosophical science as necessarily having to cease regarding the “evanescent” as something inessential and extraneous to truth.
The evanescent itself [Das Verschwindende] must [...] be regarded as essential, not as something fixed, cut off from the True, and left lying who knows where outside it, any more than the True is to be regarded as something on the other side, positive and dead. Appearance is the arising and passing away that does not itself arise and pass away, but is ‘in itself’, and constitutes the actuality and the movement of truth. The True is thus the Bacchanalian revel in which no member is not drunk (Ph 27/34-35 ¶47).

In Hegel’s notion of “appearance,” Heidegger notes a “basic speculative concept” whose “significance” pertains to the whole of Hegel’s Phenomenology, in both its title and essence:

[...] appearance as what appears is not only that which shows itself. To show itself is to rise up. Appearing means arriving or coming, and not-appearing means staying away. Thus, taken as a whole, appearing means rising up and disappearing. With this we grasp the specific character of movement in appearing. [...] Consequentially, appearing means rising up in order to disappear again, disappearing in order thereby to make room for another, for something higher. It means the affirmation and negation in transition [...] 116

If some movement of vanishing persists throughout the Logic’s unfolding, then it is necessary not only to parse out the reasons for the emergence of the term in the beginning, but also to make sense of Hegel’s claim that in the process of becoming vanishing itself vanishes. In short, we are asking for a concept of vanishing “in-itself” that pertains specifically to the domain of logical experience.

5.2. Vanishing and Becoming in Deleuze

Vanishing [l’évanouissement, la disparition] plays four fundamental roles in Deleuze’s work that will concern us throughout. (1) Vanishing indicates the movement of becomings that are excluded from the determination of essences in classical representational thought as too inessential and unstable (see Ch. 2 §5 below). (2) It indicates the achievement of the forms of “infinite representation” provided by Hegel and Leibniz in challenging the limitations of finite determination (see Ch. 3 below). With Hegel, Deleuze argues, thought achieves a thought of infinite determination, of the “whole” as infinite self-differentiation, the ground of which is a “single and unique total moment, simultaneously the moment of the evanescence and production

of difference, of disappearance and appearance” (DR 42/62). If Deleuze attributes a major success to Hegel in terms of a philosophy of difference and becoming, and if this becoming revolves around the movement of vanishing and appearance of differences in an infinite ground, then our question becomes whether there is a degree or limit of vanishing, in which the movement of becoming would be checked, that would differentiate the extent of their respective accounts of differential becoming (see Ch. 4 §6.3 below). (3) Vanishing forms a structural component of Deleuze’s account of actualization, or the emergence of identity-forms from the process of differentiation, on the condition of what Deleuze identifies as the “vanishing of difference” [l’évanouissement de la différence] (DR 226-228/294; see Ch. 4 below). (4) Vanishing concerns Deleuze’s ultimate account of the movement of becoming. Deleuze and Guattari claim in A Thousand Plateaus that all becomings are “rushing toward” “becoming-imperceptible” [devenir-imperceptible]: “The imperceptible is the immanent end of becoming, its cosmic formula” (TP 279/342) [see Conclusion §4 below]. It is the final aim of this project to offer a positive account of the movement of vanishing as a necessary and positive element of a philosophy of becoming provided by Deleuze.

The experience of vanishing is a necessary tendency endemic to the movement of difference and becoming. This has led to a criticism of Deleuze particularly relevant to our account. This critique is routed partially in Badiou’s critique, but it is best exemplified by Peter Hallward’s sophisticated, comprehensive, and challenging work on Deleuze.\footnote{Hallward’s account in many ways follows from Badiou’s (inadequately substantiated) interpretation to argue that the consequences of many of Deleuze’s ideas lead to an ontological withdrawing or “subtraction” from the determinate world toward a form of “extra-worldly” indeterminacy. On this interpretation, vanishing is given a negative accent or “value.” In short, Hallward’s claim is...} Hallward’s account in many ways follows from Badiou’s (inadequately substantiated) interpretation to argue that the consequences of many of Deleuze’s ideas lead to an ontological withdrawing or “subtraction” from the determinate world toward a form of “extra-worldly” indeterminacy. On this interpretation, vanishing is given a negative accent or “value.” In short, Hallward’s claim is...
that Deleuzian difference can be affirmed only through the vanishing of the actual, rather than the movement of difference engendering the actual itself. Our claim, against this negative value attached to the “subtractive” ontology, is that vanishing for Deleuze is a genuinely positive movement of becoming-other that, when differentiation is thought properly as the middle between its virtual conditions and actual materializations, is effectively genetic. Between Hegel and Deleuze, vanishing is the logical, though ethically challenging, requisite of becoming.

6. Overview of Chapters

This project reads Hegel’s *Logic* and Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* simultaneously to trace a common line of argument from the inadequacy of being as self-identical to being as an infinite process of becoming determinate of the whole of an immanent reality. As stated above, the structure of the project selects the coordinates established by Deleuze’s reading of Hegel in *Difference and Repetition*, and orders them according to Hegel’s presentation in the *Logic*. The two texts, as presented here, can be seen as overlapping, converging, and diverging series. The four chapters of this work concern the follow ideas: (1) being, (2) finitude and limit, (3) the infinite, and (4) the ground. While the final two form the explicit terms by which Deleuze engages Hegel’s *Logic*, in what Deleuze calls “infinite representation,” the first two allow us to consider Deleuze’s own argument for the emergence of infinite thought through the dialectic of being and determinacy provided by Hegel’s *Logic*.

Chapter 1: Being as Becoming. Our opening chapter provides a close reading of the Hegel’s dialectic of being, nothing, and becoming at the beginning of the *Logic*. We clarify the significance and necessity of Hegel’s beginning with the notion of “being.” From here, we provide an interpretation of the meaning of vanishing that defines the movement of “becoming” that being proves to be. We then argue that the moment of becoming, or the movement of vanishing and emergence, should be understood as the ground of the *Logic’s* subsequent
development. Hegel’s equation of becoming and vanishing, we argue, challenges the possibility of beginning with a self-identical and foundation stable in its presence for thought. We consider this conception of becoming in light of Deleuze’s own equation of the “univocity of being” with becoming, as well as the role of vanishing in the critique of pure immediacy afforded by the beginning of Hegel’s *Phenomenology*. The chapter concludes with the problem of how determinacy can emerge from an indeterminate movement of becoming.

**Chapter 2: Determinacy at the Limit of the Finite.** The aim of this chapter is to explicate Hegel’s account of “determinacy” [*Das Daseyn*] and “finitude” as they follow from the account of *becoming*. The first half provides an interpretation of how determinacy can emerge from what Hegel calls the “vanishing of the vanishing” that *becoming* proves to be. Contrary to claims that the movement of *Verschwinden* is effectively cancelled at this point in the development of the *Logic*, we argue that *Verschwinden* is carried over and given further determinacy in the internal logic of finitude. The second half considers Deleuze’s account and critique of “finite representation” as a model of finite or conceptual determination. In both cases, we argue that what finite determination predicated on identities fails to explain is the movement of becoming itself.

**Chapter 3: The Affirmative Infinite.** Hegel and Deleuze both deduce the reality of the infinity from the logic of finitude. This chapter considers the infinite from three angles: (1) the model of “infinite representation” that Deleuze argues advances on “finite representation” in terms of the determination of the whole of reality; (2) Hegel’s dialectic of the infinite, which Deleuze positions at the culminating point of his history of representational difference, and (3) the early modern problem of the infinite in Leibniz. The latter gives us resources both to see the role of vanishing in metaphysical systems that predate Hegel and Deleuze, while also allowing us to precisely differentiate the innovations of the latter. What we conclude is that the notion of the
infinite is not the point of disagreement between Deleuze and Hegel. Both thinkers advocate systems of infinite thought. Rather, where Deleuze distinguishes himself from Hegel and Leibniz is the way in which he claims they each relate the infinite movement of difference to a ground defined by the mediation of identity.

Chapter 4: Ground and Ungrounding. This chapter completes our analysis of infinite representation by considering the complex notion of ground as it appears in Difference and Repetition, and puts it into conversation with the history of the ground that the text engages. Deleuze’s conclusion about Hegel is not that difference is not infinite, but that the infinite movement of difference is botched when related to a “ground” that endows it with the form of identity. This chapter considers this claim more closely by seeing how pre-critical metaphysics of Plato, Leibniz, and Spinoza equate ground with identity. We then provide a reading of Hegel’s notion of the ground in the Logic to show that his dialectic of essence undermines substrative foundationalism to realize the ground as a process of ungrounding, or a volume of infinite difference production in an immanent field (appearance). The final part of the chapter makes the claim that while Deleuze, in one sense, critiques the notion of ground, he also in another sense moves to utilize it as an explanatory basis for “virtual” differentiation itself as generative of “actual” determination. To more closely show the dialectical nature of Deleuze’s use of the ground, we consider its argumentative line in his account of the three-fold order of temporality. At stake here is that vanishing is shown to be dynamic of ungrounding.

Conclusion: The Abiding of Vanishing. We argue that vanishing should be interpreted as an essential and persistent feature of dialectic development. Specifically, it shows the role of becoming as sub-representative movement that is irreducible to negation. We conclude by considering Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of “becoming-imperceptible” to show the importance of vanishing for concrete, experiential forms of becoming-other.
Chapter 1: Being as Becoming

1. Introduction
2. Pure Beginning
   2.1. The Dialectic of Being and Nothing
      2.1.1. Tremorless Being
      2.1.2. Being as Nothing
      2.1.3. Structure of the Beginning
   2.2. Critical Assessments
3. Becoming and Vanishing
   3.1. The Problem of Movement
   3.2. Vanishing as Logical Movement
   3.3. The Efficacy of Logical Movement
4. Phenomenology of the Vanishing Present
5. Fits and Starts: Beginning in Disappearance
   5.1. The Priority of Becoming
   5.2. Deleuze, Becoming, and the Univocity of Being
   5.3. The Challenge to Thought
6. Conclusion

“Just as Time is the purely formal soul of Nature, and Space [...] is the sensorium of God, so Motion is the Motion of the veritable soul of the world. We are accustomed to regard it as a predicate or a state; but Motion is, in fact, the Self, the Subject as Subject, the abiding of vanishing.”

– Hegel

“[…] this circle is truly not tortuous enough.”

– Deleuze

“[…] leave methods to the botanists and mathematicians. There is a point at which methods devour themselves. I should like to start from there.”

– Fanon

“So today I have expressly rid my mind of all worries and arranged for myself a clear stretch of free time [to] devote myself […] to the general demolition of my opinions.”

– Descartes

PART I: BEING

1. Introduction

Hegel’s Logic begins with the immediate unity of thought and being (SL 29/33). In this way, the Logic is grounded in the achievements of the Phenomenology [1806] (SL 29/33) while also

119 DR 169.
121 Meditations, 12.
122 “[…] it is only in absolute knowledge that the separation of the subject matter from the certainty of itself is completely resolved: truth has become equal to certainty and this certainty to truth. […] Pure science […] contains thought in so far as this thought is equally the fact as it is in itself; or the fact in itself in so far as this is equally pure thought” (SL 29/33). Hyppolite emphasizes that the Phenomenology’s “result” is that “the self has experienced itself as identical with being,” an experience of itself as the differential forms of “alienations of
promising to go further by deducing the fundamental categories that intrinsically structure human experience. If the *Phenomenology* is the “way of despair” [Weg der Verzweiflung] (Ph 49/56 ¶78) in which the subject of experience struggles with the various modes of separation from its object, then the immediacy with which the *Logic* begins is also the *Phenomenology*’s consummate achievement at the end of this path: the “absolute knowledge” in which the subject is realized to be “one” with “being” itself (Ph 488/429 ¶802).123

The claim of the *Logic* to “begin purely” endows the project with a now notorious significance. This has led to a number of critical responses, with Deleuze included, that naturally follow from the audacity of erecting a “pure,” foundational, and thus ostensibly first principle. This chapter will argue, however, that what the beginning with “pure being” [reines Seyn] proves to be in Hegel’s account significantly challenges the need in ontology to begin with stable foundations. Despite the promise and necessity of a secure point of departure à la Descartes, what the beginning of the *Logic* exposes is the impossibility of a pure and stable “ground” that can be thought solely in relation to itself. The attempt to grasp pure being in its immediacy proves ultimately that the proper ground of the *Logic* is “becoming” [Werden] as an ontological unrest. What is provocative about Hegel’s account, and a point that has been largely undeveloped in interpretations of the *Logic*, is Hegel’s claim that being is a process of “vanishing” [Verschwinden].124 How can a disappearing foundation – a foundation as disappearance – ground anything at all? In

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123 For our interpretation of the significance of “absolute knowledge” in the *Phenomenology* for understanding “vanishing” at the beginning of Hegel’s *Logic*, see §2.3 below.

124 The exception to this is Stephen Houlgate’s analysis in *Opening of Hegel’s Logic*. We will return to and offer a response to Houlgate’s interpretation below.
light of this problem, the goal of this chapter is to argue for the importance of taking *Verschwinden* seriously as a constitutive factor in the dialectical process of the *Logic*.

Following an explication of Hegel’s dialectic of being, nothing, and becoming in the first chapter of the *Logic* (§§2-3 below), this chapter will primarily concern itself with the legitimacy, function, and significance of Hegel’s use of the term “*Verschwinden*” in a presuppositionless ontological exposition. The problem we take up is that vanishing has its more obvious place in empirical or phenomenal experience, where an object given in the limited sensibility of a subject can gradually escape it. This forces us to reconsider how a process of vanishing can be an appropriate notion in the exposition of metaphysical reality without presupposing or employing the terms of phenomenal experience. What is its relevance for the domain of logical exposition? Does its apparent origin in experiential consciousness jeopardize the project of a presuppositionless account of the immanent self-determination of being?

This chapter will provide a reading of Hegel’s two beginnings, in the *Logic* and the *Phenomenology* respectively, in order to argue for the significance of vanishing in Hegel’s ontological account. To demonstrate this significance, this chapter will closely examine four dimensions of vanishing at work in the beginning of Hegel’s exposition: the vanishing preconditions of the *Logic* itself (§2.3), the vanishing that becoming is (§3), the vanishing effectuated by the attempt to the grasp the immediacy of experience (§4), and the significance of a vanishing ground that is becoming (§5). As we maintain, the notion of vanishing is not imported illegitimately from the domain of experiential consciousness, but rather proves to be an essential and constitutive aspect of dialectical movement. In short, our claim is that the inability to grasp being as purely immediate and self-identical is precisely the condition of the developmental movement of the *Logic* itself. The first articulation of this movement is the movement of becoming, that is, of indeterminate vanishing and emergence. However, given that Hegel’s account of becoming
concludes with the “vanishing of the vanishing,” the stakes of our thesis ultimately involves demonstrating the occurrence and endurance of the movement of Verschwinden beyond the thought of indeterminacy that inaugurates the Logic (see Conclusion below, and Chapter 2 §2).

2. **Pure Beginnings**

Hegel’s Logic begins, before its proper beginning, with a procedural clarification on the conditions of possibility for a non-dogmatic “science” [Wissenschaft] (SL, “Introduction”). In short, these prefatory remarks draw our attention to a basic question: How and with what must we begin to think philosophically? As we clarified in the previous chapter, Hegel’s innovative procedure is to begin an account that is absolutely without presuppositions. On the one hand, the account is “logical” [logische] insofar as it promises to derive the categories of “pure thought” without presuming in advance the structure and outcome of this development. On the other hand, it is also “ontological” insofar as it proceeds from the notion of “pure being,” a notion structurally excluded by the terms of “transcendental logic” whose goal, following Kant, is to establish the necessary relationship of conditioning between the “pure concepts” of the understanding and the sensible experience of a non-conceptual object under the formal conditions of space and time. This double significance of the Logic allows Hegel to provide an account of the genetic deduction of the “categories” through which reality is structured, but it does so from a point of departure that is purely ontological. Hegel thus effectively returns to what Kant called “pure reason” – condemned as a “groping among mere concepts” (CPR Bxv) – whose ground, following Kant, had been “extirpated root and branch” and “has vanished from the ranks of the sciences” (Hegel, SL 7/5). On Hegel’s account, if we are to explain the nature of thought, we must do so without presupposing an idea of what thought already is. As both Hegel

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125 The term “Logik,” in this sense, should be understood in the Kantian sense as “transcendental logic,” that is, the “deduction” of the categories of the understanding (cf. SL 40-41/46-48).
and Deleuze note, presuppositions can be both “objective” and “subjective,” pertaining to the pre-conceived nature of the object or the form of thinking itself (cf. *SL* 23/27, 45/53; *DR* 129-30/169-70). “Pure speculative philosophy” (*SL* 9/21) must provisionally abandon not only the “touchstone of experience” (Kant, *CPR* A711/B739), but also its own “image of thought” (cf. Deleuze, *DR* Ch. 3). For Hegel, it is necessary to “[set] aside every reflection” and “simply to take up […] what is there before us” (*SL* 47/55). What is left “there,” present for us in the clearing away of all presuppositional and determinate ideas, is the purity of “being,” and nothing else.

The point of departure of the *Logic* is thus this simple and “undifferentiated unity” (*SL* 51/60): unity as the absolute coincidence of thought and being, and not a unity of difference between them. As the prefatory remarks of the *Logic* make clear, this starting point provides two essential possibilities. The first is a new beginning for ontology that would be “liberated” from the presupposition that metaphysical thinking is separated from the being – that is, the “fact” or “object” [*Sache*] of thought – for which it wants to provide an account (*SL* 29/33). The second possibility is an exhibition of the fundamental structures of reality – of what *is* – proceeding from this immediate, presuppositionless, and ontological “foundation” [*Grundlage*] (*SL* 49/57). If Aristotle had advanced thought beyond the reality of determinate beings toward the ultimate sources and manifold ways in which being as such expressively structures our experience,127 Hegel’s “logical” beginning entails a clearing ground in which thought is absolutely freed from any determinate pre-conceptions about the nature of experience. At this moment in which ontology becomes fully immanent to itself, however, it is not the case that the experience of the *Phenomenology* is definitively overcome or surpassed, as if it represented a misadventure in the course of thought. This would be to fundamentally misunderstand the significance of Hegel’s

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126 Cf. *CPR* A295/B352 & A425/B453
127 *Metaphysics*, 1584 [1003a20].
Logic and to condemn it to a position of abstraction that it consistently critiques. Rather, the product of the Phenomenology is the possibility of a new stratum of exposition from the “ground” [Grund] (SL 48/56) on which the project of ontology can be realized autonomously with resources wholly its own and toward ends that are not pre-determined. As such, ontology begins anew with a course of thought that is structurally open. With the Logic, the Phenomenology – to employ a unique phrase of Hegel’s – “retreats” into its own “ground” (SL 71/57). For this to be possible, as we will show below (§2.3), the traces of phenomenal experience must vanish for thought to ground itself retroactively, that is, ontologically. Reflecting this philosophical position of beginning, Edmund Husserl later poses the question that is relevant to us here: “What can remain, if the whole world, including ourselves with all our cogitare, is excluded?”

2.1. The Dialectic of Being and Nothing

In this section we will explicate the way in which Hegel’s Logic executes this task of beginning, of taking up and following the development of the simplest and most immediate – and thus adequately presuppositionless – notion available to thought. Since our primary goal in this chapter is to interpret the role of vanishing in Hegel’s account of becoming, we will not have the opportunity to pursue all the intricacies, consequences, and criticisms entailed by Hegel’s dialectic of being, nothing, and becoming (SL, Ch.1, 59-60/68-70). Instead we focus on those aspects of the dialectic that are significant for our latter account of becoming (see §3 below). To aid us in this course, we can briefly summarize in advance the main dialectical movement that the beginning of the Logic presents: Hegel argues that a truly presuppositionless science must begin with the notion of “pure being” as immediate and indeterminate presence. Upon examination, the presence of Pure Being proves to be “nothing” at all, and not the absolutely rich idea one

might expect. When the new notion of “pure nothing” is apprehended in its turn as what is true, it proves to entail that it “is” all there is to think, despite its own nothingness and ostensible opposition to being. In short, Pure Being and Pure Nothing share the same immediate indeterminacy: they are indistinguishable from each other in their nullity of content that intrinsically has the presentation of nonetheless being. When grasped respectively, each entails the other and is thus mediated by the other. The truth of both is their “becoming,” or the logical “movement” in which each immediately “vanishes” in the other and becomes the other that emerges. Yet they remain paradoxically and irreducibly different from each other in their indistinction. Our central problem in this chapter is the following: Why does being “vanish” of its own accord? Why, in this vanishing, does it become other than itself?

The accent of our analysis in what follows will accordingly stress the significance of this movement of “vanishing” [Verschwinden] as a logical movement, that is, as a non-figurative and non-metaphorical dynamic proper to speculative development. As we will argue, vanishing is a proper dynamic in the interplay between immediacy and mediation. Further, this movement of vanishing immediacy and purity is the condition through which the content of the Logic develops its manifold of differential forms through the dissipation of any immediate identity in an immanent becoming-other than itself. Before turning to this account of becoming, we will first clarify a number of aspects regarding the opening dialectic: (1) the justification for the necessity of beginning with “pure being,” (2) the co-implication of being and nothing, (3) critiques of Hegel’s presuppositionlessness, and (4) the role of vanishing as the pre-condition of the Logic’s beginning.
2.1.1. Tremorless Being

That with which the beginning is “made” must be an immediate givenness that is ungrounded and indeterminate: “Seyn, reines Seyn” (SL 59/68-9). Since we cannot presume that “pure being” is the object of and thus other than thinking itself, it must be understood as the mere “is,” pure and simple. Pure Being is, simply and immediately, without any further qualification or determination. There is thus no reference, implicitly or explicitly, to anything other that would be distinct from or outside it, nor to any manifold of content that would complicate it or render it intrinsically self-differentiated and mediated. As given, it must be both present and absolute. The Logic therefore does not begin with an assertion or predication of what being is like, nor even with the propositional form of a complete, declarative statement. What is given is not a judgment that would entail a mediated connection between a subject and predicate through a copula (e.g. “being is X”). Rather, it begins by stuttering, with a thought fragment, a verb suspended from all determinacy: What Hegel calls “reine Seyn” here is not a positive ontological response to the traditional question: “What is being?” It is the residuum (without being a derivative, successive result per se) of a process of abstracting and freeing thought from all determinate content and

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129 Instead of Di Giovanni and Miller’s translations into English’s common use of substantives, one could translate these opening remarks with an adverb plus either the gerund (“being, being purely”) or the infinitive form (“to be, to be purely”). Instead of the usual rendering of “pure being” in scholarship, I sometimes opt for “reine Seyn” throughout to emphasize the verbal nature of the category while avoiding the awkwardness in English, and to differentiate it from more determinate senses of “Seyn” throughout the Logic. This is difficult because Hegel’s text sometimes wavers between “reine Seyn” and “das Seyn.” This use of an independent verb in place of a substantive is important, even if it becomes or takes the form of the latter with the addition of “Das,” since the origin of substantives in verbs or stutters is worth consideration.

130 Deleuze describes the “great writer” “at the limit” as a “foreigner in his own language” that “makes the language itself scream, stutter, stammer, or murmur” (CC 138/109-110). Following Deleuze’s remarks, one can imagine another Hegel along these lines, a more “minoritarian” Hegel, who makes “language take flight, [sending] it racing along a witch’s line, ceaselessly placing it in a state of disequilibrium, making it bifurcate and vary in each of its terms, following an incessant modulation” (ibid., my emphasis).
Being is neither the subject that thinks it, nor the indeterminate object apprehended by such a subject, nor even the ideal content of a thought determination that would envelop both poles of the relation. What is posited is simple, indeterminate presence as such. Moreover, rather than positing a pure substantive, what is expressed is a pure act, since what is apprehended is indistinct from the act of apprehension itself. This ground is itself problematic insofar as it immediately inaugurates an event of thinking that in principle can freely reveal its own truth spontaneously. Properly speaking, Hegel’s beginning has the form of a test: to begin truly without presuppositions, it is necessary to grasp the most “pure” notion, that is, one which requires nothing other than itself to be thought and which is not pre-determined from the beginning to result in anything more than it is in its immediacy.

By positing being independent of all conceptual and objective mediations (references to other concepts or to concrete content), thought is left with a simple, immediate, unadulterated notion. The opening fragment in which Pure Being is simply enunciated is followed by a predication or elucidation about what the notion entails. This elucidation takes the form of four criteria that qualify reine Sein as a presuppositionless point of departure and thus a true ontological beginning: (1) indeterminacy, (2) immediacy, (3) self-equality, and (4) insularity (no outward reference or inequality to something other).

The relation is worth noting here between Hegel and the later phenomenological ἐποχή formulated by Husserl, itself entailing a methodological suspension or provisional destruction of determinacy, since both entail the activity of abstraction as the concerted vanishing of a sum of determinate knowledge about the world. The world must fall away in order to arrive at its essence and genesis. Cf. Husserl, Ideas I: “The attempt to doubt universally belongs to the realm of our perfect freedom […]” (58/54). “We put out of action the general positing which belongs to the essence of the natural attitude; we parenthesize everything which that positing encompasses with respect to being; thus the whole natural world which is continually ‘there for us’, ‘on hand,’ and which will always remain there according to consciousness as an ‘actuality’ even if we choose to parenthesize it.” Such an ἐποχή or “restricted” vanishing of “spatiotemporal” existence from judgment allows Husserl, following Descartes, the “acquisition of a new region of being never before delimited in its own peculiarity” (63/58).

Hegel makes this point in another way: “whether a beginning is made with the activity of nothing or with nothing is equally indifferent,” since both are “mere abstracting,” that is, not substantives but actions (SL 76/87). Regarding the consequences of Hegel’s point here, see §2.2 below.
In its indeterminate immediacy it is equal only to itself and also not unequal with respect to another; it has no difference within it, nor any outwardly. If any determination or content were posited in it as distinct, or if it were posited by this determination or content as distinct from an other, it would thereby fail to hold fast to its purity (SL 59/69).

It is with this four-fold criterion that we have Parmenides’ grasp of the “unshaken heart of well-rounded truth” [Ἀληθείας εὐκοκλέος ἀτρεμές ἱτορ]. While the “well-rounded” character of the Parmenidean conception of being testifies to its insularity and proportionality, like that of a perfect sphere, its distribution is also ἀτρεμές, literally free of “tremors” that would move the body in fear and thus disturb its equilibrium.

As should be clear from these defining clarifications, Pure Being is not an object of thought, insofar as the status of an object presupposes a difference from the subject that apprehends it. Unlike the dialectical deduction of the experiences of consciousness, philosophy cannot presuppose a given distinction between subject and object. As we will see further, it is predicated on and made possible by the vanishing of this difference (see §2.3 below). It would thus be imprecise to say that thought thinks itself purely, as if immediacy provided a direct access to thought as a bare, given object for contemplation. Pure Being is thus nothing other than givenness itself when thinking has wrested itself from the manifold of experiential determinacy: Pure Being is this “pure empty intuiting itself” (SL 59/69; cf. Ph 63/67 ¶104), just as intuition is merely the direct grasp immediacy of being. In wresting itself from all determinate notions of “being,” it has also forgotten its differential situation in relation to being as something other. Thought, at least for an instantaneous and vanishing moment, is free from alterity.

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133 The Presocratic Philosophers, 243 [Fr. 1, 25-32].
134 For a diverse set of discussions on this conception of being, its disturbance by Heraclitean flux, and the significance of this classical antagonism for contemporary ontology, see Michael Marder and Santiago Zabala, eds., Being Shaken: Ontology and the Event (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
135 It is important to consider Hegel’s remark here alongside Parmenides’ claim that being and thought are one: “The same thing is there to be thought and is why there is thought. For you will not find thinking without what is […].” Ibid, 252 [Fr. 8, 35-40]. Hegel praises “older metaphysics” for having a more true conception of thought and its relation to the real: “[…] thinking in its immanent determinations, and the true nature of things, are one and the same content” (SL 25/29).
2.1.2. Being as Nothing

The test of Hegel’s beginning is to see what being proves itself to be, without any preconception that it will be determined in certain ways (as quality, quantity, essence, et cetera), and without artificially manipulating it to these ends. The idea of Pure Being initially seemed adequate to articulate the simple presence of thought as such, free of all otherness, but what we find is that the presentation of being as absolute cannot be present without immediately presenting itself properly as nothing: being is “in fact nothing, and neither more nor less than nothing” (SL 59/69). We can say only that Pure Being is empty, that it contains no determinateness, no difference, and no manifold of content. Pure Being is thus thought intuiting what is given as its own vacancy. It is the concept of “pure nothing” [reine Nichts] that appears as the truth with which we can begin, the truth of being itself. In the absolute presence of thought for itself, a new truth emerges at the heart of its ostensibly tremorless and other-less being. Pure Being, according to the criterion of beginning as such, needs to be unconditioned and absolute. If it were constituted in an essential relation to something other than it, then its unconditionality would be compromised; with impurity it would lose its immediacy, and would thus lose its claim to begin on its own. Yet as soon as thought grasps Pure Being, otherness emerges at its center. Paradoxically, it is present only as the absence of this presence that it is or was.

Pure Nothing thus appears as the truth of Pure Being. Yet what emerges is not something more determinate than Pure Being. Pure Being is not fertile soil, but rather a collapsing ground that opens thinking itself onto its own absolute abyss. In its pure state, nothingness is grasped in the same way as Pure Being: immediate, indeterminate, self-equal, and insular. Hegel suggests that if we insist on thinking reine Nichts as negativity, then we must regard it as the pure negative, the simple not against the is of being, without further qualification. Reine Nichts therefore should not be thought of as negation, since negation is relational; for reine Nichts to be pure, it has to be
taken immediately, and therefore independent of all mediation or relationality. The consequence of this is that because its absolute truth permits nothing outside its abyssal embrace, nothing is inseparable from being all that is. When Being was grasped in its immediacy and without further mediation, it immediately entailed a new notion (nothing) that, rather than being discovered outside itself, it found entailed by itself. Just as equally, Pure Nothing immediately entails the status or claim to be, which was supposed to be its opposite, as its essential truth. The positing of nothing is inseparable from an affirmation that it “is.”

2.1.3. The Structure of the Beginning

There is a tendency to treat the structurally delineated moments as distinct, exclusive, and sequential notions in a dialectical progression from the least to highest determined. Chapter 1 of the “Doctrine of Being” contains three sections: A. Sein, B. Nichts, C. Werden. This delineation gives the impression that what we have are three distinct ideas in a dialectical process with each subsequent one surmounting the last: first being, then nothing, then becoming. What we argue is that rather than being separate notions, they are three folds or three articulations of the same indeterminacy, immediately presenting itself as Pure Being and given its full articulation in the mediation of becoming: Pure Being is implicitly nothing, and vice versa, while Becoming is the explicit apprehension of both in the same dynamic and folded unity. We can summarize the movement as follows: What is present in §A is the pure, self-identity of being with no alterity or limit.\footnote{This analytic language poses a certain problem for interpreting the Logic since we are using categories of thought (identity and difference) that have not yet been deduced in Hegel’s system (they will be in the “Doctrine of Essence,” where we encounter the first “laws” of thought). However, in Hegel’s remarks in Chapter 1, the principle of identity is affirmed to be at work here: those philosophers who claim that “being is only being” and “nothing is only nothing,” what he associates only half-correctly with the Eleatics and Spinozism, entail a “system” of “abstract identity” ($SL\ 61/71$). For a closer consideration of this problem, see §2.2(b) below.} §B reveals the emergence of a new, distinct notion: Nothing. This other is immediately revealed to be the same “empty” indeterminacy as Being. What appeared to be a difference from
or othering of an original self-identity proves to be the ultimate identification with it: self-identity – otherness – identity between apparent “opposites.” As Hegel notes at the beginning of §C, “*Pure being* and *pure nothing* are therefore the same” ([*ist also dasselbe*] (SL 59/69). This seems to leave thought affirming a simple identity. However, the identity Hegel posits with one hand he retracts with the other. In the ultimate instance, Hegel does not affirm the identity of Being and Nothing, but rather the synthetic contraction or simultaneous folding of their distinct movements. The shift from Being to Nothing and back again is made possible by a logic of entailment in which each present themselves immediately and in doing so only present the other. The result is an indeterminate and unlimited oscillation between the two notions since each immediately entails the other and is thus unthinkable except through the other.

What appears to be an identification of the two contraries in the beginning entails three ways in which the principle of identity is compromised and torn asunder as the beginning is unfolded, as thought sinks into its ground: 1) a *co-implication or co-inherence* (Being as Nothing, and Nothing as Being); 2) a logical *process or movement* (Being and Nothing *vanish* in one another); and 3) a *distinction* that is both *ontological* (Being and Nothing remain different) and *temporal* (Being does not *pass*, but *has passed* over into its other). In the explication of Becoming below (§3), we will have to answer three questions: How can Being and Nothing be both identical and absolutely differentiated? How can the indeterminate involve a movement? And finally, how can the domain of logic have temporal relations?

2.2. **Critical Assessments**

Given the bold prerogative that the *Logic* sets for itself – to ground a system of “pure knowledge” on a foundation that is itself absolute and unconditioned – Hegel’s beginning has been subject to a diverse number of critiques that aim to undermine the project before it advances even a second step. The most obvious critical strategy has been to demonstrate that
Hegel’s claim to a presuppositionless ground has certain presuppositions and thus cannot ground the system securely. Here we will consider three specific objections concerning: (a) the necessity of beginning with Pure Being, (b) the risk of presuppositions of language in the account of Pure Being itself, and (c) the implicit and anticipated presuppositions of the content of “being.” Of the numerous challenges that have been levelled at the Logic since its publication, and toward Hegel’s philosophy as a whole, we emphasize these three because of their relevance to what we take to be the multiple linchpins of Deleuze’s own critique of Hegel as outlined in the previous chapter.

(a) Hegel’s claim is that “it lies in the very nature of a beginning itself that it should be being and nothing else” (SL 50/59). Scholars have drawn attention to this necessity of beginning with Being and not some other notion, especially the Nothing with which being proves to be indistinguishable. In this sense, George P. Cave argues that Being essentially has no ontological priority over Nothing as a “starting point of the Logic.” It is important, however, to distinguish two different questions: Whether beginning with Being or Nothing will have the same result, notably, is not the same question as whether one begins necessarily with one or the other. According to Hegel it is necessary that it be made with Being because the immediate fact of thought is that it in fact is, and not that it is not, even though its Being will prove to be indistinguishable from Nothing itself in the abstract form of these terms (SL 50/59). Given the shared indeterminacy between the two, Hegel admits, with the risk of equivocating, that they are effectively interchangeable (SL 99-100/86-7) and that beginning with Nothing would not result in a different path for the Logic. Cynthia Willett has argued to the contrary that beginning with Nothing would in fact produce a different course of the Logic, and that Hegel’s “privileging” of being has the effect of endowing Becoming with a directionality of growth, and thus of

determinate existence and the organic form of life that realizes an end.¹³⁸ For Willett, Hegel’s *Logic* in effect “orients itself towards a return to being,” and “this spiral upwards must forget its double pointed downwards.” For Willett, this “second spiral” remains “lost in the shadow of the *Logic*.” While Willett’s conclusion is provocative, it is largely speculative. In §5 below we offer our own response to the question of the properly understood ground of the *Logic*, which we maintain requires a consideration of the role of Becoming in relation to the sequentially “prior” notions of Being and Nothing. As we maintain, both Being and Nothing, inadequately conceived on their own, are only implicitly what they are in truth, namely, a differential movement of Becoming which alone is the ground properly speaking.

(b) A more formidable set of criticisms have been leveled that concern the role of language in Hegel’s articulation of Being as such. In short, the central claim is that the beginning of the *Logic* is not truly presuppositionless because the immediacy of Being is thought through the mediation of language. Rather than effecting a purely logical and speculative movement from the immediacy of Being, such a deduction is made possible by the determinate language in which being is necessarily conceived. This critique has been set forth in particular by Hans Gadamer, who argues that “[with] words […] there is no beginning ex nihilo. Nor is it the case that a concept could be determined as a concept without the usage of the word with all of its many meanings playing a role.”¹³⁹ Gadamer’s critique has two primary and distinct prongs: (1) “Philosophical logic,” rather than providing access to the essential and universal structures of meaning, presupposes a more vast and “diverse schemata of linguistic access to the world.” The

¹³⁸ “The Shadow of Hegel’s Science of Logic,” in *Essays on Hegel’s Logic*, ed. George di Giovanni (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 92. Willett offers an important insight here, but the consequences are vaguely determined. I propose ultimately to consider the problematic of vanishing as an irresolvable and necessary course of the *Logic* – rather than a movement that is “lost,” as Willett concludes – and consequentially, as an explicit structure of logical and phenomenological reality.
“functioning” of “concepts” relies on the “natural logic of language,” which in turn is subject to historical variability of meaning and signification. While this first critique is a largely external appraisal of Hegel’s Logic, the second is a consequence that is leveled on the Logic’s own terms. (2) For the “construction of the Logic” to “function,” Gadamer argues further, “it must already presuppose and use the categories of reflection which it then claims to deduce dialectically.” This latter criticism not only pertains specifically to the account of Being that sets the Logic in motion, but moreover, it speaks to the pre-conditional criterion of a presuppositionless science that serves as the tribunal of this movement: if there are structures to thought, these cannot merely be presupposed, but must be deduced immanently. Gadamer’s claim is that the linguistic predication with which the notion of Pure Being is presented employs “categories of reflection” – namely, determinacy and indeterminacy, identity and difference, interiority and exteriority – that have not yet been derived, as they later will be in “The Doctrine of Essence.” Such reflexive categories, for Hegel, require their essential mediation through other terms. For instance, identity is meaningful only through the distinction from the category of difference, and an “inside” is only in relation to what is excluded as falling “outside” it. Such a fundamental mediation between the terms that seem to predicate being potentially compromises the claim to a thought of pure immediacy. Gadamer’s claim is not that these terms should be avoided, but precisely that they cannot be avoided since they form the essential structures of human language.140 Dieter Henrich offers a precise response to Gadamer’s influential challenge, arguing that what we have called above the “criteria” or “predications” of Pure Being have in fact a strictly “negative character,” rather than being affirmative predicates; their “task is to keep away every further determination

140 Ibid., 82.
from the purity of being.” In short, they merely clarify how Pure Being should not be thought. Thus, for Henrich, rather than condemning the apprehension of immediate Being to the contradictory mediation of language, Hegel’s language should be understood as only negatively elucidating being through the categories of reflection without directly predicking the former through the latter. In short, Henrich argues that they serve to “cancel the reflexive character of the categories” that might mistakenly be attributed positively to Pure Being by the reader.

(e) While the first two criticisms concerned the order and form of the Logic’s beginning, the third concerns the claim, echoed by Willett, that the incipient movement beyond the category of Pure Being is possible only through a teleological orientation that is presupposed. Pure Being becomes other than its immediate indeterminacy because it contains within it an implicit end toward which it strives. In consequence, Pure Being cannot be absolutely without presuppositions since it implies a goal that determines what it will show itself to be. Along these lines, Schelling argues that pure indeterminacy transitions into the determinacy of Daseyn because of the former’s deficiency for a thought “already used to a more concrete being […] more full of content, and thus cannot be satisfied with that meagre diet of pure being in which only content in the abstract but no determinate content is thought” (see Ch. 2 §2 below).142

We note these three lines of attack because they each inform certain aspects of Deleuze’s own critiques of Hegel’s Logic. Along similar lines as Willett, Deleuze’s ultimate critique of Hegel is that dialectical logic has a determinate end to which it strives: for Willett, this is a privilege given to a “return to being,” and for Deleuze, it is a return to the identity of the whole from the “dismemberment” of its parts (see Chapters 3 and 4 below). Along the lines of Gadamer, Deleuze

141 “Anfang und Methode der Logik,” in Hegel im Kontext (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971), 85. Ibid. what follows. Translations are my own.
claims that Hegel’s claim to effect logical movement is inefficacious as long as movement is generated by way of conceptual language (see §3.3 below). Deleuze advances a third objection that concerns the “subjective presuppositions” implicit in Hegel’s notion of pure being. We will begin with this latter objection, the response to which will allow us to clarify the first primary function of vanishing in the Logic, namely, the condition forgetting the Logic’s phenomenal preconditions.

2.3. The Vanishing of Experience

Deleuze asserts that Hegel fails to begin without presuppositions because “pure being […] is a beginning only by virtue of referring all its presuppositions back to sensible, concrete, empirical being” (DR 29/169).\(^{143}\) While it is unclear precisely what Deleuze intends here, this accusation can be interpreted in two principle ways. (1) Like Deleuze critiques Kant, perhaps Hegel merely models the transcendental categories, which the Logic purports to deduce immanently, on the empirical or experiential forms of consciousness. If this were the case, Hegel would be presupposing in advance what he is trying to explain by placing the conditioned in the conditions.\(^{144}\) Certainly this breaks with Hegel’s explicit intentions in the Logic. As Hegel will stress, “pure being” as a starting point does not indicate the being or perspective of anything resembling consciousness, but signifies the simple is, nothing further. Logic must be an ontology rather than a phenomenology, a logic that takes being as problematic.

We can thus read Deleuze’s critique in another way that will allow us to see the first analytic function of vanishing in the Logic. (2) The Logic requires that it begin with the unconditioned, but, as Hegel admits, the project of the Logic presupposes his earlier Phenomenology

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\(^{143}\) Deleuze’s critique attacks Descartes’ presumption regarding the orientation to the structure of the I. Hegel “does not seem, for his part, to proceed otherwise.”

\(^{144}\) Cf. Deleuze’s insistence on not modeling the condition on the conditions, but instead beginning with “something unconditioned capable of assuring a real genesis” (LS 19/30): “The foundation can never resemble what it founds” (LS 99/120; cf., 105/128, 120-1/145-6, 123/149).
as its historical conditions of possibility. The capacity to abstract thought from all presuppositions itself relies on the experience of the phenomenological “Subject” [“der Substanz in das Subject”] (Ph 488/429 §802) that has arrived at the point of “Absolute Knowing” [Das absolute Wissen] in which the subject is realized to be one with its object. Die Logik presupposes phenomenal history. However, what the Logic presupposes in the Phenomenology, as Hegel clarifies, is philosophy’s “liberation from the opposition of consciousness,” from the doxa that thought is structured by a separation between the experiential subject and the object of thought or experience (SL 29/33). In this liberation, thought no longer regards the object prejudicially as something extraneous to it; it is now able to take itself as the object of its own investigation.

This leads to a problem for presuppositionless ontology: How can the thought of the unconditioned itself be conditioned by history? The interpretative difficulty of this point, and the importance for the present study, is not in deciding whether the Logic is truly presuppositionless, since Hegel admits in one sense that it is not, but in recognizing precisely how the Phenomenology renders the Logic possible. What the outcome of the Phenomenology generates is the capacity for realizing the unity of thought and being. From this position of unity, thought is able to reflect on its history. This does not mean that thought is doomed to be examined as an abstraction, but that abstraction from all determinate content or preconceived images of thinking is the only way to guarantee that what is given is thought as it is, unconditioned by the prejudices of history.

The Phenomenology ends with the unity of thought and being with which the Logic begins. However, while the position of “absolute knowing” that consummates the Phenomenology must be understood as the position of reflective memory on its experience, the position of the Logic is characterized by the absolute forgetting of this history. The “pure thought” with which the Logic

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145 “The concept of pure science and its deduction is therefore presupposed in the present work in so far as the Phenomenology of Spirit is nothing other than that deduction” (SL 29/33, my emphasis).
begins is conditioned by the results of the historical process, but this ground is its own disappearance, its own self-erasure as ground. Angelica Nuzzo takes up this issue in the question of whether “collective memory” is the ground of history or whether it is rather produced by the historical process. As Nuzzo outlines, this raises a complex interpretative issue for understanding the role of memory [Erinnerung] in Hegel’s system. The capacity for recollection seems to be the condition of historical experience, yet memory is never immediately given as capacity, nor is it strictly speaking individual; memory is always constituted in a complex social whole. Further, the Phenomenology consummates historical time in an “ahistorical” present in which the whole of Spirit’s past experiences are available to it for “re-collection” as a “gallery of spirits” (Ph 492/433 ¶808). History and its externalizing forms are overcome in the absolute interiorization of spirit’s memory. “… [M]emory is transformed by its passage through (phenomenological) history” in order to become “purely logical memory, a merely virtual act of Erinnerung.” In order to think the unconditioned, the Logic requires that the determinate content of memory’s history vanish for thought “as if all that precedes were lost for it, as if it had not learned anything from the experience of past spirits.” Memory, as the “forgetting history altogether,” gives way to a constitutive forgetfulness and thus “vanishes in the pure concept with which the Logic beings,” in “the atemporal ‘realm of shadows’.”

While the project of doing the Logic may certainly presuppose the historical conjuncture of the experiences of a “sensible, concrete, empirical” consciousness in the whole of its tumultuous becoming, this does not necessitate that the categorical structure of the Logic will simply resemble the form of consciousness as such. The Logic is not grounded in the image and

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147 Ibid., 4.
148 Ibid., 8.
149 Ibid., 10.
150 Ibid., 8.
reflection of phenomenological experience, but rather by its disappearance.\textsuperscript{151} It is only by actively forgetting its experience hitherto in the dynamism of intersubjective history that a free abstraction can make possible a presuppositionless point of departure for a logical self-exposition, for thinking the grounds of experience outside of its phenomenal image. For the Logic to begin, the Phenomenology must literally vanish from the experience of thinking, leaving only the absolute clearing in which the immediate and unconditioned can be given without the mediation of history and its persistent division between subject and object that caused consciousness so much trouble. It is in this first case that vanishing, defined as a pre-conditional forgetting, is a constitutive process of the Logic.

Having set up the project of the Logic and analyzed its opening move, we will now turn to Hegel’s conception of becoming in order to provide an analytic of the notion of vanishing. The reality of becoming, as Hegel presents it, will allow us not only to skirt the primacy of identity as being complicates itself, but also to determine the animating principle of thinking. In the final instance, this analytic will allow us to return to the problem of beginning in philosophy in order to rethink the ground of thought in Hegel’s account.

\textbf{PART II: BECOMING}

3. \textbf{Becoming and Vanishing}

\textit{Pure being and pure nothing are therefore the same.} The truth is neither being nor nothing, but rather that being has passed over into nothing and nothing into being – “has passed over,” not passes over. But the truth is just as much that they are not without distinction; it is rather that \textit{they are not the same}, that they are absolutely distinct yet equally unseparated and inseparable, and that each immediately \textit{vanishes in its opposite}. Their truth is therefore this \textit{movement} of the immediate vanishing of the one in the other: \textit{becoming}, a movement in which the two are distinguished, but by a distinction which has equally immediately dissolved itself (\textit{SL} 59-60).

Das reine Seyn und das reine Nichts ist also dasselbe. \textit{Was die Wahrheit ist, ist weder das Seyn noch das Nichts, sondern daß das Seyn in Nichts und das Nichts in Seyn, – nicht übergeht, – sondern übergegangen ist. Aber}

\textsuperscript{151} It should be noted that, for Hegel, the Logic is not the idealist solution in which history is dissolved, but also the ground from which it will re-emerge as natural space and time. Cf. Hyppolite, \textit{Genesis and Structure}, 574/554; and Hegel, \textit{Ph} 491-493/433-434 806-8.
eben so sehr ist die Wahrheit nicht ihre Ununterschiedenheit, sondern daß sie nicht dasselbe, daß sie absolut unterschieden, aber eben so ungetrennt und untrennbar sind, und unmittelbar jedes in seinem Gegenteil verschwindet. Ihre Wahrheit ist also diese Bewegung des unmittelbaren Verschwindens des einen in dem anderen: das Werden; eine Bewegung, worin beide unterschieden sind, aber durch einen Unterschied, der sich ebenso unmittelbar aufgelöst hat (WL 69-70).

3.1. The Problem of Movement

Hegel’s section on Becoming [Werden] consummates a symmetrical process in which both Being and Nothing – as pure, independent abstractions – prove to entail the other. Their self-identity is immediately a breaking down of identity itself: Becoming is the logic of other-entailment. Since there is no indication of movement in §A and §B of Hegel’s text when reine Seyn and reine Nichts are given respectively, it is necessary to account for the genesis of Becoming as a “movement” [Bewegung]. Is this movement anything more than the shifting attention of thought between the effectively identical indeterminacies of each moment, like the eyes oscillating back and forth over the double-image puzzle in the Sunday morning paper, frustratingly trying to “spot the difference”? In this case, movement would rely on an external reflection merely caught in its own oscillating indecision. It is only in a third moment, in which these first two abstractions are taken as a “unity,” that there is an affirmation of movement and difference: §C asserts a passage that is always already accomplished: Being “has passed over, not passes over.”

If the cancellation of their identity is also the cancellation of their difference, then under what conditions can we speak of logical movement? In order to demonstrate that there is more to the activity of thought than the empty postulates of Being and Nothing, there must (have) be(en) a real passage from one to the other. The entire fate of thinking rests on logical movement.152 If there is no movement between the categories of Being and Nothing, then the immanent deduction of the Logic falters at the impasse of its own beginning. Thought would remain static,

mired in its own abstractions. In the face of such a undecidability, what inevitably takes the place of the immanent deduction is either the recapitulation of the table of categories as it is given by classical logic, or the intervention of a subjective thinker that asserts a categorical system based on a common sense understanding of what the determinacies of thought ought to produce to reflect the world accurately. In either case, the understanding of thought advances no further than the dead, petrified husks of concepts as they have always been assumed to be. What continues to elude the grasp of thinking is the life of the concept, its animating principle(s).

If there is any advance beyond the simple thought of Pure Being – if thought is capable of uttering anything other than “is, is, is” in an inescapable loop of the pure, blinding light of presence – then there needs to be a propulsion outside of the immediately given notion of reine Seyn. It is clear that Hegel’s account requires the reality of movement for this advance to be possible. Becoming is a “movement [Bewegung] in which both [Being and Nothing] are distinguished, but by a distinction which has just as immediately dissolved itself” (SL 60/70). However, there are three problematic interpretations of the appearance of movement at the start of the Logic, all of which would prove dismal for the legitimacy of the Logic by its own terms.

1. Movement commonly implies a change or dislocation of a spatio-temporal object whose integral presence allows us to calculate the distance covered and the rate of travel. This articulation relies on a conception of local motion alien to and not explicitly deduced from the logical concept of being, but rather imported, for example, from a conceptual model of physics. Since the Logic cannot explicitly presuppose empirical conceptions of

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153 The introduction of movement into logic here is not eccentric. Taking the syllogism as a model, what differentiates a logical deduction from a mere analytic truth is the generation of a new consequent from the synthesis of two analytic judgments. In this case, the conclusion of the valid deduction was not given in either of the premises already. The jump from the conjunction of the independent premises, which differ in nature, to a conclusion entails a logical movement or process. Validity depends both on a premise difference and a conjunction.
space, time, or objectivity, there will need to be a notion of movement as *logical process*.

This is further complicated by the fact that Hegel does not say that Pure Being moves into *nothing*, but rather that it “vanishes into” *nothing*. Physical movement is not obviously a process of disappearance, since what moves often endures its travel.

2. In this case, motility seems to rely not on physics but on a category of phenomenological consciousness for whom experiential fluctuation is given. What vanishes for me as a perceptive being is what tends to the limit of my line of sight, like the parallel lines that converge and become indistinguishable at the vanishing point of the canvas, or the flow of temporal objects that cannot seem to stay lodged in the duration of my present. If this is the case, then Pure Being does not vanish of its own accord necessarily. Its truth *qua* vanishing would be derived from the situation of a consciousness that experiences a world of changing objects from a determinate perspective. However, the goal of ontology is not to reduce all experience to prefabricated molds, but to think movement as it is in-itself. It must not be artificially rendered by the subjective desire of the thinker who, in Schelling’s words, “cannot be satisfied with that meager diet of pure being” and thus pushes thought forward out of a craving for concrete determinacy.\(^{154}\)

3. Lastly, there is the possibility that Hegel’s use of *Verschwinden* is figurative, a rhetorical or poetic device – a little flourish to enliven the labor of logic. However, if *Verschwinden* is doing any logical work, if it is an essential element of thought’s activity in deducing its own categorical structure, then the metaphor jeopardizes the project of a presuppositionless science. Hegel would be relying on a device of poetic language, extraneous to thinking, in order to fabricate a logical development.

\(^{154}\) *History of Modern Philosophy*, 138.
3.2. Vanishing as Logical Movement

Given these interpretative possibilities, in what sense and under what conditions can we speak of a mode of logical disappearance that is distinct from physical, phenomenological, and poetic devices? Becoming is the “movement of the immediate vanishing of the one in the other.” The motility of the concept is its disappearance, yet its vanishing is inseparable from a simultaneous tendency to emerge. On one level, the only movement in Becoming is that of Verschwinden, but why does anything vanish, and why is vanishing a movement? With Pure Being and Pure Nothing, each vanishes “in the other” simultaneously. The preposition here designates that since each is indistinguishable and inseparable from its own vanishing, and since this vanishing is always in the other, each is nothing more nor less than a threshold or point of passage defined by its direction out of itself. In itself, Being is always already Becoming, a direction out of itself and into something else. Parmenides thought that the logic of being would prove to be free of tremors, to be the true stasis subtending the illusory sorrows of a fluctuating existence. Against this position, Hegel reintroduces Heraclitus at the heart of being (SL 60/70r). It is not that Being contains a vanishing content and that its form endures. For reine Seyn and reine Nichts, there is no distinction between form and content, therefore it is the whole of Being that vanishes or tends to become its opposite. Insofar as it is by its own necessary standard a position of immediate and absolute purity, Pure Being must be absolutely present. As an unmediated givenness, it must be pure presence. Yet the reflection of this immediacy shows that its presence entails its own absence: what is given immediately is the nothingness of its presentation. The logic of being is immediately the collapse or suspension of presence.

Grappling with this difficulty, Houlgate argues that Pure Being vanishes because “it is so indeterminate in itself that logically it is not even the pure being that it is and so is in fact the absence of
Thus, “its own utter indeterminacy prevents it logically from even being pure and simple being.” Houlgate’s interpretation of Verschwinden here indicates the impossibility of Pure Being as an absolutely present idea, but it does not do full justice to the language of vanishing itself. I argue that the ontological sense of vanishing must be understood in terms of the simultaneity of Being and Nothing. The beginning does not unfold as a mediated, successive series, since there is no real time in which Being is fully present and then fully absent. What Hegel is parsing out is the paradoxical structure of the immediate as such. In turn, reine Nichts vanishes because to be what it is entails always being in excess of itself; to posit nothing purely is already to posit that nothing is all there is.

In being virtually indistinguishable from each other, Being and Nothing realize that their truth is one and the same becoming. The pure light of being entails blindness to any distinct content, a whitewashing of the perspectival field: the day in which, to twist Hegel’s famous dictum, all cows are white. This blindness is the absolute indeterminacy that makes the acts of Pure Being and Pure Nothing one and the same position: “pure seeing is a seeing of nothing,” “[pure] light and pure darkness are two voids that amount to the same thing” (SL 69/80r). By Parmenides’ important lesson, the appeal to identity negates the possibility of movement and difference. From the perspective of Being or Nothing as purities, thought is caught in the difficulty of stasis: they are both more and less than what they were in their immediacy, thus both exceed what common external reflection might have expected from them as immediacies. How can this passage be one of “vanishing” insofar as the gerund implies an act of passage, transition, or middle-ground in which the act is in the process of being accomplished, without termination?

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155 Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 277-278. Houlgate here explains vanishing primarily with an emphasis on the affirmative or negative terms set by the problematic of Being and Nothing (is-and-is-not, is-not-and-is respectively, “it’s not even what it is supposed to be”). But this does not directly explain the use of Verschwinden in its literal sense.
To vanish is not to have disappeared, but to be *en route* to disappearance, and thus to be both suspended in middle-ground between presence and absence and in motion toward the latter.

The question of what vanishing means is the same question as how thought gets to an affirmation of Becoming at all. Becoming is affirmed because neither the respective duplicities of *reine Seyn* and *reine Nichts* on their own, nor their initial opposition and consequent identity, are mediated moments. They are the contracting levels of a single immediate givenness. Each vanishes and thus moves beyond immediacy because they are each both present and absent in the same logical instant. Since the extremes of their individual presentations can never be present without the other, their truth is the intermediary and ceaseless oscillation between the two in the same thought determination. Mediation is the reflection of the restlessness of the immediate as such.

*Being is* Nothing, but it is also more than nothing, since Nothing itself *is*. From the vantage point of each respective moment, each is not what it is, but already the other without ceasing to be itself as the ineradicable trace of a presence. Each is the simultaneous excess and absence of itself, a doubling that at this point amounts to nothing determinate as such. Their truth is that they cannot but occupy this intermediate position that is nothing short of the simultaneous generation and cancellation of their difference. As such, they are vanishing moments, never quite themselves, always in the process of losing their reality without ever having disappeared completely. They find that their truth is not a third successive moment, but an immemorial ground that, in affirming vanishing as such, sustains both past moments in an unstable unity: both are Becoming. Vanishing is thus the generative condition of *Logic*. Being is not a substantive ground. The genetic ground is the inability of Being to be its own stable ground except as the reflection on the becoming it already is.
What moves, what becomes other than itself, is. Becoming is their “unity” and “truth” because it affirms the difference and process that they always are; it is the double affirmation of a single process that they are independently unable to affirm. Paradoxically, it is from the vantage point when both are grasped together – “unseparated and inseparable” because of their indistinction – that thought is able to discern that they are “absolutely distinct.” Thought is able to discern their distinction after having emerged from the vanishing point of their difference. How is thought, having survived their identity, able to grasp difference? Hegel clarifies that this “unity” [Vereinigung] can only be stated as an “unrest of incompatibles” [eine Unruhe zugleich unverträglicher], a taking together that is nothing other than a disturbance. As such, it is a “movement” [Bewegung] (SL 60/70). Houlgate emphasizes Hegel’s point that “all vanishing of being and nothing into one another entails the pure and absolute difference between the two immediacies.”

In this process, for Houlgate, a “difference arises […] in the very movement in which it disappears,” the process “in which pure being itself proves logically to be nothing at all.” Being and Nothing are the same, but this is because in their equally not being themselves at all, their identity consists in their pure difference: they do not converge on some identical ground, but prove to have the same movement in which they are ceaselessly other than themselves. Hegel’s thesis of Becoming undermines the independence of substantive accounts of being in order to affirm a movement or process that predicates nothing other than its own restlessness. It is only when both are grasped together that their truth as vanishing and the genetic power of thinking is realized. This oneness, however, is not a static polarity of opposites, but a unity of unrest and incompatibility: each immediately tends to, falls into, and falters in its other. They are exclusive “opposites” only for a presuppositional, pictorial common sense that, for example, contrasts absolute darkness and light. Paradoxically, vanishing accounts for both the

156 Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 289
indiscernibility and the difference between Being and Nothing (SL 68/79). Vanishing denotes the effect in which an insular identity is inextricably caught up in a ceaseless process othering itself. As such, vanishing is logical rather than pictorial.

Vanishing seems to imply a unidirectional movement from presence to absence, with the absolute limit being defined by the obliteration of all traces of presence. By Hegel’s logic, we can see how the notion of Verschwinden does not function univocally or in a single direction: reine Seyn is present to thought only as its vanishing into reine Nichts. Pure Nothing, taken in its immediacy and indeterminacy, is inseparable from its tendency back into Pure Being. In this zone of indistinction, both are for thought the vanishing into each other and not the simple, absolute, self-sameness they appeared to be. Yet while the notion of Pure Nothing vanishes immediately, insofar as nothingness cannot be thought except as becoming the indeterminate immediacy that Pure Being is, it is not only vanishing but also emergence. The vanishing of one is the arising of the other (SL 76/87r). The immediate truth of both is presence, even the explicit presence of an absence, and the mutual implication produces the counter-action of emergence. Logically, this truth of becoming is that disappearance is inextricable from emergence, and these two tendencies form the logic of a beginning as process.

We can see the reason for why movement is absent from the first two sections. There is no transition from Being to Nothing taken as such because this would hold the two apart and render the movement successive: first Being is present, then it transitions over into Nothing. “In the pure reflection of the beginning as it is made in this Logic with being as such, the transition is still hidden; because being is posited as immediate, the nothing only breaks out in it immediately” (SL 74-5/86r). But Hegel’s point is that the transition between Being and Nothing is nothing other than the transition from Nothing to Being. It is thus only at the point in which we can grasp this bi-directionality as one complex process that any movement can be affirmed as co-
extensive and simultaneous. Becoming is the contraction of two vanishings. These two vanishings are directional flows that together constitute the unity of becoming. The contraction is synthetic insofar as it brings together two flows and not static terms into a single dynamic, indeterminate, always passing flux.

In addition to isolating the inherence of the contraries in one another, and their status as a process of passage, Hegel implies that this passage has a temporal specificity: Being “does not pass, but has passed” (nicht übergeht, sondern übergegangen ist). What accounts for this distinction between the present and the perfect tense? Why does the passage of Being into Nothing necessarily have the status of having already happened? Is this simply an articulation of the sequential order of the moments? Succession is not a good reading for two reasons: 1) Reine Seyn and reine Nichts must be taken as immediate, and any temporal distinction into successive instants would not only render them separate (which they are not), but it would render them as mediated immediately. 2) Werden does not follow reine Seyn and reine Nichts in time, but is rather the primary truth that they reveal themselves to be immediately. Becoming was always the truth of Being and Nothing, each of which could never actually be grasped in their purity by thought, lest thought vanish completely.

Vanishing marks the transition(s) between Pure Being and Pure Nothing from the vantage point of Becoming as their immanent truth. What makes the notion of motility as vanishing essential for Hegel here is that the transitions are never terminated at their target: the moments are preserved, but in becoming they are never anything other than their transition or tendency toward the other. Their transition is perfect, or already accomplished, because it can never be grasped as absolutely present, and thus as static and finalized: it is always past, yet always moving, a past that is never completed. It is the nature of becoming to “elude the present” (Deleuze, LS 1/9).
3.3. The Efficacy of Logical Movement

Hegel begins with what he takes to be the purest and most presuppositionless account of being. This involves abstracting the “is” from the concrete situation of experience in which the question of being is otherwise enveloped. This allows the Logic to move beyond an always situated experience looking for its conditions of possibility to an immanent and potentially complete account of those logical conditions. As we have shown, this account is possible only insofar as being shows itself to involve a logical movement in which the purity of being vanishes in the indeterminate movement of becoming. The notion of logical movement raises a further challenge for which Deleuze is a central protagonist. The challenge suggests that no position of ideal or conceptual abstraction from concrete existence can adequate the movement of the real.

The being of Hegelian logic is merely ‘thought’ being, pure and empty, which affirms itself by passing into its own opposite. But this being was never different from its opposite, it never had to pass into what it already was. Hegelian being is pure and simple nothingness; and the becoming that this being forms with nothingness, that is to say with itself, is a perfectly nihilistic becoming; and affirmation passes through negation here because it is merely the affirmation of the negative and its products (NP 183/210).

This is one of Deleuze’s most precise engagements with Hegel’s Logic in a book one where would not expect to find it. Moreover, it echoes a longer line of criticism of Hegel’s conception of movement. One of Deleuze’s main objections in Difference and Repetition against Hegel is that he is unable to capture the life or movement of thought except in the form of language and representation, thus rendering it ineffectual (DR 52/73-4). This raises the question of how to express the differential process of metaphysical reality, since as Pierre Klossowski claims, “we have no language to express what is in becoming.”157 For Deleuze, similarly, there “are only inexact words to describe something exactly” (D 3/9). As we noted in the previous chapter, this

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raises the possibility that Hegel and Deleuze diverge definitively, as Baugh importantly argues, around the possibility of providing an abstract account of the immediacy of being. While Hegel pursues the movement of mediation and contradiction of logical and experiential immediacy in abstraction – that is, the immediate “as thought” – Deleuze pursues a metaphysics realized through the “concrete richness of the sensible” (D 54/68). Between Hegel and Deleuze, Baugh isolates Deleuze’s thesis of a “priority of the a posteriori characteristic of empiricism”: that “multiplicity is thus a positive fact, the empirical and prior condition of the conceptual determinations of thought, something that thought does not produce and cannot deduce, but can only encounter ‘after the fact’.” This means that Deleuze’s appeal to “multiplicity” is “governed by a logic of difference rather than the logic of identity of the concept,” a “logic of external relations” as the “greatest impediment to Hegelianism” with its logic of internal conceptual relations, of “contingent empirical events” over the necessity of the concept of being’s own differentiations. To be sure, Baugh’s interpretation accurately follows Deleuze’s own characterization of transcendental empiricism. In what follows, we wish to further follow our consideration of the type of logical movement that vanishing is to determine the extent to which it does not, in its own way, generate an account of the self-differentiation and dynamic becoming of immanent being. To do this, we will extend our analysis of the Logic’s use of vanishing being to the vanishing of immediacy at the beginning of the Phenomenology which is Deleuze and Baugh’s primary point of reference.

4. **The Phenomenology of the Vanishing Present**

   The question regarding the time of being, and thus the motivating conditions of a vanishing, can in part be clarified by a brief consideration of the section on “Sense-Certainty”

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159 Ibid., 137.
“Sense-certainty” is the account of how the attempt to grasp the immediate in experience fails qua immediacy. This failure occurs not because of a pre-given standard of knowledge that consciousness is unable to adequate, but because its very attempt proves to be other than it intends or thinks itself to be. Immediate knowing proves to be mediated and not a direct, uncontaminated apprehension of the truth in all its specificity. The singular proves to be universal, and as such, sense-certainty moves outside of itself or is replaced by different form(s) of consciousness that look at the thing in terms of its self- and other-mediating constitution.

The basic form or object of immediate knowing is the singular: this. The singular promises to bypass all mediation (whether through concepts, judgments, or representation in a subject). In principle, this direct route allows us to grasp what makes reality individually unique without being defined by something else: not “this paper in comparison to that paper” (an example of determinate negation, or knowing mediated by concepts and differentiation), but rather, “this here” (singular, non-propositional, indeterminate knowing). Concepts are interferences, in-betweens or representatives that step in when consciousness is unable to acquire a direct, uncontaminated access to singular essences. Sense-certainty ambitiously claims to accomplish this latter route.

The singular and indeterminate “this” proves to be a differential mediation between two terms entailed by the same, immediate experience. The first mediation is that the this is split into a subject and an object, a this thing and a this I. In face of this emergent distinction, sense-certainty tries to preserve the immediacy of its experience by regarding the object as the essential moment, the immediateness that is true regardless of whether I am here to apprehend it. Nonetheless, the this proves to be mediated in a second way: the this has two forms corresponding to the different dimensions of space and time that form my experience in the here and now.
respectively. This second mediation, however, does not compromise the experience of sense-certainty because it is able to reframe its experience in terms of immediacy, since both the here and now are equally singular and indeterminate. The difference between them is a difference that does not make a difference for immediacy.

This brings Hegel to an examination of the experience of the “here” and the “now” as they appear. He tells us that the here and the now equally vanish. What is important in this is not that Hegel is arguing from our common empirical experience of determinate things, which is to say, by making sense of the immediate in terms of the mediated. Rather, Hegel is claiming that when we examine the operation of this form of knowing in the real, experiential flow of space and time, the singular proves to be universal. We can thus follow the logic of this reversal: The norm that sense-certainty sets for itself, if it is to be what it thinks it is, is that it is the immediate grasping of what is immediately available for it, here and now, as present. There is no knowing if there is nothing present for sensing. Knowing is defined by the certainty of this presence, of the point of access with which it is fully identified. It is in this sense that Hegel calls sense-certainty, like reine Seyn, “pure intuiting” itself (Ph 63/67 ¶104). However, the reality of its experience is that it is subject to the differential flows of space and time in which everything changes, even if this change is not yet the object of knowledge. The pre-conditional backdrop here is that knowing is subjected to the conditions of space and time, and it is upon this world that knowing comes to bear. In these flows, the attempt to grasp the singular against the reality of spatio-temporal change shows that the singular is always disappearing immediately with the emergence of a new moment or point. This does not mean that the singular is nothing, since it always reappears elsewhere. It vanishes because it immediately is and is not simultaneously, and it is only as this proliferation, deferral, and extension outside of itself into a plurality. This is the third moment of mediation in the structure of the immediate: the singular, in the purview of phenomenal
experience, takes the form of a multiplicity or plurality of moments in time or points in space. Again, this does not fully threaten immediacy because each point is equally indeterminate, the same \textit{this}, but now a \textit{this-that-is-a-this-more-than-this}.

The immediacy of sense-certainty begins to break down: the truth that is supposed to make something individually defined and absolutely distinct actually makes everything the same “this,” since “this” is all we can say if we are to stay true to singularity. Against all change and differences in the world, I make the same truth-claim. Since everything is a “this,” everything is the same singular, \textit{ergo} the singular is universal. If the singular object proves to be other than it was thought to be, namely as a universal, then it cannot be the object of \textit{immediate certainty}. In this experience of the ceaseless vanishing of what I grasp to be the truth, I recognize that the form of the Now itself endures in each passing singular indication (the night that turns into day, the wine glass that is emptied). Furthermore, the universal form of Now that remains stable in the restless passing of all particular contents is not a single instant, but rather an “absolute plurality of Nows” (\textit{Ph} 64/68 §107).

At first apprehension it seemed as if the object was the essential term of the mediated relation between an I and a Thing, since “there is no knowledge if the object is not there” (\textit{Ph} 59/64 §92). Yet: “What does not disappear in all this is the ‘I’ as universal” (\textit{Ph} 62/66 §102). The Now would not vanish if I were not there for it to fall away from, if I could not fail to hold it fast. At this point, sense-certainty looks to the I as the object of a present singular and immediate truth, since it is always for me that points and moments vanish and emerge and vanish again. But the I proves to be subject to the same fate, since there is nothing in the I to grasp except the multiple points of apprehension that correspond to the objects apprehended. Like the object, the I is also an empty, fractured, indeterminate plurality (\textit{Ph} 61/65-66 §101). In short, both the object and the subject prove to be mediated universals and not immediate singulars.
To be present requires some degree of continuity, some permanence, but this is what singularity (as both the object and subject) proves to lack. The only permanence sense-certainty finds is the vantage point of the whole that is only self-identical is its differential, mediated movement. The experience of the immediate singularity is that there is no singularity or immediacy in the horizontal flow of experience, or, more precisely, that the only immediate is the grasping of the whole of experience as a spatio-temporal plurality of instants and points that vanish the instant they are emerge. The truth encountered at the heart of the sensuous is nothing more than its evanescence: it is grasped only as fleeting, vanishing in the same moment that it emerges and becomes present. The Now is always already another now. To be a Now at all is “to be no more just when it is,” to be a “having-been” [gewesen ist] and not the present we thought it would be; “it has not the truth of being” (Ph 63/67 ¶106). As such, being is only in this passing. Being is a has-been.

The immediate unfolds as essentially mediated, being unravels as a becoming, and the instant as a multiplicity. This multiplicity of fleeting singulars is sustained by the universal Now. The difficulty of the Now is not merely that it negates itself immediately and shows its truth to be a not-Now. The grasping of the Now is the genetic site in which a multiplicity or plurality of singular Nows are ceaselessly engendered for a singular consciousness that is carried along in and indistinguishable from their ebb and flow. It is the experiential becoming in which the I realizes itself as a universal abiding in a field of vanishing content. Consciousness itself is a survival, that is, the holding together of this vanishing. The condensation of thinking to the “pure being” of sense-certainty is not a retreat to the ground of an unmoving identity, nor is it simply an emptying of its own content. The This is the site for an upsurge of difference. There are “countless differences cropping up here” (Ph 59/64 ¶92) from a temporal ground of experience on which I am unable to find a stable footing.
Sense-certainty is an experiential “history” (Ph 64/68 ¶109), the “movement” in which universality is retroactively generated from the restless proliferation of singularity. It is the account of how subjectivity is realized as a stabilization and contraction of a becoming of temporal and spatial disappearances and emergences. As Lampert succinctly argues:

[Hegel’s] Now is always a plurality, a universal, a having-been, a subjectivity and not just a facticity. Hegel introduces multiplicities of temporal quantification into the present, and multiplicities of qualitative subjectivities into temporal quantification. His move is not to deny something about the present but to add so much into the present that it no longer looks like what we thought the present was going to be. In this way, Hegel’s logic of negation is not a logic of absence, of lack, or even primarily of antithesis — it is a logic of genetic multiplication, negation via hyper-affirmation. To clarify why Deleuze does not take seriously the view that the present does not exist, it is of value to note Hegel’s reason for not taking it seriously: namely, that what makes a Now be another is not that it vanishes, or simply is not there, but that more Now extends it into something else.160

Perhaps it is necessary to add that it is in its vanishing that it extends into an other, and that its vanishing is something more than and thus irreducible to negation and non-presence; it is rather quasi-presence, a becoming-imperceptible, a mode of “anarchic” or “nomadic distribution” (Deleuze, DR 37/55).

The Now is essential to my temporal experience of reality, but the attempt to express the Now in an immediate, absolute, insular present falters. This faltering, rather than terminating my experience, propels it into a time that is more expansive than that of the present. Or rather, it reveals the time to be an extending outside of itself into a multiplicity of cases that constitute a living, durational present in which I endure the fleeting nature of appearances and hold them together. Yet I am nothing more than this endurance, but what I endure is the restless vanishing of the immediate as such, the becoming of more time. The present is the time of being. Being should exist as present, whereas it is the nature of becoming to elude the present (Deleuze, LS, 1/9). This does not leave us with the indifferent choice between the present and the past-future, between being and becoming. Rather, both Hegel and Deleuze aim to show that we do not have

a choice: any attempt to grasp being in its truth reveals that it is impossible, that it “falls to the ground” of becoming. Like the Now, pure being cannot be grasped in its immediacy. This failure is not of the nature of a truth that continually displaces itself, eluding our grasp every time we reach for it. Rather, in being grasped, it exposes itself in its excess. Its being is nothing other than the process by which it others itself in a multiplicity of outpouring differences.

Sense-certainty brings to light this experiential effect of vanishing, yet the inability to grasp the Now in its present leaves us with an infinite displacement that does no more that leave the I chasing after both the object and itself, each perpetually vanishing or missing from their places. Deleuze is drawn to Alice’s curious inability to lay hold of the shiny object that, every time she reaches for it, is always on the shelf just above where she grasps. Instead of aiming for the thing where it is, Alice ingenuously connives to grasp it where it is going; she aims for the object = x not in-its-place but in-the last-place, at the limit at which it can no longer keep displacing itself. She is amazed when, despite her cleverness, the object simply disappears right up through the ceiling. Echoing Heraclitus’ infinite becoming, Alice exclaims: “Things flow about so here!”161 Sense-certainty remains naively bewildered by the flow of things. Sense-certainty as a form of knowing is not an achievement as much as it is continual impasse. What appears as the “richest,” most direct knowledge is in fact the most “impoverished.” Sense-certainty goes nowhere because it is unable to surmount its own impossibility; it remains mired in the proliferation of vanishing instants, unable to learn from its experience. Like a meteorological consciousness that is always exasperated with the emergence of winter, it is stuck in the proximate now of each season. Always “forgetting” the Now’s essential evanescence, it treats

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161 Lewis Carroll, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland *and* Through the Looking Glass (London: Penguin Classics, 1998), 176. Reinforcing this relation between a logic of flows and vanishing, Deleuze paraphrases Alice’s exclamation as: “*Comme les choses s’évanouissent ici*” [“How things vanish here”] (*LS* 56, my translation).
every vanishing as new, thereby always returning to the start, stubbornly struggling to lay hold of
the presence of what is most immediate.

5. **Fits and Starts: Beginning in Disappearance**

We have considered the role of vanishing along three registers: in Hegel’s unique mode of
ontological beginning, in the concept of Becoming as logical movement, and in his correlative
account of immediacy in the phenomenology of experience. We must now reconsider the nature
of Hegel’s “beginning” in the *Logic*: With what does the *Logic* begin precisely? In the elucidation
of any system’s *point of departure* – which Hegel envisions as both a “Grund” and “Grundlage” (*SL*
48-49/56-57), or ground and foundation, of the system’s subsequent development – there is a
natural tendency to interpret this point as a singular, first principle. We need only recall
Descartes’ “stretch of free time” devoted to “the general demolition of [...] opinions.”\(^\text{162}\) The risk
of doubt in first principles, as Descartes recognized, leads to a wholesale destabilization in the
architecture of knowledge, for “anything built” on dubitable “basic principles” necessarily
“collapses of its own accord,” like iron gridwork on a bed of sand. Following this rationalist
prerogative, Hegel’s *Logic* – framed in terms of presuppositionless immediacy rather than
epistemic “doubt” – begins with a singular notion: *being purely*. For Hegel, such a “beginning
remains” “immanent” to the subsequent development of “determinations” as “the underlying
ground [...] without vanishing from it” (*SL* 49/58), like a groundwork that continues to support
an infrastructure despite its being covered over and obscured. However, the rationalist
prerogative here risks treating the “first” as a principle epistemically higher than, and thus
separate from, the determinations that follow as consequents. What we argue, to the contrary, is
that Pure Being cannot be separated from its consequent exposition in ostensibly distinct
moments. Further, the exposition of Being as Becoming definitively compromises the need for an

\(^{162}\) *Meditations*, 12.
enduring stability of being as a first, ontological principle. To these ends, we argue for the
primacy of becoming in the Logic’s grounding (§5.1), its complementarity with Deleuze’s own
account of the “univocity of being” in Difference and Repetition (§5.2), and the consequence of these
moves for giving an account of the beginning of thought as such (§5.3). Thought begins, we
argue, through fits and starts, that is, with the inability to begin purely. Thought begins with a
problem, with the vanishing of Being, or, the vanishing that Being is.

5.1. **The Priority of Becoming**

The Logic begins of necessity with Being in its pure and indeterminate presence. Yet Being
shows itself to be something other than absolute presence: Being in truth is Nothing, that is, what
is has nothing to show. When faced with this presentation, external reflection thus analytically
separates the moments, as the sectional division of the Logic might encourage, into sequential
notions that are mutually exclusive and surmounting. Yet, in what sense can we meaningfully
speak of Being and Nothing as sequential moments? It is true that Pure Being comes first in the
exposition, and that this happens with a legitimate necessity. What we maintain, however, is that
in an important sense Becoming is more primary than these distinct notions that structurally
precede it.

There are a number of important textual grounds for our proposition that the moment of
becoming takes precedence over the antecedents of Pure Being and Pure Nothing. The first
reason, as we have demonstrated above, is that what Becoming affirms is the very vanishing
movement of each that they show themselves to be without being able to affirm, since each holds
fast to their respective immediacies. For either moment to affirm the vanishing that they are
would be to deny themselves and to affirm the other, thus showing their essential mediation.
Therefore, it is only from a third moment, the moment of their becoming, that their truth can be
affirmed: each are dynamic involvements with the other, that is, evanescent and emergent.
tendencies of becoming-other than themselves. Hegel’s remarks in the Logic and his historical commentaries further reinforce this position. In the Logic, Hegel praises the “deep-thinking” Heraclitus for bringing forth the “loftier, total concept of Becoming” from the “simple and one-sided abstraction” of Pure Being: “being is no more than nothing,” that is, “all flows, […] all is becoming” (SL 60/70r). Reflecting earlier comments that pure immediacy is a necessary but impossible notion, Hegel remarks that “there is nothing which is not an intermediate state between being and nothing” (SL 80/93r). In short, for Hegel, everything is a becoming. In other contexts, Hegel claims that one has “acquired great insight when one realizes that being and not-being are abstractions without truth and that the first truth is becoming alone.”

Reflecting this last of Hegel’s prioritizations of Becoming over Pure Being, Gadamer argues that Being and Nothing are merely “analytic moments” of Becoming, which is the first true moment, the “proper truth for thought.” For Gadamer, they are “analytic” moments neither in the sense of an external reflection, which breaks down the unity of thought by pointing out multiple respects in it, nor in the sense which would imply that out of every synthesis the inmanent contradiction can be recovered though analysis of the moments synthesized therein. Such an opposition presupposes things that are different. However, by virtue of their undifferentiatedness, Being and Nothing are only different in the pure and full content of the concept of becoming.

The priority that Gadamer assigns to Becoming in the “pure and full content of the concept” should not be taken to imply a presupposed standard of determinacy – that is, “fullness” of “content” – that Being must adequate or achieve. We argue that Gadamer points to another insight than the critique provided above by Schelling that Pure Being only becomes other than

163 Cf. Hegel’s remark on the inseperability of immediacy and mediation: “[…] there is nothing in heaven or nature or spirit or anywhere else that does not contain just as much immediacy as mediation, so that both these determinations prove to be unseparated and inseparable and the opposition between them nothing real” (SL 46/54r).
165 Hegel's Dialectic, 89
166 Ibid.
itself, and thus only moves, because it needs to achieve determinacy that it lacks. Pure Being will in fact achieve determinacy that it originally does not present in its immediacy, but there is little reason to believe that this result is not effectuated through the immanent unfolding of Being without presupposing its own end.

What makes Being and Nothing problematic starting points is that they are unable to ground anything at all. It is only in their problematic unity, as the “unrest” of Becoming, that there can be any genesis to determinacy. Determination (Daseyn, or “determinate being”) emerges not from Seyn, but from Werden as its constitutive principle, its reason, or its ground. Certainly Werden, as the synthesis of the mutual collapse of reine Seyn and reine Nichts into one another, presupposes both, but in a new sense. Contrary to certain claims that the remainder of the Logic is a deepening of the sense of “being,” we should say that in the failure of Pure Being, the Logic is a deepening of the notion of becoming. Becoming contains its collapsing moments in their failure to be thought; it holds them together in their mutual vanishing in order to affirm this twofold disappearance and emergence as their truth.

5.2. Deleuze, Becoming, and the Univocity of Being

We have followed Hegel’s account of Being in its immanent vanishing to the Becoming that proves to be its ground. With Deleuze, there is a concern with how “being” should be thought and expressed that runs throughout his work in the late 1960s (DR, EP, LS).167 “There has only ever been one ontological proposition: Being is univocal” (DR 35/52). “Philosophy merges with ontology, but ontology merges with the univocity of being” (LS 179/210). With “univocity,” according to Deleuze, being is given a “single voice” that “raises the clamour of being” (DR 35/52). On the one hand, it might appear opportune to compare Hegel and

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167 However, the term is largely absent in Deleuze’s work thereafter in which the concept is replaced by the “plane of immanence” or “consistency” populated by “becomings” (TP).
Deleuze’s conceptions of being here. Deleuze’s concern is less with the purity of being than with its abstraction, and both Hegel and Deleuze follow Aristotle in rejecting the status of being as a genus divisible into species of beings. On the other hand, Deleuze’s account of univocity has a distinct mode of derivation from the one found Hegel’s Logic. While Hegel is concerned with the “pure” and presuppositionless nature of being, Deleuze inventively derives the notion of univocity from a series of thinkers (Duns Scotus, Spinoza, and Nietzsche) in the history of philosophy that he argues each break from “equivocal” accounts of being.\(^{168}\) We will return to Deleuze’s concern with categorical equivocity and its significance for the notion of difference in the following chapter (Ch. 2 §6). Here we wish to consider the basic impulse behind Deleuze’s ontological concern with univocity to underscore an important consequence that it shares with Hegel’s account of Being and Becoming that we have established above.

At the base of Deleuze’s account is the “heretical” debate that the Scotus school inaugurated within the Scholastic tradition,\(^ {169}\) rooted in certain philosophical questions in Aristotelian logic, about how to speak about God. The debate concerned whether different beings should be thought univocally – that is, as sharing in the same “sense” – or whether, following Aquinas’ interpretation of Aristotle, beings should be thought analogically – that is, as proportionally sharing in attributes with a difference in kind.\(^ {170}\) For instance, when we speak of the “health” of the body and the “health” of the mind, we are speaking analogically insofar as what is attributed shares a common sense while pertaining to distinct substances; the requirements of mental health will thus not be the same for corporeal health. This logical

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\(^ {168}\) For an illustrative account that focuses on Deleuze’s link between univocity in Spinoza and Duns Scotus, see Smith, “The Doctrine of Univocity: Deleuze’s Ontology of Immanence,” Essays on Deleuze, 27-42.

\(^ {169}\) Selections from Scotus’ central work, the Opus oxoniense, can be found in the English collection Philosophical Writings, trans. Allan Wolter (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987).

\(^ {170}\) For Aquinas’ account of analogy, see Summa Theologica (Vol. 1) (Notre Dame: Christian Classics, 1948), 13.5.
distinction had theological significance when it was a matter of speaking of God’s attributes, such as “wisdom” or “goodness” – that is, the ways that God is – when these attributes are also predicated of created substances that are held to differ in nature, in terms of perfection, from their creator. For Scotus to claim that being is univocal therefore had the consequence that the entire realm of what is has being in the same sense, whether those beings are God, men, beasts, or vegetables. Difference would no longer be a categorical difference in kind, but rather a difference of degree or an intensive difference.

For Deleuze, Scotus broaches the first thought of immanent being, thus formally erasing the terms of transcendence, but with the limitation of conceiving “univocal Being as a neutralized, indifferent concept” (EP 67/58). What is required is that univocal being cease being indifferent to the differences endemic to things and become “perfectly determinate,” the “object of pure affirmation.” Deleuze argues this affirmation is achieved with Spinoza’s ontology of “substance” in which the “same thing, formaliter, constitutes the essence of substance and contains the essences of modes” (EP 67/58). It is often interpreted that in Spinoza substance maintains a hierarchical priority over the modes that exist only “in something else” (EP 67/58): “Spinoza’s substance appears independent of the modes, while the modes are dependent on substance, but as though on something other than themselves” (DR 40/59). However, Deleuze argues that just as modes are only in a single, univocal substance or plane of existence, so too must substance “be said of the modes and only of the modes.” The consequence, for Deleuze, is a “categorical reversal according to which being is said of becoming, identity of that which is different.” When univocity becomes constitutive of existence rather than a merely logical formalism, modes are freed from being the limitations and deficiencies of a primordial being – or as evanescent instances of an

eternal presence – and are realized as intensive powers of existence as such. When Deleuze then evokes Nietzsche as a third figure of univocity, it is precisely to note this reversal in which it is not the (modally and temporally) different that “revolves” around and “returns” from the identical (of being or substance), but identity and being that revolve around the “becoming-identical of becoming itself,” the “being of becoming” (DR 41/59).

Despite the formally different procedures by which they take up the question of being, we can see a significant commonality in the way both Hegel and Deleuze effect a logical reversal between being and becoming. Both thinkers situate themselves in the project of ontology, of thinking the essential nature of what “is” without articulating this absolutely unconditioned in the image of the empirical, conditioned, and limited. But in both cases this amounts to a vanquishing of “being” as a purely self-identical substrate. As we have seen for Hegel, pure being is inseparable from its logical opposite, and the truth of both is their ceaseless processing into the other. Becoming is the resolution of the problem of Being insofar as it proves to be its perennial truth. The uniqueness in Deleuze’s own move is not to reaffirm the supremacy of the pure, abstract “One” as the ground of different beings, but rather to show that being is only “said” of differences, just as Spinoza’s substance is only said of the individuating modes (DR 40/58). If the modal, individuated terms of existence are defined by their essential dissipation, then their autonomy from or formal immanence to being means an autonomy of the movement of vanishing itself. Vanishing is no longer an imperfect adequation or approximation to an enduring being, but the truth of being as such.

5.3. The Challenge to Thought

If we take seriously the notion of vanishing as the truth that Pure Being reveals itself to be, as the immediate beginning of the Logic, then we must reconsider what type of logical ground this is for thought. The ground is not something extraneous to thought that thinking discovers as its
prior condition; it is the very experience of thought as immediately given. Yet what it posits is its own inability to think itself in terms of purity and immediacy. In its effort to think the purity of being, without some mediating concept of what being should be to guide it, all it can grasp is the nothingness of its own givenness, and conversely, the is that emerges immediately from this void. In short, it can only think itself in the disappearance of these first two attempts to hold firmly onto a truth as pure and immediate. What vanishing here denotes foremost is the failure of thought to ground itself on a stable foundation.

Yet this vanishing of Being, the collapse of a pure foundation, does not halt thought in nothingness, nor does it leave thought stranded in the ceaseless unrest of the pure movement of becoming. By following thought in its own development, and thus in its own self-grounding, what the beginning reveals itself to be is not a linear, dialectical transition through a tripartite structure, from Being, to Nothing, to Becoming as three isolated and distinct moments. The principle of identity – that is, the identity of each moment in reference simply to itself – does little to make sense of the activity of thought at this stage. In this sense, a logic of mutually negating opposites does not capture the life of thought that experiences or grasps itself in the durational “unrest” of its own becoming. The beginning expands and contracts according to the inability of thought to have a stable thought. Has Hegel not brought us to the point of thought’s own ruination, that is, to the point of grasping its becoming? This double sense of Verschwinden as not only disappearance but also destruction is clear in Hegel’s account of freedom as realized through the “terror” of the French Revolution: “Universal freedom […] can produce neither a positive work nor a deed; there is left for it only negative action; it is merely the fury of destruction [die Furie des Verschwindens]” (Ph 359/475 589). From the vantage point of its destructive sense, the terror of logical becoming is that thought will remain mired in a fury of vanishing.
We follow David Gray Carlson in his assertion that, in a special and qualified sense, the “beginning” of the *Logic* is a “failure.”\(^{172}\) The immediate vanishing of the first moments signifies a failure of thought to think Pure Being and Pure Nothing as immediate, stable, self-identical truths.\(^{173}\) Yet this failure of thought precisely to lay absolute grasp on pure immediacy does not arrest thought in its activity. It is by failing to think Pure Being as all there is, as a full presence of reality, that the movement of thought becomes possible. Vanishing, taken strongly in its sense of ruination (since it is the promise of *Pure* Being that is ruined, after all), makes of Hegel’s beginning a constitutive failure that engenders an autokinetic process. “Hegel’s beginning is a failure, and that is why it succeeds.”\(^{174}\)

It is in this way that we can make sense of Hegel’s description of the beginning, insofar as it is an “advance” and not merely a motion arrested in the immediacy of its genesis, as a “retreat into the ground” [ein Rückgang in den Grund] ([SL 71/57](#)). Already in the most abstract, indeterminate phase of the *Logic* we can see all the senses of Hegel’s phrase enveloped. The activity of Rückgang signifies not merely a retreat, or a pulling away from, but a falling down or collapse of the ground itself. Insofar as the immediate ground of Pure Being collapses or vanishes, thinking itself is indistinguishable from this self-collapsing of what was supposed to support, this disappearance of what was supposed to be fully present. In being indistinguishable from vanishing, thought is fully immersed; it has no position of stable vantage that would safeguard it from the fate of the evanescent. In its immersion it is fated to follow thought in its

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\(^{172}\) “The Antepenultimacy of the Beginning in Hegel’s *Science of Logic,*” *Public Law Research Paper* 74 (2003), 244.

\(^{173}\) Gadamer makes a similar argument: “as long as we stay at the level of Being and Nothing as what is indeterminate, determination, i.e., thought, has not yet begun” (88). Thought at the level of *reine Seyn* and *reine Nichts* is an “Empty thinking” and thus “thinking which is not yet that which thinking is at all” (89).

\(^{174}\) Carlson, “Antepenultimacy of the Beginning,” 244.
ungrounding. But insofar as the ground is an ungrounding, an extension beyond itself into another, thought is a sinking into the being of the ground itself. This immersion in the process of vanishing is not a failure in the ordinary sense, but the condition in which thinking experiences itself as a process of self-differentiation: the failure of an absolute identity and the failure of all foundations. Certainly the break from common sense, as the condition of beginning the Logic, is disturbing: “consciousness feels as if, together with the mode of representation, the very ground, where it stands solidly and is at home, has been pulled from under it” (EL 27/30 §3; cf. Ph 37/43 ¶59). Descartes himself feared this loss of all epistemic foundations, the vanishing of all certainty, that would potentially result from the absoluteness of his method of radical doubt: “It feels as if I have fallen unexpectedly into a deep whirlpool which tumbles me around so that I can neither stand on the bottom nor swim up to the top.” The task of thought is to realize the constitutive nature of this process, to affirm it in itself. The beginning of Hegel’s Logic is not the isolated ground of a substantial “being,” but rather the contraction of becoming.

Hegel tells us at the beginning that the only thing speculative philosophy needs to presuppose is the impulse to think, the contingent decision to examine thought itself without any further presuppositions regarding what thought will turn out to be like. Situating Antonin Artaud against the “understanding” of Jacques Rivière, in a passage that could in many ways preface Hegel’s Logic, Deleuze argues that thought’s only presupposition is

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175 Cf. Schelling’s argument for the logical priority of an “unground” (Ungrund) that constitutes and escapes the differential order of actuality. Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom, trans. Jess Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 68-69. Schelling’s Ungrund is both an “original ground” and a “nonground” that effects the “disappearance of all opposites” (68).

176 “The solid ground which argumentation has in the passive Subject is therefore shaken, and only this movement itself becomes the object” (Ph 37/43 ¶59).

177 Meditations, 16.

178 “There is only present the resolve, which can also be viewed as arbitrary, of considering thinking as such” (SL 48/56).
an impulse, a compulsion to think which passes through all sorts of bifurcations, spreading from
the nerves and being communicated to the soul in order to arrive at thought. Henceforth, thought
is also forced to think its central collapse, its fracture, its own natural ‘powerlessness’ which is
indistinguishable from the greatest power […] (DR 147/191-192).

In the fits and starts by which thought staggers before the unrest of becoming, perhaps we can
see Deleuze’s suggestion that “there is no true beginning in philosophy, or rather that the true
philosophical beginning, Difference, is in-itself already Repetition” (DR 129/169). “Thus the
beginning of philosophy is the ever present and self-preserving foundation [Grundlage] of all
subsequent development, remaining everywhere immanent in its further determinations” (SL
49/57). If vanishing is the literal operation of Becoming, the question becomes, how is it
preserved?

This ground of vanishing being challenges an historical conception of foundational truth
that relies on a determination stable and clear enough to ground a system, and thus to found
philosophy. Descartes makes this criterion of judgment clear in his Principles of Philosophy:

Indeed there are very many people who in their entire lives never perceive anything with
sufficient accuracy to enable them to make a judgment about it with certainty. A perception
which can serve as the basis for a certain and indubitable judgement needs to be not merely clear
but also distinct. I call a perception ‘clear’ when it is present and accessible to the attentive mind –
just as we say that we see something clearly when it is present to the eye’s gaze and stimulates it
with a sufficient degree of strength and accessibility. I call a perception ‘distinct’ if, as well as being
clear, it is so sharply separated from all other perceptions that it contains within itself only what is
clear.179

What thought grasps as true of Pure Being as a thought-determination is not determined by its
level of clarity or distinctness from some other concept; and consequentially, Pure Being is not
judged to be false due to a lack of clarity or distinctiveness. In order for something to be judged
clear or obscure, what is required is a static subject or fixed thinking for whom a given object can
be perceived clearly. For Hegel, speculative philosophy cannot presuppose any determinate
relation between a thinking subject and a fixed object to be known in order to guarantee the

179 Philosophical Writings (Vol. 1), 207-208.
givenness of criteria for truth. If there are criteria of truth, then these must be deduced from the simple movement of thought itself. The gerund “vanishing” skirts the Cartesian categorical disjunction of clarity/obscurity and distinctness/indistinction by affirming a different mode of intelligibility that regards the evanescent as essential to truth precisely because this is what the immanent thought of being itself shows. In the experience of the most basic thought-determination, neither clarity nor distinctness are given. Therefore what is affirmed as true is what reine Seyn shows itself to be, without the imposition of a prefigured criterion of knowledge: pure being and pure nothing are immediately and essentially dynamic rather than static. This does not represent a mere inversion on Hegel’s part: it is not a matter of simply choosing the indistinct over the distinct, the obscure over the clear. Pure Being, independent of a criterion-structured thinking, simply is vanishing. And this evanescence affirms a truth independent of the Cartesian disjunction, or rather, it affirms a dynamic state that is always between them.

6. Conclusion

We have thus far examined the ontological significance of the opening of Hegel’s Logic in which Being is grasped in its purity, that is, in its “indeterminate immediacy” (SL 59/68-69). We demonstrated that the truth of Being reveals itself to be a pure “movement” of Becoming [Werden]. Becoming is at once the “unity” of Being and Nothing as “inseparable” (SL 60/69-70) – and thus the affirmation of their cancelled, vanished, or “dissolved” difference – as well as the “ceaseless unrest” (SL 81/93) and instability in which they remain “absolutely distinct” (SL 60/69). In Becoming, difference as such, however indeterminate, vanishes and emerges without limit. At this point, the Logic has not advanced beyond the thought of indeterminacy. There is nothing present in the dynamic complex of Becoming akin to a determinate negation in which something would be defined in contradistinction to what it is not. The unity of Becoming is one of both mutual implication and dynamic differentiation. When Hegel appeals to the quasi-
experiential notion of “vanishing” [Verschwinden] to express the movement between the constitutive terms of Becoming (SL 59-60/69-70), it is precisely to highlight the contradictory nature of a difference that is at once cancelled and affirmed, of an idea that is at once present as immediacy and mediated in the absence it presents. Any determinate negation between the two notions is then a product of an external reflection extraneous to the immanent movement of ontology. There is simply the ceaseless self-othering affirmed by the movement of Becoming as a single and total process, an othering that is too pure and unstable to ever hold its constitutive terms apart long enough to distinguish them as separate identities. Vanishing should be taken seriously as a non-metaphorical and logical function. Moreover, it should be seen as a central motivating trigger in dialectical movement. Paradoxically, it is through disappearance that thought emerges. Rather than being univocal, it entails a complex of senses: dissolution, failure, collapse, co-implication, becoming, and emergence. Our final claim, which can only be substantiated in later chapters, is that the problem of vanishing is not terminated with the “vanishing of the vanishing” at the genesis of determinate being. As we maintain, vanishing persists as a constitutive, irresolvable, and thus an essential element of dialectical logic. If vanishing is a constitutive element of reality for Hegel, then this means there is a balance between the essential conditioning degree to which thought and its speculative objects are subject to disappear, and the limit at which Verschwinden becomes a universal “fury of disappearance.”

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180 This possibility of an “absolute vanishing” is one that surfaces at various points in Hegel’s philosophy. In one sense, it is the terror of the absolute limit that is always haunting experience. Hegel’s account of “skepticism” in the Phenomenology is the form of consciousness that takes this process to the absolute limit as both the truth of the world and of itself: “It pronounces an absolute vanishing, but the pronouncement is, and this consciousness is the vanishing that is pronounced” (Ph 125/121 §205).
Chapter 2: Determinacy at the Limit of the Finite

1. Introduction
2. Becoming Before Limit
   2.1. Transition to Determinacy: Critical Appraisals
   2.2. The Vanishing of Becoming
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3. Determinacy Through the Limit
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7. Conclusion: The Fate of Finitude

“Things duplicate themselves on Tlön; they also tend to grow vague or ‘sketchy’, and to lose detail when they begin to be forgotten. The classic example is the doorway that continued to exist so long as a certain beggar frequented it, but which was lost to sight when he died. Sometimes a few birds, a horse, have saved the ruins of an amphitheater.”
– Jorge Luis Borges

“[…] whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.”
– Paul to the Corinthians

“[…] only clouded light and illuminated darkness have distinction in them and hence are determinate […]”
– Hegel

**PART I: HEGEL AND DETERMINACY**

1. **Introduction**

   This chapter concerns the conditions of determinacy – that is, of determinate difference and determinate negation – in which something expresses itself through its otherness. At a crucial moment in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze situates himself directly at this point of Hegel’s *Logic*:

   “Difference is the state in which one can speak of determination *as such* (DR 28/43). In entering the domain of “determinate being” or “Existence” [*Das Daseyn*], according to Hegel, we enter

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2 *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Chapter 13, Line 8. King James Version. In fuller context, this thought is intended to emphasize that in light of the transient reality of the created world, “charity” or “love,” as unique to the unity and eternity of the divine creator, “never faileth” and endures the vanishing values of the created world.
3 *SL* 69/80r. See §6.2 below.
4 These translations of “*Daseyn*” are Miller’s and Di Giovanni’s respectively. We sometimes choose to refer to *Daseyn* as “determinacy” generally throughout to highlight Hegel’s thought of determinateness as such, avoiding the mistake that *Daseyn* be taken as a “a being,” as is suggested most explicitly by Burbidge’s
“the sphere of differentiation, of dualism, the domain of finitude” (SL 126/144). This chapter will involve two central questions. (1) How can determinacy arise from indeterminacy? In §2 below we interpret this transition as involving vanishing in a double sense: the “vanishing of the vanishing” [Verschwinden des Verschwindens selbst] that Becoming is. Determinacy emerges when the indeterminate movement of Becoming – with the motions of vanishing and emergence that it conjoins together – cancels itself and takes the form of a stabilized immediacy as being [Daseyn].

Beyond this chapter, we argue that this question of the emergence of determinacy from the ground of indeterminacy is a central concern of Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition as a whole. (2) Given our hypothesis that vanishing is a persistent movement throughout the Logic, how can vanishing as such survive the “vanishing of becoming” itself with which vanishing was equated?

Between these two questions, §3 and §4 will trace the reappearance of the movement of vanishing in Hegel’s account of determinacy. Hegel provides a dynamic conception of the “limit” as the threshold in which something is at once defined against the other and thereby becomes the other that it is. By elucidating the ontological structure of “finitude” as the form of limited and end-directed being, we show that the course from the immediate simplicity of “determinacy” [Daseyn] to finitude is in fact the further determination of Becoming that had ostensibly vanished.

Finitude is realized as a movement of becoming whose essential form is one of vanishing. Determinate vanishing, or vanishing in relation to and through a limit, is no longer an indeterminate movement, but rather the ceasing-to-be of a determinate something that by its own nature transcends and becomes other than itself. The reflection of this vanishing as the truth of finitude opens the finite to its ground, that is, to its reason for vanishing. We therefore take up Hegel’s notion of the infinite in the subsequent chapter.

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translation in The Logic of Hegel’s Logic. Di Giovanni’s choice of “Existence” is not technically incorrect, but we believe the term suggests too much in the direction of the actual existence of something as opposed to its mere possibility, for which Hegel chooses the term “Existenz” later in the text.
Following our account of determinacy in the Logic, §6 below will correlate Hegel’s insight about self-other relations with Deleuze’s critique of “finite representation.” Deleuze’s central concern here is to show that a certain mode of thought – what we emphasize as a conceptual model of determination – claims to account for the determinacy of an individual by a process of differentiation subordinated in the highest instance to the identity of the concept. In taking up this section of Deleuze’s historical argument in *Difference and Repetition*, we aim to show two things. First, that for Deleuze the inadequacy of this form of determination is its exclusion of the movement of becoming, or vanishing and incidental properties, in the definition of things. Second, the account of this inadequacy textually forms the basis of both Deleuze’s account of “infinite” thought achieved by Hegel and Leibniz (see Ch. 3 below) and his own theory of an immanent or “univocal” ground(lessness) of difference (see Ch. 4 below). Both Hegel and Deleuze are interested in accounting for the genesis and infinite becoming of things themselves, rather than their demarcations in a presupposed and static distribution and hierarchy. Both accounts push us toward a developed concept of becoming defined by a series of limits as thresholds of passage, and not merely an indeterminate process of disappearance. In short, by entering the philosophical terrain of determinacy, we want to know what it means for something to be *defined* by its vanishing.

2. **Becoming Before Limitation**

We must begin where we left off, at the limit of our account. How does Becoming become determinate? Above we have chosen to emphasize the moment of difference in Becoming. Becoming involves difference – it is differentiated in-itself – but its difference is still purely indeterminate. As we have seen, this is paradoxical since it will not be obvious how
indeterminacy can contain within itself any difference. Becoming is a “unity” of two ostensibly opposed but ontologically identical indeterminacies. It is not, however, a difference between delimited entities, but a movement of ceaseless difference in which no determination can be isolated without immediately becoming other than itself. Therefore we have argued that Becoming is a ceaseless becoming-other without limit; it is thus an indeterminate mode of difference generation and dissipation. The most challenging idea advanced by Hegel here is that the difference between Being and Nothing arises in Becoming from the cancellation of their difference in the commonness of their indeterminacy. When Hegel invokes the language of “vanishing” [Verschwinden] to express the movement that Being and Nothing show in the unity of Becoming, it is precisely to indicate this movement of difference-from-self that both ideas are. In this way, Becoming is “doubly determined” [gedoppelter Bestimmung] (80/93) in its fundamental indeterminacy. This self-difference is analytically decomposed into the distinct directional movements of “coming-to-be” [Entstehen] and “ceasing-to-be” [Vergehen]. The distinction between the two movements depends on which immediacy (Being or Nothing respectively) forms the point of departure for the movement. As we have insisted, this vanishing is not the vanishing of a material or experiential content of Being, nor is it a vanishing of one isolated self into its independent other. Rather, what Hegel is asking us to think is the vanishing of logical immediacy

5 We thus go against the claim of certain commentators like McTaggart who suggest that there is an absence of difference in Becoming in light of an absence of determinacy: “[with determinate being], for the first time, we get the possibility of differentiation and plurality. Being and Nothing did not admit of this. Whatever simply Is is exactly the same.” Commentary on Hegel’s Logic, 21. Hegel’s point about Pure Being and Pure Nothing is the opposite, that their simple immediacy is not that they “simply Are,” but that they are something more or less than they present immediately. McTaggert downplays Hegel’s thought here to expedite the transition from synthesis to the unity of determinacy.

6 This appeal to the determined [Bestimmung] nature of Becoming leads to an inevitable confusion, since the notion of Das Daseyn that supplants Werden is the determinacy or “determinateness” [Bestimmtheit] of Being as such. What we are suggesting here is that Hegel appeals to the language of determination to show the difference that Becoming shows itself to be, but one that is not yet affirmed as a determinate difference in-itself since Becoming affirms only the vanishing of its moments and not their static distinction.
into the mediation that Becoming is; in this movement, neither side form a determinately isolatable component, since each is nothing more than its vanishing into the other. Further, the differential movement of these terms in Becoming is itself cancelled in the static form of Determinate Being [Daseyn] that Becoming immanently shows itself to be.

According to Hegel’s account, the logic of Pure Being leads to the vanishing or cessation of the vanishing that Being is: the “vanishing of becoming” is the “vanishing of the vanishing itself” [Verschwinden des Verschwindens selbst] (SL 81/93). Becoming is “self-opposed” and thus “contradicts itself in itself” (SL 81/93-4). The directions of becoming “interpenetrate and paralyze each other” (SL 80/93). The “union” of Becoming that affirmed the simultaneity of Being and Nothing in their vanishing “destroys itself.” Its “ceaseless unrest” by its own logic “collapses into a quiescent result” [die in ein ruhiges Resultat zusammensinkt]. Hegel calls this the “sublation of becoming” [Aufheben des Werdens]. What results from this overcoming is a resultant “quiescent simplicity” that “is being” (SL 81/94). If Pure Being has vanished – or rather, is nothing more than its vanishing – then why does Becoming itself necessarily vanish and return to or resuscitate the form of Being, albeit in a new and developed way? How can Becoming give rise to anything newly determinate when its very reality is to immediately elide all limitation of its movement? Why does Becoming contradict itself?

This transition is pivotal, but Hegel’s explanation of it is minimal. There are a number of provisional responses to this question that we can consider before advancing our own. In this section we will first consider a number of critiques of Hegel’s transition to determinacy (§2.1).

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7 “Their vanishing is therefore the vanishing of becoming, or the vanishing of the vanishing itself. Becoming is a ceaseless unrest that collapses into a quiescent result” (SL 81). “Ihr Verschwinden ist daher das Verschwinden des Werdens oder Verschwinden des Verschwindens selbst. Das Werden ist eine haltungslose Unruhe, die in ein ruhiges Resultat zusammensinkt” (WL 93).

8 Miller translates “ruhiges Resultat” (WL 93) as a “stable result” (SL 106). “Quiescence” and “stability” here capture the same thing, namely, a stasis of a movement that is in-itself turbulent and unstable.
Against these readings, we will then explain this vanishing of Becoming itself and how it makes possible a movement to determinacy (§2.2). Finally, we will consider the potential risk and profit in this transition for the termination of a movement of Becoming in the Logic from a Deleuzian perspective (§2.3).

2.1. Transition to Determinacy: Critical Appraisals

(1) On one reading, Becoming must vanish because thought cannot remain satiated with the indeterminacy that Becoming expresses. In short, Becoming is a meaningless abstraction. This is a hypothesis that has been advanced by certain critics of the Logic that we considered in the previous chapter, namely Schelling, who wish to halt the advance of the project in its incipient moment. The central concern here is that the Logic must advance to the level of determinacy because the world as we know it obtains its reality in its determinacy. We know a world not of pure becoming, but a world of distinct individuals and concrete bodies, with limits and determinate differences between real things. If the Logic does not advance to an articulation of the logical conditions for these determinate distinctions, then it loses its capacity to express the ontological conditions of the real world, remaining mired in the empty abstraction of the thought that Becoming is. For these critics, Werden as such poses a problem for an ontology that would be adequate to the world. Obviously the Logic does make the advance to determinacy, so the critique hinges on whether Hegel’s transition is efficacious. The central claim of the critics, therefore, is that the transition is not made immanently, but is instead accomplished by presupposing what should result to meet this prior demand, or as Schelling says, a “craving for determinacy” that subtends Hegel’s ontology. The weight of this objection hinges not on a close evaluation of Hegel’s text, however, but on the sense that his explanation for the transition is absent. In this sense, we maintain that the objection is insufficient for the immanent emergence of determinacy and ignores much of Hegel’s own condensed but compelling presentation.
(2) McTaggart has offered a similar approach, which we regard as equally insufficient, that proposes to remove the category of “Becoming” altogether as not belonging to the transition as he claims Hegel intends it.\(^9\) As we saw in the previous chapter, the stakes of McTaggart’s thesis is that Becoming does not involve any movement of change, thus making the “concrete” notion of Becoming, as he phrases it,\(^10\) inappropriate to what is merely a static synthesis. This approach not only undercuts many of the important things Hegel says about Becoming, thus glossing over the serious way in which Hegel conceives logical movement. Moreover, it mistakenly demands that any appeal to the category of “Becoming” promises “a great deal more” than what Hegel gives it here.\(^11\) For our purposes here, it is enough to note that by removing the the category of Becoming, McTaggart proposes to simplify the transition to determinate being that he claims is obfuscated by the language of a movement become static. Thus, for McTaggart, the mutual “implication” or co-“dependence” of Being and Nothing with one another in a necessary “relation” is sufficient to account for the new notion of Daseyn that, as we will see below, is nothing more than the unity of Being with its negative. In short, what is sufficient according to McTaggart is their “synthesis” rather than their dynamic movement to account for what Determinate Being will prove to be.\(^12\) The course of our account in this chapter will move strongly against McTaggart’s remarks here in our claim that Becoming as such, as a serious type of ontological movement, is constitutive throughout Hegel’s account of determinacy, which McTaggart regards as fundamentally inapplicable to and “impossible under the categories of Quality.”\(^13\)

\(^9\) Commentary on Hegel’s Logic, 17.
\(^10\) Ibid., 18.
\(^11\) Ibid., 20.
\(^12\) Ibid., 21.
\(^13\) Ibid., 18.
Following our analysis of Becoming in the previous chapter, we propose a reading of this transition that takes vanishing seriously as a constitutive factor of this transition from indeterminate Becoming as a movement of vanishing to Determinacy as an immediate stability of this movement. Against Schelling, we argue that this transition is immanent and does not merely leap in anticipation of the concrete world that we desire. Against McTaggart, we maintain that not only does Becoming present its own logical dynamic that should be taken seriously beyond the merely synthetic relationality of its prior terms, but that the movement of vanishing that Becoming expresses will find further articulation in the domain of qualitative determinacy.

2.2. The Vanishing of Becoming

To grasp the necessity of the vanishing of Becoming, and thereby the emergence of determinacy, we must first recall what dynamic Becoming itself is constituted by and what it holds together. Further, to grasp the result of this second (or tertiary) vanishing as taking the form of “being,” we must recall the presentation of Pure Being as such.

Becoming is prefaced or conditioned by the convergence of Pure Being and Pure Nothing. Since each is simultaneously both the presence and absence of itself, each is the same vanishing, the common unrest and passage into the other. The purity of their respective ideas collapses, becoming indistinguishable. Becoming is “new” to the extent that it affirms vanishing itself as their truth, as what each are, thereby grasping both in a unified complex, that is, in their dissipative unfolding. In this way, Becoming becomes the ground of the Logic. Yet when their union is posited as an identical process (“all is vanishing”), there emerges an “absolute” distinction or difference between the two collapsed moments: they are grasped immediately as emerging from distinct starting points in their common act of disappearance. Being and nothing are differentiated in their directionality. Becoming is therefore defined by the identity and difference of its constituent moments. Without the precondition of their already (sur)passed
purities, there is no becoming, yet they only vanish and are what they are from the perspective of their unstable unity. Becoming is paralyzed by the immediate cancellation of its “opposed” terms. Determinacy becomes possible through the logic of unrest and stasis, speed and fatigue.

For Hegel, the becoming that ceases, vanishes, becomes paralyzed by its own energy, is not becoming tout court, but the becoming that being is: Werden, pure and simple. Sticking to the textual logic, Houlgate argues that the collapse of Werden is justified even from the perspective of the primacy of becoming because Werden, as Houlgate argues, “can be sustained only through the constant reemergence of purity.” Its disappearance is immediately a resuscitation of the very same pure identity that disappeared, and so on ad infinitum, without limit. Despite its ceaseless diremption of purity, it is Becoming itself that ensures the preservation of purity by affirming a vanishing constituted and sustained by it. From Houlgate’s perspective, this makes of Becoming an untenable position. However, the failure of Becoming to be or remain what it is (unlimited, pure vanishing) is not necessarily a loss for a philosophy of becoming. To put the matter in Deleuze’s terms: with Werden, becoming “lacks its own concept,” since it is always thought as primarily constituted by the principles of purity and identity. Its genesis is then, in a sense, not Becoming “in-itself,” but rather “reactive.” As we will demonstrate, both Hegel and Deleuze take up this problematic to develop the idea of becoming constituted by limits and infinite

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14 Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 292.
15 Ibid., 291.
16 Houlgate’s sentiment here refers to what might be desired by what he contemptuously calls “fundamentalist Heracliteans.” Ibid., 292.
17 Deleuze sets up the project of Difference and Repetition to discover an “Idea” of difference “in-itself” that is “singular,” and not a conceptual difference “already mediated by representation,” as the latter form of difference is intelligible only for, or grounded by, a principle of identity that would itself be presupposed (DR 27/41; XIX/1-2). See §6 below.
18 While the language of the “in-itself” reflects the approach to difference in Difference and Repetition, the concern with a “reactive” concept reflects his earlier concern with the will in Nietzsche and Philosophy.
passage. This developed notion of becoming has the capacity to explain the generation and disappearance of determinate forms.

In the immediate emergence of Daseyn from the self-collapse and stabilization of Becoming, Hegel argues that the “accent” falls “on being” (SL 85/98); determinacy in its “immediacy” thus has the “form of an immediate” in the “one-sided determination of being” (SL 83/97). The logic of this move is complicated, but it is one we have already considered in the necessity of beginning with Pure Being over Pure Nothing. As we have seen for Hegel, immediacy entails a claim to be. The “pacified unity” is an “immediate” affirmation because the oneness now determines not merely a part of the vanishing complex but the whole of it in its exhausted, immobile form. Much of Hegel’s analysis in this section is geared toward emphasizing that the new moment that emerges is not a mere “relapse” [Rückfall] into or repetition of the purity of being (SL 81-82/94-95), nor is it simply the self-undermining of the ceaseless passing that the idea proved to be. “Aufheben” is the simultaneous preservation and cancellation of its constituents (SL 81/94r). Daseyn is the contaminated unity in which the terms of the is, the not, and passage are preserved and circulate in their ineffectual traces and in new effective, determining modes.

Becoming is the “mediation” between two irreducible flows that ceaselessly interrupt the other. It is constituted by a difference that cancels itself, reposing as an immediate “oneness” of what was supposed to be differentiated. As the sublation or “result” of becoming, simple determinate being [Das Daseyn als solches] is the self-relation of this undifferentiated whole. The whole is “concrete” because it is no longer empty being, but the containment of a “being [Seyn] with a non-being [Nichtseyn], so that this non-being is taken up into simple unity with being” (SL 84/97). It contains both, but only insofar as each is purely entangled with and undifferentiated from the other. Such a surpassed difference does not make a difference because it has ceased
without having disappeared entirely. As Hegel recognizes throughout, the difficulty of the language here is in deciphering how this immediate “oneness” is any different from the idea of pure being itself. If all difference and distinction has been effectively cancelled, then what is there for Daseyn to contain? Although the difference between the directional flows of becoming has collapsed into a unity, what is contained is the trace of their disappearance, the mark of their collapse. What is considered here is a strange unity in which there is a distinction but one that is hidden and obscured behind the presentation of its “immediacy.” For Hegel, it is this paradoxical position of unity that will be the genetic condition for the appearance and emergence of a complex of “several determinations” and “distinct relations” (SL 84/98). In other words, we will only have determinacy when something contains and is thus determined by both being and non-being. To side with one absolutely is to fall back into logical oblivion, that is, the abstraction of indeterminacy (SL 85-88/99-102r).

2.3. Arrested Becoming: Aesthetic Variations

For Hegel, the pure movement of Becoming is arrested immanently, that is, by its own logic. Its unrest becomes stable, its contradictory constituents are reconciled, its turbulence made quiet, its movement rendered static. In short, Becoming shows itself to have the form of Being. At this stage for Hegel, we are presented with the grounds of determinacy. We have proposed that Hegel’s Logic develops an immanent logic of becoming. However, what fate can the movement of becoming have if its pure notion cancels itself and returns it to the form of Being? In one of his final works, Deleuze returns with Guattari to the concept of “immanence” that had preoccupied him throughout, proposing a new approach to the concept that would not necessarily mutually oppose the immanent to a “transcendent,” but would rather “think transcendence within the immanent [from which] a breach [une rupture] is expected” (WP 47/48). How then to explain the genesis of transcendence within immanence without reducing “immanence as immanent to a
transcendent”? Why reincorporate the transcendent as a “breach”? Deleuze and Guattari’s answer is short, but informative of this moment in which we rest with Hegel’s Logie: “[…] all that is necessary is for movement to be stopped. Transcendence enters as soon as movement of the infinite is stopped” (WP 47/49). Can determinacy be achieved for Hegel only through the arrestation of movement and thus, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, through the introduction of the transcendence of being over movement itself? Hegel’s point about the vanishing of Becoming risks being logically idiosyncratic, but it is a paradoxical thought that is shows itself in different aesthetic expressions such as film, photography, and painting.

In one sense the “vanishing of becoming” could not be more abstract and unthinkable, but it is a limit that cinema thinks all too well with its freeze-frame. From Swords of Doom to Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, we are presented with the same effect: the culmination of a becoming of action, of an intensification of continuous motion toward a climax or finale, that is arrested in the static moment of its own realization. The becoming is halted suddenly, the camera relinquishes its power of tracking the becoming of its protagonists, and the scene crystalizes in a single photographic shot (in short, cinema relapses to the instantaneity of the photograph). The future is foreclosed. François Truffaut’s Antoine in Les Quatre Cents Coups (1959) speeds on foot from the strict educational system that was unable to contain his mischief – which, as the French idiomatic title suggests, has the sense of a “hell” that rises from the ground. The long climatic scene tracks Antoine’s patient run through the countryside, with all its degrees of adolescent exuberance and momentary fatigue, until he reaches the shore. His slow course reaches its limit after crossing declines and ravines, the new sludge of wet sand, the traced-lines of vanished strollers, and finally the limits of the tide that meet his tired feet. There the camera captures his startled face at the limit. It is the arrestation less of a figure than of an entire continuous trajectory. Yet the cinematic viewing of the trajectory is of each single frame of a motion in
which what is passed, what transpires in the frame, immediately vanishes as it leaves the screen. Our focus is caught in the image’s own motion beyond what it was, and thus we abide the vanishing that the protagonist effectuates in his propulsion forward. It is not by chance that Antoine is arrested at the shore. The countryside that he traversed with such pace was already a determinate one – of differentiated inclines and foliage and light. The moment his becoming is terminated in the freeze-frame is the moment in which he encounters that unlimited expanse of sea in all of its ceaseless currents and interchange, the fluid beyond of a world to escape. And at this frozen moment, the escape itself obtains definition; the course from the school to the shore, in which we were immersed, loses its immanent continuity and gains the definition of an impact. At the limit, Antoine confronts the sea, and his feet stop in the shallow water. The future is at once indicated and foreclosed.

The future lasts for only an instant. The Italian Futurists knew this well with their paradoxical insistence on capturing it, making it still for a moment, a movement caught in the frozen simultaneity of a composition. They mistrusted film, perhaps for prolonging the movement of things, letting it go too long beyond its life. Their problem is not how to represent the future, but how to capture its instantaneity, and for this reason they loved painting, sculpture, and photography: fluid strokes dried on flat surfaces, glowing metal rigid atop plinths, the stillness of refracted light caught in the shutter. Boccioni’s sculptures show the movement of a figure in time, thrusting forward and flaming backwards, all in the heavy bronze of a single, total moment that vanishes as it appears. For all the love of movement, why the insistence on simultaneity? It is foremost a choice of intensity over extension, but it is not altogether clear why simultaneity is adequate to intensity. While the extension of instants is sufficient to show the free movement of time – of all time enveloped in a single, extended presentation – it does so at the cost of prolonging the present indefinitely, of forestalling the future. It was sufficient, as a sole extant
cinematic gesture, to show a single figure trapped in a room of spiraling mirrors and closing walls, with no where to go. It is a precise problem: how to reveal futurity? The initial answer is that the future shows itself neither as an extended and unfolding line of time, nor a potential present held in reserve. The future lasts for an instant, yet the future is not the present. The present always finds its rest in the next, and only there, while the Futurist moment is the dizziness in-between, both at once, the point of eruption and dissipation. The only renewal of this middle ground is the excess promised on the other side of the resting place. An impossible promise of the world that can arrive only in a present dismembered and intoxicated without direction, a ground that rises until its linearity becomes fluid and spiraling, until the body that found itself intensified by the earth has nothing left but to leave it, to follow its errant lines: a parachuting figure suspended in sky.

In these different aesthetic moments, is not what is disclosed the tragedy of life rather than its liberation, the point at which the movement of things is captured and rendered still? Antoine’s face marks the end as a trap, Cassidy and the Kid are frozen in the frame with guns drawn as if pointing to their inevitable deaths, and the Futurist creativity and love of dynamism is either rendered frozen or becomes a fascistic line of flight to the point of war and death. But can we also, in this sense, not see the important point that stoppage and arrestation is logically not something that comes from outside an indeterminate movement of becoming, but from becoming itself and its own immanent limit?

What I am interested in pursuing here is not merely the resurgence of the language of “being” as a “starting-point for the ensuing development” (SL 109/97, trans. Miller), but rather the way that the dialectic of quality entails the co-contamination of the three determinations: the is, the not, and the passage. Houlgate argues that with Daseyn, pure being and pure nothing have
“disappeared for good.”

What we will emphasize is that what has not disappeared is the
effectual reality of vanishing itself. Our emphasis in this chapter will therefore fall on the role of
passage. Becoming is vanishing, and vanishing is logical movement. Does the double
“vanishedness” [das Verschwundenseyn] (SL 106/94) of Becoming – its restlessness become stasis –
entail the cessation of all movement and passage? As we will see, the fatigue that makes possible
the immediacy of Daseyn is momentary. The dialectic of “quality” will show the general
disruption of the settled nature of Daseyn as it attempts to define itself determinatively, that is,
against what it is not. The relation between self and other will first generate the notion of “limit”
that serves as their line of demarcation and reciprocal self-definition. Further on, what will be at
stake in the movement between the logical categories of the finite and the infinite is the
realization of the limit as a threshold of passage in which the identity of self is transformed in the
field of its beyond. As a logic of passage and the diremption of identity, the experience of the
limit necessarily reposes the problematic of vanishing in a more developed form.

3. Determinacy Through the Limit

The problem of “determinacy” [Bestimmtheit] is definition: How can “something” be said
to be a “reality” that is “distinct and reflected” (SL 85/98)? What Hegel asks us to think is
determinacy “as such” [als solchem] – that is, in its most “immediate” “simplicity” – rather than
according to any substantial preconception we may have about what it means for something to
be determinate or concretely existent. Daseyn, or determinate being, at once “proceeds from
becoming” and has the “determination of being” (SL 83/97). Daseyn has the form of Being insofar
as it posits itself as an immediacy, but it is no longer Being in its “purity” and held off abstractly
from the other that it immediately showed itself to be. Daseyn is “the simple oneness of being and
nothing” (SL 83/97) in which “neither oversteps the other” (SL 84/98). In this sense, it also

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19 Opening of Hegel’s Logic, 291.
affirms the unity that was Becoming’s determination, though *Daseyn* is not merely the Becoming from which it proceeds. Becoming ceaselessly affirmed a difference between its terms that simultaneously undermined itself. Distinctly, what *Daseyn* holds fast is this unity in which something’s “being” is “opposed to an other,” and yet this “other” [*Anderes*] is the converse side of its own determinacy. In this way, determinacy is “quality,” and being is qualified in relation to its other from which it distinguishes itself and in the face of which its “reality” becomes concrete and defined. This double-sidedness of *Daseyn*, however, is only implicit in the immediacy of its presentation. The movement to the “infinite” in the *Logic* takes identity to the limit in the interplay between self- and other-determinations. If subject-predicate logic is in some significant way content to stipulate analytically what inclusive predicates exhaust the definition of a thing and thus differentiate it from others, Hegel shows how the minimal notion of determinacy leads on its own, independent of any external categorization of things, to an immanent process of differentiation. What proves to be the truth of determinacy is not that something *is* against what it *is not*, but the process in which something is only in its self-othering.

### 3.1. **Being Something Through the Other**

What is denoted by the immediate thought of determinacy is not a particular being or entity, nor anything robustly concrete that we may identify as something determinate in the world: *Daseyn* is not the thinghood of this glass that I grasp in thirst, or the vehicle that speeds past me and vanishes around the corner. Without doubt, these are instances of determinacy in my

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20 Logically, the principle of identity has the form of “A = A.” Correlatively, the propositional form of determinacy is that “something is what it is.” In other words, it is self-defining, containing within itself its essential determinations (qualities, properties, essences, et cetera), excluding or maintaining itself against what it is not. Definition is situated in a logic of relations, and as such, is qualitative: How is something differentiated from its other? If a given quality of a thing is contained also in an other thing, then that quality cannot be what makes it distinctly itself. The singular identity of the thing is destroyed in favor of a common or universal identity with all things in general. Ostensibly then, for something to be singular, something must contain its principle of identity and exclude otherness or maintain it as inessential: something must differentiate itself from the other.
experience insofar as something materializes for me with the significance and limitations of an object that, so to speak, stands out in contrast to other things, whether it is the stained table surface below the glass or the wet asphalt beneath the car’s tread. However, what Hegel is asking us to think here are the most minimal conditions of determinacy as such.

Determinate being is an immediacy, but what is immediate is the “simple unity” when “non-being is taken up […] with being” (SL 84/97). In Daseyn, difference is explicitly determining. Determinacy is therefore not merely immediate and simple, but implicitly contains within it a determinate relation between terms that are only insofar as they are related to and distinguished from the other. The first expression of this distinction is between “reality” and “negation” (SL 85/98-99), with each term corresponding to whether the affirmation falls on Being or Nothing respectively. As Hegel stresses, these are not yet distinct things opposed to each other, but two ways of looking at the whole of determinacy. When one side is isolated, the other is “concealed” [versteckt] (SL 85/99), but only insofar as they are in fact both quality. In other words, reality and negation are the two sides of what determinacy is, two ways in which reality is qualified. The fact of my reality is that I am here and now. Thus I have an immediate sense of my own reality as concrete and present, as having being in a determinate way. Yet this sense of being myself – e.g. in the act of taking up the glass and then setting it down to commit my hands to writing – I am not the fluid I intake or the keyboard through which my words enter into existence. The concrete sense of being a reality is effectuated against that which I am not. This series of negations accentuates my reality as something distinct, like the chiaroscuro shadows that intensify the illumination of the figure as it presses forward from the dark background. Determinacy is stable yet differentially determined. Each posits and defines itself by excluding and not being the other. In this way, each proves to include the other minimally: reality is defined by the negative
insofar as it excludes negation; correlatively, negation is defined by the positive insofar as it is 
really an articulation of quality.

The dialectic of “something” and “other” is the converging and recoiling of these sides of 
determinacy. The “sublating of the distinction” between reality and negation entails the 
recognition that reality is at once a positive affirmation that defines itself against what it is not, 
distinguishing itself by excluding negation in general (SL 88/103): it is thus the “negation of 
negation” (SL 89/103). In doing so, reality becomes a “something” [Das Etwas], a positive 
affirmation and not a mere negation: I am myself and not the beverage, and the beverage is an 
other. Something is present as a “being-within-self” [Insichseyn], a “simple self-relation in the form 
of being,” a “simple identity” (SL 116/114). The reality of something is that it constitutes an 
interiority or “inwardness” [In-sichseyns] that is logical rather than spatial. Something must 
contain its determinacy. At first, by “maintaining itself in its self-relation,” it is merely 
“indifferent” to its “other.” This other is no less qualified, but as negation in general that is 
excluded (SL 116/114). Such a positing of the absolute other is the immediate effect of positing 
the self, even if the determination of the latter by the former is not yet explicit. They are both 
determinate things in their own rights, and other for each other. But in this case, their reality is 
not defined by their otherness, since the latter falls outside of the something. Otherness is merely 
the indifferent correlate of self-definition.21 This type of indifference cannot maintain itself for 
Hegel, since negation is the condition of determinacy itself.

Hegel’s thesis is that something as an “in-itself” is nonetheless in an inextricable relation 
to an outside. At first, this relationship to the other is one of indifference, an accidental and 
brushed off encounter. In the second moment, something is merely burdened and “affected with

21 Taken from this initial angle, what we have is something akin to what Deleuze calls the “white
nothingness” of unconnected determinations; there is a presence of multiple somethings, but they share no
relational work of othering. Cf. §6 below.
negation” (SL 95/110-111). This negation of itself that it contains within itself is thus is “being-for-other” [Seyn-für-Anderes] and is always present, but it does not affect its own self-definition. This forging of inessential relations emerges because the immediacy of being is forced, by its own claim to be, to present what makes it itself, to indicate its quality. But all it can say is that it is “not that.” Like pure being, the other, or its non-being, is its only immediate articulation.

There are a number of important moments in which the constitutive nature of this relationality is held off and something’s being-in-itself is maintained. Yet in accepting the burden of relating to something other outside of it, something shows itself to have internalized its relation to the other; the relation to the other is an immanent relation. Something is therefore split into an essential inside and zone through which its interaction with otherness is isolated and allowed to happen. What Hegel calls “determination” and “constitution” are two modes in which something’s “in-itself” and “for-other” are unified in an indifferent relationality. Something has determination [Bestimmung] when it takes on its relation to otherness no longer as something excluded, but as “present in it,” a stable form indifferent to its “filling” (SL 96/111). As constitution [Beschaffenheit], other-determination is no longer an inessential and anonymous filling that passes through without consequence, but defines its composition: it is its own surface of othering. It is something stratified on a logical plane without depth. With a “connection” to its outside, it enters into and is “caught up in external influences and in external relationships” that do not make a difference for its identity and stability (SL 96/111). But the self is no less indifferent to this zone of othering to which it self-relates as if to “something contingent,” an “unstable surface of [its] otherness” (SL 96/111). On this surface, something alters and changes, and this alteration is a “negation” that is now “immanent” in the something without affecting its relation to itself as an affirmative reality (SL 97/113).
The result of these two modes of indifference, of trying to maintain determinacy in relation to itself while encountering the other, is that negation is realized as something’s immanent principle. Something’s “relation to the other” is effectuated “through itself”; it “posits” otherness “as its own moment” and thus “holds negation in itself” (SL 97-98/113). The other is still outside it, but its relation to this outside is internal. It relates to the other essentially, by its own nature. As such, it only has determinacy insofar as it negates its other. The strangeness of this interchange is that something itself has “passed over into otherness.” Its being-within-self is the “non-being of the otherness,” therefore it is equally the other that it denies. But it can only be this other while also being itself simultaneously. Something has its determinacy in its “limit” [Grenze]: an immanent, contradictory third that separates the something from its other. The self becomes the vanishing point of the other: it is in-itself only “the ceasing to be of an other in it” [das Aufhören eines Andern an ihm] (SL 98/113). Yet the other remains external to it. The limit, as the “single determinateness” of both somethings, “conjoins and disjoins them through their own nature, each negating the other” (SL 126/113, trans. Miller).

3.2. Something at its Limit

The first side of being determinate is that “something” has an affirmative “reality.” Something is. I am here and now, immediately present to myself, seemingly independent of the otherness that populates my context and gives my reality a concrete and situational significance. Truffaut’s Antoine is there on the screen, fixed and stable in the reality that he presents on his own regardless of the scene that has transpired in all its differences; it is, after all, the same Antoine in the dormitory as it is on the shore. Yet determinacy is more than the simple self-reference that a being posits for itself. Something’s reality is affirmed over and against what it is not. Something, in affirming its reality, must also distinguish itself from the other that it is not. This other is minimally the mere negation of the something, and as the other of the something it
is a *something*-other in its own right, thereby making the reality of something the other of the
something-other. Hegel’s twisting logic here has a simple point: *something* (reality-being) and *other*
(negation-nothing) share the same determinations, since both are equally something and other.
Their determinacy therefore is realized at the point or limit at which they each cease to be and at
which the other begins. This limit then is what explains the determinacy that each has; the limit
is simultaneously the factor of the difference between concrete things and the element of their
respective self-identities. As the principle of difference, the limit at once places things in
communication and separation, it “conjoins” and “disjoins” in the same logical operation. The
reality of my body fills itself out with a constitution, and the scope of my embodiment is given
determinate significance at the outermost limit of my epidermal skin. At this limit, my body at
once ceases and gives way to a different determinate body, or to a multiform world of corporeal
difference.

There are a number of modes of limit that emerge in Hegel’s text and which together
summarize the logical movement in which determinacy is obtained through the limit.

1. In determination and constitution, the in-itself of something delimits the other by: a)
warding it off, maintaining itself against the other; and b) by maintaining itself in its
alteration and affection by the other. The relation to otherness is a matter of self-relation
via exclusion. Here we have limitation in its rudimentary form.

2. For something, the limit is thus the “non-being of the other” (*SL* 126/113). It is the point
at which the other ceases and something starts. Since each is a something in its own right,
this relation to the other is reciprocal. The limit is the “middle” that separates them. As
such, it is the point at which the reality of the something terminates and the other begins.
Something still maintains its reality on its own side of the limit.
3. Yet it is only at the limit that something is as a positive, affirmative reality that is determinate: “in the limit it has its quality” (SL 126/114). Limitations are the “principle of what which they limit” (SL 128/115). Limit functions as the condition of qualitative difference between things. Limit therefore is not something in addition to a thing’s reality; something is determinate through its limit, therefore the limit saturates the whole of quality. Since the limit is the middle, something only is and happens in the middle ground.

4. The limit not only limits the other, but limits the self (SL 126/114). “Limit is the mediation through which something and other each as well is, as is not” (SL 127/114). Limit is the middle ground that sustains the opposite reality in which something is itself while also being other.

5. Since the self and the other share a common limit, and since this limit is the reality of each, the two at once opposed terms converge in this middle ground. Limit is not a barrier, but a space of interchange, of self-othering, of self-surpassing; there they have their “determinate being beyond each other and beyond their limit” (SL 127/114). What appear immediately as a logic of insularity and identity, through the convergence at the limit proves to be a logic of beyonds, passages, and differences.

All of these senses are generated from the fixities and mutual-exclusions of the categories of something and other. As initially separate realities, they converge in the limit that is simultaneously their point of demarcation and identification. As such, the limit is the zone of interchange. From the perspective of the self that finds itself converge with the other at the limit,

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22 McTaggart illustrates this point with the example of someone being “limited by their character.” On the one hand, we define the character of a person as what there are made of, the constitution or composition of their being: character is their definition. But in this case, what limits them from being something else, or from accomplishing a different feat, is not an indifferent boundary, but one’s character or power itself. The limit is something’s reality.
something is realized no longer as stable, integral reality, but rather the “unrest […] in its limit in which it is immanent, the contradiction [Widerspruch] that propels it beyond itself” (SL 100/115). In the encounter and relation to the other, something is forced outside of itself. What this makes possible is an account of finitude that is not merely a form of being limited in which something obtains its determinacy on its own side of the limit. The finite by its own nature “transcends” the limit since it is only in the other that something is determinate at all. Hegel’s logic of finitude is not a logic of static identities and differential negations, but of movement or passage through limitation. What finitude realizes is that the limit is the interchange of determinations, a middle ground in which something is a reality only as a becoming-other than it is. The promise is an account of difference that is a becoming rather than a static negation.

4. **Finitude: Vanishing Interiorized**

“At the most we gaze at [the vast edifice] in wonder, [as] a form of dawning horror, for somehow we know by instinct that outsize buildings cast the shadow of their own destruction before them, and are designed from the first with an eye to their later existence as ruins.”

One possible conclusion from this dialectic of self and other is that they both lose their determinacy at the limit. Such a loss would result from the cancellation of their essential difference, returning them to the starting point of a static identity. As Hegel goes on to demonstrate, this route is avoided insofar as their truth proves to be their identity as passage. What is important in the idea of finitude is its reality as a becoming. In a colloquial sense, finitude means to be limited logically, or bounded and restrained in terms of power. The finite is a positive reality, a something in general, but its determination comes at the limit, the boundary line at which its reality or power terminates. The finite something relates to the limit essentially, but its positive reality is maintained inside its boundary as a stable determinacy, a “quiescent existence” [ruhiges Daseyn] (SL 101/116). From this angle, the finite is preserved by the point at

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which it can go no further. In this way, the idea of “finitude” [Die Endlichkeit] that follows the experience of self and other in the Logic is only a further expression of that relation, its proper name. As I argue, what is important in this section is the emphasis it places on passage and becoming.

For Hegel, the finite is defined by two states. (1) As we have seen, in having its reality defined by its limit, this limit ceases to be an external point or line of demarcation and becomes an “immanent limit.” Hegel parses out the duplicity of finitus as both limitation and end. The finite is defined by the necessary relation to its own termination: “non-being constitutes [its] nature [and its] being” (SL 101/116). We can therefore see the importance of the experience of death. To die is not merely to cease to be suddenly. It is foremost an orientation, direction, and process of disappearing as oneself. To cease to be as soon as one is would be nothing; reality would be cancelled before it can even be reality. We can only speak of the finite that will cease, but has not yet ceased, which thus is in the indefinite state of its ceasing. To be finite is to be en route to one’s own end, and to nowhere but this end. It is to take up one’s own vanishing as an affirmative truth. (2) When the limit is internalized as its very being, the finite is posited as “the contradiction of itself” and thereby is “directed and driven out and beyond itself” (SL 101/116). It ceases to be a stable determinacy and is realized as “in its own self only a becoming” (SL 129/116, trans. Miller). For the finite that is defined by its end, in a relationship beyond its limit to its absolute other, “there is no longer left to things an affirmative being distinct from their determination as things destined to ruin [Bestimmung zum Untergange]” (SL 101/117). The immediacy of its being is not merely the stability it finds in its alteration (its constitution), but its ceasing-to-be. In short, the finite something is a mode of becoming – and thus a “transition,” “alteration,” an act of passage – but a “becoming that has already become concrete” (SL 90/104).
What defines the finite is that, in coming up against its limit, it discovers negation not as an external possibility – as a fate that would come to it contingently from outside of itself – but as its determinate quality. However, the finite is not simply nothing. It is inseparable from a positive reality, from the determination that something is within this limit and thus distinguishable from what is not. In this sense it does not internalize an abstract, indeterminate, and minimal negativity; what is internalized is the fact that its process or tendency to its own elimination is a necessary determination of its reality. The finite is thus the developed notion of becoming, in which the emergence of being is taken in an essential unity with its disappearance. From the vantage point of being, the finite is the unity of the is and the is not constituted by the determinate limit that separates the two. But from the vantage point of becoming, the truth of the finite is that it only is as the vanishing of itself, in traversing the limit toward its elimination. In itself it is an unrest, an expulsion outside of itself. Its absolute limit is the threshold or vanishing point toward which it tends essentially. At this stage, the becoming of the finite is no longer indeterminate, but a concrete, determinate vanishing: the disappearance of something. The finite is the vanishing of itself in relation to a limit. As such, it is perishable. The account of how this limit constitutes determinateness as such, from the most minimal condition of determinacy to the point at which the finite ceases to be itself in the becoming of the infinite, is the story of finitude and its vanishing as an independent category merely opposed to the infinite as such.

The finite is “destined to self-dissolution” (SL 112/129). The dialectic of finitude is defined by a double becoming, a double vanishing. In the first case, finitude is realized as the perishing and disappearance of itself. In the second case, it surmounts this position of limitation: “It is the very nature of the finite that it transcend itself, that it negate its negation and become infinite” [seine Negation zu negiren und unendlich zu werden] (SL 109/125, my emphasis). In the first becoming, the finite maintains itself but merely as the vanishing reality that it is. But in the
second moment, “the finite has thus vanished into the infinite” \(\text{[ist das Endliche im Unendlichen verschwunden]}\) \((\text{SL 110/125})\). It vanishes as an isolated category and through its own self-transcendence is realized as an “infinite” movement. As Hegel says, “the development of the finite” shows that “expressly as this contradiction, it collapses internally, but that, in this collapse, it actually resolves the contradiction” that it \(\text{is}\) \((\text{SL 103/118})\). The immanent contradiction of the finite is resolved in that the finite “is not just perishable,” or that it will transpire and cease-to-be in transcending its own limitation and thus its own being. Further, the “perishing” itself that the finite is – namely its intrinsic “nothing” – is “not the last” or final determination of the finite, since the “perishing rather perishes.” This is not because the finite ends at the limit in which the infinite emerges, but because the finite finds its reason for being in a beyond that does not share its limitedness. Like the dialectic of being and nothing, the opposite determinations (the \(\text{is}\) and the \(\text{is not}\)) cancel each other in favor of a third truth: the logic of passage. It is in this sense that Hegel’s account of finitude, for all his problems with the “obstinacy” of the category, nonetheless affirms an essential reality in the interchange between self and other. Self and other no longer stay poised on each side of the limit, but transcend the limit in an infinite becoming-other.

5. **Excursus: Thresholds, or, Limits Traversed**

What began as a consideration of a “pure” idea of becoming now presents itself according to a set of dynamic terms: flow, limit, passage, threshold, doorways. Michel Serres presents us with the dinner of the Satyrs in their den, a meal interrupted by an unexpected passer-by.\(^\text{24}\) With its system of keepers and guests, gifts and acceptances, meals and interruptions, parasites and hosts, the table is a zone of interchange and passage that inevitably makes its opposed terms

indistinct in the space in which they converge. The story can be rendered with a different accent to show the primacy of the logic of limits and passage.

A traveler, wandering in the storm, catches sight of the yellow glow in the distance. How many limits? At the inn door, barely visible in the haze of snow, the traveler knocks with the anxious reserve of a stranger in the night. First limit: the barred exit from the outside, the possibility of a shelter both beyond and enveloped by the storm. The door opens: an invitation to “of course, come in, come in.” Second limit at the threshold: a point of passage to be crossed, yet already in the process of crossing (one is already inside before the invitation has a chance to finish). Interrupted words, a closed door. The last bit of wind pushes at the back of the traveler as the rush of stove fire meets his face. For a brief moment, in the doorway, the traveler has himself become the affective limit between inside and outside. Third limit: the safety of the sealed interior. The new beyond rumbles outside, shaking the windowpanes and bolts, always threatening to overturn the divide. A change of places: the other side of the storm has become the inside of the outside. Refuge is the passage beyond the limit without renegotiating the fixity between the two divided magnitudes. Yet the inside is always interrupted, contaminated by its outside, like so many signals flashing through the cracks in the walls. One merely waits for the opening and closing of the door. A nice dinner, but a bit austere. Onion soup. “No, please don’t eat that yet.” Fourth limit: the limit-logic of the interior: so many ways of sitting, folding, speaking. An obscene gesture, an overturned soup. The traveler and his coat are forced back out into the storm, respectively. Fifth limit: an unanticipated expulsion. The second limit is traversed again, the first redrawn. “Out with you!” eliminare: to be pushed out of or banished through the limen, threshold. Finitude, or the logic of unwanted guests shoved out into the cold, toward some other end. The duplicity of the doorway. Once again traversing the exteriority of the storm, the traveler is growing tired. Sixth limit: affective limits in the slog of the exterior, the exhaustion and
rigidity of limbs. Perhaps a little rest, here, just for a moment. Seventh limit: the absolute. Fully limited, eliminated at the ends of the night; a frigid death bundled up against an old oak tree. 

Finis.

The reason one can count the limits in any given experience, without falling into meaningless distinctions, is because limit, as the boundary between the self and its beyond, is always the logic of passage, of moving beyond oneself as a form of self-definition. To vacate oneself, to transcend the limit that defines our sense of being who we are, is to vanish. However, to vanish is not to cease to be ad nihilo, but to enter into the becoming of a world that exceeds you. What differentiates the finite from the infinite is whether this unlimited passage itself is the object of affirmation. As Deleuze might say, the logic of becoming is one of a thousand doorways. Perhaps the perennial question of metaphysics, in this sense, is not “what is being?” but rather “which way out?”

**PART II: DELEUZE AND DETERMINATION**

6. **Deleuze and the Limits of Finite Representation**

We have followed Hegel’s account of determinacy from its minimal simplicity to the notion of finitude as a determinate being that, in realizing its sole determination is its own essential vanishing, transcends its limit into its other beyond it. Thought is at the limit in which the “infinite” emerges for finite being as if its beyond were the promise of its own reason for being the vanishing that it is. The following section places Deleuze’s ontological argument against “finite representation” (*DR* 28-42/43-61) in conversation with the problem of determinacy, difference, and finitude as we have followed it above in Hegel’s *Logic*. We argue two things: (1) both accounts hinge on taking seriously determinacy as difference, and (2) both push toward showing that a logic of finitude as determinate self-enclosure is incomplete. Our hypothesis is that both thinkers stress the significance of limit through the logic of differential relations, passage,
and the movement of becoming-other. Following this logic of finitude will lead us, through both Hegel and Deleuze, to the infinite. Deleuze’s critique of finite thought will lend credence to the process of vanishing that finite representation excludes from consideration and which Hegel’s “infinite representation” affirms.

§6.1 below contextualizes the central problematics of *Difference and Repetition* as (a) the critique of representation and (b) the demonstration of “difference in itself” as logically prior to the form of identity. §6.2 makes the case that Deleuze’s ontology is foremost concerned with determination, and that this is accomplished by a proper account of difference. §6.3 gives an account of the operation of determination that Deleuze sees in the model of finite representation, and the essential role that difference plays in the determination of individual substances. §6.4 summarizes what we see as Deleuze’s important critique of finite representation as (a) grounding difference in the identity of the concept, and (b) limiting the capacity of thought to determine the vanishing aspects of a thing. Finally, §6.5 re-considers the role of finitude in Deleuze’s thought and the challenge that he poses to it in light of Hegel’s account of determinacy. Our final conclusion indicates that in taking up the issue of the finite, both Hegel and Deleuze push the finite to more becoming; that is, they determine the logical movement of vanishing *qua* vanishing rather than seeing it as merely a deviation or aberration from a more universal and enduring notion. This means taking the finite to its limit, to the infinite and into its excessive, difference-producing “ground.”

### 6.1. Difference and Representation

A central ontological question of *Difference and Repetition* is as follows: Can we think difference as it is “in itself” [*en elle-même*]? To do so, Deleuze maintains, would be to think difference as a “singular Idea” and not as a “conceptual difference” (*DR* 27/41; XIX/1-2). The legitimacy of Deleuze’s proposal here will not be obvious. Conceptual differences are common
and often take little work: varietals of wine are differentiated only insofar as they pertain to the identity of the substance that is wine, and the depths and translucencies can be noted in the angle of the glass insofar as the color “red” can permit and hold together a gradient of shades. Even an untrained eye will search the multiplicity of shades and, without the words to express a difference, will settle with “red,” or the untrained palette resolve itself with “dry.” This is the largely the world as we know it: not only a world of multiform and diverse differences in quality, but differences that impact us as belonging to and thus fundamentally mediated through substances, objects, and things with which we are primarily concerned. Words allow us to concentrate a diversity of perceptual differences in a universal essence and to express this as a meaningful existent object or as a quality inhering in it. On this account, therefore, to ask the question of difference is really to ask after differences regarding what is and what is identical to itself in a primary sense. Deleuze asks then, in a deliberately perplexing way: “[…] instead of something distinguished from something else, imagine something which distinguishes itself” (DR 28/43). The thought of difference “in itself” would then be a thought of “something” that differs primarily from itself, and thus whose difference is not located between two opposed identities, concepts, or things. The “singularity” of difference promises its irreducibility.

Deleuze is conscious of the strangeness of his question: to ask after an idea of difference in-itself is to think difference in a way that is not mediated by a logically prior identity, grounded in the unity of a substance, nor subsumed under a more general concept. Difference would itself be primary, though no longer in the sense of an ontologically fundamental substance or thing in the world, like the vine that grows by its own volition from the soil. Of course, the mere possibility of an idea of difference in-itself is insufficient to demonstrate its actuality as a ground of thought or the determination of concrete, existent things. Deleuze’s ontological argument for the primacy of difference must proceed, therefore, by immanently demonstrating an explanatory inadequacy in
the model of “representation” itself, that is, in the “image of thought” that structurally and morally regards the form of identity as prior to difference (DR Chs. 1 & 3). On its “dialectical” side, Difference and Repetition is at its core a critique of representational thought, whether it is the representation of a phenomenal object, the movement of time, or biological lineages. On its “logical” side, Deleuze’s book is a positive account of an alternative form of thought that would take difference and the process of repetition (that is, the repetition of difference) as its immanent ground. In order to do justice to Deleuze’s full logical achievement, we will ultimately need an account of the infinite (Ch. 3 below) and ground (Ch. 4 below). Before completing this account, our concern in this chapter will therefore fall on his dialectical argument. What we wish to consider is the crucial link that Deleuze accentuates between the form of the finite and the model of conceptual determination.

What is meant by “representation”? Generally, representation involves an imitation, a mimesis, a repetition or re-presentation of something as it is in a distinct form, for example, in the form of a mental concept or a derivative physical image. Descartes imagines the wax in his hand as its solid form vanishes in the periphery of the flame. Distinctly, Hans Holbein represents Christ’s body on the canvas, emaciated and lacerated in its tomb, the specter of and testament to the vanishing that flesh is in the ultimate instance. For Deleuze, representation does not

25 The empirical-pragmatic side of his argument, which will largely not be taken up in this project, involves demonstrating that a ground of unmediated difference has more explanatory import regarding the phenomenological experience of time (DR Ch. 2), advancements in mathematics like the differential calculus (DR Ch. 4), and worldly phenomena such as the evolutionary development of the organism (DR Ch. 5). For the most significant and rigorous analysis of Deleuze and temporality, see Lampert’s account of the three dimensions of time in Deleuze and Guattari’s Philosophy of History, 12-70; for an account of Deleuze and mathematics, see Duffy, Logic of Expression, and Somers-Hall, “Hegel and Deleuze on the Metaphysical Interpretation of the Calculus,” Continental Philosophy Review 42.4 (2010), 555-572; and for an account of Deleuze and biology, see the final chapter of Somers-Hall, Critique of Representation, 211-238.

26 We borrow the terms “dialectic” and “logic” in this paragraph from Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason to denote the respective critical and productive elements in a single work geared toward challenging a predominant conception of thought.

fundamentally mean the correspondence between an object in the world and its concept in the mind, but rather the logic of judgment in which differences are explained by the adherence of predicates in a subject. Representation thus is a form of a thought, a way of thinking about the world. According to Deleuze, representation has a complex and functional machinery that makes a particular mode of determination possible; it claims to afford us knowledge of what and how things are. For all its practicality, however, Deleuze’s claim is that it also presupposes a certain way of thinking which is not itself exhaustive of reality as such. The history of philosophical representation that Deleuze dialectically traces is challenging and involves dense commentaries on a number of thinkers that we will largely not take up here. His account formally hinges on a distinction between two models of representation or determination: what he calls (1) “organic” or finite representation, and (2) “orgiastic” or infinite representation (DR 28-58/43-82, 262-277/337-355).

In both models, according to Deleuze, difference is assigned an effective role in determination, but only under the “subordination” to a greater principle of identity that is privileged (DR 50/71). The strength of Deleuze’s critique of representation hinges on the demonstration that representation, with the priority given to the identity of form, relies on and thus presupposes an immanent process of difference. This chapter will conclude by emphasizing the role of vanishing in the link between what Deleuze identifies as the model of “finite” thought, which grounds difference in a finite set of conceptual determinations, and Hegel’s own account of finitude as a process of vanishing and going beyond itself into the infinite.

6.2. The Task of Determination

In Difference and Repetition, Deleuze is concerned with determination, that is, the way in which reality is effectuated through difference (ontologically, temporally, conceptually, and physically). Philosophy has always required a concept of difference in order to account for the determinacy of reality. “Difference is the state in which one can speak of determination as such”
Deleuze’s claim is that the history of systems of representation has, in one form or another, always thought difference ultimately through the principle of identity. This is most clear in the way we commonly indicate differences in the world – for example, when I empirically observe that the fingers on my hand are individually distinct and add up to five, or when geneticists remove foreign DNA from the polluted sample of an organism being genetically coded. In both cases, we are sifting through a world of differences and marking distinctions. However, we do so with a preconception that each thing being differentiated from others has a self-identity and integral unity of its own. It is on account of the empirical concept of “finger” that I can isolate a protruding segment from stretches of flesh with which it is contiguous, on account of the a priori concept of discrete quantity (“one”) that I can count the digits numerically, and on account of the functional unity of the organism that one can separate it from “foreign” genetic material. For a certain form of thought, it is identity that makes the thought of difference possible; difference is always thought as a difference in or between concepts and things that instantiate them.

Deleuze’s chapter does not begin straightaway with an affirmative elucidation of what difference in-itself amounts to. He begins tangentially, offering two images of “indifference” or indeterminacy, strange images that are at once logical and pictorial (DR 28/43). First, there is the “undifferenciated abyss” in which “everything is dissolved” [tout est dissout]. It is the state in which nothing is present, or where all that is given is the “animality” that has already consumed all possible determinations. Indeterminacy is the absence of determination or difference, of which Hegel might liken the image of “pure light” or the “darkness” of the black void. Second, at

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28 Cf. Hegel’s characterization of the domain of determinacy as one of “differentiation” (SL 126/144).
29 These are also instances that Hegel might simultaneously condemn and nonetheless employ as “pictorial thinking.” “But the common practice is to imagine being, as if it were a picture of pure light, the clarity of unclouded seeing, and then nothing as the pure night – and the distinction between the two is then
another extreme, there is the “calm surface upon which float unconnected determinations.” In this case, determinations appear to be present, but they have no effective relationality: a head here, eyes over there, elsewhere a mouth without a face. They float in a purely fragmented dispersal, an indifferent plurality on a ground that neither unites them nor differentiates them.

Between these strange images, Deleuze sees two inverse ways that we might account inadequately for what makes something determinate: first, a subject without predicates; second, predicates without a subject. Following Somers-Halls’ analysis, we can say that in the first case what is present to thought is the absolute subject independent of any determinate predication that would fill it; in the second case, what is presented is a multiplicity of predications that meander without an inherence in a subject that would make them meaningful parts of a whole. Deleuze’s opening hypothesis, which will serve as the guiding thread in his critique of representational models, is that determination is accomplished through judgment, that is, when a determinate relation is established between a subject and the predicates that it contains. At stake in Deleuze’s abstract examples are indications of these two poles of determination taken independently of one another. Thus, it is a logical illustration of the limits at which determination is lost. At both extremes, la différence equally becomes l’indifférence by vanishing absolutely. If difference is the condition of possibility of determinacy, then the absolute vanishing of difference is the extreme limit at which thought faces its own impossibility. However, Deleuze does not

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30 Somers-Hall offers this interpretation in Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition, 22. We largely follow Somers-Hall’s analysis of finite representation below with a distinct focus.
propose to offer a new account of subject-predicate logic, nor does he aim to set aside
indeterminacy itself. What we aim to show is that Deleuze’s account of difference, and the
explanation for vanishing that is entailed by it, will be located in a dynamic and necessary
relation between determinations and indeterminacy.

Historically, Deleuze’s aim is to show that two modes of representational thought can be
distinguished by the way they accomplish determination through different scopes of distribution
in subject-predication. These scopes – under the headings of “organic” and “orgiastic”
representation – can be understood as (1) finite or (2) infinite in the ultimate instance. (1) In the
first case, individuals can be determined, and thus given meaning, through a finite number of
conceptual, universal categories. In this case, difference is both the means by which individuals
are specified as subsumed under a universal concept, as well as the reciprocal bridge in which the
universal realizes its efficacy in an individual and the individual in the universal. (2) In the second
case, the movement of difference is effectuated not within finite limits – that is, in a “hierarchical
distribution” within a finite number of concepts; determination is itself rendered infinite and is
thereby effectuated within the immanence of the infinite. In the following section, we consider
the structure of finite representation, as Deleuze understands it, in the model of genus-species
determination. Interpreting what Deleuze sees as the limits of finite, conceptual determination
will allow us (a) to see the complementary challenge he poses, along with Hegel, to the sufficiency
of finitude, and (b) to set up Deleuze’s move to infinite representation that Deleuze sees as
Hegel’s ultimate achievement.

6.3. **Finite Representation**

Representation wants to capture something in its determinacy, that is, to grasp
something’s individual specificity in a world of differences. To represent is to designate and
express something’s essence. For Deleuze, representation is “finite” when thought attempts to determine an infinite number of numerically distinct individuals by reference to a finite number of universal categories; it is “organic” when these logical structures of articulation are inherent in the movement of things themselves. For Deleuze, rather than being a contingent model of representing things through systems of language, finite representation is accomplished at the intersection of linguistic or logical structures and metaphysical postulates about the nature of reality expressed by the former. The primary philosophical object of Deleuze’s analysis of “organic representation” is the genus-species system afforded by Aristotle’s logical treatises, a system grounded in multiple texts of Aristotle, systemized by Porphyry, and later adopted by modern scientific taxonomy. Without a doubt, Deleuze’s engagement with Aristotle in these passages is dense and swift in its conclusion, and the genus-species model by no means exhausts the wealth and singularity of Aristotle’s philosophical thought. We therefore do not aim to provide a comprehensive account of Aristotle here, but more modestly to clarify the mechanism of determination that Deleuze sees in a specific aspect of Aristotle’s thought.

In what follows our analysis concerns two interrelated questions: (1) How are distinct individuals in an infinite world determined and made intelligible, in the ultimate instance, through the form of finitude? This finitude is found in what Deleuze calls the “equivocity” of categorical or conceptual “being.” (2) What role does difference play in this determination? For Deleuze, difference is the “transport” of determination between universality and individuality whose intermediary function of specification ensures the subordination of difference as such to the “identity in the concept.” By coming to understand the mechanism of finite representation and the role it assigns to difference, we will then be able to appreciate (a) the excessive difference

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31 “[…] denoting the substance of a thing means that the essence of the thing is nothing else.” Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1590 [1007a25].
in the world that Deleuze will move to explain (see §6.4 below), and (b) why it is necessary to
incorporate the infinite for this explanatory account (see §7 and Ch. 3 below).

6.3.1. Mechanics of Finite Representation

Aristotle’s account of genus-species determination has obvious taxonomic and linguistic
applications, but at its core it concerns “definition,” that is, the signification of “a thing’s
essence.” For Aristotle, the system is therefore both propositional and metaphysical insofar as it
concerns human speech about things as they are “primarily.” In *Topics*, Aristotle defines a
“genus” as “what is predicated in what a thing is [i.e. in essence] of a number of things exhibiting
differences in kind.” As a universal concept, the genus says something about what it means to
be that thing essentially; in this way, the genus “animal” is predicated of, or attributed to, the
grazing cow as much as it is of the attending shepherd. The cow and the shepherd, mobile on the
same ground, are not merely differences in number (that is, individuals counted as two); they are,
rather, differences “in kind.” Thus the genus, predicated commonly of both, subsumes a
difference into essential and exclusive types; in this way, the cow is in fact specified and
distinguished as such through the opposition as implicated in essence by the genus: for instance,
between “rational” and “non-rational” animals, or “bipedal and “quadrapedal” creatures.
Through opposition into *species* of a genus that “differ in kind” – that is, that exemplify contrary
types of the same universal notion held in common – the genus as such is further specified until we
arrive at a singular individual. It is thus not any shepherd counted indifferently, but Abel. The
species thus functions as an “intermediate class” that is both a species of a more universal notion
and a genus itself of further specifications that fall under it. At its lowest level of specificity, the

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32 *Topics*, 169 [101b30]
33 *Topics*, 170 [102a30]
34 *Metaphysics*, 1578 [998b25-30].
species is “predicated of” things that differ only in number, i.e. potentially infinite instances of the
same type.

6.3.2. **Explanatory Significance of the Model**

This system of determination has a number of advantages that must be noted before moving to Deleuze’s concerns with its account of difference. Appreciating these will be significant both for understanding why Deleuze sees finite representation as being a “propitious moment” for the philosophy of difference (DR 29/45) while also exhibiting a certain insufficiency.

(1) **Scope.** By drawing together the genus, species, and individual into a single process of specification, the system is able to provide a holistic account of essential determination. It is able to represent reality simultaneously in its universality, particularity, and singularity respectively, and to show that these distinct levels are each essential to answering the question of what something is. For Aristotle, we can properly answer the question of what something is only through a co-determination between the universal and the particular, between the essence at the level of the genus and the oppositional difference at the level of the species. Rather than being indifferent ways of speaking about things (e.g. as universal or particular), judgment envelops all three dimensions into holistic or syllogistic articulation of what it means for something to be.

(2) **Depth.** It thus shows that grasping something on its own, in its mere self-reference as “this” *hic et nunc*, is insufficient. Individuals only are what they are by instantiating and actualizing more universal notions through which they are given significance in a world that is at once concrete and conceptual. Aristotle recognizes this pointedly: “If there is nothing apart from individuals, there will be no object of thought, but all things will be objects of sense, and there
will not be knowledge of anything […].”\textsuperscript{35} Furthermore, the abstract concept itself obtains significance by its instantiation in the substantial individual.

(3) \textit{Difference}. Just as the individual proves to be more than it appears to the senses, so too do the identity of the individual and the sameness of the form require a process of difference for determination to be accomplished (see §6.3.3 below). Determination is complete when the most general concept (the universal genus) is related to the most singular (the individual), and this relation is accomplished by difference itself, that is, by the differentiation of the universal concept into specific oppositions. The universal must differentiate or oppose itself, just as the individual, through its genus, becomes concrete by differentiating or opposing itself to others determinately.

(4) \textit{Completion}. Granting the potential problem posed to knowledge by a world exhibiting to sensation a seemingly infinite number of individuals, representation is able to define these in essence by subsuming them under a finite number of universal categories. By this model, it is the \textit{finite} that makes intelligible a potentially \textit{infinite} multiplicity of existing individuals. Such a system of determination is constituted by a hierarchy of limits. When Deleuze suggests that the problem of finite understanding is that of the “large and the small” (\textit{DR} 42/61), what is at stake is how the most specific relates to the most general, and thus how the determination of things is accomplished between the limits of the “maximal” and “minimal” terms. Genus is the maximal limit, terminating at the equivocity of the categories, beyond which no greater determination can be given (see Ch.1 §5.2 above and §6.3.3 below). The individual is the minimal limit at which determination, through a process of downward division, becomes essential and unique. The

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Metaphysics}, 1578 [999a25-999b1]. “…unless we say that sensation is knowledge. Further, nothing will be eternal or unmovable; for all perceptible things perish and are in movement.” The context of the full quote is significant for our purposes here. The prepositional phrase “apart from the individual” above that designates the excess of the genus beyond the individual is problematic for Aristotle, who notes that the genus cannot be something completely other than the individual substance itself. This will contribute to his later conclusion in the \textit{Metaphysics} for an account of substance as “informed matter.”
concern is that without a finite number of categories, the understanding would be unable to identify distinctions between individuals and thus unable to identify essences. Without ultimate limits, understanding would get lost in the infinite expanse of a world, like a net too small or porous to catch the minute plenitude of life.

6.3.3. Deleuze’s Concern with Difference

Now that we have set forth a brief sketch of the mechanics and significances of finite representation, we now turn to the account representational difference offered by Deleuze. Here we wish to separate out Deleuze’s theses about Aristotle’s conception of difference from the limitations of the model that Deleuze stipulates on his own behalf. These theses concern (1) its functional achievement, and (2) the typology and limits of difference.

(1) The first thesis is that the Classical model of determination marks, for Deleuze, a “propitious moment” for “the philosophy of difference” (DR 29/44-45). The favorable opportunity consists in a twofold move. First, it ceases to regard the thought of essences as purely a matter of self-identity. In this way, difference is able to “cease to be a monster,” that is, a mere aberration of form to be excluded. Second, the passport that allows difference to “leave its cave” has the condition that difference be “represented,” that is, that it “become a harmonious organism and relate determination to other determinations within a form.” This means that difference as such is “inscribed within the concept in general” and therein acquires a functional status of specifying the concept itself. We will examine the consequences of this “subjection” below, but for now it is sufficient to note the importance of difference within the concept.

When Deleuze describes difference here as “pure,” “formal,” “intrinsic,” and “qualitative” (DR 31/46-7), this is to emphasize that what difference pertains or “applies to” is essence itself. Thus when “animal” is differentiated into opposing species, it does not become purely other than itself (i.e. cease to be animal) when it passes into two new differentiae; rather, the differentiae simply
designate what the concept of “animality” itself implies. The concept involves its own difference, and difference is always of this prior universal notion that makes possible its own contrariety. As Aristotle notes in the *Metaphysics*: “For all things that we know, we know in so far as they have some unity and identity, and in so far as some attribute belongs to them universally.”\(^{36}\) The individual has an identity through its concept or essence, but the concept itself requires difference to obtain individual concreteness.

Deleuze makes a number of further points that are critical: difference is “synthetic,” “productive,” and transitive or transportive (*DR* 31/47). It is *synthetic* precisely because genus-species determination is not merely an analytic parsing out of a universal, but a matter of “composition,” the connection of distinct determinations without which no individual distinctions could be established. In this sense, difference is itself a “mediation” of determinations that it composes and “mediated” by the universal it “predicates.” It is *productive* because it is difference that is responsible for this determination. It is a precocious stretch for Deleuze to call difference a “formal cause,” but his point is that without a power of differentiation the universal would remain within its own sameness and never reach an individual distinction, since the latter is more than an abstract and single notion. Difference is a “veritable rule of production” that actively “divides” the genus and thus “gives rise” to species; “difference is actually added to the genus” and not merely “virtually” (or analytically) “included” in it. Finally, difference differentiates the universal while also “carrying with itself that which it attributes” to the species to which it gives rise. “It is thus in the nature of genera to remain the same in themselves while becoming other in the differences which divide them. Difference carries with itself the genus and all the intermediary differences.” To suggest that difference is a “diaphora” is to note that what difference accomplishes in this model is to transport the universal into the individual that instantiates it as

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\(^{36}\) 1578 [999a25-999b1].
“something unique and indivisible” yet as something more than the universal itself. The “determination of species” as the operation of oppositional difference “ensures coherence and continuity in the comprehension of the concept.” The concept “comprehends” when difference allows it to leave its heights and materialize at the surface of thinghood, yet without truly leaving the horizon of the concept.

(2) This shows how difference moves within the concept, but it does not show the finite limits of this movement of difference or its constraints within the concept. The only question regarding difference here is “how far [it] can and must extend – how large? how small? – in order to remain within the limits of the concept, neither becoming lost within nor escaping beyond it” (DR 29-30/45). To this end, Deleuze notes a second thesis that there are two types of difference in the finite representation, as if there were “two ‘Logoi’” of difference “differing in nature but intermingled with one another” (DR 32/49). The first pertains to what we have so far focused, namely “specific difference” (DR 32/45-46). Specific difference divides a universal genus into contraries continually, carrying its predecessors until it obtains an individual essence. For Aristotle, according to Deleuze, this is a conception of difference that is “at once the greatest and the most perfect” because it designates a difference between “terms” when “they are other, not in themselves, but in something else” with which they also “agree” (DR 30/45). Two terms can enter into the “maximal” degree of “contradiction” (such as rational and non-rational species) only when they involve the same subject (such as animality).

Deleuze notes, however, that specific difference is only “greatest” in an “entirely relative sense” (DR 31/47). It is merely “relative” because it only obtains the degree of its contrariety from the identity in the genus that it divides; thus it is “small” compared to the difference between genera themselves as “ultimate determinable concepts” or categories that are “not subject to the condition that they share an identical concept or a common genus” (DR 32/48-49).
This is a crucial issue for Deleuze because, as we indicated in the previous chapter, it marks the metaphysical commitment to either an “equivocal” or “univocal” account of being. If the hierarchical chain of specific differences were to be subsumed under a single genus, such as being or unity, then specific difference or contrariety would itself be maximal. However, for Aristotle, being is not a subsumptive genus of the genera. Deleuze latches onto an ambiguity in Aristotle here, since a diversity of ultimate categories would seem to make their “generic or categorical difference” irreducible. However, as Deleuze notes, this “equivocity of Being” involves an “identical or common concept” that “still subsists” (DR 33/49). Thus, the plural diversity of the finite and exhaustive categories are the equivocal ways in which “being” is said, though the category of “being” has “no content in itself.” In this way, the indeterminacy of being takes on a twofold role of “distribution” and “hierarchization,” to “partition” the concept and ensure the “measuring of subjects” in an “equal” and “internal” relation “to being” respectively (see §6.4 below).

To summarize, Deleuze identifies a hallmark of difference in Aristotle. Finite representation ceases to regard difference as a threat to the purity and self-identity of essential forms. It realizes difference as a functional part of determination in which the self-identity in the form must other itself to obtain an individual distinction. Essential determination can only function by assigning difference a negative and exclusionary role through the opposition of division and the disjunction of contraries. The procedure therefore assigns a positive role to difference as the “differentiator” or divisor, the agent of determination as such. However, it respects difference only by denying the possibilities of a universal “Idea” of difference (DR

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37 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 998b: “if either unity or being is a genus, no differentiae will either be one or have being.”
31/48), as universally comprehensive, in favor of a “concept of difference” as fundamentally mediated through the identity of form.

At this point, the question remains as to why the genus-species system cannot satisfactorily articulate the specificity of individuals. On one reading, all that would be required is a sufficient process of division that demonstrates how one individual differs from another based on her essential properties: the one who wept in the field at the vision of the three saints, and not the one in the castle proclaiming to be made of glass. Joan of Arc is therefore not Charles VI. From Aristotle through Kant and Hegel, Deleuze argues that the problem is a structural presupposition in the model of thought: “[…] every philosophy of categories takes judgment for its model,” allowing “the identity of a concept to subsist, ether in implicit and confused form or in virtual form” (DR 33/50). We maintain that Deleuze’s critique of representation as a whole involves two theses, that representation is at once presuppositional (DR Ch. 3) and explanatorily insufficient (primarily DR Ch. 1, 4, & 5). In the following section, we wish to indicate the way in which it is not sufficient to explain the differential world. The fact is that to represent essences, representation must exclude certain determinations as “inessential,” that is, as not making a difference. The stakes are twofold: (1) whether there is a non-conceptual ground of the concept, and (2) whether the “inessential” does in fact make a difference. For Deleuze, these twofold moves define the trajectory of “infinite representation” (see Ch. 3 below). Involved in this, as we will show, is the metaphysical status of what are commonly regarded as “vanishing” or insignificant properties of something. To determine essences, representation must make a choice on what is inessential.

6.4. The Limits of Conceptual Determination

We have maintained that the function of judgment in finite representation is to explain the world. This involves establishing the specification of the concept, through difference, in its
instantiation in an individual. However, we have also suggested that Deleuze’s analysis of this structure of judgment, which he claims functionally subordinates difference to the identity in the concept, is also a diagnostic: judgment, for Deleuze, has an explanatory inadequacy. What is the problem with judgment? The arguments for this in *Difference and Repetition* are obscure on this point, but they are crucial to understanding the forward movement of the text. Following our above analysis, Deleuze argues that in finite representation, difference is only a “reflexive concept” (*DR* 34-35/51-52). Through opposition, difference transfers determinacy from the the “most general determinable concepts” to individuality as such (i.e. from the “large” to the “small”). This “allows the passage from respectively identical genera,” insofar as their categorical differences are unified by the expression of the way a whole reality is, “to the relations of analogy which obtain between them in the intelligible,” with each reflecting the other (*DR* 34/51-52).

This means that a reflexive difference is a difference without “its own concept and its own reality” (*DR* 35/52) since it inscribes the movement of specific difference in the unity of genera or categories whose difference is merely “analogical” in relation to an “undetermined concept” of being. Prima facie, the lack of a concept of self-referential difference is not a logical problem. We will therefore focus on two aspects of his critique that are more robust than this and which will be relevant to our account of vanishing and the critique of finite limits: (1) at the level of generic difference, representation presupposes something indeterminate outside its structure to ground itself, and (2) at the level of individual difference, that it excludes vanishing becomings in favor of stable essences.
6.4.1. Presuppositional Thought

Somers-Hall provides a succinct account of Deleuze’s critique of finite representation that hinges on its inability to “think its own ground.” In effect, while this model can account for the “determination of objects,” it cannot account for “the constitution of objects.” Somers-Hall’s thesis builds on the fact that as the effective “predicate” of the genus it divides, difference is the “property of something” primary. This means three things. First, as we have seen, specific difference is subordinate to the genus and the genera themselves by a categorical difference. Second, that for categorical difference to be a difference at all, it must be “no more than a predicate in the comprehension of a concept” (DR 32/48). Third, since this subject cannot be a single genus of the genera, the subject to which generic difference refers is an indeterminate concept of being that, as Deleuze argues, “has no content in itself, only a content in proportion to the formally different terms of which it is predicated” (DR 33/49). In effect, for Somers-Hall, this procedure “rules out in advance any possible account of the genesis of the subject” – of being as such in the ultimate instance – the “existence” of which finite representation has “already presupposed.” If the project of metaphysics is to be the thought of “being qua being,” rather than the thought of being through an already determined experience, then it has thought being as no more than the equal “distribution” of the fundamental categories of experience already known and the “hierarchy” of unity that they effect (DR 33/49-50). When difference is represented, it is merely “imposed on the world” through the form of the concept. What it does not show is the “emergence of form,” that is, how difference, as the prerequisite of representation’s own

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38 Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition, 23.
39 Ibid., 30.
40 Ibid., 22.
41 Ibid., 23.
essential determinacy, “emerges of its own accord, or immanently from the world.”\textsuperscript{42} This first presupposition concerns the limits of representation in thinking the ground of its determination. It concerns the thought of being, which as we have seen, both Hegel and Deleuze insist we think immanently, independent of the terms of experience. Moreover, both show how the thought of being as such leads to the thought of the movement of becoming.

6.4.2. The Scope of Difference: Vanishing Life

There is therefore a second presupposition involved in finite representation, or rather, the converse effect of a single presupposition regarding the priority of the concept. For Deleuze, representation presupposes the power of differentiation: “it never shows difference changing its nature, we never discover in it a differenciator of difference \textit{[un différenciant de la différence]} which would relate, in their respective immediacy, the most universal and the most singular” (\textit{DR} 32/48). It necessarily utilizes the movement of difference, but it cannot account for the ground of this differential movement that it harnesses.\textsuperscript{43} Neither specific nor generic difference exhaustively accounts for difference universally in “all the singularities and turnings of difference” (\textit{DR} 31-32/48). What “turnings of difference” escape the model of conceptual representation and elude the mold of essential forms? The classical tradition regards them as “inessential” or “accidental”

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 22.

\textsuperscript{43} Hegel makes a similar point in the \textit{Phenomenology}. The universal and individual in the “organic” whole are mutually determining, and there does appear to be a movement from the universal genus as a “quiescent unitary being” to the “pure negativity” of the individual as its “principle of process” (\textit{Ph} 176/164). But this principle of movement, of becoming itself, is not explained immanently to the organic whole, but rather from “outside of [their] universality.” The terms that are related in the organism to account for its determinacy are themselves mutually “indifferent” to one another (\textit{Ph} 177/164). Both Hegel and Deleuze aim to show that the metaphysical categories itemized by the Aristotelian tradition in order to make sense of the natural world do not ultimately account for the genetic principles of these categories themselves. They thereby miss the principle and ground of movement that constitutes things in general and their conceptual structures. In organic representation, concepts merely map on to a certain hierarchical division between things, rather that deriving from their ground. This is not to say that there are not in fact genera and species relations; it is to say that genera and species are themselves not the explanation for why things become in the way they do. Deleuze’s argument is: organic essences lack a ground, or the form of the concept cannot fully ground the movement of difference it requires for determinacy.
properties. Deleuze regards them as “becomings,” or conceptually unassimilable “metamorphoses” (DR 32/48). Our interest in these becomings is both their vanishing nature and their potentially infinite or unlimited scope. Becomings are real and are both more and less than essence, but the question is the degree that they are constitutive of things in their singularity.

Representation is capable of recognizing the nuance that there is more to the nature of things than their essence. I can be sitting or standing, Socrates could be cold on the battlefield or warmed in the sun of agora. When I stand my being is altered from the way it was before in time, with my posture straightened and my muscles prepared for movement; so too does Socrates’ capacity for action or thought change depending on the temperature of his milieu. As Aristotle notes, “accidents” designate what are “neither a definition nor a property nor a genus;” the accidental property at once “belongs to the thing” in its actuality, but it “may either belong or not belong to any one and the self-same thing.” Socrates does not become something other than himself – that is, his singular concept does not disappear – when the chilling wind befalls him and produces (or, as the story goes, fails to produce) an affective change in his bodily temperature and composure. Accidents pertain to existence, but to its “temporary” or temporal side: “there is nothing to prevent an accident from becoming both a relative and a temporary property; but a property absolutely it will never be.” As Porphyry describes, whereas properties give an essential definition of the species, accidents “come into being and pass away apart from the substratum” so that “it is possible to conceive of a white crow and of an Ethiopian who has lost his colour apart from the destruction of the substratum.” Accidents befall subjects, filling out their determinative constitution, but they are merely vanishings, fleeting states of being. Since the subject remains the same regardless of whether they are present or absent, weak or intense,

44 Topics, 170 [102b1-5].
45 Ibid. [102b20-25].
prolonged or momentary, they are inessential to what the subject is in essence. Accidents are necessarily excluded because they pertain to a flux of existence that does not affect the subsistence of essential forms. Socrates is what he is independent of and despite these fluctuations of accidental attributes that emerge in his milieu, pass through him, and vanish. The subject stands firm, erect and immobile, clearly discernible amidst the turbulent haze of the storm.

Deleuze’s critique cannot merely hinge on whether the movement of becoming is a constitutive factor of representation or not. For Aristotle, it is in the nature of things that their essence or end is something to be actualized in a lived, developmental reality. Essences are not statically given, but are achieved dynamically in the realization of things. On this account, following Aquinas, “generation,” or emergent becoming, is “motion towards form.” Deleuze’s concern is not whether essential forms are involved in processes of becomings, but rather whether it is able to account for the becoming or generation of forms themselves. His claim is that representation is not able to accomplish the latter task. Difference serves only to articulate a pre-conceptual division of the world by the “extraction or cutting out of generic identities” from a “flux of a continuous perceptible series” (DR 34/51). For Deleuze, representation is normative: it requires a “selection” to determine what counts for the determination of essences, a decision on essential and inessential determinations. It is prepared to recognize the reality of the infinite, given that perceptual life presents us with a seemingly endless diversity of fluctuating appearances, some of which endure while others vanish. In light of the potentially infinite degree of differences in the world, difference as such appears as a “malediction” (DR 49/44), something “monstrous” (DR 29/45), as too multiform to be captured by the delimitation of form. The infinite appears as

47 “On the Principles of Nature,” in McInerny Selected Writings (London: Penguin, 1999), 19. What is entailed here is the correlative significance of vanishing in which form is dissolved rather than generated: vanishing would be the movement away from form as co-constitutive of life as informed, transformed, unformed, and de-formed.
an excess of what can be represented. The infinite as such, as Aristotle suggests, is something from which to “flee”: “…nature [φύσις] flies from the infinite [ἀπειρον]; for the infinite is imperfect, and nature always seeks an end [τέλος].” Only that which intrinsically strives for τέλος can be determined, while endless differentiation is elusive of a final end and thus any determination of essence.

The universal concept, in the generic levels that run from “substance” to “rational animal,” is always imbedded in a dynamic becoming of forms themselves. It recognizes the self-animation of organic wholes through growth and fulfillment. In order for the form of “rational animal” to be realized, for example, the child must first become man in a passage defined by all “singularities and turnings of difference” (DR 32/49): the stretching of skin, intensified muscle systems, the whole social apparatus of repressed drives, the habituation toward a norm of excellence, the assimilation into an economy of labor and production, and a final descent in which form(s) as such vanishes back into the formless matter of an infinitely modulating world.

Here the understanding confronts the limits of its own explanatory scope as well as the encounter

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49 This priority of essences over accidents is reinforced at certain moments in Plato. Socrates’ argument in Philebus wants to show that those who reject “definite quantities” as a “standstill and the end of a progression” in favour of a logic of “more and less” that is “always in flux and never remains,” ultimately do away with all determinacy. The latter are in principle endless, without limit, “unlimited” (24a-d, 411-12). As Socrates says earlier in the dialogue: “The boundless multitude, however, in any and every kind of subject leaves you in boundless ignorance, and makes you count for nothing and amount to nothing, since you have never worked out the amount and number of anything at all.” (17e, 405-6; cf. Parmenides, 153-155). It is in this light that we can see the distinction that Logic of Sense opens with in its speculation on the nature of “pure becoming” [pour devenir]. Deleuze says that Plato indicated two dimensions, at once logical and temporal, only to reject the second in favor of the first: that of the “limited and measured” things, and that of a “pure becoming without measure” (LS 1-2/9). Here it is a choice of the finite and the infinite. The first entails the assignment of predicates to a subject that contains them. It fixes these determinations and the subject’s own stability in the present, the time in which one can properly speak of determined things and properties that are. Since the present sustains the being and measure of determinations, what Deleuze will propose as the time of “becoming-mad” “eludes the present,” causing all properties to “coincide in the simultaneity of a rebellious matter” (LS 2/9).

50 “Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do excellences arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit.” Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 1743 [1103a20-25].
with a “ground” of difference that exceeds the concept (DR 35/52). The prerogative of the concept can always remain content with carving up a series of becoming into determinate instantiations of stage-forms (<embryo, child, adolescent, adult…>), but it cannot conceptualize the underlying dynamics that makes this possible while also retaining the ineradicable contingency of “monstrous” differenciations (arrested development, perversion of norms, interspecies contamination). For Deleuze, what exceeds the scope of the concept is the process of becoming, the vanishing and appearance of determinations, those determinations which stand as accidental, inessential, and fleeting properties of forms whose permanence and endurance define things most primarily. Organic representation can only presuppose a given conceptual order of the world. For it, differentiation is always already accomplished because it assumes the oppositional division of a pre-given concept. Difference explicates what is already implicit in the concept, rather than, as Deleuze will propose, the identity of form explicating what is implicit in difference.

If the presupposition of essential forms is an insufficient ground, than as Somers-Hall argues, a philosophy of difference should explain “the process of the emergence of form, which cannot be captured within the structures of the already formed.”51 As an “arborescent” model of determination, representation can only inscribe differences within a pre-established hierarchy (TP 16/25). The genesis of form eludes the concept because the latter is merely distributive rather than efficacious. However, for representation an infinite ground must be excluded because it threatens to overturn the primacy of form in favor of deformed determinations. It remains to be seen whether infinite representation, and Deleuze’s own theory of ungrounding, can, as Somers-Hall implies, itself account for the “appearance” or genesis of form. More than failing to meet a standard of difference that Deleuze merely erects, Deleuze’s claim is that individuality is

51 Deleuze's Difference and Repetition, 23.
not irreducible, but presupposes a logically prior process of individuation, just as the categories are not maximal, but presuppose a univocal account of being. There must be a ground beyond the limits of the concept, both greater than the universal genus (univocity) and more irreducible than the individual (individuation), from which the subject is both constituted and dissolved. In short, organic representation presupposes difference rather than accounting for it. Conceptual differences require a non-conceptual ground. The positive side of Deleuze’s project hinges on the explanatory power of a pure idea of difference whose only ground is difference itself.32

At the limits of the concept, thinking confronts two distinct forms of indeterminacy. Beyond the genus there is not a greater universal that would subsume the diversity of genera as species, but rather a universal that must remain undefined. Beyond the individual, thought confronts nothing save accidental, inessential properties or the ineffable singularities of things that escape all definition. For conceptual determination, we can only answer the question of definition by positing what belongs in essence to any particular thing. At the limit, individuality loses all the form conferred upon it by the universality of the concept. Since organic representation cannot account for its own ground, at the limit it “ceases to be reflexive only in order to become catastrophic,” bearing “witness to an irreducible rebel ground [un fond rebelle irréductible] which continues to act under the apparent equilibrium of organic representation” (DR 52, translation modified). Yet, it is also at the limit that it is endowed with its ultimate determination. This is what Deleuze means when he claims that “it cannot be the one without the other.” This confluence of genesis and termination, of formation and dissolution, is the work of a logically prior ground that is either “infinite” or a “pure unformed.” When existence loses the reference point of essence it discovers the power and necessity of creativity.

32 If we can actually think the non-representational ground of determination, then we must concede that “thought is not arborescent” (TP 15/24).
7. Conclusion: The Fate of Finitude

At the limit, something vanishes. Vanishing is the logic of limits, but only if the limit is realized as a threshold. But what is a limit, how is it generated, and under what conditions is it displaced or surpassed? What would it mean to take the limit seriously as a vector of becoming? For Hegel, the notion of limit changes its nature to becomes a threshold when the limit is realized as a point of passage of the thing outside of itself, when the positive reality of a thing is defined by its disappearance and its becoming-other. For Deleuze, the logic of vanishing and emergence is the process by which determinations elude the mold of finite representation, thereby affirming an “irreducible rebel ground.” If the limit is finite – fixed, absolute, fully determined – then vanishing is perfect, accomplished at the limit, cancelled at a determinate point. But if the passage beyond the limit is infinite, then vanishing itself is indefinite, always in process, and never fully consummated.

At all points we confront a duplicity to vanishing. At once, vanishing aligns with the death of the thing, the terminal point at which it loses its existence. Vanishing risks being interpreted as a consummate negation: not as vanishing but as having vanished. Conversely, vanishing signals the impossibility of death for an existence that is not defined by its fragile but essential presence, but rather by its degrees of becoming. To vanish is thus to lose oneself, but only in approaching a limit or threshold in which one becomes something else incommensurable with what one was. Vanishing promises that one is always vanishing without ever having vanished completely. Thus, vanishing signals a process that is never simply tied to the disappearance of any determinate identity, but rather a process in which identities are always entangled in their coming-to-be and their consequent ceasing-to-be. The metaphysical thoughts of the finite and the infinite converge on the primacy of becoming-other.
Chapter 3: The Affirmative Infinite

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“[… as in landlessness alone resides the highest truth, shoreless, indefinite as God—so, better is it to perish in that howling infinite, than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were safety. [...] Up from the spray of thy ocean-perishing—straight up, leaps thy apothecosis!”

—Herman Melville

“[… nature [φύσις] flies from the infinite [ἀπειρον]; for the infinite is imperfect, and nature always seeks an end [τέλος].”

—Aristotle

“[…] life goes beyond the limits that knowledge fixes for it, but thought goes beyond the limits that life fixes for it. Thought ceases to be a ratio, life ceases to be a reaction.”

—Deleuze

PART I: INFINITY (DELEUZE AND HEGEL)

1. Introduction

Hegel’s analysis shows how the idea of finitude is realized through its limit in which something proves to be itself only through the interplay between self and other. The limit is both the point at which the other vanishes in the self, and the self vanishes in the other. In the very act of positing itself, finitude is led ultimately to posit the infinite [Die Unendlichkeit] as its reason, but what is posited initially of the finite is merely its own vanishing. From one angle, this involves the negation of finitude; from another angle, it involves the affirmation of the infinite as a becoming. In a different but related fashion, the logical move from the finite to the infinite is reflected in

233 Moby-Dick, or The Whale, in Moby-Dick, Billy Budd, and Other Writings (New York: Library of America, 2000), 136-7 [Ch. 23].
234 “Generation of Animals,” 1112 [715b15]. “ἡ δὲ φύσις φεύγει τὸ ἀπειρον· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἀπειρον ἀτελές, ἢ δὲ φύσις ἄρτι ζητεῖ τέλος”
235 ἩΡ 101/116.
Deleuze’s historical analysis in *Difference and Repetition*. Deleuze identifies two forms of “representation,” that is, two ways of accounting for differences in the world of determined things: “organic” and “orgiastic” systems. Whereas the Aristotelian genus-species system serves as an exemplar of “finite” or organic “understanding,” Deleuze turns to Hegel and Leibniz as two projects that attempt to understand difference through infinite analysis. According to Deleuze, what is essential in both cases of infinite representation is the degree to which they explain determination through the “element” of the infinite related to a “ground” as a generative power (*DR* 43/63). This chapter will consider the role of the infinite and its affirmation of vanishing, while the following chapter will develop the idea of ground.

In what follows we consider the basic problematic and the two-fold coordinates of Deleuze’s model of infinite representation. To develop the role of the infinite in this model, we will parse out the contributions that Hegel, Leibniz, and Deleuze each make to thinking this generative power of the infinite as an ultimate source of determination. While Deleuze argues that Hegel and Leibniz ultimately subordinate infinite differentiation to a greater identity that mediates it – issues that we will take up in the subsequent chapter – each nonetheless make important contributions toward an ontology of difference and vanishing. Hegel’s *Logic* provides an exposition of how the “true infinite” serves as a generative ground of the evanescence that is proper to finitude. Leibniz invents the concept of the “infinitesimal” to give determinacy to individual reality as a singular perspective defined by its infinite relations to obscurity. Each is an important historical step that will be modified in Deleuze’s own theory of a primary ground of difference not mediated by the form of identity. Before considering this history of infinite representation that Deleuze provides, we will consider his general philosophical claims about the import and structure of this mode of thought. This will require expanding the scope of analysis partially beyond the terms and order of *Difference and Repetition*. We conclude with a consideration
of Deleuze’s critique of and contributions to the idea of the infinite as it is given in the orgiastic
model. These passages are Deleuze’s most sustained and analytically neglected engagement with
Hegel. Part of their difficulty comes from the long history of the infinite implicated in this
encounter. What we are interested in here is how far Deleuze sees Hegel’s idea of the “true
infinite” as going in realizing the constitutive nature of differentiation, and how the operation of
vanishing plays a pivotal role in it.

Infinite representation is a success story, however flawed it proves to be for Deleuze, in
the history of the philosophy of difference for two reasons. (1) By integrating the infinite into its
analysis, it is able to account for the movement of becoming in which finite terms are
engendered, rather than merely presupposing the essential form of what is to be explained. (2) As
a consequence, it assigns vanishing (the “evanescent”) an essential role in determination;
vanishings are no longer inessential aspects of things to be excluded from the consideration of
essence. Vanishing and appearance are now regarded as constitutive aspects of determined
reality. In short, Deleuze argues that infinite analysis explains becoming by realizing a “ground”
of “pure difference” which is akin to a “single and unique total moment, simultaneously the
moment of the evanescence and production of difference, of disappearance and appearance” (DR
42/62).

2. Deleuze and Infinite Representation

2.1. The Break from Finite Representation

Deleuze’s account of Aristotle and organic representation textually leads into an account
of what he takes to be a parallel yet minor form of thought that runs counter to the requirements
of representation. This history – stemming from Duns Scotus to Nietzsche through Spinoza –
centers on the thought of the “univocity of being” as opposed to the “equivocity” of the
categorical thought we saw in Aristotle. As the final paragraph of Difference and Repetition makes
clear (DR 303-4/386-9), the remainder of Deleuze’s text will concern itself with developing a philosophy of difference in light of a univocal or immanent ground. Rather than departing from the history of representation, however, Deleuze recognizes that there is a significantly different approach to the representation of difference, what he calls “orgiastic representation” [représentation orgique] (DR 42/61). Deleuze’s association of the “orgiastic” with representation draws from what he takes to be the “Bacchanalian” state of determination when representation functions through the concept of the “infinite” (cf. Hegel, Ph 27/34-35 §47). Representation ceases to operate with the pre-delimited organic “form” as the “principle” by which entities in the world are determined as “finite,” and instead embraces the principle of the “ground” [le fondement] that operates through the “element” of the “infinite” (DR 43/63). Before turning to extended treatments of Hegel and Leibniz, two thinkers that Deleuze highlights as the central proponents of this form of thought, this section seeks to clarify the structures of “infinite representation” to determine why Deleuze later argues that the “greatest effort of philosophy was perhaps directed at rendering representation infinite (orgiastic)” (DR 262/337). We argue that the success of infinite representation is both in determining the process of vanishing and in rendering vanishing itself determinate. This analysis is followed in the subsequent chapter with the argument that for Deleuze it is not the infinite that is the problem, since it is an idea that will be crucial to his own theory difference. The problem with infinite representation, as Deleuze presents it, is the extent to which the infinite it is subordinated to a ground of identity (DR 49/69-70). We argue in this chapter that Deleuze recognizes there to be a “power” of the infinite that intrinsically subverts this latter possibility.

2.2. The Affirmation of Vanishing

The difference between finite and infinite representation concerns the very “notion of limit” (DR 43/62). When form is the principle of determination, the limit refers to: (a) the limits
of representation, in the forms of the most general categories and the most specific individual
differences that instantiate them; and (b) what is excluded from the scope of conceptual
determination, namely the infinite potential of matter. It is a question of how far representation
can go while retaining the form of things. At the limits of the finite, representation encounters the
non-conceptual life of matter, with its infinite differentiation of shapes, fluctuating tones, and
unstable presences. The understanding confronts a “whole” domain of phenomena that appear
and vanish without regard for the concept’s “arrestation of power” (DR 43/62), becomings that
subtend the “apparent calm” of the conceptually “organized” (DR 42/61). Deleuze argues that
when representation becomes infinite, it no longer refers to the limits of the comprehension of
finite categories, but to the “Whole” [le Tout]. Rather than staying within the limits of concept,
representation pushes the concept to the limit of the infinite: all determination refers to the
“convergence towards a ground” [vers un fondement].

By integrating, rather than excluding, the infinite into representation as its “element” of
determination, infinite representation accomplishes two things: (1) it obtains the capacity for
determining the totality of existence, and (2) it relates all things to a “ground” as the “womb”
[matrice] or genetic source for the infinite ways finite determination (forms) “never ceases to
disappear and to be born” [de disparaître et de naître] (DR 43/63, my translation). Representation
now lays claim to the very movement of determination in “all its metamorphoses” (DR 42/61).
The ground of determination ceases to be a stable substratum of essence mediating the flux of
material appearance to become the “element in which power is effectuated” (DR 43/62). Rather
than renouncing the problem of the “large and the small,” orgiastic representation reorganizes
the relation to the limit as an infinite relation to a “single” and “total” ground, rather than a
finite system in relation to an non-totalizable infinite. The ground represents a “coincidence” of
the extremes (the “infinitely small” and “infinitely large”) in a “ground which is like a single and
unique ‘total’ moment, simultaneously the moment of the evanescence \([l’évanouissement]\) and production of difference, of disappearance and appearance \([la\ dispiration\ et\ de\ l’apparition]\)” (DR 42/62).

What infinite representation importantly realizes, for Deleuze, is a co-implicative relationship between the terms of finitude and infinity. Further, as we showed in the previous chapter, it recognizes the need to explain that to be finite is not to be merely limited by something opposed to it (e.g. species oppositions or individual distinctions), but to both appear and disappear. The finite fundamentally presupposes a process of becoming in which it is effectuated \(qua\) finite. To oppose the finite and the infinite would be to lose the meaning of both: the finite requires a principle for its vanishing, and defining the infinite in opposition to something that excludes it limits and thus negates the infinite. The finite and the infinite cease to be oppositional notions and are united in a single ground that is both generative and dissipative. In this sense, contrary to the caution of finite representation, Deleuze’s makes the important qualification that “the infinite is not the point at which finite determination has disappeared \([a\ disparu]\ […]

Orgiastic representation can discover the infinite within itself only by allowing finite determination to subsist: better, by saying the infinite of that finite determination itself, by representing it not as having vanished and disappeared but as vanishing and on the point of disappearing \([représentant\ non\ pas\ comme\ évanouie\ et\ disparue,\ mais\ comme\ évanouissante\ et\ sur\ le\ point\ de\ disparaître]\), thus as also being engendered in the infinite. This representation is such that the infinite and the finite have here the same ‘restlessness’ \([inquiétude]\) (DR 43-4/63, translation modified).

Losing their oppositionality, the nature of the limit between the finite and the infinite is not the point at which one emerges fully in the present while the other “has disappeared” \([a\ disparu]\).236 The absence of one is not the condition of the other. Against Deleuze’s later construal of the ultimacy of contradiction in Hegel, the move from the finite to the infinite is ultimately not one of

\[236\] This point is slightly confused in Patton’s translation of “l’infini n’est pas le lieu où la détermination finie a disparu” (DR 63, my emphasis) as “disappears” rather than “has disappeared” (DR 43).
contradiction or negation, but of mutual-subsistence or inherence in a common field of
becoming. The infinite is said of and not in the place of the finite, just as the finite “subsists” in its
infinite ground. When the finite is represented by the infinite, it is in the form of a gerund: “as
vanishing” [comme évanouissante] and “on the point of disappearing” [sur le point de disparaître]. The
grammatical function of the indefinite here makes clear that vanishing indicates the becoming of
the finite, or as Hegel says, the state of indeterminacy between being and nothing (SL 82-83/104), rather than the consummated termination of one for the other. This is reflected in the
same way we’d mathematically speak of a “quantité évanouissante” as a “diminue indéfiniment,” a
gradual and indefinite decrease that infinitely approaches zero without becoming the nullity
entailed by the latter (cf. §4.5 below). Determinacy is not opposed to the indeterminate. Both
ideas, once they are taken to the point of their interrelation, prove to share the same
“restlessness.” In other words, both are realized as the same process of becoming rather than
logical contraries (limited or unlimited).

What is affirmed in this notion of the infinite is the ongoing nature of vanishing as a process
of determination. For Deleuze, the relation between the finite and the infinite is in fact one of
genesis: the finite is “engendered [s’engendrant] in the infinite” (DR 44/63) and “produced” [se
produit] by it (DR 42/62). However, the important nuance here is that the infinite ceases to be a
purely generative source, as a substantial reserve of possible determinations, since it is, in
addition to its capacity to produce differences, “simultaneously” the “infinite movement of
evanesence as such” (DR 42/62). In short, once representation functions through the infinite,
essences can no longer mediate determinations but must analyzed in their infinite proliferation
and disappearance, either as “infinite analytic” (Leibniz) or infinite “synthetic” propositions
(Hegel) [DR 43/63]. With infinite analysis, thought can no longer be defined by a finite,
conceptual whole, since it discovers the “idea of the infinite within itself” (DR 42/61). The infinite
is always larger than any totality and smaller than any determinate part. If infinite representation
has a history, it is the history of assigning the infinite a concept adequate to what it demands to
think it seriously, in-itself, as a genetic power of transformation. As we will see, doing so calls into
question traditional relations between subject and predication, wholes and parts, and the
metaphysics of irreducible terms. Orgiastic representation “rediscover[es] monstrosity” (DR 42/61)

insofar as it points to, without fully realizing for Deleuze, a non-conceptual and “sub-
representative” ground. Yet if there is an overthrow of ontology here, it is not in the sense of its
overcoming, but in the affirmation of a ground whose nature cannot cease to overthrow the
terms of an essentially determined reality.

2.3. **The Choice in Infinite Analysis**

Deleuze suggests that the “choice” between the large and the small that finite
representation introduces, as the “limits” of determination, is a choice that we find resuscitated in
a new form in infinite representation. It is a choice, he says, between Leibniz and Hegel (DR
42/61, 45/65). It is not altogether clear why Deleuze sees this as a choice, as if two roads
diverged within the infinite toward the “infinitely small” and the “infinitely large.” By Deleuze’s
own eye, Leibniz uses the infinite to push at both the large and the small, just as Hegel expands
the scope of the whole while also tracing the minute vanishings effectuated within it (DR
263/338). Part of this construal has to do with what Deleuze sees as the central or focal
innovation of each thinker in locating the origin or direction of “restlessness” which will appear,
in both cases, as “intoxication, giddiness, evanescence and even death” (DR 45/65), the
tumultuous effects of a “rebel ground” [un fond rebelle irréductible] (DR 52, my translation) that is

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237 Leibniz and Hegel “are in agreement, since the Hegelian problem is also that of disappearance
[l'évanouissement], while the Leibnizian problem is also that of dismembering [l'écartèlement]” (DR 263/338).
238 This key phrase is omitted in Patton’s translation.
the “sufficient reason” (DR 162/210, 222/286) for the becoming and metamorphosis of forms (DR 42/61-2).

Yet the opposition here risks an oversimplification. We will therefore have to examine both Hegel and Leibniz’s contribution in their turn. What we will see is that the thought of the “true” or “affirmative” infinite in each case will require taking both roads simultaneously. What is important in each case is that the limit no longer ensures determinacy by a relative relation to “abstract mathematical determinations” (DR 43/62), to the most general on the one hand (the large genera), and the most numerically irreducible (the small individual forms or material atoms) on the other. Representation becomes orgiastic to the extent that the limit is rendered infinite. The infinite is at once generative and dissipative, and thus the reason for finitude itself in its essential appearance and disappearance. Determinations issue from and disappear into a ground, but this ground is no longer a finite subject that contains a definite set of essential properties. It is not a substantial subject, but a process that necessitates, in a problematic sense, a difference in logical order between the ground and the grounded, between a generative source and the differential order of the effectuated (what Deleuze will call the “virtual” and the “actual” respectively). Such a ground expands the scope of determination beyond the fixed system of subjects and essential properties to include the effectivity of accidents, changes of state, intensity, and modifications of form as determinative of what subjects are, or rather, how subjects are made. Thought no longer moves from presence to absence, from being to non-being, nor from self to other. Instead, what is affirmed is the process or movement that constitutes these terms that are always secondary to or constituted by a more fundamental dynamism. The success of these

239 “The concept [of the orgiastic] thus follows and espouses determination in all its metamorphoses, from one end to the other…” (DR 42/61).
analyses will be taken up in the subsequent chapter to demonstrate this generative power, to justify its capacity to ground, and ultimately to rethink what “ground” this entails.

The remainder of this chapter will concern itself with explicating the following problems: How does the infinite explain the finite more adequately by “representing” it as a perpetual vanishing rather than a disappearance that is definitively accomplished at a certain limit? Why is this gerund form essential to the genetic or productive capacity of the infinite? How can something’s vanishing be constitutive of its essence? And finally, in what sense is infinite analysis “representation,” and why is it inadequate in this regard for Deleuze?

3. Hegel and the Infinite

Deleuze provides a demanding reading of Hegel’s Logic in both “Difference in Itself” (DR 42-56/61-79) and the “Conclusion” (DR 262-272/337-49) of Difference and Repetition. Deleuze’s thesis about Hegel is twofold: (1) he pushes the finite to the limit of the infinite, thereby affirming the movement of vanishing and appearance; and (2) he relates this dynamic process of determination to an infinite “whole” as a “ground” [fondement] defined by the movement of “contradiction” (DR 44/64). Deleuze argues that the “limit” of contradiction is Hegel’s highest form of difference, and should be regarded as the “infinitely large” (DR 44/63-4), which he opposes to the inverse operation of the “infinitely small” that we find in Leibniz. Deleuze’s interpretation of Hegel in these passages is provocative and true to Hegel, but it is also highly condensed. It draws on Hegel’s insights about self-other relations from the account of determinacy in the “Doctrine of Being,” and combines three passages on “contradiction” from the “Doctrine of Essence” (SL 374/279, 384/288-9r). Moreover, it associates the conclusion of Hegel’s dialectic of the “ground” with the infinite thought achieved earlier in the “Doctrine of Being.” Hegel does not write much on contradiction as such, but Deleuze interprets the
“resolution” of the dialectic of identity, difference and contradiction in a “ground” as giving contradiction a type of ultimacy in his system.

For Deleuze’s reading of Hegel as endorsing a form of infinite thought to work, there needs to be a link between the infinite of being and contradiction of essence. In demonstrating it, we are interested in the way this link carries through vanishing from the “Doctrine of Being” to the “Doctrine of Essence.” To work out the continuous function of vanishing beyond the sections on indeterminacy and determinacy, we will here consider Hegel’s first significant analysis of the infinite in the Logic (SL 108-125/123-43), which Deleuze’s reading largely takes for granted. This requires distinguishing between Hegel’s account of the “spurious” and “true” forms of the infinite. §3.1 re-considers the problem of finitude set out in the previous chapter to show how the finite by its own logic relates itself to its beyond. §3.2 focuses on the initial presentation of the “infinite” as such, which proves to be a “relapse” of the infinite back into the terms of finitude. §3.3 interprets the “unity” of the “true infinite” as a “single process” of immanent becoming. §3.4 turns to Hegel’s dialectic of identity, difference, and contradiction in the “Doctrine of Essence” to show the link between the infinite and contradiction that forms the central structure of Deleuze’s reading of infinite representation. §3.5 summarizes the development of vanishing from the “Doctrine of Being” to the “Doctrine of Essence.” Since the second component of Deleuze’s thesis on Hegel involves the “resolution” and expansion of contradiction into the notion of “ground,” our analysis will pick up in the following chapter. Our concern here is the association of the limit of contradiction with the infinite and the immanent process of becoming that Hegel’s infinite offers. Throughout these sections, Hegel’s basic question can be stated: Why does anything vanish?
3.1. The Becoming-Other of the Finite

In the previous chapter we showed that, according to Hegel’s account, the finite by its own logic relates itself to its beyond. Having been first defined by a limit, and thereby qualified and determinate, the finite spontaneously transcends it. This is the paradox offered by Hegel’s account of finitude, namely, that the very limit that makes something what it is by excluding what it is not, is the same limit that determines something only as this relation to something other than it. As the finite posits its own negation as its sole truth, this act of moving outside of itself is an experience of perishing and thus the constitutive relation to its own death. Since the finite is not the consummate point of its own having vanished, but the essential inclination toward it, the determinacy of the finite is that it is merely a process of self-disappearing. The finite is realized as a becoming insofar as the latter has been defined minimally as vanishing (SL 59-60/69-70).

Furthermore, the idea of becoming, rather than being overcome, gains a further development: becoming is no longer an indeterminate process, but formed within and generative of determinate limits that, in the ultimate instance, it must (or “ought” to) transcend.

The reason for the becoming of the finite, however, cannot be contained in the finite itself; the principle of its self-othering must be posited as external to and ontologically “beyond” it.240 The finite’s nature as a becoming necessitates the overcoming, erasure, and vanishing of the initial condition of the finite itself as limited. The explication of the idea of finitude leads us to consider this “beyond” that is the necessary correlate and logical reason for the reality of finite being. The finite involves the necessity of something other than it, and since the finite is its limitation in the face of this other, the other presents itself as something “unlimited.” The passage of the finite into the infinite or unlimited beyond, however, is a passage of becoming for the finite

240 “The finite can never ‘contain’ its own othering relation; infinity, the logic of beyond, is irreducible.” Lampert, “Limit, Ground, Judgment,” 187.
“into what is its *in-itself* (SL 110/126). The finite moves toward its vanishing point as toward its own reason for vanishing.

The infinite is what the finite “becomes” (SL 109-10/125-6), but it appears at first as the “other” of the finite. The “affirmative determination” of the infinite (SL 110/125) is accomplished by its own vanishing as something merely limited (SL 110/126). Affirmation is a double-negation, that is, a double-vanishing: the vanishing of finitude’s own vanishing in the becoming of the infinite that the finite is and in which the infinite itself vanishes. In its “simplicity” and initial presentation, the infinite is a “fresh definition of the absolute” (SL 108/124). As the “negation of the negation” (SL 108-9/124-5), it is thus an un-limitedness held apart from all determinacy. The infinite as such is defined against the form of finitude that it negates and overcomes: positively, as a “self-relation devoid of determination,” the “elevation above restriction,” something “absolute without qualification” (SL 108-9/124-5). However, the dialectic of the infinite in these passages shows a struggle to think the infinite truly. The idea passes through a number of forms in which it falls back into and is compromised by the category of finitude, and thus “not already free from restrictedness and finitude” (SL 109/124). Thinking the in-itself of the infinite is achieved only through a tortuous path of failures and wrong turns in the labyrinth of the idea.241

### 3.2. The Spurious Infinite and the Endurance of the Finite

The transition from the finite to the infinite poses an interpretative problem. The condition for the initial thought of the infinite is that the finite has “vanished into the infinite” [das Endliche im Unendlichen verschwinden] and what is “is only the infinite” (SL 110/125). Yet, Hegel argues that the infinite stands “opposed” and in a “qualitative mutual reference” to the finite as its “other” (SL 110/126). In short, the problem of the infinite is that its “immediate being […]

241 Of course, this is not necessarily a failure of presentation, but the necessary labor of thinking.
resurrects [erweckt] the being of its negation, of the finite again, which seemed at first to have vanished into the infinite” (SL 110/126). Opposition requires the presence of each of its conflicting terms. How can the immediacy of the infinite entail both that the finite “has vanished” and yet has been retained and “persists” as something opposed (SL 111-12/127-8)? One’s present self is not opposed to the traces or memories of one’s past.

The affirmation of the infinite is accomplished by the negation of the finite and the withdrawal from all limitation. But this very act of separating itself from, of being “set above or beyond” the finite, tethers the infinite to that from which it withdraws. Through separation they are “essentially connected with each other, through the very negation that divides them” (SL 111/127). The immediacy of the infinite obscures the negation of which it is a product. The result is that the finite, having appeared to have vanished completely, in fact immediately reappears as a necessary “world” to be excluded (SL 111/127). But the two ideas do not merely oppose each other indifferently; each gives rise to the other spontaneously in a dynamic of entanglement and recoil. Affirmation as an immediate self-relation is first accomplished through a cessation of vanishing in the fact of “having disappeared,” but the reality that appears to be the case, at once concealed and rising to the surface of the infinite, is that it is a double-process of becoming, a continual disappearance of the self and emergence of the other in it. The infinite and the finite thus share “alternating determinations,” a “turning over or transition of the finite into the infinite” (SL 112/128). The infinite is itself only in opposition to the finite; in encountering this limit that demarcates it, the infinite becomes finite. Conversely, the finite is only as the “indeterminate void” beyond it; in transcending the limit it cancels its determinacy and thus becomes the infinite. Each determination has “in it the other of itself”: “[E]ach is thus the unity of itself, and, in its determinateness – not to be what itself and what its other is” (SL 113/129). This “process” (SL 112/128) goes on to infinity as long as their relation remains external to one
another, as long as each attempts to stay true to their self-determination and self-identity. The “Schlechtunendliche” (SL 111/127, 118/135) – the “bad” or “false” infinite – is this double-movement in which the infinite is finitized, and the finite is infinitized without limit, erasing and resuscitating the limit, vanishing as self and emerging as other. As Deleuze construes it in terms of temporality, the series of finite points is a “constantly aborted moment of birth” (DR 70/97; cf. §6.4.5 below). The finite can endure its own vanishing, but it cannot explain its own reason for vanishing.

Finitude was realized as a becoming, but it affirms only one side or tendency of becoming that we encountered in Ch. 1 of the Logic, namely vanishing or “ceasing-to-be.” The spuriousness of the infinite goes further to realize that in the forced encounter with the finite world it excludes, the finite is re-generated immediately in the infinite, just as the infinite vanishes. Hegel admits that if we insist on pictorially representing this process as an “image,” we can think of it in terms of the dialectical relationship between points on a line that extends in two unlimited directions (SL 119/136). The line is statically or non-dialectically understood as being composed of an infinite number of points, but this accounts only for discrete, unrelated points themselves and not the reality of a line as a field of composition that envelopes the multiplicity of points. The line is intelligible only by showing how points spontaneously surpass their limits. The discrete points compose a line as finite terms that move beyond themselves in two unlimited directions on the line, but always remerge as other finite points identical to the vanished last. This process is ad infinitum, and thus a thought of the infinite, but an infinite that is represented only as the restlessness of the finite itself that, in escaping itself, only escapes into itself once again. We therefore do not advance to an affirmative thought of the infinite qua infinite; the infinite is thought, as if indirectly, by obstinately staying true to the terms of finitude.
3.3. **The True Infinite**

In one sense, the spurious infinite is an initial shot at affirming the intrinsic power of infinity, but it proves to be a relapse back into the terms of finitude; the spurious infinite is a missed mark. The result is an entanglement of thought in “unreconciled, unresolved, absolute contradictions” (SL 111/127). In another sense, the spuriousness of the moment contains an essential insight in its very tendency or “progress to infinity.” It thus reveals within itself another notion of infinity, what Hegel calls the “real” and “true infinite” [wahrhaft Unendliches] (SL 118/136) whose being is “affirmative.” The “asunderness” of the spurious infinite is its perpetual externalizing of the other, in the persistent opposition despite their continued logical convergence. They connect but only as emerging and disappearing from different points of departure rather than a common ground: the “return from an empty flight” [aus der leeren Flucht] (SL 116/133), a “flight beyond restrictions that fails to gather itself together within [die sich nicht in sich sammelt] and is unable to bring the negative back to the positive” (SL 120/138r, my emphasis). Its “reflection” [Reflexion] is incomplete or “unfulfilled”; the movement of the finite lacks a unity that could hold it together.

The “unity” of this process occurs neither with the unity of opposites, nor with ceaseless oscillation, but in the affirmation of the process of becoming itself that the infinite was only implicitly. The finite and infinite move in the spurious infinite because each recoils from the other it spontaneously becomes. What the true infinite affirms is neither moment on their own, but rather “this movement in which each returns to itself through its negation,” and in which each are “implicit mediation” (SL 117/135). The “truth” of the infinite is the recognition of the

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242 Somers-Hall interprets Hegel’s relation to organic representation in this way: “Hegel does not renounce finite representation but instead calls for it to be reintegrated into the interiority of the infinite. […] Organic representation is given content by participating in orgiastic representation, just as both being and the differential are maintained as being just on the point of vanishing.” *Critique of Representation*, 178.
dynamic of becoming as an immanent process. When Lampert argues that Hegel’s infinite is a “singular becoming-other,” what is at stake is moving from a becoming generated by the irresolvable attempts of the finite and infinite to transcend the other, to an immanent ground of becoming that is singular and irreducible. Lampert’s emphasis of the singularity of Hegel’s true infinite reflects the way Hegel presents it in the *Jena Logic* (1804-5) as the “infinitely simple,” the oneness of “unity-and-multiplicity,” and the dialectic of the “one and the many” that the true infinite becomes (*SL* 132-151/150-72). Reconciliation here is no longer about the cancellation of difference, but the affirmation of becoming-other as a dynamic of determinacy itself. We can therefore see the weight of Deleuze’s reading of Hegel’s infinite representation, which realizes the infinite as a “single and total moment,” this is, as an immanent process irreducible to the individual terms that become in it. Our emphasis on the true infinite as a process highlights the development in the “Doctrine of Being” itself that structurally mirrors what we saw with pure being and pure nothing in Chapter 1: we began with the thought of “something” determinate, independent and determined in its limit, only to see that the dialectic concludes not with “something” substantial but rather with the movement of becoming-other. The differential determinations (finite terms) emerge and vanish in the infinite. The qualitative infinite is an “irruption” [*Hervorbrechen*] of becoming in finite reality, a passing beyond the limit from the immanence within it:

The qualitative infinite was the irruption of the infinite into the finite, the *immediate transition* and vanishing of the ‘this here’ into its ‘beyond there’ (*SL* 323).

*Die qualitative Unendlichkeit war nemlich das Hervorbrechen des Unendlichen am Endlichen, der unmittelbare Übergang und das Verschwinden das Disseits in seinem Jenseits* (*WL* 370).

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This irruption of the infinite through the finite is precisely the relation of the finite to the ground. Rather than overcoming the limitations of the finite, the infinite envelops the finite as its generative power and explains how it can sustain its determinate vanishing as a moment in a single process. For Hegel, finite “understanding” becomes infinite “reason” (EL 66-68 §28a).

[…] the Notion is the condition, or rather an essential moment of reason; it is form spiritually impregnated, in which the finite, through the universality in which it relates itself to itself, spontaneously catches fire, posits itself as dialectical and thereby is the beginning of the manifestation of reason (SL 612/43, trans. Miller).

3.4. Hegel, Essence, and Contradiction

The central argument that Deleuze focuses on concerns the dialectic of identity and difference, and the ultimate account of difference that Hegel provides in the form of contradiction. Hegel has already linguistically employed the terms of identity and difference throughout the “Doctrine of Being.” If pure being proved to be “identical” with pure nothing, this was because the independent presentations of each offered no determinate difference; their difference was indecipherable, and thus they proved to share the same “indeterminacy.” The dialectic of identity and difference in the “Doctrine of Essence” concerns what Hegel calls the “essentialities or the determinations of reflection,” more traditionally regarded as the “universal laws of thought that lie at the base of all thinking” (SL 354/258r). The categories of reflection present “identity” as such over and above the dialectical movement that being presents. This is possible only in the context of the dialectic of “essence”: “The truth of being is essence” (SL 337/241).

The transition from being to essence primarily concerns the immediacy of being.245 However, the role of immediacy [Unmitelbarkeit] in this transition is complicated. Being becomes

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245 See Houlgate, “Hegel’s Critique of Foundationalism.” Houlgate provides a clear and persuasive reading of the “Doctrine of Essence” in terms of immediacy and non-immediacy that argues for the “anti-foundational” conclusion of Hegel’s dialectic of essence. Houlgate’s analysis of Hegel on essence has been
essence first because the presentation of being in all of its moments has involved immediacy. The presentation of being is that it is. Throughout the “Doctrine of Being,” however, the immediacy of this is progressively showed itself to be more than simply immediate, but as qualitatively determined by relations to something other than what being is at first. The immediacy of being is mediated by its relations with otherness and by its becoming-other. This is of course true if we think about it in terms of how individual things are determined by the infinite external relations that involve them, but Hegel’s point is that it is also true of the fundamental categories through which reality is determined. As such, being was determined as quality, quantity, and qualitative measure. Each moment involved both the diremption and vanishing of immediacy through the mediation of something other, and the emergence of a new immediacy. The fluid quality of water, for example, remains what it is despite and with “indifference” to increasing or decreasing quantitative degrees of temperature. However, at a certain limit point, these gradual changes in quantity result in a qualitative shift in the substance itself. At 100 °C, the fluidity of water boils. The gradual increase in homogenous quantitative units encounters a threshold in which the subsistence of the quality of fluidity vanishes and produces a becoming-other of quality (the effervescence of steam) [EL 170-1; SL 322/368]. While the categories of quality and quantity first present themselves as opposed, they prove to be “bound up” with one another in the shared unity of “measure.” The immediacy that being presents at the conclusion of the “Doctrine of Being” is not something irreducibly simple, but an immediacy that it is always mediated. In this movement, being itself proves to not only be a continual becoming-other-than-itself, but also the unity that holds this becoming together as “immanently negative and absolute” (SL 330/377, my

informative for our brief reading here, but we take up his conclusion about the status of foundationalism in Hegel more concretely in the following chapter. Somers-Hall provides an extended interpretation of “infinite thought” provided by Hegel’s account of essence in conjunction with the dialectic of the infinite and the “speculative proposition” of reason. “Infinite Thought,” in Critique of Representation, 125-157.
emphasis). Hegel calls this immediate, complex unity the “totality of the process of determining” which is “contradiction all around” (SL 330/377). The “Doctrine of Essence” is the unfolding of this contradiction that being remains implicitly.

The immediacy of the whole of being that presents itself as essence is not simple immediacy, but an immediacy that is more than itself. Essence is immediate being that presents itself as its own mediation, as being that is immanently extra-being. This insight provides the most fundamental, though by no means sufficient, sense of what it means to speak of essence. The force of Hegel’s analysis of essence is that essence “becomes,” that is, it has a dialectical development that in the ultimate instance challenges a traditional conception we have of essence as something foundational and “beyond” the immediacy of appearances.

Since the goal of knowledge is the truth, what being is in and for itself, knowledge does not stop at the immediate and its determinations, but penetrates beyond it on the presupposition that behind this being there still is something other than being itself, and that this background constitutes the truth of being (SL 337/241).

Before essence presents itself first as something immediate to be apprehended directly, it is the non-immediate reality or excessive being implied by the immediacy of being: “it is not immediately in and for itself but is a result of that movement” in which “essence issues from being” (SL 340/244). While this might be seen as something alien to a conventional understanding of essence, it must be understood that Hegel begins his account of essence, like he did with “being,” with what essence must be minimally. We follow Houlgate’s straightforward interpretation that the “concept of essence thus cannot stand alone: we cannot talk of essence tout court, but only of the essence of something immediately given.”246 We might think of essence as what something is “in and for itself,” and thus think of this “is” as a type of immediacy, as if Socrates’ essential rationality is immediately given to us as he stands barefoot in the snow.

However, Hegel’s point is that before we move to taking essence itself as something immediate, we must first see that we access essence minimally as “behind” and mediating the immediate presentation of beings that are. For example, I may confront two or more bodies in extension before me now, each presenting many different properties and sharing others, each of which might or might not affect my apprehension of them. Before essence presents its as essence in itself, it is apprehended as the “absolute negativity of being” (SL 342/245), as not immediacy. Essence is not the immediate, but something more profound, and this difference leads to the notions of the “inessential” and the “essential.” However, since the claim of essence is not to be a relation between determinate others that equally are, but a reflection of all there is, then all immediacy proves to be a mere “seeming” or “illusion” [Schein] of immediacy. Yet the very idea of reality as Schein, of essence merely as an illusory show that everything immediate is, is only an appearance of something that is not illusory. The negativity that Schein is leads to the thought of essence as something immediate in its own right, but a certain reflexivity of essence that reflects the process of seeming in itself.

This unity in which essence reflects itself, and returns to itself from its inessential and illusory reflection in the immediate, leads to the dialectic of identity and difference as what Hegel calls the “determinations of reflection.” Our ability to form propositional judgments about the world relies fundamentally on positive statements about the identity or difference between subjects, or negatively on relations of opposition and contradiction. Hegel recognizes that this is also true of the ideas presented in the “Doctrine of Being,” for example, when we say that “something is quality or quantity.” The difference between the “reflections” of essence and the determinations of being is that the latter are always “qualified” in relation to all the others (quality becomes quantity, and thus proves to only be in this passage into the other). Where essence is concerned, determinations appear at first as “self-references” that lay universal claim to
all of reality. Essence has returned to itself and reflects itself in its showing, and in this infinite movement has become identical to itself through its vanishing. Taken in itself, identity is thought only through itself. Thus we find the crude, one-sided formulations in metaphysics that “everything is identical,” that “everything is different,” or that “A cannot be A and not-A at the same time.” The claim of essence is the whole, the movement of being that has become whole onto itself, reflected through itself in its pure identity with itself. Hegel’s accomplishment in this regard is in demonstrating that the abstract principle of identity, regarded as a fundamental “law of thought,” is less foundational than it is something emergent in the differential becoming of being.

The thought-determination of identity presents itself has unqualified and foundational, but it emerges through the overcoming of the immanent movement of being as it differentiated itself in various forms. Hegel argues that essence can be grasped as “simple self-identity” only as “absolute negativity” by which all “otherness” has “disappeared [verschwunden] into pure self-equality” (SL 356/360). For essence to be purely identical with and equal to itself, a “pure production, from itself and in itself,” it must first “sublate” the entire domain of being into a single, self-referential reflection unmediated and undetermined by what “vanishes” in it. Identity is the “disappearing of otherness” [Verschwinden des Andersseins] (SL 361/265r). Yet the pure, self-reference of identity contains within itself the implicit “negativity” in which it “is differentiated from difference” at “the same time” as it “determines itself” as identity (SL 361/266). While this negativity of vanishing seems to be resolved in the idea of “absolute identity,” identity contains a further difference that remains implicit in it. Identity “contains more than is meant” by it, namely “absolute difference itself” [den absoluten Unterschied] (SL 361/265r). This difference is not itself something different from the reflection of identity; for Hegel, absolute difference is the negativity implicit in identity itself. Identity must be different from difference without being different from
something determinate outside of or other than itself. Identity, as absolute difference, thus becomes a difference “of itself from itself” (SL 361/266). Conversely, when essence is reflected as this pure difference, it is reflected as a difference that is identical only to itself and not to something other. For Hegel, difference always proves to be both “itself and identity,” the “whole and its moment” (SL 362/266). When this is reflected as the indifferent relation between separate “immanent reflection[s],” as the “otherness” in which each terms refers only to itself, it is “diversity” [Die Verschiedenheit] (SL 362/267). When these moments (the positive and the negative) remain “diverse in one identity,” they are in “opposition” [De Gegensatz] (SL 367/272). The containment of opposites in the same subject or presentation leads to “contradiction” [Der Widerspruch] (SL 374/279).

Deleuze’s reading of Hegel picks up here. Deleuze is quick to associate Hegelian difference with the oppositional difference between contraries. However, Deleuze makes a good, though hidden point about Hegel: difference cannot be thought merely in terms of external “opposition” (DR 44/64), for example, in the proposition that “X≠Y.” In this case, the terms are placed extrinsically to one another, and their difference is thus already presupposed rather than demonstrated immanently. Deleuze’s claim is that with this model of difference there is neither difference nor contradiction, but only “indifference” between identities that exclude the other according to the principle of non-contradiction proper to already distinguished subjects. Deleuze earlier associates this with one of the states of “indifference” considered at the beginning of “Difference In-Itself,” in which determinations exist in an indifferent and strewn diversity (head here, neck there, eyes without a face) on a ground that neither unites nor differentiates them (DR 28/44). “Indifference” is a term that Deleuze chooses to critique systems of determination that presuppose difference rather than explain the process in which difference are produced. Deleuze levels this at Hegel as he did Aristotle (DR 44/64).
Hegel too recognizes the problem of indifference, of an inadequate account of oppositional difference, and what his dialectic of identity and difference shows is precisely this inadequacy. According to Hegel, the “assumption” of mutually exclusive and pure principles of identity or difference leads to a “thoughtless examination” of determinate things that “enumerates them one after the other, so that they appear unconnected” (*SL* 356/260r).

Recognizing this, Deleuze considers that while organic representation merely posits the oppositional differences between forms, Hegel generates difference from the immanent othering of the “Self”: difference must be a unilateral differentiation, and as such, that which differentiates itself from itself contradicts itself. Hegel’s point is that when essence reflects itself as identity, it can only do so by internally differing from itself; conversely, when essence reflects itself as this absolute difference-from-self, it does so only by making its very difference into the identity with itself by excluding absolute identity. Since the dialectic of identity is a movement in a single presentation, both identity and difference prove to be self-contradictory. “Each contrary must further expel its other, therefore expel itself, and become the other it expels” (*DR* 45/64).

Difference has ceased to be an extrinsic determination of the thing and is internalized in something as the self-negation in which self is self only by negating itself and becoming other: the “movement of contradiction […] constitutes the true pulsation of the infinite” (*DR* 45/64). While philosophical thought is quick to regard contradiction as an impasse of thinking, it does so only by presupposing, rather than demonstrating immanently, the principles of thought that it employs to rule out contradiction.

Deleuze emphasizes Hegel’s claim that “Difference as such is already implicitly contradiction” (*SL* 374/279). For Deleuze, this is sufficient to show that if there is a philosophy of difference in Hegel, its highest articulation is the fact of contradiction, the limit to which difference becomes maximal. Deleuze is too quick to associate contradiction with opposition in
Hegel. We have emphasized that this should be seen as a move from the finite opposition between determinate subjects (something the “Doctrine of Being” undermines), to a form of self-opposition. What is important for Hegel, however, is that if identity and difference present themselves as opposites, this is because their independence and self-subsistence falters and immediately entails the other. “Difference as such is already implicitly contradiction; for it is the unity of beings which are, only insofar as they are not one – and it is the separation of beings which are, only insofar as they are separated in the same reference connecting them” (SL 374-5/279). For Hegel, contradiction does not merely imply the logical statement that “A is A and ~A,” where contrary predicates would be contained in the same subject. Hegel’s emphasis on contradiction effectively challenges the principle of identity at the ground of subject-predicate logic: that terms can be self-defined, and distinguished from each other, with merely extrinsic differences.

According to Deleuze, Hegel accomplishes this by making difference in the form of contradiction “pure, intrinsic, essential, qualitative, synthetic and productive” (DR 45/65).

**3.5. Hegel and the Movement of Evanescence**

Deleuze is right to see in Hegel an account of internal difference, as the difference of something not merely from a determinate other but from itself. The Self differs from itself, and thus others itself in-itself. Deleuze reads Hegel properly up to a point: rather than mutually negating the contradictory sides of the Self, the Self that is at once taken as identical with itself is propelled beyond itself in an infinite movement of becoming-other. For Hegel, contradiction does not resolve difference by cancelling it in a higher identity. Rather, every identity proves to differ from itself and thus to contradict itself, producing an infinite movement outside of itself where further differences encounter one another. It is in this sense that contradiction makes self-differentiation maximal and infinite in scope. Despite this, Deleuze claims that Hegel generates a complex notion of difference that, on the one hand, pushes it beyond the limits determined by
the identity of presupposed forms, and on the other hand, re-binds difference to the form of identity at the limit in which difference ultimately becomes contradiction. As we will see, Deleuze claims that it is the relation of infinite contradiction to the “ground” that is the point in which he thinks difference gets “resolved” (*DR* 44/64) in a “foundation” which, though it “is not the identical itself, it is nevertheless a way of taking the principle of identity particularly seriously, giving it an infinite value and rendering it coextensive with the whole, and […] allowing it to reign over existence itself” (*DR* 49/70). Deleuze’s claim is strong though not immediately persuasive. It is thus regarding the nature of the ground that we believe an encounter between Hegel and Deleuze is most interesting. We will therefore reserve our analysis of this thesis for the subsequent chapter. We would now like to conclude by focusing on this link between the infinite and contradiction. We are interested in at present is the nature of vanishing that Deleuze sees as essential to this form of difference as contradiction.

We saw that being showed itself to be a becoming, a movement between the pure and immediate terms of being and nothing that presented itself as a “ceaseless” process of the disappearance and emergence of each terms as they immediately become the other. At this stage, vanishing occurs between seemingly contrary extremes that, in their shared indeterminacy, both are and are not simultaneously. Vanishing was the indeterminacy of the between state of failed immediacies. This becoming itself collapses and vanishes to produce a stabilized determinate reality in which something is defined in relation to its limit. However, the immediate presentation of finitude, at once a stable determinacy with its limit, merely obscured the process of becoming that remained implicit in it. The dialectic of finitude is the unfolding of this becoming in which any determinate thing can be itself only by becoming other than itself. But to *become* other than itself is to vanish as oneself, to relate to an unlimited outside: first, as a terminal vanishing point; and second, as an infinite process in which finite determinations both vanish and emerge. What
fundamentally distinguishes the false from the “true” infinite, the negative infinite from the “affirmative” infinite, is whether the “becoming” that both are is what is affirmed. When the “understanding” focuses on the simple reemergence of each, it holds to a limitation and independence that constantly fails and is surpassed. Only “reason” can realize that the “infinite” taken truly is “essentially only as becoming,” though it is a becoming “further determined” (SL 118/136). As such, the infinite is the “negation of the negation,” an affirmative development of becoming itself. While becoming was at first merely indeterminate, becoming will become essence and notion.

Hegel’s point in emphasizing the further determination of Becoming is not that Being has been left behind. In fact, there is no movement of becoming without the presentation of being as something immediate that can emerge and then vanish in the becoming-other that it is as immediate. The dialectic of essence makes this clear. What vanishes in essence is immediacy itself, the state of determination in which something is taken as self-identical and self-sufficient unto itself. Becoming is further determined as a movement in which immediacy and mediation emerge and vanish and emerge as something other. What contradiction emphasizes is the intrinsic and unilateral nature of becoming that any identity confronts when it is taken as something immediate. Thus between the indeterminacy of being and the emergence of essence, the movement of evanescence is rendered infinite: it no longer refers either to contrary and identical indeterminacies that form the limits of its movement, but to an infinite and unlimited movement within things themselves. Somers-Hall interprets the development of vanishing from the first notion of becoming to the account of reflection as achieving a “pure movement” that the former lacked. With the “process of reflection,” the “movement of disappearing itself is therefore checked by negativity, as it cannot arrive at a state of having disappeared. As such, this movement persists and is, albeit as a movement constantly in tension. Equally, however, as a
pure movement, we can say that reflection is not, as it lacks any stability.”

“Finite things, in their indifferent variety, are therefore just this: to be contradictory, internally fractured and bound to return to their ground” (SL 385/289r). The sphere of the ground to which contradiction leads, Hegel claims, “is not itself the resolution of its higher contradiction but has yet a higher sphere for its negative unity, for its ground.”

**PART II: INFINITY (LEIBNIZ AND DELEUZE)**

4. **Leibniz and Infinite Analysis**

We have been pursuing the logical relation between the finite and the infinite, and how the reality of vanishing, at once a property of finitude, is effectuated by the infinite itself. The strength of Hegel’s analysis is in showing how the finite itself leads to the infinite as a becoming. At stake in this is the question of how we can and should think of the infinite. It is in this sense that Deleuze situates Leibniz, alongside Hegel, as a seminal point in the history of infinite representation. Deleuze argues that where Hegel realizes the “dismemberment” of the finite by the infinite whole, Leibniz “vice-dicts” the finite through his notion of the “infinitely small.”

Between the two methods, what each explains in common is an ontological vanishing effectuated in the relation between finitude and infinity. The modern period shows an innovative labor to think the infinite affirmatively, to take the idea in-itself seriously as an existent ground of reality and not as an ideal possibility or ineffable limit. After considering the argument behind Leibniz’s metaphysics in §4.1 and §4.2, we consider the efficacy of this account of vanishing in relation to perception in §4.4, the temporality of memory in §4.3, and the early formulation of the mathematical calculus and its relevance to Deleuze’s notion of sub-representational elements in §4.5.

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247 *Critique of Representation*, 142.
4.1. The Problem of Individuation

The problem of individuation is at the core of Leibniz’s philosophy. Individuation concerns how individuals are constituted and distinguished from other individuals. At stake is a theory at once of difference as distinction and difference as naturans, what we will later call differentiation. In the first register, individuation is concerned with the constitution of essential forms, and in the second with the process of becoming in which forms are composed. Individuation cannot escape the problem of genesis, which means it cannot merely posit arbitrary divisions between things. The first register of distinction is grounded by the second register of difference as a differentiator; between the two is the constitutive relation between finitude and the infinite.

The types of things Leibniz is interested in are often clear, but the arguments for his theses are more difficult to interpret. My interest in the present section is to reconstruct some of the arguments by which the “monadology” gets off the ground, and in considering the consequences of how it claims to return to the ground of things. In some writings, Leibniz’s argumentation seems to move linearly from the grounded to the ground, from contingent things to their necessary reason for being. This follows the principle of “sufficient reason” or the order of causality in which “everything must have a reason” that logically precedes it, in the way an effect must be different from and a consequent to the cause that effectuates it. Leibniz’s argument for individuality, however, requires a circularity of explanation between singular points and the whole(s) they reflect. Such circularity promises to ensure unity and singular distinction as the two requirements of individuality. This circularity is consummated in the Leibniz’s theory of perspectivism.

Leibniz sometimes situates the problem of individuality between two premises about the nature of reality: (1) there are composites (M §2; PNG §1), and (2) things are subject to change or
alteration (M §§7-8; NSN 144). In these essays, the argument for the theory of monads appears to be derived directly from these propositions. Of course Leibniz runs the risk of developing a system based on axiomatic presuppositions about empirical reality. They are certainly not the most dogmatic moments in Leibniz’s system. In a way, for Leibniz they are merely statements of fact. Experience presents us with vast plenitude of phenomena, but it never presents us with terms that are not decomposable into internal parts and relations, nor with static terms wholly divorced from a process of change or becoming. Leibniz never claims to be a pure metaphysician or an idealist, but someone interested in explaining the physical systems of prime interest to his age (NSN 139). Another way to read these propositions is as problems rather than axioms. They function as access points for Leibniz to contest certain assumptions about individuality, the metaphysical grounds of physical entities, and the empirical knowledge of forms.

4.2. Monadic Composition

The reality of composites or aggregates raises the question of composition: with what ultimate terms are complex forms constituted? For Leibniz, a “composite” is not a multiplicity in general, but a substantial collective: something that aggregates or is composed of distinct things, in the way a chemical compound of water is composed through the bonding of hydrogen and oxygen atoms. We must therefore distinguish at the outset “simple substances” from “composite substances” (PNG 207), the molar from the molecular. If individuality were located on the molar

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248 G. W. Leibniz, Philosophical Essays, eds. and trans. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989). References to Leibniz’s specific works will be cited in-text, with section and/or page number, according to the following abbreviations:

M for “The Monadology”
T for Theodicy
DM for Discourse on Metaphysics
NSN for “Toward a New System of Nature”
PNG for “Principles of Nature and Grace”
UOT for “On the Ultimate Origination of Things”
level of aggregates, individuality would not be something fundamental and irreducible. Every thing would itself be a “multitude” of things. Of course, there is nothing impossible about this picture of reality. Water can be perfectly individuated and distinguished from other fluids while still admitting of part-whole relations and material divisibility. The consequence is that each part of the composite itself will be composed of smaller parts ad infinitum. An atom like hydrogen swarms with orbits of electrons, protons, and neutrons; and sub-atomic particles themselves vibrate with the spinning of quarks and leptons, the substructures of which present our sharp molecular eyes with only a dark, unknown ground on which we can say, at best, that things emerge and disappear out of existence. Leibniz offers the following illustrative image of the world:

Each portion of matter can be conceived as a garden full of plants, and as a pond full of fish. But each branch of a plant, each limb of an animal, each drop of its humors, is still another such garden or pond. And although the earth and air lying between the garden plants, or the water lying between the fish of the pond, are neither plant nor fish, they contain yet more of them, though of a subtleness imperceptible to us […] (M §§67-8).

The upshot of the infinite divisibility of the material world is that each portion gives way to a whole world of processes that subtend our reality, rather than a foundational void or absence of life. Reality is a “plenum” (M §8, 61), a fully positive material without void or vacuum. Perhaps more is better than less. The downside is that there is no true unity in nature, only a ground that diminishes to infinity without ever becoming nothing. What then is inadequate about an infinitely divisible account of individuality? There are in fact two arguments against this position: from the principle of substance and from the principle of change. Here we will consider the argument from substance as it leads to the argument for change. Doing so will yield us Leibniz’s own theory of vanishing.

Leibniz’s implicit argument seems to suggest that the proposition that an individual thing (as a whole) is composed of smaller things (parts) undermines its own explanatory grounds.
Leibniz puts it in ostensibly tautological terms: without simple terms, there can be no composite, since composites are defined by prior constituents (M §2; PNG §1). This is not merely a matter of definition, but of necessary conditions. The aggregate is an aggregate only insofar as it holds together *things* or distinct substances. Water is neither a hydrogen or oxygen atom, but a differential relation between the two atomic entities. The argument takes an analytic proposition to show that what it requires are not smaller composites, but *simple* terms with discreteness and unity capable of endowing the whole with the unity of composition. Without simple terms, the infinite divisibility of things becomes regressive. Leibniz’s concern here is that regression, in this case, is not a matter of unconsummated (infinite) composition, but the loss of sufficient reason and the grounds of explanation. In short, individuality requires a unity for distinction, but infinite divisibility undermines any ultimate unity in favor of infinitely diminishing segments of matter. Without unity, there can be no indication of the uniqueness or distinction of one thing from another in the plenum.

Leibniz’s question therefore becomes: What must composite reality presuppose in order to account for individuality? We arrive at Leibniz’s first thesis:

1. Composite substances must presuppose “monads,” “simple substances,” the “true atoms of nature” (M §§1-3).

Without further qualification, this thesis is conventional. In grounding compounds in molecular simples, Leibniz situates himself in the metaphysics of atomism and risks at best an original degree of abstraction, even if, as we will see, the consequences of his pushing the idea of the infinite to its limit – that is, to infinity – will significantly reformulate and complicate the atomist thesis. Ideally, matter and extension are infinitely divisible, permitting of no ultimate unities except the whole of matter taken in the abstract. As such it cannot be the source of individuality. Atomism halts division with the grounds of discrete indivisibles, more or less infinite in number.
What can we said of simple substances? What must they be in order to explain something like an individual distinction, whether it is my body distinguished from the mass of the crowd, or my steak differentiated from the plate on which it rests? After all, it would be a silly mistake to tell the waiter that the porcelain plate is overcooked.

(2) As “true unities,” monads must be without parts. They must be conceived without a merely extensive distribution over multiple cases or positions. In this way, they are akin to sealed rooms (without flooring, of course) with “no windows through which something can enter and leave” \((M \S 7)\). If monads were penetrable, they would not be simple but extended volumes capable of housing terms that in their residency would be more fundamental than themselves. Their simplicity negates the possibility of communication or relation with an exteriority. Monads are purely immanent unities.

Leibniz never denies the infinite divisibility of material entities, as the above picture of the world suggests \((M \S\S 67-8)\). His claim is that composite (divisible) entities cannot explain their own grounds, just as contingent entities cannot explain why they change in the way they do. Leibniz’s answer to the problem is that physical systems are compelled to posit immaterial and metaphysical entities to explain both physical composition and change. The claim against atomism is not that there are no atoms in nature, but that “true atoms” are not material or minimal degrees of extension. The remainder of the “monadology” entails the predication of monadic unity and how they can explain change.

Immaterial realities risk a lot of problems, not the least of which is grounding reality in cryptic or ghostly entities that can never be empirically verified. This leads to a further problem. If the grounds of real individuals are simple constituents without parts capable of entering into composite relations and constructing aggregates, then how can they differ from one another in any meaningful way except numerically, that is, counted indifferently? How can individuality be
anything other than an indifferent heap of anonymous stuff? Numerical difference does not make an individual difference. Difference always confronts the problem of not making a real difference. The pivotal Leibnizian problem is in developing a notion that has both true unity and an intrinsic principle of differentiation. Leibniz more or less embraces the difficulty, and his theses press toward his novelty:

(3) Monads are irreducible unities, but they must be “multitudes,” “diversities,” and “pluralities” (M §§12-3; NSV 142). If monads did not have qualities, they would be indistinguishable from each other. This is the fate of material atomism. As a consequence, they would be incapable of communicating difference to the aggregate reality we experience as differentiated into diverse individual entities.

Leibniz is happy to resurrect a concept like “monad” from Neo-Platonism to signify a unity that envelops a multiplicity. But what does this multiplicity consist of if not in number, external relation, extension, or partition?

(4) To account for a difference between things, each must have an “internal difference” (M §9). To be simple, they must be quantitatively one, and thus numerically indistinguishable from all monads (M §8). Yet to be individual and distinct, they must be qualitatively diversified. True unity requires qualitative self-differentiation (M §8).

At this point, abstract or concrete atomism is left behind, as is any claim to pure simplicity. Monads are the grounds of numerical and extensive multiplicities (composite things), but only under the condition that they unify potentially infinite qualities or degrees. A universal like the color red easily admits of degrees or shades, or the species dog embraces a multiplicity of dispositions that range from domesticated to feral. Species or genus identities do not obviously erase differences since they rely on difference to begin with to identify species distinctions.

Regardless, we must recognize what this move accomplishes. First, it skirts merely numerical
distinction that would render monads indistinguishable, which is the same as being indifferently
distinct. One atom is finite and thus different from another One, though they are essentially the
same in their sole numerical predication. Second, the ground of real difference is ensured in the
internal, qualitative differentiation of the monad itself. Difference can now be communicated
from the molecular ground to its molar instantiations. Monads are singular points that signal an
infinite qualitative variation. Monads are composed of “affections,” or qualitative degrees, a
“subtleness” of reality that is “imperceptible” to us if we look at the world as composed of organic
wholes. Extension must presuppose intension insofar as intensity is the state of non-extended
variations in qualitative degrees of reality. This sounds good for a philosophy of difference, but
how does a such monadic qualitative differentiation give us a theory of vanishing? If it manages
to do so, does it contrive vanishing from specious grounds?

4.3. Perspectivism and the Dark Background

Monadic intensity ensures the possibility of individual distinction, but as a potentially
infinite variation of degrees it runs the risk of destroying the monad’s necessary unity. The double
requirement of unity and singularity oscillates between destructive extremes in which each risks
cancelling the other. Leibniz therefore faces the following problem: Where does a monad’s unity
come from if it must necessarily be a unity of a qualitative multitude? Perhaps unity is always a
contrivance in any case, but Leibniz’s theory of individuality proceeds as if it were a requirement.
The resolution to this problem of affirming singular differences, of developing a genuine account
of individuation in the context of an infinite world, can be found in Leibniz’s theory of
“perspective.”

(5) Each monad expresses the whole world in which it is involved, but it does so from a
particular perspective (M §14; NSV 142). Monads are zones of immanence that have
“no windows through which something can enter and leave” (M §7), yet each monad
“represents the whole universe” (M §62). Every “substance is like a complete world and like a mirror of God or of the whole universe, which each one expresses in its own way […]” (DM 42).

With this thesis we are promised unity and singularity: the distinction of perspectives on a whole or common world that envelops all possible perspectives. Yet the problem here is not fully resolved. The monad derives a unity from the whole world it expresses, and its singularity from the unique perspective by which it reflects or represents this world. In the Discourse on Metaphysics, Leibniz argues that the subject must contain its predications (DM 41). If two subjects or substances contain the same predicates, then by the “law of indiscernibility,” they must be identical. The monadology comes up against this logical problem: each monad expresses the whole world, and thus the world as exhaustive predication is contained in each, and thus each contains the other through a repetition of cases; yet if each contain the same predicates (the same infinite world repeated in each), then each monad must be indiscernible from the other. Unity comes from the necessity that to perceive is always to perceive a given whole, but why then the individuation of perspectives, and can perspectivism guarantee singularity against indiscernibility?

Unity is conferred on the monad by its tendency to express the whole, but the infinity of the world is not expressed or experienced clearly and totally for each monad.

(6) “Monads all go confusedly to infinity, to the whole; but they are limited and differentiated by the degrees of their distinct perceptions” (M §60).

Each monad is individuated according to the point of view by which it expresses the totality of the world. Deleuze argues that the consequence of this perspectivism, if it is to preserve the singular from being “swallowed up” by a single “universal Spirit” (F 24/33-34), of having its singularity negated, is that the way in which a monad expresses or reflects the whole is defined by
degrees of clarity and obscurity. The monad’s intensity is its relative degree of illumination of a finite milieu. Each view of the city has its finite purview or “neighborhood” that it experiences, while what escapes its perception is not an indifferent other, but the remainder of the world that falls into a “dark background” or zone of shadow which it no less includes within itself. This obscure background, with its alleyways obscured by shadow, its traffic of individual motions in the distance reduced to a drone, is not less constitutive of the individual than the brightness of its proximate surroundings. The city is an infinite series of vantage points (DM 42). You are sitting in a coffeeshop. They have dimmed the lights hoping you’ll get off your computer. Across town I am at home constructing fruit fly traps, one by one, waiting for swarms to move through perforated plastic into a cell without exit. Our worlds couldn’t be more different. Our environment and projects differentiate and individuate us. You with your coffee-squatting; me with my traps. Nonetheless, it is the same world that forms the backdrop or conditions for our respective perspectives. The same summer heat forces one to flee a sweltering home to air-conditioned coffeeshops and gives rise to swarms of tiny bugs around the fermentation of trash.

There is thus a certain reversal of Cartesianism in Leibniz: truth is no longer simply a matter of securing clear and distinct perceptions from the precipice of obscurity proper to the sense; there is rather an intrinsic obscurity to the world that is the condition for individuation and determinacy, and the genesis of the finite from the infinite world it expresses. Deleuze notes that for Leibniz, “[c]larity endlessly plunges into obscurity” (F 32/45). The monad contains the whole, but under the conditions of an internal degree of perceptual vanishing that defines its expression of reality. Monads have no need of windows or doors because they are always already fully open to the world even if this chamber-world is populated with figures that emerge suddenly from and disappear into shadowed corners.
Monads are at once absolutely singular and inclusive of the world. Perspectivism bridges an infinite qualitative difference (perspective as intensity) immanent to monadic singularity with an infinite totality of the world that confers its unity, but under the conditions of a singular perspective and a corresponding zone of clarity-obscurity. There are many strange consequences of this infinite envelopment of the singular and the universal: multivalent infinite series, a pan-organicism, the impossibility of purely external causality in which singular things would be acted upon from without, infinite machinic assemblages grounded by soul-centers of expression, and an immanent form of expression.

(7) “Everything must arise for [the individual] from its own depths [fonds], through a perfect spontaneity relative to itself, and yet with a perfect conformity relative to external things” (NSN 143).

The argument for individuality proceeds according to a circularity in which the singular is bridged with the universal through an infinite qualitative reflection. It is in this sense that “Individuals [singularia] involve infinity” (183) and infinity expresses itself through the singular perspectives which are like flashes of light, “continual fulgurations of the divinity from moment to moment, limited by the receptivity of the creature, to which it is essential to be limited” (M §47). If the individual is taken as a discrete unity, abstracted from the infinite world it envelops in various shades, then the formation of the universal soul “only abstracts certain circumstances by concealing innumerable others” and by “concealing aberrations” (183). Therefore, “it is only in an individual that there is a notion so complete that is also includes all of its changes.”

All this is not totally absurd. In linguistics, an utterance is perfectly individuated while still presupposing the entire structure of its system of language as given, even if this is never a circumscribed totality of utterances, but a system of infinite variations in meaning and context. The generation of encyclopedias was a monumental task of Leibniz’s time. The question
becomes how the structure of the encyclopedia can provide comprehensive predication of an individual entry. In the development of a “universal grammar” that would provide the numerical or symbolic terms of a calculus of life in its infinity, Leibniz suggests that individual entries of such an encyclopedia should include an infinite series of referents by which each entry would be made definite by its relation to all the others. Thus each entry would contain the whole of the encyclopedia, structurally open as knowledge of the infinite world “progress without end.” There is thus a repetition of infinite cases in each individual, but from the perspective of a singular individual instance that organizes the series around a focal point or unique hinge of ordering.

It remains to be seen what all this tells us about the nature of reality, if it amounts to no more than creative abstraction at best and preposterous fantasy at worst. Bayle reproached Leibniz for a philosophy of becoming that would risk confusing substance (primitive monads) with their accidents. If substance could produce accidents, Bayle argues, they would “possess a power of creation and annihilation,” and accordingly “one could not perform the slightest action without reducing an endless multitude of them” (T 360). “Merely by moving the tongue to cry out or to eat,” he clarifies, “one creates as many accidents as there are movements of the parts of the tongue, and one destroys as many accidents as there are parts of that which one eats, which lose their form, which become chyle, blood, etc.” Leibniz’s response takes little work: “What harm can be done, supposing that an infinity of movements, an infinity of figures spring up and disappear at every moment in the universe, and even in each part of the universe? It can be demonstrated, moreover, that that must be so.” One phenomenon in which we can see this theory of obscurity-distinction, of disappearance-emergence, is in memory.

4.4. Reflections on Memory: Through a Mirror Darkly

(8) For the individual, “when we consider carefully the connection of things, we can say that from all time in [his soul] there are vestiges of everything that has happened to
him and marks of everything that will happen to him and even traces of everything that happens in the universe, even though God alone could recognize them all” (DM 41).

One, first of all, remembers. One form of the presentation of memory, following the order of time, is that of succession. Events precede and follow one another according to their temporal series of emergence. However, the question of a temporally first memory must be distinguished from the primary apprehension of memory as such. In this latter sense, the first memory is neither alien figures towering above you with down-stretched arms, nor a child’s view of the scintillating city lights from an airplane cabin’s window. The first memory is memory’s first condition: the present has vanished. Vanishing is the immediate passing of the present, that is, the present moment’s self-past-ing. Yet, in vanishing it has been retained in its having passed. Disappearance and retention are the first phenomena-set of memory. From the vantage of any fragile present, it is as if nothing has disappeared at all, and that the entirety of the past of which we are the unity is presently available to us for immediate recall. The calendar system provides a numerical coordinate system of dating the flow of past-time, and each immediate present seems less like a port of new input than it is a search engine. The second condition is the apprehension of the past in its wholeness. Such a feeling of access can only be ideal, however, since the volume of memory is a depth obfuscated with shadows.

If the simultaneity of disappearance and emergence defines the present, then clarity and obscurity initially define the volume of memory’s reserve. The instant vanishes as soon as it appears, receding into dark background of memory. Even though memory seems to contain the entirety of my past, the volume of the past is not experienced in the present as fully available. Memory functions according to degrees of obscurity and clarity, proximity and remoteness. My view from the airplane window has a remarkable clarity on the city lights illuminating the dark
ground like so many monadic fires in the field. Yet the fluorescent glow of the cabin that envelops me conveys only vague figures to be discerned now, perhaps no more than part of a face that turns briefly toward me with an expression half lost in that radiant oblivion long past. Of course these degrees of obscurity-distinction are not just present in singular memories, but in the external relations that set memories apart in time. The memory of that airplane 26 years past can easily be distinguished from the cavity of the bus only hours ago by their degree of retention, their scope, and the limit at which clear apprehension gives way to obscurity. In my temporal proximity to that bus, more of its perceptions are still alive for me: a rocking tube of Caribbean costumes, strollers maneuvering into place, figures fighting with intractable doors, and at the farthest recesses of that cabin, a man who hunches in sleep.

Access is only one problem of memory, since memory is not a stasis of imperfect inscription set against the dynamic fragility of the present that, in its disappearance, eludes any absolute presence. Recall is never an absolute power, but is itself a complex of disappearance and emergence. It is true that we forget as much as we remember. Forgetting situates us with the problem of loss. The laborer knows the monotony of time well and the fate of forgetting. The dead repetition of tasks makes it difficult to remember at all. The previous night’s happenings seem to dissolve into a single obscurity extending from the present. The whole of the past trails, spectrally. The mind focuses on the dark background, trying to pick out distinctions. The perennial question: What happened? Suddenly something emerges, less a full memory than a singular quality, a brief moment in which an object was touched or smelt. Singular events rise up from the shadows, their vicinities slowly populating with qualities and relations. Suddenly the picture fills out rapidly. Qualities multiply and swarm around the singularity. Obscurity gives rise to an expanding clarity. Monads are singular points of orientation, mobile centers of reflection. Obscurity is not the loss of life, but the condition under which thought is provoked to solve a
problem. The world, having passed, comes into focus. Beyond my little flytraps I hear the wind in the trees and the crescendo of the storm as it comes on suddenly. Out there is the world and its noise. But what world does this noise contain?

Memory presents us both with the whole and our own limitations. The totality is given only barred, spectral and emergent. “God alone is the primitive unity of the first [originaire] simple substance; all created or derivative monads are products, and are generated, so to speak, by continual fulgurations of the divinity from moment to moment, limited by the receptivity of the creature, to which it is essential to be limited” (Leibniz, M §47). Perhaps it is at this nexus that we are always located and in which we are given determinacy. Is the limit of obscurity an obstacle to be overcome, or the way in which our world becomes livable? What would a thought at that ultimate limit be, in which the world is present in its fully clear immediacy and power? What kind of life, in its limitless magnitude, would be possible there? It is no surprise, and perhaps an unsatisfactory result, that Leibniz sees here the thought of God.

I prefer to remember Borges’ Ireneo Funes, that “street tough from Fray Bentos” who, having been bucked from an untrained horse, awoke paralyzed and able to remember everything in all of its plenitude. He was the “solitary, lucid spectator of a multiform, momentaneous, and unbearably precise world.” Funes’ world was one in which the memory of a vineyard ten years before was an infinite labyrinth of details: the minute veins on tendrils, the water vapors swarming inside the constellation of clouds as they disappeared over the hills, and the condensation of heat from the summer grapes as they cooled in the new shade, a world in which figures would proliferate with muscular and thermal sensations, infinitesimal and radiant. Of course, nothing could be more incomprehensible to Funes than “general, platonic ideas.” How

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249 “Intensity is individuating, and intensive quantities are individuating factors. Individuals are signal-sign systems” (Deleuze, DR 246/317).
250 Borges, “Funes, His Memory,” in Collected Fictions, 131-137.
could the stray dog at 10:30 AM in an alleyway of Montevideo, seen from the left side, be the same dog as the one looked at from the right as she emerges from the alley ten paces later? Perhaps Funes’ paralysis was the limit that kept him from dying finally in a chaos of new sense. Limited to his own memory and the finite milieu of the view from his window, Funes was left with remembering. He could remember an entire day in 1886 precisely as it was lived, though to do so would take a full day’s work. More important was the impossible task of designating all the singular details that composed his life. To do so required inventing a language in which he could catalogue his infinite memory in an encyclopedia that would attribute proper names to each singular event. The number “17” on Rue de Montparnasse could be called, more precisely, “the stray dog,” while the general number 17 could be called the “fruitfly spasm.” The sweat from General Sherman’s face, as he first caught sight of the Atlantic, could be called, more or less arbitrarily, “Alfonso Caldaron.” What is important is the assignation of names to the minute details, the accidents, that otherwise escape and are obscured by our attention to more general forms. Funes, smoking from his cot in the shadows, is forced to abandon such an infinite task for its insolubility no less than its pointlessness. Of course, “it is was difficult for him to sleep.” In difficult moments, he would try to return to the present by looking out into the distance toward those newly built suburban tenements that he had never experienced. He would imagine them as “black, compact, made of homogenous shadow.” Perhaps, then, Funes could sleep.

### 4.5. The Calculus and Vanishing Quantities

In a lecture course from 1981, Deleuze develops a provocative synthesis of Spinoza and Leibniz that elucidates his own interest in the role of the infinite in early modern metaphysics.\(^2\)

The “actual infinite,” Deleuze argues, can be conceived neither as finite nor indefinite. It is

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\(^2\) *Les Cours de Gilles Deleuze*, “The actual infinite-eternal, the logic of relations” (10/03/1981), available at <http://www.webdeleuze.com/php/sommaire.html>. My interest in this text stems from the problematic Deleuze sets up in justifying the infinite as opposed to a finite or analogical ground.
neither made up of an unlimited number of irreducibly discrete terms (atoms), nor is it formed by a limit that is always displaced, indefinite, and never finalized. An atomistic account composes the infinite of nothing but finite entities, “spuriously” extended ad infinitum. An indefinite account places the emphasis on the incompleteness of the absolute: there are no final terms, only the displacement of terms that could consummate the system. Both accounts try to locate the infinite, the first in the quantity of a set, the second in the set’s incompletability or inconceivability for an understanding that is itself limited. Either we encounter a final limit (the atom), or we never reach the limit because it always eludes our grasp. Why is there a choice here? Deleuze rejects both of these accounts because neither think the infinite for itself. In short, each can conceive the infinite only negatively, either as the void between discrete terms or as the beyond of unlimited series that is unknowable for us. A negative articulation of the infinite limits it, negates its constitutive power in favor of finite universals with only potential infinite comprehension (genera), and thus misarticulates the infinite qua infinite. With the modern period, we therefore have a series of convergent and divergent attempts to think the infinite affirmatively and to move beyond finite understanding. As we have shown above, Hegel’s analysis too moves toward an affirmative idea of the infinite as a generative power.

Deleuze associates Leibniz’s innovation here with a metaphysical infinite analysis, what he opposes to Hegelian contradiction as Leibnizian “vice-diction” (DR 46/66). What Deleuze means here is that representation extends analysis beyond the discrete reality of the finite determination, thus adding an “unsuspected perspective to representation” (DR 262/338). It includes the “vanishing of difference which is too small,” thereby integrating the “depth of difference itself.” Representation vice-dicts the finite by positing (from the Latin dicere, to speak) the imperceptibly small changes and alterations (from the Latin vice) subtending the numerical
and extensive terms of reality. \(^{252}\) Infinite analysis reveals the infinite and intensive depth of things themselves that explains their explication or extension in the world. Leibniz transposes difference from a difference in quantity or extension to the intensive depth of terms themselves. When difference is taken to the qualitative infinite, terms can no longer be conceived as absolute presences or essential forms whose unity envelops subordinated components; they become vanishings, a difference in qualitative expression of the world whose clarity emerges from a dark background. Vanishing can no longer be thought as the negation of reality, the inevitable point at which it disappears and becomes nothing, but as the necessary becoming with infinitely small and imperceptible differences of which it is composed. The *clinamen* becomes the irreducible, and the ground becomes intensive. As Deleuze interprets, monads are “inflections” that are “inseparable from an infinite variation” (*F* 16/23). While we will take up Deleuze’s concern with intensive quantities in the subsequent chapter, we will now briefly consider Leibniz’s mathematical project to see more concretely the association of vanishing with the numerical representation of the grounds of change.

Leibniz’s metaphysics is bound up with a contemporaneous attempt to rigorously formulate the grounds of the differential calculus. The latter project entails the invention of a concept of irreducible terms that are in-themselves differential rather than discrete and self-same. Deleuze focuses on the efficacy of this achievement throughout *Difference and Repetition* (cf. *DR* Ch. 4). Leibniz’s work on the calculus does not solve the metaphysical problem of individuation, but it adds an important dimension to our account of vanishing. What is of interest for us is the way the problem of the calculus gave rise to a discourse in mathematics surrounding the calculation

\(^{252}\) Later in his monograph on Leibniz, Deleuze will associate vice-diction with the “eventual divergence of series” and “incompossibility” (*F* 60/80).
with what were termed, to much controversy, “vanishing quantities” \(\text{quantitates evanescunt}\).\(^{253}\)

How does this language of vanishing tell us something about Leibniz’s metaphysics of the infinite? As a consequence, what does this concept of vanishing constituents tell us about the relation between the categories of quality and quantity with which our analyses have been grappling?

The language of “vanishing” emerges from the early problematic of the calculus: how can we calculate and represent the motion or velocity of a body? The difficulty emerges with calculating with relational terms that are themselves fluctuating, for example, the relation between time and distance travelled when velocity is inconstant. The calculus thus employs a relation, for example, between points on the x-time axis and those on the y-distance axis. The philosophical problem emerged with the question of what the differential coefficients are if they are each \textit{indeterminate} in-themselves, possessing no assignable value, but perfectly \textit{determinable} in their relation to one another. With other relational quantities, like the fraction \(\frac{2}{3}\), there is equally a relation, but between two terms that are on their own determinate values. This led to a series of fantastical or “fictional” notions to account for the grounds of the differential equation. For Leibniz, these terms were regarded as “infinitesimals,” that is, infinitely small distances between points that produce a direction or vector of change. For Newton, they were “fluxions,” no longer a determinate distance between static points, but dynamic points themselves, or

\(^{253}\)In what follows I intend only to give a basic account of the problem of the calculus to make clear the stakes and relevance of vanishing quantities for the metaphysical questions being pursued here. The history of the development of the calculus is bound up with the history of philosophical problems, especially those of atomism and principles of change. Moreover, its mathematical importance is longstanding, technical, and controversial, making a full treatment of it here difficult. Rather than being an aside to our analysis, I suggest that there is a close link between Leibniz’s concept of the monad and his formulation of mathematical infinitesimals. For an excellent account of the history of the calculus with a keen eye for its philosophical intersections, see Carl B. Boyer, \textit{The History of the Calculus and Its Conceptual Development} (New York: Dover, 1959 [1949]). For a concise history of the mathematico-philosophical infinite, see Paolo Zellini, \textit{A Brief History of Infinity}, trans. David Marsh (London: Penguin Books, 2004 [1980]).
“vanishing quantities.” It seems then that in the endeavor to stay true to the infinite, we end up positing an absurdity: an ultimate term is something, but always smaller than any given quantity. As Berkeley mocked Newton’s idea of fluxions: “What are these fluxions? The velocities of evanescent increments? [...] They are neither finite quantities, nor quantities infinitely small nor yet nothing. May we not call them the ghosts of departed quantities?”

Why is the differential quotient composed of a relation between two vanishing terms? What is important in this mathematical innovation is that the ultimate terms of calculation are not finite quantities, but qualitative shifts. Their determinacy comes not in relation to definite quantities, but in the relation between fluctuating terms below the level of quantity. The relation is realized as an “independent” constitutive moment of what makes individual terms what they are, whether it is a graphable trajectory, a change in movement, or a modification in their state of being. “The differential formula $dy/dx$ is the internal qualitative relation, expressing the universal of a function independently of its particular numerical values” (Deleuze, *DR* 46/66).

But moreover, the process is grounded by real, though numerically irrational, terms. Paolo Zellini defines the problem as such:

> The mechanisms transforming reality and realizing the possible act within the subtlest interstices of this arrangement. They are grasped, as it were, as directing a nascent state that encloses a maximum or unlimited potentiality joined to a maximum concentration of entelechy, or

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254 “When the ultimate form of the hypothesis brings the quantities to a state of evanescence, they are called vanishing quantities. / The expression ‘vanishing quantities’ does not imply that the quantities are infinitely small while under examination, but only that they will be so in the ultimate form; which observation implies that the ratio of the vanishing quantities is not an equivalent expression with the ultimate ratio of the vanishing quantities, the former being taken ‘ante finem temporis’ [before the end of time].” Sir Isaac Newton, *Newton’s Principia, First Book, Sections I, II, III*, ed. Percival Frost (London: Macmillan, 1878), 7. Newton later contrasts between “finite” and “infinite” vanishing quantities (8), and between “vanishing” and “nascent” quantities (8-9).


256 What the differential expresses is an internal process, but what does it mean for intuition to disappear in, or in favour or, the differential relation? In the thought of pure difference, and thus of becoming, thought as a mediator itself vanishes in favor of the process itself, of the “differentiator of difference” which grounds and forces us to think it without it being defined by the thought that either intuits it directly or mediates it through representation.
delimiting essence. Thus, science sets out to seek the characteristics of action and change ‘in the momentary element, in the force tending towards change’, which for Leibniz is the very principle of reality and the profoundest source of its dynamic functioning.\footnote{Brief History of Infinity, 113-4. Zellini is citing the interpretation of Leibniz provided by Léon Brunschvicg, “Spinoza et ses contemporains,” Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale 14 (1906), 58.}

Leibniz is equivocal in his opinion of the ontological status of the infinitesimal, just as Newton struggled with a rigorous explanation of what a fluxion is.\footnote{Leibniz sometimes claims that he considers infinitesimal quantities to be “useful fictions.” “Letter to Samuel Masson” (1716), in Philosophical Essays, 230.} It is clear that he regards them in their vanishing as necessary and clear articulations for the application of calculus to physics. Deleuze insists that for the “Ideas” to be realized as the “differentials of thought,” the differential coefficient $dx$ must be realized independently of contradiction (not-$x$) and the infinitely small ($DR$ 170-1/221-222), while maintaining its “ontological value.” In its “universal function it expresses […] a pure element of qualitability” ($DR$ 173/225).

Leibniz’s infinite thus moves in two directions: first, toward the infinitely small (monads as singular points of view on the whole); and second, toward the infinitely large (God as a maximum degree of reality, essence, and perfection that envelopes all possible worlds). The first direction shows that simple terms are infinitely divisible into qualitative differences of degrees; the second shows that monadic terms, as distinct expressions of the whole, are surpassed by an infinity of worlds that exceeds the compossible whole of the infinite world it expresses. Leibniz takes the infinite seriously to the extent that, in order to account for a world constituted by multiplicity and change, he is willing to recognize the existence of multiple infinities that are both necessary and logically distinct. Vanishing is effectuated not by the infinite itself, but by the genetic or productive relation in which the finite is effectuated by the infinite. While Leibniz’s monadology sometimes appeals to an atomism, this move is poorly understood if the singularity of these irreducible and constitutive elements of reality is thought to be discreteness of extension and
presence in appearance. The relation between the problem of conceptualizing the mathematical
differential, and the monadic composition of the continuum, thus shares this paradoxical
thought: that the singularity of things is not their presence in an “instant,” but the instantaneous
motion that vanishes as it appears without ceasing to be constitutive for that reason.\textsuperscript{259}

5. **Conclusion: Infinity and the Flash of the Finite**

We have followed Hegel’s dialectic in which “pure being” becomes the “infinite” through
an immanent process of self-othering. What this course in Hegel’s *Logic* involves is the further
determinations of becoming [{}\textit{Werden}{}] and vanishing [{}\textit{Verschwinden}{}] as ontologically constitutive
processes beyond their initially indeterminate presentations (\textit{SL} 82-83/104). We have correlated
Hegel’s account of determination with the history of the representation of difference provided by
Deleuze in “Difference in Itself.” The goal has been to show a corresponding argument and line
of thought between Hegel and Deleuze from finite to infinite reality. What the infinite proves to
be in both cases is not an oppositional other to finite reality, but the engendering becoming of the
finite itself.

What we have analyzed in this chapter are three vectors of infinite thought with which
Deleuze is primarily concerned. On Deleuze’s reading, two of these vectors (Hegel and Leibniz)
succeed in pushing the philosophy of difference significantly beyond the explanatory
insufficiencies of finite thought. The third vector (Spinoza) also provides a form of infinite
thought, but it is one that Deleuze believes does not ultimately bring difference back to a

\textsuperscript{259} “It is true that the tendency is extinguished in a flash. This seems to contradict the eternity of the
monad and the unity of the trajectory. But the instantaneousity of the tendency only means that the instant
itself is a tendency, not an atom, and that it does not disappear without passing into the other instant: this
is why it is up to the tendency, or the inner unity of movement, to be recreated and reconstituted at each
and every instant, in accord with a particular mode of eternity. Tendency is not instantaneous unless the
instant is a tendency to the future. Tendency dies ceaselessly, but it is only dead in the time in which it
dies, that is, instantaneously, in order to be recreated in the following instant. Monads of the third species
are flashing, twinkling in a way, through the difference of the illuminators and the illuminated” (Deleuze,
\textit{F} 117/158).
mediating form of identity that would confine the movement of difference, and the movement of vanishing specifically, within the bounds of what he regards as a representational model.

Deleuze’s two-fold history here – with the infinite representation of Hegel and Leibniz on the one hand, and the univocal ontology of Spinoza on the other – show a number of important things. First, it shows that it is not the idea of the infinite itself that is the point of contention between Hegel and Deleuze, since the infinite is an affirmative power in Spinoza that Deleuze is ready to endorse. Deleuze’s claim that the “infinite is still a representational concept” should thus be read in the following way: the “element” of the infinite is confined to representation as long as it is related ultimately to a “ground” which serves as a “principle” of identity and mediation. Second, that the distinct infinite systems between Hegel and Leibniz each demonstrate the significance of the movement of vanishing for ontology. Third, the ultimate divergence between Hegel and Deleuze’s projects is located not with the infinite, but with the idea of the “ground” by which the infinite movement of reality is effectuated and by which it may be mediated according to a principle other than difference in-itself. In this sense, the infinite as a constitutive process brings our investigation to the idea of the “ground” as such. It is on the nature of the ground that Deleuze ultimately claims to depart from Hegel (DR 49/70, 263-4/338-339), but here also that he sees in Hegel the furthest thought of difference in the history of representational thought. Therefore, in order to assess the legitimacy and need for this divergence, it is necessary to closely examine the idea of the ground in each of their systems. By turning to the notion of ground in the subsequent chapter, we thus aim to: complete Deleuze’s reading of infinite representation, differentiate and assess the grounding of each system in a form of identity, to lay out Deleuze’s original position regarding the “ground” of difference, and to make clear what he draws from each thinker to develop a sophisticated ontology where vanishing plays a new and critical role.
The finite and the infinite are both ways of articulating the determinacy of the world, but they are not opposed determinations. “The entire alternative between finite and infinite applies very badly to difference, because it constitutes only an antinomy of representation,” failing to “capture the extra-propositional or sub-representative source” (DR 264/339). But what is such a source or ground for Deleuze given the philosophical tradition we have been sketching? Both thinkers have brought thought’s attention to its own ground. Deleuze at once critiques the appeal to a representational ground that would hold together, mediate, and retain all vanishing moments, just as he moves to a new understanding of ground. The question becomes how we can justify what such a ground is necessarily. Leibniz and Hegel converge around the following problem: How is the finite effectuated by the infinite? The result is a series of conceptual innovations that each articulate in different ways regarding how the finite and the infinite implicate and explicate the other. Each thinker readily employs the language of vanishing to make sense of this process, but it is Deleuze that draws our attention to it. To the extent that the finite is effectuated by the infinite, there is way in which all of the thinkers above push the concept of the finite toward that of singularity as an instantaneous event that emerges in the simultaneity of appearance and disappearance. Individuality is less a discrete part of reality than it is a flash fire, a burst of lightning that vanishes as soon as it appears, but long enough to set the plane of existence ablaze.

Lightning […] distinguishes itself from the black sky but must also trail it behind, as though it were distinguishing itself from that which does not distinguish itself from it. It is as if the ground rose to the surface, without ceasing to be ground (Deleuze, DR 28/43).
Chapter 4: Ground and Ungrounding

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“How could thought avoid going that far, how could it avoid thinking that which is most opposed to thought? With the identical, we think with all our force, but without producing the least thought: with the different, by contrast, do we not have the highest thought, but also that which cannot be thought?”260

– Deleuze

“You would not find out the boundaries of soul, even by travelling along every path: so deep a measure [λόγον] does it have.”261

– Heraclitus

“[…] the positing is the outward movement of the ground to itself and the simple disappearing of it.”262

– Hegel

PART I: DELEUZE AND THE HISTORY OF GROUNDS

1. Introduction

We have largely considered Deleuze’s ontology in regards to the history of thought in which he situates his own philosophy of difference as a response. This has led us from the thought of being, through determinacy and finitude, to the notion of the affirmative infinite. Between what Deleuze diagnoses as “finite” and “infinite” representation, we have followed Hegel’s own exposition in which being becomes the infinite as the ground of finitude through a persistent and increasingly determinate movement of vanishing and emergence. Along this course, Deleuze and Hegel prove to share a number of important insights about reality. It is not ultimately regarding the status of the infinite that Deleuze differentiates his project from Hegel, nor is it whether Hegel offers an account of difference. Rather, Deleuze argues that it is Hegel’s

260 DR 226/292.
261 The Presocratic Philosophers, 203 [Fr. 45]. We are indebted to Russon for pointing out this passage.
262 SL 417/321.
“relating” and “tracing back” difference “to a foundation” or “ground” [un fondement] (DR 44/64; 51/73) that makes his account of difference inadequate. Yet Deleuze also mobilizes a theory of “ground” (un fond) as differential rather than one defined by the form of the “identical.” It is therefore in terms of their notions of ground that Deleuze’s engagement with Hegel culminates in Difference and Repetition. The goal of Difference and Repetition, we maintain, is to argue for the necessity of the ground in the determination of reality, though it appeals to a productive and dissipative ground rather than a stable foundation.

This conclusive chapter involves three basic questions: What is inadequate in a ground defined by the form of the identical? What does Hegel’s Logie offer as a ground in light of the classical model of thought with which Deleuze is concerned? Finally, what would be entailed by the “ground of difference”? §2 outlines the dialectic of the notion of ground offered in the concluding chapter of Difference and Repetition. This allows us to establish the ground as a central idea and problem of Deleuze’s project. By distinguishing the functions that Deleuze attributes to classical models of ontological grounding, we will be able to later appreciate his own theory of the “groundlessness” [sans fond] and “ungrounding” [l’effondement]. §3 reformulates Deleuze’s history of representation around the “critical turn” away from “pre-critical metaphysics” concerning grounds. This allows us to see the significance of the role that ultimate grounds play in traditional metaphysical accounts for Deleuze (in Plato, Spinoza, and Leibniz). Further, it will allow as to delimit Deleuze and Hegel’s own innovative shifts toward an immanent rather than transcendent account of differentiation. §5 reads Hegel’s section on “Ground” [Grund] from the “Doctrine of Essence” to show that for Hegel, the ground as such proves not to be a substratum of identity, but the dynamic process in which differences both appear and vanish. Finally, §6 offers an account of Deleuze’s own appeal to the ground as ungrounding. To elucidate the explanatory efficacy of Deleuze’s equation of the ground of difference with the process of ungrounding, we
focus on his notions of intensity and the virtual, the condition under which difference “tends to vanish” in actualization, and conclude by considering his account of the holistic structure of temporality as a process of grounding and ungrounding.

2. **Deleuze’s Dialectic of the Ground**

   The notion of the “ground” is ubiquitous in the history of philosophy precisely because it discloses philosophy’s fundamental pursuit of the reason for the way reality *is*. The ground is the object of a desire to move beyond the superficial presentations of things toward their underlying reason for being. If the project of ontology is the elaboration of the being of reality, then the ground functions as the limit for what can be said of being ultimately. The ground is both the explanatory matrix for real phenomena and the ultimate limit for thought, what something “*is* and [what] it possesses primarily, in the utmost” (Deleuze, *DR* 272/349). Of course, grounds are not exclusively an ontological concern. The ground concerns the criminological and psychological basis of human action, as well as the complex determinations of physical, causal systems. Epistemology, proceeding on the basis of accounting for the possibility of knowledge, must decide on the adequate grounds for a belief to be both justifiable and true. Nor are grounds always ultimate: they can be treated operationally as infinite in scientific explanation, or be regarded theologically or logically as, of necessity, grounded in an unconditioned reality. In each investigative context, there is the conviction in the necessity of what has been called, following Leibniz’ formulations, “the principle of sufficient reason”: to *be*, everything must have a ground [*ratio, Grund*]. That which is by its nature groundless, as absolutely without reason, is thus regarded as ontologically eluding the requirements of determinacy; the effect stripped of the necessity of its cause becomes indeterminate, just as a condition divorced from what it conditions loses its generative and constitutive appeal. Nonetheless, if ontology is directed in its essence toward “being qua being” [ὁν ἡ ὄν], rather than the being of entities determined by the external
relations between worldly things, then the philosophical question remains: What can be said of the ground as such over and above what is grounded?

The ground, however, is problematic. In comporting itself to the ground of things, thought is provoked to solve a problem, but only under the condition that there is, as Deleuze argues, an essential “ambiguity” (DR 274/351) or “obscurity” (DR 264/340, 275/352) to the ground. The experience of thinking begins with the sense that there is more to the being of reality than what appears for us immediately. If the ground were given absolutely and transparently in what it grounds – for example, if the essence of object was intelligible through its immediate unity and identity with its concept – then thought would not be incited in its essential activity of questioning. In this provocation in relation to a problem, thought moves beyond the given “towards a beyond” (DR 274/351) that promises to illuminate that shadowed side of things, the process of their coming-to-be, which vanishes and is cancelled in the immediacy of their presentations. Marx’s insight rings true throughout the history of metaphysics no less than materialism: one can never tell simply by the taste of the processed wheat the labor that went into it. It is the nature of the commodity to obscure its process of production or generation. The ground must efface itself in what it grounds at the same time as it maintains an un-cancellable difference from it. Critical thought is born not merely in the “given,” but in relation to “that by which the given is given” (DR 222/288). It pursues what has vanished beneath the surface of “common sense.”

264 Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. N. I. Stone (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1904 [1859]), 22. Cf. Deleuze’s remarks in *Anti-Oedipus*: “the product gives us no hint as to the system and the relations of production. […] But the moment that one describes, on the contrary, the material process of production, the specificity of the product tends to vanish [s’évanouir], while at the same time the possibility of another outcome, another end result of the process appears” (AO 24/31, translation modified).
In the “Conclusion” to *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze adds significant weight to his concern with the ground, giving the sense that the entire book is being rewritten from the perspective of the idea. The mistake would be to interpret the “ground” as philosophically monolithic. He delineates four propositional senses or functions of the activity of grounding [*fonder*] (*DR* 272-277/349-55). We focus in detail on this list because it functions as a highly condensed dialectic of the ground itself, which corresponds to the history of representation we have interpreted thus far, culminating in Deleuze’s own notion of ground. Rather than being an arbitrary list, we argue that it forms a line of argument and development.

1. “To ground [*fonder*] is to determine” (*DR* 272/349). On one level, to establish the ground of something is the basic task of determination: to “determine” what something *is* and in what way it *is*. Grounding is the determination of essences. On another level, it requires parsing out the elements involved in the grounding “operation.” In fact, the “ground” [*le fondement*] as such is nothing but the operation of “logos.” Deleuze’s historical model here is thus Platonic participation which involves three terms: the ground [*le fondement*], the grounded [*le fondé*], and the quality [*la Qualité*]. (a) *Le fondement* as such “enjoys supreme identity.” For example, only the Idea of “Virtue” can be said to be virtuous without qualification; the Idea is equal only to itself. (b) However, *le fondement* is insufficient for determination, since the ground has no need of grounding itself: it already possesses being completely, and must thus be said to be unconditional. It is only those realities that “claim” to have an essence (the just, the virtuous, et cetera) that require grounding or determination. To be *grounded*, determinations “possess” or “participate” in the ground by “having after” (*metexein*) or secondarily in relation to the ground that first possesses primarily and “in the utmost.” (c) The relation between *le fondement* and *le fondé* requires a third term: the *quality* of the ground by which the grounded can be said to “resemble” the ground. This quality is always “difference” as the “distance” from the ground or degree of similitude, but it is a
difference grounded in the purity of the ground itself. Deleuze notes that difference as the object appears to be the quality or possession of the ground, as if the ground contains the reason for the qualitative variation of its participants. This is because the ground alone is the measure of adequation. Consequentially, grounding-determination requires a selection of those images to which an essence applies and to what degree, and those that are to be “eliminated, rejected and denounced as ungrounded” (“simulacra”). The foundation of the ground is the pure measure that determines the qualitative order of resemblances between images that are differentiated in degrees of similitude. It is difference that makes determination at first possible by putting the ground and the grounded in relationships of qualitative involvement. In this way, “Ideas inaugurate or ground the world of representation.”

(2) “To ground” is “to render representation infinite” (DR 273/350). While the ground as determination makes representation possible through relations of resemblance, this second sense of grounding concerns the enterprise of infinite representation. Lampert interprets this sense as the articulation of a “foundational level behind appearance,” but this does not fully explain the unique function of foundationalism as it emerges with infinite representation, since Platonic Ideas already involved foundational essences “behind appearances.” Transcendent essences are content to include or exclude certain images since, in their being “defined by the identical,” they already possess being fully. When representation becomes infinite, what is effectuated is an expansion of scope that no longer excludes the excessive aspects of the phenomenal world that are “too small or too large,” but which maximally include the infinite details of the world. Deleuze argues that while this expands the degree of differentiation that can be represented in reality, it significantly reorients the role of identity: identity is no longer a ground that is transcendent of the grounded, but an immanent process of inclusion that “monocenters” or

“converges” “all possible centres” or “finite points of view.” The foundation is no longer a stable "beyond” that measures, but the totality of the infinite series itself that is “conquered” by representation (DR 262-3/337-339).

(3) Deleuze says that the third sense “unites” the previous two: “To ground is always to ground representation” (DR 274/351). The unique sense of it, however, is more difficult to interpret, but it does add an important addition to grounding in infinite representation: “to ground” is “to organise” (DR 273/350). The first sense defined the goal of determination, the second defined the scope of infinite representation, but the third clarifies its necessary labor to retain representation’s right of dominion: to accomplish a stabilized infinite system, the very movement of the infinite, and not merely its content, must be determined. Differences must be “distributed” in the “circle” of representation. The need for this distribution is the fact that the infinite is more than a series of terms, but a dynamic of “qualitative becoming” “between the two extremes of more and less.” If representation is still to be possible within the infinite, it is necessary to invoke “stoppages” and “moments of stasis” that allow the infinite movement of differential qualities to congeal in the regularity of forms (“seasons, the days and years”). It is for this reason that Deleuze often emphasizes the “taming” quality of representation. When representation becomes infinite, it incorporates more becoming, and in doing so it requires more structured regulation for the mobile ways in which differential determinations appear and disappear. The important point here, as Lampert rightly points us to, is that when representation encompasses the totality of representations rather than a qualitative and finite selection, it is dealing with “determinations that ‘coexist’” in a “shared ground of difference with no shared moment,” a co-existing immanence with an infinite “overlay of difference.”

It is for this reason that Deleuze characterizes the infinite ground as an “immemorial Memory or pure past” which

267 Ibid., 189.
“itself was never present but which causes the present to pass, and in relation to which all presents coexist in a circle” (DR 273-4/351; cf. 53-54/76). A claim that we will consider further below in Deleuze’s philosophy of time is that the form of the past “grounds” time by laying claim to the genesis of the movement or passing of the present for which, according to Deleuze, the “pure past” is inadequate to explain (see §6.5 below). In short, time is the expression of the appearance and disappearance of phenomena in a single ground. In becoming infinite, representation makes itself into the ground of this phenomenon of vanishing rather than excluding it as inessential.

(4) “To ground is to determine the indeterminate [déterminer l’indéterminé]” (DR 275/352). Deleuze presents this final sense of fonder as his own. One way of summarizing the failure of representation in the first three operations of grounding is the following: What must be accounted for is determination, and the ground is appealed to as the reason for why something is determined the way it is. Yet in articulating the ground conceptually, the ground is given determination in advance of the work that determination is meant to explain. Whether the scope is finite or infinite, the result amounts to the same in the end: we find nothing more in the cause than we do in the effect. Conceptual thought merely presupposes itself, and its genetic grounds are left in obscurity. The mistake is in thinking that obscurity as such, the “indeterminate,” is something to avoid. Deleuze is ready to recognize that the alternative between determinacy and indeterminacy is a false choice. Determinacy is effectuated when thought is “forced” to “confront this indeterminate.” The relation between indeterminacy and determinacy obviously evokes the relation between a mere matter and form, with the latter contributing a determinacy that the former lacks. For Deleuze, this is insufficient since the determinacy of form acquires its power only from conceptual categories that determine divisions between material entities, and matter is “already informed” even in its deficiency. Deleuze’s proposal is that determinacy is achieved only
through a process of deformation or decomposition in relation to a “formless base,” an
“autonomous and faceless existence,” the “stupidity” at the ground of thought that “forces it to
think.” Deleuze calls this encounter with indeterminacy a relation to “groundlessness” \[\text{sans fond}\] and the effect of a “universal ‘ungrounding’” \[\text{l’universel ‘effondement’}\]. It is this conception of the
ground that will largely concern us in what follows (see §§4-6 below).

3. Metaphysics of the Ground

The four-fold dialectic of the ground that Deleuze presents summarizes the historical
trajectory of representation and indicates his own detour. Before turning to the latter, we will first
re-consider the history of representation regarding the notion of ground to accentuate Deleuze’s
own position. Between Deleuze’s account of Plato and Hegel, we see a series of thinkers that
realize the necessity of difference in the determination of reality but which, Deleuze argues,
“subordinate” difference to identity as an ultimate, organizational principle. To clarify traditional
appeals to the ground, in this section we consider the role of the ground in the three “pre-
critical” ontologies that Deleuze differentiates himself while also drawing certain insights. §3.1
From Plato, Deleuze will take the “problematic” challenge of the ground while abandoning its
formal and transcendent purity. §3.2 From Spinoza, Deleuze will formulate the “univocity” of
the ground and the grounded while abandoning the priority of substance over modality. §3.3
From Leibniz, Deleuze will take both the infinitesimal vanishing of differences and divergent
world-series while abandoning God as the convergence of infinite possible worlds. We will then
turn briefly in §3.4 to Kant’s “transcendental turn,” from which Deleuze will draw on the critical
demand that the genesis of representational thought must be explained while abandoning the
limitation that restricts the structure of transcendental to the terms of representation or “possible
experience” itself. The struggle of ontology, according to Deleuze, is the realization of ontological
immanence – immanence between essence and appearance, of the ground and the grounded. In
each of these reversals, Deleuze is motivated by necessity that the ground cease to be articulated in terms of identity and become a ground of difference. It is the goal of the final part of this chapter to answer the question: Why must the ground become differential?

3.1. The Reversal of Platonism

Deleuze defines the “task of modern philosophy” as the “overturning” ([*renverser*] of Platonism (*DR* 59/82, 66/92). Deleuze is often thought to scapegoat the Platonic dialogues for a certain classical mode of thought that hinges on a subordination of appearance to essence. Our concern here is not to appraise or substantiate Deleuze’s reading of Plato.268 Rather, our concern is with an important experience in this model that proves to be informative for him. We by no means take Deleuze’s account of Plato as exhaustive of the significance of these works, namely, that the ground is “problematic.”

The goal of Platonic difference, Deleuze argues, is a matter of “selection” (*DR* 59-60/84) in relation to a “foundation capable of making the difference” (*DR* 62/86, translation modified).269 Like the Aristotelian genus-species system, Deleuze notes that we find in the Platonic dialogues a type of inquiry that determines the nature of things by way of “division.” Here Deleuze makes an interesting point: where finite representation grounded difference in a conceptual plurality of categories, Deleuze argues that the ground for Plato is a multiplicity of “Ideas” rather than concepts.270 Platonic Ideas (e.g. the Just and the Equal) function no less as the foundation for differences in the world, but they are properly speaking non- and pre-conceptual

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269 “*La division l’exige comme le fondement capable de faire la différence; inversement, il exige la division comme l’état de la différence dans ce qui doit être fondé*” (*DR* 86).
270 “The Idea is not yet the concept of an object which submits the world to the requirements of representation, but rather a brute presence which can be invoked in the world only in function of that which is not ‘representable’ in things. The Idea has therefore not yet chosen to relate difference to the identity of a concept in general: it has not given up hope of finding a pure concept of difference in itself” (*DR* 59/83).
grounds. Given Deleuze’s central prerogative of arguing for an idea of “difference without a concept” (DR 27/40)\textsuperscript{271}, this is an unexpected achievement: with Platonism, the “Idea has therefore not yet chosen to relate difference to the identity of a concept in general” (DR 59/83). Before Aristotle, there remains the possibility, even if it is ultimately undermined in the Platonic dialogues themselves, of an idea of “pure difference” not yet mediated by the concept. With Plato, we see an altogether different function of the ground: the ground is not a pre-given concept to be divided (e.g. animality), but rather the principle of measure that determines degrees of “participation” in the “Idea” (DR 62/87). Ideas ground by way of determining degrees of participation rather than delineation. Differentiation of reality requires division for Plato, but this division happens within experience, in the “depths [les profondeurs] of the immediate” (DR 60/85).

The selective “grounding test” (DR 63/88) proper to Platonism involves two inverse operations in the “dialectic” of problems and questioning.

(1) The first operation concerns the establishment of a relationship to the ground in experience. This represents the method of dialectics. On Deleuze’s account, Platonic division is essentially a matter of “measuring rivals and selecting claimants,” of “distinguishing between things and their simulacra” (DR 60/85). Deleuze’s generates this image of dialectics concretely from the social dynamic of the agora, and textually from the dialogues themselves. The interlocutors appear as so many claimants to the ground as truth. “The claimant calls for a ground; the claim must be grounded (or denounced as groundless). Laying claim is not one phenomenon among

\textsuperscript{271} There is an important series of qualifications regarding this phrase that are at the center of understanding Difference and Repetition which may appear as an equivocation on Deleuze’s part. At the end of the “Introduction” (DR 27/40-41), Deleuze argues for the need to arrive at a thought, historically and philosophically, of “différence sans concept” which he shortly afterwards formulates as the lack in representation of an adequate “le concept de la différence” (DR 27/41). Whether what Deleuze is aiming for is a “concept of” difference or a difference “without a concept” is both complicated and clarified by his final characterization of a “singular Idea of difference,” a “singularity as a power of Ideas” (DR 27/41). Between Plato and Kant, we hope to clarify Deleuze’s methodological appeal to “Ideas” over “concepts.”
others, but the nature of every phenomenon” (DR 62/87). Opinions must be submitted to the “test” of questioning to see whether they can adequately support their claims, to determine which, if any, can legitimately make claim to the ground. The “selective difference” between “true and false claimants” is accomplished by the mediating “role of the ground” as a principle of measure (DR 62/87). It is a “question not of identifying” what instances belong to a concept, but of “authenticating” (DR 60/84-85) who can legitimately lay claim to the true and the just, and who merely simulates or imitates the Ideas in question. The reality of the ground emerges in the context of the philosophical project as a performative reality in which the constituents are measured by something more than themselves.

In submitting to the interrogatory activity of questioning, the interlocutors are dialectically compelled beyond the certainty of the given, whether it is a perceptual recognition or a conviction of value. The ground appears as a necessary foundation and criterion of truth, so the task of dialectics is to establish a “pure line of descent” (DR 59-60/84) in relation to the ground. If dialectics begins in the immediacy of experience, it is because it begins from a position of obscurity in which the ground is not fully given. It begins from thought as it encounters a problem in the world. In this problematic position, it is necessary to establish a multiplicity of lines of enquiry from claimants that converge on the ground of “Ideas” in the “depths of the immediate” itself (DR 60/85). The lines are differentiated by “varying degrees” of adequation measured by the ideas which “alone possess the ground” absolutely. Only “Equality” in-itself, as a pure idea, can be said to be equal without qualification. For the dialectical claimants, it is therefore a question both of right and access to the ground.

(2) Why then does the ground appear as the “depths” of the immediate? The second operation concerns the access to the ground as foundation from a position in experience. Sense-experience is the field in which questioning is enacted. Plato’s philosophy as a whole presents us
with the problem of “common sense.” At once we are able to recognize things in the world, and to concord opinions upon the “same object.” The question becomes how such knowledge is possible when the senses provide us with nothing but inequalities, dissimilitude, fluctuating qualities, the manifold of an evanescent world. The field of sense is a ground in which everything is shifting. Yet we are able to recognize. We can recall one of the lessons of the *Phaedo*: We form judgments about the identity or equality between similar objects, whether they are of the same kind or magnitude. Yet we are forced to admit that the concrete objects compared are in kind or equal only to a certain extent or in certain ways: we are led to the contradiction that material things simultaneously are and are not commensurable. This contradiction is resolved by asserting that the reason why we can identify two sticks as equal is because of an idea of equality that is transcendent of sense and bodies. If I did not have access to, if my knowledge of the world was not grounded by ideas that form the structure of my experience of a world of apparent or minute differences, then experience would not be what is actually is for me: a world of objects that can be recognized. Sense opens us onto a domain that both exceeds our perception and makes our knowledge possible.

The sensual is defined therefore as an approximate relation, a participation in essential forms, and a “falling short” of the Idea. Since only the Idea can be said to be truly self-identical and unconditioned, and since the Idea serves as the foundation for judgments about differences and distinctions in the world, then difference is always mediated by a prior perfection of form.

This epistemological grounding, Deleuze argues, leads Platonism to the metaphysical postulate of the “world of the ground” (*DR* 274/352) and the world of the grounded—the transcendent domain of forms and world of the simulacra. Though sense is the immediate

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272 The *Phaedo* leads beyond epistemology to a cosmological concern for the immortality of the soul, with its origin and final descent. This is not arbitrary, since grounds have an intimate relation to beginnings, whether they are mythical or logically necessary starting points for thought.
context of the experience of Ideas, we know them only through a higher faculty of memory, with its power of recollection, or we reacquaint with them through the art of dying. The test of knowledge that positions the claimants against one another in relation to the ground has the truth of being as its principle of measure. For Plato, only those Ideas that remain self-same without qualification can truly ground; this can be an “equality” in-itself that would condition judgments between unequal things, or a “justice” in-itself that would serve as the measure of more or less just acts. The world of the ground is the world of being, and what is grounded can only participate inadequately as becoming: both the becoming of qualitatively shifting appearances and the striving for that which is ideal. From the “depths of experience,” Plato established the constitutive relation between being and becoming as both a metaphysical structure and an epistemological challenge. So long as thought remains caught in the sensual world of becoming where qualities appear and vanish without any permanence, thought contents itself with the shadows of simulacra that parade as masks of the true, while being as such remains irrevocably cloaked.

Deleuze’s antithetical relation to Platonism has often been stressed. However, the “overturning” of Platonism for Deleuze is less an abandonment than it is reversal. Deleuze is poorly understood if this historical nuance is missed, since it is first from Plato, even if it gets its fullest articulation in relation to Kantian “Ideas,” that Deleuze retains the notion of ground as problematic. Uncovering the ground requires an essential labor of thought. Thought begins in relation to experience as a problem. If being disclosed itself without remainder in the terms of the empirical world, then there would be no need to think. What Plato introduces is the problematic nature of experience as less than its conditions. Yet Plato betrays this insight, according to Deleuze, by resolving the conditions of the problem in a “transcendent ground” that posits “Ideas” as ontologically prior to and exclusive of the simulacral differences that they effectuate.
Being is reached only through a reduction and consequent exclusion of the grounded that is meant to be explained in the first place. “The world of the ground is undermined by what it tries to exclude, by the simulacrum which draws it in only to fragment it” (DR 274/352). Why this failure of being to both ground and exclude the world of becoming occurs must be considered further below in Deleuze’s own argument.

3.2. **Spinoza and the Immanence of Substance**

Spinoza’s ontology completes the project of immanence, according to Deleuze, while as we will see for Hegel, Spinoza’s substance falls short of “self-determination” that he regards as an essential component of an immanent, systematic process. In this section, we first recall our earlier point about Spinoza and univocity, and second consider Hegel’s challenge to underscore the role of vanishing in it. The guiding question is as follows: What role can vanishing have for an eternal account of substance that includes within it all reality?

Hegel deduced the infinite from the internal becoming of finitude, and Leibniz explained finite individuality through the obscured ground of the infinite that it expresses determinately. Rather than showing the co-implication of the infinite and the finite, Spinoza begins with what he takes to be a true conception of the infinite, that is, an idea of infinity without any limitation. Spinoza’s foundational definition of substance is that it is an “absolutely infinite being […] consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence” (E I.D6).

Spinoza’s account of individuation is located at the level of modes. In “the absolute limit,” Deleuze argues, “these properties take on an infinite collective being” (EP 22/18). As we will see below, Spinoza’s account of modality explains vanishing and appearance in terms of degrees of

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273 For a precise and relevant account of this problem of temporality and eternity in Spinoza’s ontology, see Baugh, “Time, Duration, and Eternity in Spinoza,” *Comparative and Continental Philosophy* 2.2 (2010): 211-233.

power. However, when infinite variation is connected with the ground of substance, the problem of the foundational unity and identity of being emerges. Modal reality is infinitely diverse, but for Spinoza this is the case only under the condition that the singularity and unity of substance is ontologically prior to its modal differentiations: “Substance is by nature prior to its affections” (E I.P.1). However, by emphasizing the thesis of univocity that Spinoza’s substance involves, Deleuze makes possible a necessary erasure of the priority in consequence, though not in principle, between substance and its modal expressions. Individual (modal) things become defined by their degrees of power rather than by essential forms or their transcendent (substantial) ground. These qualitative variations are inseparable from a logic of infinite relations between things. At the limit of substance, modal powers realize only their collective interpenetration in a “collective” being that undermines any hierarchical relations between substances (e.g. mind and body). Modal existence is effectuated in relations of becoming of which vanishing is an essential mode. However, in the “eternity” of substance, vanishing signifies less the fixed limitation of a thing as it does the infinite augmentation of its power for existence.

Let us then consider modal existence more closely. The individual is defined by its “affects,” its powers or capacities to act and to be affected. Between bodies, there is a problem. But this limit between others is not a problem of definition, as if we simply needed to know the proper boundaries of figures in a field in order to differentiate them. It is a problem of power: not of what one is, but of what one is capable of doing. Since a singular body is never discrete, but already in itself a collective assemblage of infinitely smaller bodies, then the encounter between bodies in a field is not merely negative and restrictive, but potentially enhancing; encounters are capacititating or de-capacitating depending on the quality of their relations. If we take this definition seriously, then as Deleuze says, speaking through Spinoza, “you will not be defined by your form, by your organs, by your organism, by your genus or by your species; tell me the
affections of which you are capable and I'll tell you who you are.” The limit of the individual is not a limit of an essential form to which it belongs, but the limit of its power due to the relations that involve it. The individual is a relation, in fact nothing but a set of relations (EP 251). These relations are not static, but rather dynamic and affective. The affects that links individuals in a becoming are not autonomous from the individuals they effectuate, but neither are they reducible to any definite term in the relation. Individuals are constituted as finite by determinate relations of power, but it is the affective relation itself that expresses, between entities, an infinite power of variability in which they are produced. The individual is not a constant. The constant is the relation, or rather, the exterior reality of relations in the constancy of modulation. What is constant is becoming. The limit between bodies is not a barrier but a threshold, a vector of becoming. The body is realized as a “model” for understanding the world (SPP 17), but not because the body is the locus of identity, subjectivity, or self-reference; the body is the locus of relations and degrees of qualitative power. Powers are differential relations, and relations are forced in an encounter with an other. Interiority is constituted in a field of purely exterior relations. The body is the site in which I affectively experience the world, but precisely as the envelopment of the multiplicity of that world. Composed of an infinity of parts, the individual is itself a collective, a multiplicity of contracted elements. But since these parts are intensive, then their diverse connections define it as a differential power rather than a mere aggregate.

Substance, at the limit, is “an absolutely infinite power of existing” (E I.P.11).275

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275 Our aim here is to advance a philosophical idea of the infinite that, as a strange ground, necessitates an understanding of life that cannot be understood in terms of finitude alone. Rather, finitude must be understood by an infinite process that both grounds it and relates it to a reality of becoming that itself cannot be explained by reference to a horizontal or foundational non-being and the death effectuated by such a relation. We therefore have to rethink what death is. We follow Bruce Baugh in his excellent reevaluation the idea of death as it is understood through Deleuze’s work on Spinoza's substance ontology. Such a death, for those that “live life” as the expression of the intensities that compose them, cannot be a “nothing” that “is the horizon of being or [that which] returns to haunt the living” (80-81).
We now would like to turn briefly to Hegel’s critique of Spinoza. Deleuze notes that Spinoza’s ontology has often been regarded, mistakenly, as an inadequate attempt to solve what would become one of the central problematics of Post-Kantianism: How do we move beyond merely positing and thus presupposing the structures of reality to a demonstration of its “genetic movement of self-development” (EP 18/13)? For Hegel, such a genesis is “alone appropriate to the Absolute” (EP 20/16). At stake here is not merely a question of the adequacy of geometrical or philosophical method (EP 20-22/16-18), but of demonstrating the actuality of the infinite that, as a generative positivity, would bridge the “transition from the infinite to the finite” (EP 18/14).

Hegel advances a critical reading of Spinoza that does two things. First, Hegel sees negation in Spinoza as the essential element of determination. He thus sees Spinoza’s declaration that “omnis determination est negation” (“all determination is negation”)276 as having “infinite importance” (SL 87/101). In the previous chapter, we saw Hegel’s own dialectical argument that derives determination through the internalized negation of self and other. We showed how this move was first conditioned by the “vanishing of vanishing” that Becoming is, and the further determination of vanishing as the becoming-other of the finite. For Hegel, without relations of negations there can be nothing determinate, only an indeterminate and unlimited process of becoming.277

An ontology that “conceives life through life itself” (78) is made possible, as I have argued, by taking the “actual” or “affirmative” infinite seriously, as thinking the infinite through the infinite itself. What it makes possible is not merely a logical ground, but, as Baugh concludes, the ground of “existing infinitely” (81), that is, as eternal process of becoming independent of the finite and stable terms and ends one would become. “Death and Temporality in Deleuze and Derrida,” Angelaki 5.2 (2000): 73-83. It remains arguable whether Hegel’s account of the “true infinite” moves also in this direction, or whether it tethers the life of the infinite to a negativity, no longer finite but unlimited, an eternal return of death via negation.

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277 It should be noted that determination, for Spinoza, involves limitation by relations “in kind” (E I.D2). Things involve a determinate existence through relations to something other than themselves that must share in the same attribute. However, there is no negative determination between things that have
While Hegel’s first thesis on Spinoza is a commendation for his recognition of the primacy of negation for determinacy, his second thesis demarcates the limits of Spinoza’s ontology as fundamentally undialectical. Like Deleuze, Hegel takes the ontological difference between substance and its mode seriously, but with different consequences. For Deleuze, the ontological difference makes possible an immanence in and of difference, and thus of maximal differential determination without appeal to a transcendent substratum. For Hegel, however, the ontological difference locates determination on the modal side of things, thus making of substance itself an indeterminate void of determination, what Hegel sees as an “unmoved identity” in which all determination “are dissolved.”

“In an absolute which is only unmoved identity [die unbewegte Identität ist],” Hegel interprets, “the attribute, like the mode, is only as disappearing, not as becoming [verschwindend, nicht als werdend], so that this disappearing [Verschwinden] also makes its positive beginning only from without (SL 473/377). Hegel reinforces this point in his Lectures: “If thinking stops with substance, there is then no development, no life, no spirituality or activity. So we can say that with Spinozism everything goes into the abyss but nothing emerges from it.”

According to Hegel, the essentiality of substance proves to have less reality – that is, less determinacy – than the modes that express it inessentially. Hegel’s critique of Spinoza can be summarized: Spinoza succeeds in thinking the “absolute,” but the determination of the absolute is accomplished merely “externally” to it. By beginning with definitions and axioms, Spinoza’s different attributes, since these would contradict the true and necessary infinity of the attributes (which Spinoza claims to have deduced), nor is there a negation between modes and substance, since this would invalidate the infinity of substance. Thus, for Spinoza, my determinate body is defined by the limit that distinguishes me from other bodies.

“Spinoza’s substance is only the abstract negation of all determinateness, without ideality being posited in substance itself. With Spinoza […] infinity is only the absolute affirmation of a thing, hence only the unmoved unity; consequentially, substance does not even reach the determination of being-for-self, much less that of subject and spirit” (SL 16r). Cf. SL 382-3r. Affirmation seems like it should be a good thing, but here for Hegel it is an insufficient falling short of subjectivity.
system fails to justify their proper dialectical deduction. In effect, Hegel argues that Spinoza’s substance is in fact neutral and indifferent toward the modal differences between things of which it is supposed to be the ground, source, and volume of their becoming. The immanent movement of the absolute in its self-determination is merely posited and not dialectically demonstrated. The ultimate consequence of this, for Hegel, centers on how becoming, and the vanishing it entails, is realized. As we have seen in previous chapters, the orientation of Hegel’s project of the Logic is meant to be a propaedeutic to this procedure.

Deleuze’s interpretation of Spinoza around the question of “expression” has a similar aim, though by way of affirming the internal cogency of Spinoza’s system itself: to show that substance as “univocal being ceases to be neutralized and becomes […] a truly expressive and affirmative proposition” (DR 40/59). On Deleuze’s reading, Spinoza’s philosophy of expression meets the Post-Kantian problematic of genesis in the move from attributes to modes in which what is accounted for is the “very production of particular things” by a univocal substance that “produces an infinity of [modal] things because his essence is infinite” (EP 14/10). Hegel and Deleuze interestingly disagree on Spinoza for the same reason, or according to the same problem. The ground ceases to be a substratum that ensures the iteration of the “same” and becomes the absolute “limit” within which modes, as “individuating factors or intrinsic and intense degrees,” “deploy all their being within the limit itself” (DR 40/59). When the limit becomes an “extreme form” (DR 41/60), the “mobile individuating factors” are “unwilling to allow themselves to be contained within the factitious limits of this or that individual, this or that Self” (DR 41/60). They deploy themselves according to the logic of becoming, of “metamorphoses” and “transformations” in which things disappear in the same moment that they are “changing one into the other.” Deleuze consistently emphasizes the constitutive nature of univocity: rather than erasing the ground, the immanent ground of univocity “acts in
[individuals] as a transcendental principle” that is “plastic, anarchic and nomadic” \((DR\ 38/56)\).

Rather than existing temporally *prior* to what it grounds (as in the temporality of cause and effect), univocal being is “contemporaneous with the process” by which individuals are constituted ("individuation"). While the ground lacks a temporal priority in relation to the grounded with which it is immanent, it maintains an irreducible logical priority since it is “already presupposed by the forms, matters and extensive parts” \((DR\ 38/56, \text{my emphasis})\). In the immanence of substance, the hierarchy between an essential permanence and inessential vanishings is erased. Substance is expressed no longer as foundation, but a ground that is immanently “distributed” in intensive factors that populate it and continually transform themselves in infinite degrees. It is a ground that is “no less capable of dissolving and destroying individuals than of constituting them temporally” \((DR\ 38/56)\). To be modally is to “express” quantitative degrees of power, of which substance is the maximally productive process of infinite generation, less a finite container than it is a limit that is infinitely approached. Differential reality becomes, as we will see below, a matter of intensity.

There are many differences between Hegel and Deleuze’s readings of Spinoza here. However, they also disagree for similar reasons. For Hegel, then, it is not vanishing that is a problem, but rather that the movement of Becoming is reduced “only” to a vanishing defined by the flight from determinacy into the void of indeterminacy. Vanishing must be productive and generative of determinacy, not its mere subtraction. But this is the same reason Deleuze affirms Spinoza, insofar as it is the infinity of substance that frees modal difference in an infinitely productive and univocal world without a measure for their distribution.

### 3.3. Leibniz and Compossibility

In the previous chapter we showed how Leibniz goes beyond finite representation through the idea of the infinite as grounding individuality. As an expression of the infinite world,
monadic individuality is defined not by a pre-given form but by intensive relations of clear and obscure perceptions. This metaphysics goes far in realizing vanishing as a constitutive feature of reality, and it is Leibniz’ multilayered account of the infinite that accomplishes this. According to Deleuze, there are two problems with this account that concern Leibniz’s notion of ground rather than the element of the infinite that he affords us.

(1) Finite individuality is grounded by the infinite, but it is determined as a mere limitation of it. The logic of vanishing, as we have traced it, involves a qualitative relation between distinctness and obscurity. Rather than articulating this as an external relationship (e.g. defined by perspective and spatial distance), Leibniz’s innovation is in articulating this relationship as intrinsic to the constitution of individuality itself. By including the whole immanently to each singular term, relations of vanishing are no longer regarded as inessential facets of experience but definitive of what individuals are. It is in this sense that Deleuze hesitantly associates Leibniz with a relation of “distinctness-obscurity” (DR 213-4/276) intrinsic to the “Ideas” as a “virtual multiplicity made of differential relations and singular points, which thought apprehends in a state close to sleep, stupor, swooning, death, amnesia, murmuring or intoxication” (DR 213/275). In this sense Leibniz challenges the Cartesian standard of truth as “clarity-distinctness,” since obscure perceptions are no less constitutive of individual reality. However, Deleuze rightly admits that this only goes so far for Leibniz, since the obscurity proper to monadic perspective is at the limit not an obscurity proper to the virtual multiplicities, but

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280 “[…] no one has gone further than Leibniz in the exploration of sufficient reason, and why, nevertheless, no one has better maintained the illusion of a subordination of that sufficient reason to the identical. No one has come closer to a movement of vice-diction in the Idea, but no one has better maintained the supposed right of representation, albeit at the price of rendering it infinite. No one has been better able to immerse thought in the element of difference and provide it with a differential unconscious, surround it with little glimmerings and singularities, all in order to save and reconstitute the homogeneity of a natural light à la Descartes. It is in effect with Descartes that the principle of representation as good sense or common sense appears in its highest form” (DR 213/275).
merely the “confused” apprehension of a whole that remains in-itself clear. Absolute truth proceeds, therefore, not by affirming the irreducibility of vanishing, but by clarifying it in a tendency to think the whole, even if this possibility is barred by the intrinsic limitations of individual substances.

(2) Leibniz takes the infinite seriously enough to posit the necessity of an infinite number of possible worlds, of which our own contains the maximal degree of reality. This is appealing for Deleuze as it posits the singularity of our actual “world” as an infinite series (differential multiplicity of monadic perceptions on the whole) that “diverges” in the “vicinity” of an infinite number of “possible” worlds. Between the relations of possibility and actuality are a nexus of infinite diverging-series of infinite converging-series. When the multiplicity of relations expresses or involves the same world, they are said to be “compossible” (e.g. Adam the sinner and the world in which Adam sins). When the multiplicity express series that cannot exist in the same world without contradiction, they are “incompossible” (e.g. Adam the non-sinner and the expulsion from Eden). This account is clearly rich in difference-potential, yet Leibniz regards this infinitization of worlds as requiring an ultimate unity capable of deciding the “best” and excluding the others. This follows from Leibniz’s “principle of sufficient reason.” For Leibniz, there must be a reason or ground why it is this world that passes into actuality while the infinite series of possible worlds remain incompossible with our own. Sufficient reason is not a “cause,” since a cause is of the order of the actual, and must in turn be caused. Sufficient reason is the ground as a principle of organization and selection. This ultimate sufficient ground is God as the guarantor that our world is “best,” that is, that it contains the maximum degree of reality. Thus, sufficient reason falls back on a ground that ensures the “convergence” of all “finite perspectives” on a common whole, and the incompossibility that prevents other possible worlds from
converging with our own. A rich theory of infinite difference becomes, in the last instance, a ground of identity as convergence.

### 3.4. The Kantian Propaedeutic

Each of the three thinkers above have provided metaphysical accounts of the ultimate grounds of reality, procedures for the determination of differences in the world, and ways of accounting for vanishing – whether it is through appearance (Plato), modal variations (Spinoza), or degrees of obscurity in perception (Leibniz). Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* announces itself as a “propaedeutic,” a corrective measure that inaugurates a new contestation over the “legitimate” grounds of knowledge. The correction is prescribed not to common opinion and perception, but to reason itself in its “speculative interest” (Deleuze, *KCP* 8/16): “Human reason has the peculiar fate in one species of its cognitions that it is burdened with questions which it cannot dismiss, since they are given to it as problems by the nature of reason itself, but which it also cannot answer, since they transcend every capacity of human reason” (Kant, *CPR* Avii). For Kant, the task of “transcendental philosophy” entails critically assessing and demarcating the limits of cognition to put an end to metaphysical problems that lead to “groundless” pretensions to think an object that can never be a “possible” object of experience. This self-grounding that Kant effects at once provides the “conditions of possibility” for knowledge at the same time as it limits reason from its own tendency to breach these conditions in pursuit of ideas that fall outside the conditions of experience. The *Critique* thus fights a two-front war against both rationalism and empiricism, that is, in putting a definitive end to the pre-critical ambitions to think the “in-itself” of objects independent of experience, and in salvaging the project of *a priori* knowledge from skepticism by re-establishing it on properly solid grounds.

The ground of knowledge established by the *Critique* is neither simple nor formulaic: it amounts to an “architectonic” of formal and mutually constitutive conditions whose deduction is
methodologically circular. Whether the *Critique* amounts to a classical idealism in the sense it wants to avoid, or to a “transcendental idealism” that is able to be a meaningful “empirical realism,” is here not our concern. Deleuze is right to see in Kant the creation of an innovative concept of the “transcendental” domain of conditions. The novelty of Kant’s transcendental domain lies in its organizational structure. Its argument hinges on effectuating a “common accord” between independent faculties or sources of cognition (sensibility, imagination, understanding). What this differential accord between the faculties “makes possible” is the cognition of a common object “presented” at once by the passivity of sensibility (always under the formal conditions of space and time), determinately synthesized by the free, associative power of the imagination (whose rules are provided by the “schematism”), and conceptualized by the understanding (in accordance with the finite table of categories). Knowledge is no longer a matter of merely corroborating an appearance with its transcendent essence, or of achieving a thought of the “in-itself” independent of the phenomenal, but a differential work of the subjective faculties as they condition the presentation of their own object of knowledge.

As we have indicated, the *Critique* has two central prerogatives allocated to the first “Transcendental Logic” and the latter “Transcendental Dialectic.” While the first entails the structural determination of the transcendental domain as the legitimate grounds of knowledge, the dialectic concerns a diagnosis of the tendency endemic to the faculty of reason itself to overstep the bounds established by the transcendental propaedeutic. A conventional reading of the dialectic is that it is merely restrictive: it establishes the finite boundaries which reason must not pass regardless of its intrinsic tendency to do so in the interest of arriving at a thought of the “noumenal” ground. “Reason concerns itself exclusively with absolute totality the employment of the concepts of the understanding and endeavours to carry the synthetic unity which is thought in the category, up to the completely unconditioned” (*Kant, CPR A336/B383-4*). Kant argues
that this pursuit leads reason to posit “transcendental Ideas” that by definition “exceed” the bounds of possible experience: God (whole of reality), the Soul (absolute subject), the World (complete causal series). Each represents an “endeavor” to think the “totality of conditions” which is itself “unconditioned.” In doing so, according to Kant, reason is lead into “antinomic” dead ends.

Knowledge is not merely conceptual for Kant, since cognition presupposes a differential, a-conceptual “manifold” presented through sensibility and made determinate through the synthetic power of an infinite imagination. However, as Deleuze argues, such knowledge nonetheless remains under the “legislation” of the understanding and its priority of identity in the concept. The ultimate ground of knowledge, for Kant, is thus the “transcendental unity of apperception” in which faculties coordinate in a “common” and “single experience.” Nonetheless, Deleuze sees in Kant not merely the generation of Ideas of reason that pose problems to knowledge, he also argues interestingly that this transgressive tendency proper to reason, while it always threatens to transcendentally unground legitimate knowledge in favor of transcendent pursuits, nonetheless contributes an essential function to the transcendental project that the understanding on its own is unable to accomplish. Kant argues that for the categories to have universal and a priori applicability, they must pertain to all objects of possible experience as can be given in sensibility. But it is reason itself that affords the thought of the “totality of conditions” that is essential to the applicability of categories. As Deleuze argues, reason pursues its speculative interest in the noumenal precisely as a role of which reason “alone is capable” but as “determined” by that of the understanding (Deleuze, KCP 17/30-31): “Reason has […] as its sole object, the understanding and its effective application” (Kant, CPR A644/B672) in order to “confer on [concepts of the understanding] a maximum of both systematic unity and extension” (Deleuze, KCP 17/30). To ground itself universally, the understanding is compelled to transgress
its own boundaries of legitimacy, by generating “problematic” Ideas which alone can confer on
the understanding the unity and comprehension it needs for its own self-grounding. As Deleuze
suggests in another context: “It is excess in the Idea that explains the lack in the concept (DR
220/284).

Insofar as Deleuze evokes the necessity of “transcendental” grounds, his project should be
understood in light of an “immanent critique” of thought first effected by the Critique of Pure
Reason. However, insofar as Deleuze advances a thought of the “in-itself” (difference), then his
own project must be understood as challenging the self-imposed limits of the self-grounding
system of faculties that Kant prescribes.

PART II: UNGROUNDING (HEGEL AND DELEUZE)

4. Hegel’s Dialectic of the Ground

The fact is thus the unconditioned and, as such, equally so the groundless; it arises from the ground
only in so far as the latter has foundered and is no longer ground: it rises up from the groundless,
that is, from its own essential negativity or pure form (Hegel, SL 417/322).

Deleuze attributes to Hegel an “orgiastic” model of difference. Like Leibniz, Hegel
pushes determination beyond the finite limits of the thing to the infinite field of its self-othering.
Infinite becoming – with its unlimited self-surpassing and interpenetrative determination – is
accomplished in Hegel, according to Deleuze, through the movement of contradiction.
Contradiction is presented as the highest form of difference. When every identity contradicts
itself and becomes its other, however, Deleuze argues that the infinite movement of difference is
mediated by the form of the identical in the whole. Contradiction takes difference “to the limit”
of a “ground” (DR 45/65) capable of sustaining the movement of the infinite as such. Deleuze
thus reads Hegel’s achievement of infinite differentiation as failing to escape a foundational
totality. Deleuze picks up on important features of Hegel’s own account of ground, but he also
overlooks Hegel’s point that the ground is less a terminus of difference in identity than it is the propulsion of difference out of essence. Hegel will call this the “groundless.”

The notion of “ground” [Grund] is present in different ways and levels throughout the Logic. Appreciating its complexity would thus require a systematic study of its own to appreciate the scope of its role. For instance, we began our study considering the importance of a presuppositionless immediacy as the ground of a proper logical beginning. From there we saw that such an immediate beginning – the ground of logic as such – must be examined in the scope of its development, rather than as a stable and discrete foundation that remains isolatable from what is founded upon it. Seeing the full course of this dynamic, self-grounding presentation of Being would require, most importantly, grasping its final culmination in the “Concept” [Begriff] as the ultimate, “absolute” subject matter of philosophy. However, Deleuze’s thesis refers to the specific moment of “Ground” [Grund] that appears, following Hegel’s account of “contradiction,” at the culmination of the first section of the “Doctrine of Essence.” Hegel’s account here is intricate and we do not aim to explicate all that it contains. Rather, we wish to consider why Deleuze might see Hegel’s account of difference as stalling in a ground of identity, and to partially challenge this reading with an account of Hegel’s Grund that shares important features with Deleuze’s own dialectic of a vanishing, differential ground. In both cases, the ground is itself implicated in a movement of emergence and disappearance from which differences issue in an immanent process. To cash out this point, we will consider Hegel’s account of Ground from four angles pertinent to reading Deleuze: (1) emergence, (2) negativity, (3) self-identity, and (4) ungrounding.

(1) How do we arrive at the notion of the ground? Deleuze notes that contradiction “resolves itself” and “resolves difference by relating it to a ground” [fondement] (DR 44/64). When the infinite movement of contradiction is represented, it is associated with a “foundation
“fondement” or sufficient reason” as the “mediation” of difference (DR 49/66). Deleuze makes a nuanced distinction here between fond and fondement – between ground and foundation – which suggests that the ground must become the foundation. This means that the ground as such, for Deleuze, is a distinct power from the foundation and only subsequently takes on the status of a mediating substrate or “absolute form or Self.”

We will return to this point below. As we know, the principle of “sufficient reason” demands that every determination must have a ground. In terms of causality, the ground of a present phenomenon is traced back to an antecedent cause and thus is determined as an effect; the cause, by definition, must precede the effect just as the ground or reason must preexist what is grounded. It is “sufficient” if the ground exhausts the determinacy in question. Associating Hegel with a theory of ground as a self-identical foundation or universal subject that abides differences grounded upon it would be inadequate. It is important to note that for Hegel, ground is neither a beginning nor a climax of exposition, but rather an emergent result of the movement of Being and Essence, as well as a final “recoiling” of essence on itself before it emerges as a flux of appearance.

What is the situation of the dialectic of Grund in the Logic? As a way that essence shows itself – that is, as a category of essence – the ground is not merely something that existentially predates the being of the fact; the ground is itself emergent from the movement of being. The consideration of being as such (examined in the “Doctrine of Being”) concerned the forms of immediacy in which being presented itself. This movement involved the vanishing of immediacies in the emergence of other, more determinate immediacies. The infinite showed a

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281 “It cannot be said that Leibniz does not got as far as Hegel: there is even a greater depth in his case, more orgiastic or bacchanalian delirium, in the sense that the ground [le fond] plays a greater role” (DR 49/70).

282 The ground comes to be what it is in the movement of “essence,” as what “essence determines itself” to be (SL 386/291). As we have seen, essence in turn “issues from being” as the “result of that movement” (SL 340/244) that being proves to be in “truth” (SL 337/241). Ground is not the end of a line of explanation to be drawn from a fact, but is itself the result of the becoming of being.
movement of becoming-other between finite determinations. Each immediacy was always in excess of itself and became itself only by passing into the other, becoming the immediacy of that other, and thus vanishing as itself. Since no single immediacy could account for the whole of this becoming, being presented itself as excessive, as another level of determinacy. Hegel calls this the domain of “essence.” Being is essence, and essence is being, but the initial insight of essence is that being is more than itself and cannot simply be the self-insular immediacy that it is. For Hegel, the consideration of essence shows that “there is no stopping at immediate existence but a return must be made from it back into its ground” (SL 388/293r).

(2) The whole of essence is a negative self-relation. The question is whether this negativity or self-difference is posited immanently or whether the differences recoil from one another and deform essence. What is studied in the “Doctrine of Essence” is “Reflection” as “pure mediation” or self-reference in which the determinations of essence show a negative relation with one another. The problem with essence prior to Ground is that this “negativity” is not fully “posited by the essence itself” (SL 387/291). When Hegel considers the movement of something’s essential and inessential sides (its “shine”), essence proves to be mediated but as if by something beyond or below its immediate determinacy, and this essential substrate thus takes on the character of an immediacy that negates it. Thus something’s illusory “show” merely reflects something more essential, and the essential is just the same immediacy as its “shine.” When something is then said to be identical with itself, or purely different from itself, or opposed to and in contradiction with itself, these “essentialities of determination” show the manifold ways in which the sides of essence relate and surmount themselves within essence itself. Deleuze does not like the overcoming of “difference in itself” in “contradiction,” but Hegel’s point is that if essence is seen in terms of the identity with itself, it in fact differs from itself, and in contradicting itself it “dismembers” essence in toto. What is denoted by “ground” are different attempts to reconstitute
essence itself as a whole before essence “falls to the ground” as an indifferent substratum of determinacy.

(3) Deleuze’s ultimate claim is that the ground in Hegel leads only to the “infinite circulation of the identical by means of negativity” (DR 50/71). While the foundation is “not the identical itself,” it is a “way of taking the principle of identity particularly seriously, giving it an infinite value and rendering it coextensive with the whole” and “allowing it to reign over existence itself” (DR 49/70). Deleuze is right to note that, for Hegel, the ground is not a self-identical substratum of differences that remains substantially when determinacies emerge and vanish. Hegel considers this type of “ground-connection” as “absolute ground.” The problem with this classical model is that the foundation-ground of a determinacy, as “sufficient,” can only contain as much determinacy as what is grounded upon it. The ground thus “collapses” into the grounded. What is required is a “determinate ground” that is capable of explaining not just the determinacy of the singular, but also its emergence and disappearance in flux. In order to do the work of grounding, the ground cannot merely double the grounded phenomenon, at risk of becoming tautological; the ground must contain more indeterminacy than the determinacy to which it gives rise.

In what sense, as Deleuze claims, is the ground defined by the form of self-identity? Ground is the “absolute repelling of itself within itself” (SL 386/291), and as such is “in its negativity, identical with itself.” In ground, “essence returns into itself as it negates” and is thus the “self-identity of essence as ground, equally as existent” (SL 387/291). Here Deleuze seems to have a point. But what is Hegel’s point about this self-identity of the ground’s negativity? The ground emerges as the collapse of the contradictory sides of essence, but it also reinstates the division of essence itself into the ground and the grounded. These then collapse as sharing the

283 “[...] there is nothing in the grounded which is not in the ground” (SL 398/303).
same determination. Yet this is the source of more difference, as the form and content of a phenomenon which themselves come to be external to one another and then immanent aspects of the same process (“informed matter”). The immanence of the ground and the grounded is achieved when the sides of itself cease to recoil into external elements and instead reflect the other in themselves. The ground becomes the “totality of the determinations” or conditions in which a “fact” emerges “into the externality of being, the restored circle of being” (SL 414/319). The achievement here is that a determination ceases to have its essence in a transcendent substrate and is effectuated as an “existent” in a totality of differential determinations that ground it in a manifold of ways. “The fact proceeds from the ground” (SL 417/321).

(4) This makes of the ground an “absolutely unconditioned.” Totality is less about totalization than it is about the immanent production of determinations, a “becoming within itself” or “groundless, absolute becoming” (SL 416/320). The “self-identity of essence as ground” is less about a mediated totality or a transcendent foundation of difference than it is about the immanence of difference.284 Accordingly, Lampert is right to interpret Hegel’s ground as the movement in which “differences surpass their finite limits, and emerge and vanish in a nontotalizable field.”285 As such, the ground is “orgiastic,” an “immanent” “ground of plural becoming” that “consists of mutations in a zone of productivity,” indicating not the erasure of determinacy, but the “expansion of determinacy into, and out of, difference.”286 Such a ground is “unconditioned” for Hegel “not because there is an uncaused cause, but because conditions

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284 Houlgate summarizes the end of essence in this way: “In essence, then, there is no simple immediacy, and there is no essence or foundation underlying the appearance of immediacy, either. All [there] is, is the process of seeming itself—the process whereby sheer negativity first seems to be immediacy, then seems to be distinct from its own seeming immediacy, and finally dissolves this distinction and reveals itself to be nothing but seeming as such.” “Hegel’s Critique of Foundationalism,” 40.
286 Ibid., 187.
consist of serial-deconditioning.” For Hegel, the fact “is not grounded or posited by it in such a manner that the ground would still stay underneath, as a substrate; on the contrary, the positing is the outward movement of ground to itself and the simple disappearing of it. Through its union with the conditions, it obtains the external immediacy and the moment of being.” It is the “simple disappearing of its difference from its positedness” (SL 417/321).

5. Interlude

Our idiomatic landscape is littered with concerns for the ground: a linguistic economy of values, risks, fears, precautions. Sometimes this economy is convergent around common meanings, other times divergent, easily contradictory and opaque, but often concerned with the problems of living. “To make or lose ground.” The ground is a measure of progress or regression in activity. “To run aground,” the risk of one’s activity becoming stalled, stagnant, unable to keep advancing, like a ship that, having accidentally steered from the depths of the sea into shallow waters, lodges its hull in the sea floor. The ground, at once the condition of travel, always threatens to interrupt it. The outcome of course depends on the relationship between vessel, speed, and ground traversed. To face a “quagmire,” the situation of impossibility, of advancing no further than an irresolvable problem: to be “mired” in tortuous, swamp earth with feet sinking into the ground, without tread, sliding in place. Gauging the possibilities of movement therefore requires a topology of grounds, since grounds are as diverse as the fears that surround them. Sinkholes, quicksand, landslides. It is even insufficient to associate ground exclusively with earth, since even the surface of the water provides conditions for movement and upset: the “sea-swell” that arises suddenly to capsize us. So many ways of trusting and mistrusting the ground: a perennial concern that the floor of things will no longer do the work of supporting, of conditioning the movement forward, becoming instead an inescapable trajectory into the depths

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287 Ibid., 197-198.
of the ground itself. Ground reveals a double dimension of depth and surface, and a correlative program of security, caution, and moderation. Since the depths provide nothing but the abysmal mixing of bodies and elements, and a thought stuck “in the clouds” withdraws us too much from the world, the life of sense, with the integrity of its forms and ends, seems to leave us with a desire for living at the surface of things: “to be grounded,” stabilized and confident in one’s plans, course, and future. A whole discourse of the sedentary that negotiates depth and surface, a geotechnical engineering and the art of laying foundations: to be grounded both “on” and “in” the ground, to be “rooted in” one’s projects, to “lay down roots” in the making of a home. And finally, at the twilight of maturity, to open an account with genealogy.com: to “uncover roots” by digging into the muck of one’s past, brushing aside the dirt that has obscured the genetic lines of one’s coming-to-be. In a way, this final sense of ground, while perhaps not the ultimate sense, is one that turns us backwards. The spatiality of ground reveals its temporality. But moreover, it is a matter of recognizing, retroactively, the essential productivity of the ground from which we are generated and returned, so many Adams molded from clay, gasping up for air.

Of course we now risk muddying the metaphor: too many senses, twisting, unraveling, multiplying meanings. Perhaps, as Deleuze will suggest, this unraveling is the work of the ground itself.

6. **Deleuze and the Ground of Difference**

We seek to determine an impersonal and pre-individual transcendental field, which does not resemble the corresponding empirical fields, and which nevertheless is not confused with an undifferentiated depth [une profondeur indifférenciée].\(^{288}\)

[...] l'être est la Différence elle-même.\(^{289}\)

\(^{288}\) Deleuze, *LS* 102/124.

\(^{289}\) Deleuze, *DR* 64/89.
The ground plays a central but duplicitous role in *Difference and Repetition*: it is at once an inadequate idea in the metaphysics of identity and a source of potential in his alternative account of difference. By emphasizing Deleuze’s appeal to the ground as constitutive, our goal is to argue for the ultimately ontological orientation of *Difference and Repetition* specifically and his philosophy as a whole consequentially.\(^{290}\) This chapter has thus far sketched the historical development by which Deleuze engages directly with the status of the ground. At stake in this history was whether certain thinkers conceive the ground in terms of a foundational identity, and to what extent they provide certain resources for realizing a ground of difference. In each instance, vanishing is explained in a certain way by a grounding relation, but none go far enough according to Deleuze. It is only with Deleuze that the ground is argued to be difference “in itself” unmediated by identity, and in which vanishing is realized furthest as a feature of the ground as such. What this means is that while Deleuze’s ground draws on important traditional features of philosophical explanation – namely its constitutive and productive functions – its differential nature requires a new concept of “ungrounding” to fully articulate its non-foundational status.

Given Deleuze’s ultimate appeal to “groundlessness” and “ungrounding,” the association of Deleuze’s project with a traditional notion of ground is problematic and risks grafting onto *Difference and Repetition* a foundationalism that it consistently rejects. To clarify this, we oppose the foundation to the ground. In §4.1 we justify taking the traditional notion of the ground seriously in Deleuze by highlighting his diverse appeals to it. §4.2 provides an account of Deleuze’s positive use of ground (*le fond*) as a process of ungrounding. §4.3 takes up Deleuze’s notion of “intensity” to demonstrate the nature of vanishing as an essential feature of a differential ground,

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\(^{290}\) To claim that *Difference and Repetition* is ultimately a work of ontology, insofar as it claims to articulate the ultimate ground of reality, by no means undercuts the other orientations of the work, be they phenomenological or political. To the contrary, we argue that it is the ontological orientation that supports Deleuze’s development of a “transcendental empiricism” and an account of “real experience.”
and poses Deleuze’s problem regarding the “vanishing of difference” in actualization.  §4.4 draws together these notions in Deleuze’s account of the virtual. §4.5 draws together the movement from foundation, to ground, to ungrounding by considering this three-fold operation in Deleuze’s account of time.

The most consistent argument of Difference and Repetition is that difference grounds identity. The mistake of philosophy from Plato to Hegel, Deleuze argues, has been a reversal of this grounding relation that leaves real differences inadequately determined. In the ultimate instance, the stakes of Deleuze’s inversion of difference and identity is in demonstrating how identities are produced by the “dramatization” of difference. Our emphasis in this section will be the emergence of identity through the vanishing of difference that is the work of difference itself when difference is understood as becoming.

6.1. Deleuze’s Appeal to the Ground

Deleuze is well aware that the postulate of being as “groundlessness” will appear either as an unappealing relativism at best, and an abyssal indeterminacy at worst (DR 276-277/354-355). Such an alternative is the “ultimate illusion” that representation poses: “that groundlessness should lack differences, when in fact it swarms with them” (DR 277/355). What we argue is that Deleuze’s appeal to the “groundless” [sans fond] as “ungrounding” [l’effondement] is effectuated by an appeal to generative and dissipative power of the ground [le fond] itself which is also explanatory. If ungrounding emerges as a replacement idea for the traditional philosophical role of ground as a foundation, this is because Deleuze’s aim is ultimately to explain the phenomenal world with more precision than any metaphysics grounded on identity can. Elaborating the significance of ungrounding therefore requires seeing how it emerges from a fundamental concern with grounding as such.
Deleuze’s most well-noted appeal to the ground is the formulation of his project, at the crux of *Difference and Repetition*, as a “superior” and “transcendental empiricism” (*DR* 56-57/79-82). As we have seen for Kant, the determination of the “transcendental” is the deduction of the grounds of “possible experience;” that is, the structures of judgment by which the world as we conceive it is possible. Deleuze owes something important to Kant’s notion of the transcendental here, insofar as what he proposes to think are the “conditions” of experience without “tracing” the transcendental from the “outlines of the empirical.” However, Deleuze and Kant differ significantly on the parameters of what is understood by experience. For Deleuze, empiricism should not be restricted to a clarification of an experience of the world made “possible” by the presupposition of a conceptual structure that determines in advance how the world will present itself. Inversely, the transcendental cannot be articulated by merely mirroring what an already conceptualized experience demands of its conditions. Both of these operations merely presuppose an “image of thought,” consummated in the eight-fold structures of representation (*DR* 167/216-217), rather than explaining the genesis of thought itself. If the ground merely repeats what is grounded on a quasi-transcendental level, then the very appeal to the ground becomes tautological. We give ourselves nothing more in the conditions than we already thought in the conditioned, which by definition lacks the capacity for self-grounding. Deleuze goes as far as to critique Kant as betraying his own method in this regard (*DR* 135/176-177, 142/185, 143/186).

In coupling the transcendental with empiricism, Deleuze significantly re-conceptualizes the meaning and function of both terms. Deleuze thus takes an essential impulse from both Plato and Kant: that we move beyond the obviousness of experiential thought to the grounds of experience that constitute it as such. In posing the question of its own ground, Deleuze’s account of thought opens thinking onto a “transcendental domain,” a ground of experience that, far from mirroring the structures of representation, can and must be thought as a “sub-representational”
The transcendental for Deleuze is thus the grounds or conditions of existence, which falls outside of the concept, rather than the conditions of experience mediated by the concept. To articulate the ground of existence is thus not a matter of the logic of judgment, but the logic of a lived reality that can be thought in its determinate structures without reducing the structure and its terms to the parameters of being a object of recognition, judgment, and knowledge. In this sense, the empirical side of Deleuze’s method does not contradict its transcendental pursuit, but shows that logic and experience form an immanent procedure. Here we would like to underscore the ontological significance of this approach, since the “object” of transcendental sensibility, according to Deleuze, is “the very being of the sensible” [l’être même du sensible] (DR 57/80).

The intense world of differences, in which we find the reason behind qualities and the being of the sensible [où les qualités trouvent leur raison et le sensible, son être], is precisely the object of a superior empiricism. This empiricism teaches us a strange ‘reason’ [une étrange ‘raison’], that of the multiple, chaos and difference (nomadic distributions, crowned anarchies). It is always differences which resemble one another, which are analogues, opposed, or identical: difference is behind everything, but behind difference there is nothing (DR 57/80).

Common sense experience already presents us with diverse qualities, objects, and representations. It does not take thought to recognize that a given phenomenon is this or that object, or that it contains qualities that can be analogous (in different objective instantiations) or opposed (when contained in the same objective representation). Diversity is a form of difference and qualitative multiplicity that is “given.” Recognizing this does not “provoke thought.”

Deleuze’s remaining Kantian spirit is in pushing thought to the domain of the transcendental

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291 As Baugh has rigorously demonstrated, Deleuze’s appeal to the method of empiricism has little to do with the version we find in a figure like Locke, but rather owes its insight to the “existential” empiricism, afford by Jean Wahl and others, which affirms “the irreducibility of being to knowing.” The real is grasped as a totality “in which no element is absolutely transcendent to any other,” a concrete existence or “beyond through which knowledge has a meaning, towards which it directs itself, from which it derives nourishment.” Wahl, *Existence humane et transcendance* (Neuchâtel: Éditions de la Baconnière, 1944), 10-11. Translations are Baugh’s in *French Hegel*, 35. As we will show, Deleuze will maintain a ground that cannot be communicated or exhausted by representational thought, but one in which its structure is thinkable and determinable rather than a merely ineffable beyond of thought.
when what is asked after is not an empirical clarification of the given, but the grounds from
which “the given is given”: “Difference is not diversity. Diversity is given, but difference is that by
which the given is given, that by which the given is given as diverse” {DR 222/286}. In this sense,
for Deleuze: “Difference is not phenomenon but the noumenon closest to the phenomenon.”

In the elaboration of difference as the “reason behind” qualities and the “being of” the
sensible, Deleuze is comfortable, with an important qualification, evoking Leibniz’s “principle of
sufficient reason” [principium rationis sufficientis]: “Every diversity and every change refers to a
difference which is its sufficient reason [la raison suffisante],” just as every “phenomenon refers to
an inequality by which it is conditioned” {DR 222/286}. Later, at the point at which Deleuze
begins to elaborate the ground of difference as possessing a three-fold structure (quantitability,
qualitability, potentiality), this structure of difference as a process of “differen/tiation” is argued
to be the element of “sufficient reason” {DR 176/228; cf. 221/285}. Further elaborating this
structure in terms of the differential calculus, Deleuze argues that we need a “geometry of
sufficient reason” {DR 160/208, 162/210; cf. 181-182/235}, an impulse that leads him to
transcendental Ideas as a type of calculus of sufficient reason {DR 181/235, 210/271}, a grammar
of what it means to think.

This appeal to “sufficient reason” is problematic, since as we have shown, infinite
representation “mediates determination and makes it a concept of difference by assigning it a
‘reason’” {DR 48/69}. It pushes the boundaries and scope of determination beyond the finite by
articulating “infinitely small differences” which form “the confused ground [le fond confus] that
underpins” the “clarity” of finite representations {DR 48/69}. However, it accomplishes this by
relating all differences to a “foundation [fondement] which selects or chooses the best world.” The
“confused” or “obscure” ground, at once an accomplishment for difference, is ultimately clarified
and made manageable at the limit where God ensures the identity and convergence of all
possible worlds. In short, the principle of sufficient reason pushes determination beyond the presuppositional divisions of finite representation by way of the infinite ground. It pulls out infinitely small differences in the world (Leibniz), or infinitely large contradictions of any whole (Hegel). However, Deleuze contends that the “foundation or sufficient reason employs the infinite only to lead the identical to exist in its very identity” (DR 49/70). “Mediation itself has become foundation” (DR 49/70) of an infinite whole whose “delirium” is merely feigned.

Given Deleuze’s appeal to “sufficient reason,” it is necessary to specify what we take to be his move here. Deleuze should not be read as appealing to a classical model of sufficient reason in which everything in the world, however infinite, can be conceptually assigned an essential reason. Deleuze regards this method as a “vulgarized Leibnizianism” (DR 11/21): “every determination is conceptual in the last instance” because “there is always one concept per particular thing” (DR 12/21). Deleuze’s innovation, in taking the principle of sufficient reason seriously, is to separate out le fond from le fondement, the power of the ground from the function of the foundation. While the le fondement founds the world of difference by organizing it through an ultimate unity, there is a power to le fond that not only grounds difference, but which grounds difference through difference itself. Deleuze likes to say that true sufficient reason has a “twist” or a “bend” because “it relates what it grounds to that which is truly groundless [un véritable sans-fond],” at which point “it must be said, there is no longer recognition” (DR 154/200). Deleuze takes the role of the ground seriously in order to significantly reformulate its traditional conception as stable, self-identical substratum into a process of ungrounding. Deleuze’s own ground of difference will involve a complicated process-relation between indeterminacy and determinacy that alone can account for the “metamorphosis” essential to formation and deformation that is reality.
6.2.  Ground as Ungrounding

Groundlessness, the without-ground, inevitably evokes the idea of a fundamental abyss (DR 276-277/354). In this vein, Deleuze sometimes associates the groundless with an “Ungrund” (DR 229/296). Despite this risk, Deleuze avoids an account an ex nihilo genesis of difference, instead arguing for a positive account of the ground. Deleuze articulates this new type of “ground” [le fond] as “depth” [la profondeur], a “deeper instance” or “dimension” presupposed by the extensive distribution of opposed determinations, for example those articulated by species differentiation (DR 229/295-296). Rather than being an abyssal absence of any differences, le fond (ground) as la profondeur (depth) implies a ground both richer and more original in difference-potential. Furthermore, depth is a ground from which differences in “extensity” “flow,” from which they are generated and issue forth. La profondeur is a differential “volume” [volumineux] of appearances, the “matrix” [la matrice] or womb of differences.

Deleuze insists that the groundless retains an “autonomy” (DR 275/352), but it also loses its substantial independence as a substratum in relation to appearances. It is insufficient for determination to postulate the indeterminate as “opposed” to the determinate, as if it were an indifferent matter awaiting the benediction of form. Determination is the process by which the indeterminate is determined without canceling the fundamental indeterminacy of the ground as such. Deleuze will sometimes choose to talk about the indeterminate as the “determinable” (DR 276/354). The determination of difference happens “between” the indeterminate and the determinate. Playing on the notions of depth and surface, determination occurs when the “ground rises to the surface, without assuming any form but, rather, insinuating itself between forms” (DR 275/352; cf. 28-29/43-44, 152/196).

When determination is thought as occurring between the indeterminate and the determinate, what we require is a new notion that can account for the dynamic, constitutive, and
deformative potential of difference-determination. Deleuze thus defines the groundless as a process of “universal ungrounding”:

By ‘ungrounding’ we should understand the freedom of the non-mediated ground [liberté du fond non médiatisée], the discovery of a ground behind every other ground, the relation between the groundless and the ungrounded, the immediate reflection of the formless and superior form which constitutes the eternal return (DR 67/92).

Deleuze argues for the status of a ground that is not mediated by representational, conceptual thought and the form of identity that it would impose. As such, it must be thought as a “sub-representational source” of difference (DR 264/339). This requires a “thought without an image” (DR 132/173, 276/354). When this ground is thought in terms of knowledge, it is the ground as “non-knowledge” [non-savoir] (DR 166/215-216), which for Deleuze is not an “insufficiency” of knowledge but rather “a rule or something to be learnt which corresponds to a fundamental dimension of the object” (DR 180/324). In terms of linguistic meaning, it is “non-sense” (DR 153/199, 275-276/353); in terms of form, it is the “formless” [l'informel] (DR 55/77, 57/80, 91/122-123, 275/352-353, 299/382); in terms of thought, it is “stupidity” (DR 150-153/196-198, 275/353); in terms of the biological classification, it is a “digestive” (DR 152/198; cf. 293/375) “animality” (DR 150-151/196-197, 275/353; cf. 28/43); in terms of moral value, it is “cruelty” (DR 29/44, 67/93, 151/196); in terms of social order, it is catastrophe (DR 35/52) and revolution (DR 190/246, 193/250, 208/269, 268/344); in terms of consciousness, it is “delirium” (DR 50/71, 227/292).

Whatever the language we use to speak about what cannot “represented,” what is crucial for us is that Deleuze maintains a consistent appeal to the power of the ground. This need not be seen as an inadvertent relapse into a new form of foundationalism, for which Houlgate reprimands Deleuze,292 since the ground is appealed to in light of the failure of the foundation

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292 “Hegel’s Critique of Foundationalism,” 44
and against the possibility of an indifferent abyss. Ungrounding “allows no installation of a foundation-ground” [une fondation-fondement]; instead it “swallows up or destroys [il détruit, engloutit] every ground [tout fondement] which would function as an instance responsible for the difference between the original and the derived, between things and simulacra” (DR 67/92).

Rather than abjuring the first three functions of grounding proper to representation, Deleuze’s fourth sense proposes to complete them, but with the novelty of not conceiving the ground in terms of a foundational identity. (1) Function 1 proposes that grounding effectuate determination, and it brings in difference to fulfill this role. Deleuze’s ungrounding proposes not to abandon the project of determination but to complete it more adequately (DR 28/43-44, 275/352). (2) Function 2 expands the inclusive scope of determination beyond the participation in essential forms to include the infinitely small and large determinations in their dynamics of vanishing and appearance, which in Function 1 were regarded as inessential phenomena (Socrates’ vanishing hair has no bearing on his wisdom). As we argued in the previous chapter, Deleuze’s qualms with infinite representation do not truly and should not concern the infinite as such, but the representation of the infinite as a system organizable around a focal principle of identity. (3) Part of the success of infinite representation is its drive to account for the very vanishing and appearances of phenomena in an infinite whole, but Deleuze argues that this operation confers on the movement of vanishing a regularity inadequate to the infinite. Ungrounding too claims to ground infinite movement, but without the presupposition of a determinate distribution.

Groundlessness can always be an arbitrary assertion, but Deleuze’s account of it shows a great deal of nuance. What we have argued here is that Deleuze’s engagement with the idea of the ground involves a dialectical argument that leads from mere determination of essences, through the failure of substrative foundationalism, to an innovative notion of the ground as a
non-foundational process of difference production. The key for ungrounding to explain is the operation of the actual world as it “differenciates” itself, and this requires an adequate conception of grounding: “To ground is to metamorphose” (DR 154/200). It remains to be seen how the actual can be effectuated by ungrounding, since this requires of the ground a type of agent of differenciation that, by Deleuze’s standards, eludes the ontological status of self-identity. This will require a further clarification of Deleuze’s ground in terms of “intensity.”

There is tendency to think that without a foundational and organizational principle, all truth is destroyed; the horror of every organized system is the chaos of its disorder. In a strong sense, Deleuze ungrounding does afford what representation and organization fear: the “totality of circles and series is thus a formless ungrounded chaos which has no law other than its own repetition, its own reproduction in the development of that which diverges and decenters” (DR 69/94). Everything revolves around “an aleatory point at which everything becomes ungrounded [s’effonde] instead of a solid ground” (DR 200/258). “Ontology is the dice throw, the chaosmos from which the cosmos emerges” (DR 199/257), “the groundlessness from which everything comes” (DR 284/364). If Deleuze’s argument has any strength, it is in demonstrating that the ground as “chaos” is a necessary component of the process of determination.293

6.3. Intensity and the Vanishing of Difference

Deleuze has employed a number of different terms to designate the element proper to the ground of difference: difference in-itself, the disparate, inequality. “Asymmetrical Synthesis of the Sensible” culminates in a final element that Deleuze thinks is most adequate to the “reason [la

293 Lampert interprets this explanatory import correctly: “grounding events in groundlessness is supposed to account for determinacy even better than sufficient reason would. Groundlessness explains not only the directly causal elements in a determinacy but also its accidental, shifting, ambiguous elements distributed over many groupings across disparate historical events. It is only a nonsufficient reason, that is, the extra-sufficient ungroundable reasons, that ground determinacies, by showing how even unpredictable connections have a form, ‘the empty form of time’.” “Limit, Ground, Judgment,” 190.
"raison" (DR 222/286) and "being of the sensible" (DR 236/304-305, 266/342) as well as the "determinant" in the "process of actualisation" (DR 245/316): intensity. For Deleuze, difference in-itself is "intensive difference": "difference of intensity" is the "sufficient reason of all phenomena, the condition of that which appears" (DR 222/286). It is this formulation that brings us most directly to the problem of vanishing, and gives us resources to answer the question, for Deleuze, about both the conditions of vanishing and the emergence of identity in the world.

Deleuze’s concern in this chapter is twofold: (1) to explain why the ground of difference “disappears” in the actual world as representation articulates it; and (2) to explain how the process of actualization is the effect of this vanishing of difference. Deleuze’s account of intensity here draws heavily from scientific theories in energetics or thermodynamics. Following Deleuze remark that ultimately “intensive quantity is a transcendental principle” and not merely a “scientific concept” (DR 241/310), we will largely focus on the import of the idea of intensity for an ontological ground of phenomenal experience.

We have already encountered the question of vanishing throughout this chapter. Philosophy from Plato to Kant has provided accounts for vanishing, but these always grounded it back in a form of identity, whether it is a transcendent domain of essences or the unity of subjectivity. In each case, the ground as such is secured from the ungrounding implications of vanishing. With Deleuze, the ground is conceived in terms of vanishing itself, as the disappearance of foundations in a decentered series that frees difference from the constraints imposed upon it by “reason as a process of identification and equalization tending towards identity” (DR 224/288). Ungrounding is the disappearance of grounds that explains the interactions of differential series in an open volume where essences are produced rather than assumed.
Borrowing from the theory of thermodynamics, Deleuze proposes the terms “intensity” and “extensity” as ways to think about the two distinct orders of differences in actuality (DR 223/287-288). While extensity concerns the distribution of part-whole relations as they occupy a certain space, intensity designates the force or magnitude of energy measured in the singularity of a unit. Each expresses a distinct form of difference. When looked at in terms of extensity, the differences between objects as instantiations of the same concept (e.g. pigs in a pen) can always be minimally determined by the position they occupy in a common space. In turn, the differential “qualities” of a set of given objects (e.g. the “right” or “left” orientations of hands) are possible by a common space that situates the seemingly identical objects in relations of spatial opposition. By differentiating objects in terms of spatial locations, relations of qualitative contrariety can be determined through judgment in terms of whether a given quality (e.g. warmth or coldness) inhere in the same subject. Likewise, relations of resemblance can be established between different subjects exhibiting the same predicate (e.g. heat in the symptoms of a fever). Extensity and intensity therefore are co-constitutive ways of thinking distinct serial-orders of differences. When differences are distributed in spatial relations, intensities are “explicated.” When intensities differentiate themselves, they remain “implicated.” While extensity presupposes a homogenous space in which differences are divided, intensity presupposes only the differentials of its

294 Deleuze appeals to the distinction between ordinal and cardinal numbers to make the point that spatial extensity presupposes an “equality among cardinal numbers, a relative equivalence of exteriorised terms” (DR 233/300). The series of cardinal numbers (e.g. the natural numbers <1,2,3…>, are composed of numerical units that are comparable: the difference between 1 and 2 is the same between 2 and 3. Differently, ordinal numbers (e.g. <first, second, third…>) do not imply relations of commensurability, since the degree between “third and fourth” need not be equitable with that between “first and second.” What makes the ordinal series suitable to the notion of intensity, for Deleuze, is the fact that it involves a series of quantitative terms that are definable only by the relations of power that they uniquely express. In this way, the “third” cannot be isolated and analyzed on its own, but is only meaningful in the differential relation between the “second” and the “fourth.”

The problem is initially phenomenological, though ontological in consequence, since “we know intensity only as already developed within an extensity, and as covered over by qualities” (DR 223/288). This is a problem in thermodynamics no less than representation (DR 225-6/289-291). Deleuze’s initial point is not merely that we tend to represent intensities in terms of extensive qualities, but that intensive difference “tends to deny [se nier] or to cancel itself out [s’annuler] in extensity and underneath quality” (DR 223/288). There is a significant interpretive problem here. On the one hand, this suggests that there is a tendency endemic to intensity to “disappear” in identity and to “cancel itself” in extensity (e.g. the tendency toward the equalization of energy differentials in physical systems). On the other hand, Deleuze argues that it is this “vanishing of difference” [l’évanouissement de la différence] that is the problem of which “we are victims” (DR 228/294). In this second case, the vanishing of difference is construed as the fault of a representation that conceives in terms of extensity rather than a tendency proper to intensity itself. Deleuze concludes that the “transcendental physical illusion” is that extensity, or the oppositional differences between qualities, is taken as self-grounding, when in fact “extensity does not account for the individuations which occur within it” (DR 229/295).

The “vanishing of difference” that Deleuze regards as problematic is the erasure of difference as ground, as that which is constitutive of the extensities that explicate it. “Even if difference tends to be distributed throughout diversity in such a manner as to disappear [disparaître], and to render uniform the diversity it creates, it must first be sensed as that which gives diversity to be sensed” (DR 226-227/292). The vanishing of intensity in extensity can only be illusory, a distorted effect, since difference “in the form of intensity remains implicated in itself” even when it is “cancelled by being explicited in extensity” (DR 228/294).
In what way does intensity ground, and retain an irreducible difference in kind from, the distributive order of extensities that cancel it? Deleuze appeals to intensity as a primary constitutive force for the differenciation or actualisation that constitutes the world as we perceive it in spatially distinct relations and qualities. “It is difference in intensity, not contrariety in quality, which constitutes the being of the sensible” (DR 236/305; cf. 266/342, translation modified). “It is intensity which dramatises” (DR 245/316). It is intensity that “develops” and “determines the movement of actualisation.” Intensity provides the differentiating force that gives actuality is animation, and in this sense it “dramatizes,” but it does so without ever vanishing as a ground. But this ground fundamentally resists a resemblance to the forms it effectuates, and always retains a potential to deform and reform the actual in contingent ways. To do this, it retains in its nature a capacity for vanishing and appearance in a way that it is independent of the “vanishing of difference” we see when looked at from the vantage point of extensity.

Intensity in-itself implies infinite degrees of vanishing that can never fully disappear, that is, be resolved into a complete nullification (0) or full articulation (1). This is implied in the very notion of intensive quantity. Deleuze critiques Kant here for articulating the forms of space and times merely in terms of “extensive magnitudes.” This means that the initially infinite manifolds or diversity of space and time, once they are structured with “space- and time- determinations” by the “Schematism,” are always articulated in terms of part-whole relations that can be numerically expressed. When Kant discussed “intensive magnitudes,” this is merely to reserve it for the determination of the “content” (sensation) rather than the “form” of an appearance. A sensation can contain an infinite degree of intensity, tending or vanishing toward zero. The inversion that Deleuze makes here is to make intensive magnitudes the ground of extensive magnitudes that constitutes them at the same time as they unground the permanence of any actual instantiation.
6.4. The (Un)ground of the Virtual

It is in Deleuze’s notion of the “virtual” [le virtuel] that we can see the envelopment of the central ideas with which we have been preoccupied in this chapter: difference, ground, ungrounding, intensity, and vanishing. The virtual is introduced in *Difference and Repetition* following an account of “transcendental Ideas,” that is, the notions with which thought surpasses the actual world as articulated in terms of judgment to grasp the structures of “multiplicity” that engender actual states of affairs. Designating this domain of multiplicities requires an “ontological difference.” However, for Deleuze this fundamental difference is not between the “virtual” and the “real,” as is the case when the term is deployed to designate a “fictional” simulation or “virtual reality”: “The virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual. *The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual*” (*DR* 208/269). Furthermore, and most importantly, the difference of the virtual from the actual does not render it indeterminate or merely lacking the determinacy that the actual world manifests in extensive differences between concrete objects and their relations. “The virtual is completely determined,” Deleuze argues, as the “structure” consisting of “differential elements and relations along with the singular points which correspond to them” (*DR* 209/269-270). Therefore, the virtual is not “possibility,” since the metaphysical notion of possibility is merely grounded in, modeled on, and doubles an actual object by adding its negation or possible non-being (*DR* 211/272-273). On this account, what cannot be explained is the actualization of a possibility into existence since it is existence itself that distinguishes actuality from possibility.

What virtuality promises to explain is genetic potential, the emergence of actual existence from a structure of virtual conditions which, through their excess and asymmetry with the actual, thus have the capacity to explain the emergence of new states. The virtual grounds the actual not because it is the possibility of the actualization of a given actual object, but because it is
excessively rich in potential relations that themselves do not resemble, and are not structured according to the actuality that results. The virtual is an “Other”\textsuperscript{295} “structure which grounds \textit{fonde} and ensures the overall functioning of this world as a whole” (\textit{DR} 281/361). The virtual is thus the “more profound genetic element” from which issue actual determinations as “solutions” to a given problem.

There are two senses of vanishing, and two forms of difference, involved in this account of the “whole” of reality presented by virtuality and actuality. Actuality issues from virtual conditions without exhausting them, while virtual potentials subsist in the actualizations to which they give rise. In this sense, Deleuze argues that the virtual is “differen\textsuperscript{iated}” in intensity while actuality is “differen\textsuperscript{icated}” in being explicated in terms of extensive qualities and objects. When an organism evolves certain physical traits or qualities in the adaptation to its environment, it thus differenciates itself in response to a problem posed by its milieu (sight at night for hunting, gills for breathing in water). However, this is under the condition that the multiplicity of virtual conditions at once condition this adaptation while also reserving more potential for becoming. It is no less true when we acquire certain habits through imperceptible encounters or deliberate training (the contagious tick acquired from a friend, the muscle memory for throwing the ball precisely without mentally coordinating the arm). Deleuze argues that these virtual conditions are not merely logical possibilities for whether a given actuality can occur or not, nor are they static material that are triggered through an active substance. “Beneath the actual qualities and extensities, species and parts, there are spatio-temporal dynamisms” which are the “actualizing, differenciating agencies,” “morphogenetic movements” of embryology that are primary to the

\textsuperscript{295} When the faculties are taken to the point of “discord,” a “chain of force and fuse along which each confronts its limit, receiving from (or communicating to) the other only a violence which brings it face to face with its own element, as though with its unrivaled and heterogeneous other \textit{comme de son disparate ou de son incomparable}” (\textit{DR} 141/184, translation modified).
molar qualities through which we determine differences between organic species, becomings moving through “differential speeds and rhythms” below the “being” of things that are (DR 214).

The delineation of objects, the transitions as well as the ruptures, the passage from one object to another, and even the fact that one world disappears [passe] in favour of another, the fact that there is always something else implicated which remains to be explicated or developed – all this is made possible only by the Other-structure and its expressive power in perception (DR 281/360).

Thus if difference “tends to disappear” in being explicated and actualized it is because the identities and empirical differences between objects, through representational thought, tend to cover over their genetic, virtual ground in rendering them autonomous from the dynamism to which they owe their existence yet which, most importantly, also promise the potential for their own dissolution, their continued becoming and differenciation into new forms, and the vanishing of the forms that they are in any actual present. Yet it is precisely through this vanishing of the actual that we see the subsisting power of the virtual, not as a tendency toward the void of indeterminacy, but as the continued becoming of a world that in principle exceeds the actual and makes its production possible.296 To think the “virtual” side of the actual is thus to unground the world, to “follow the path to the bend at which ‘reason’ plunges into the beyond” (DR 282/361).

6.5. To Found, Ground, or Unground of Time?

Deleuze’s account of the three syntheses of time (DR 70-96/96-128) is one of the most demanding and innovative portions of his whole corpus. It is also a context that directly employs his multifaceted approach to the ground. It therefore provides us with a model by which to demonstrate the explanatory import of his move from the ground as foundation to ground as ungrounding, and to see the centrality of the phenomenon of vanishing for this transition. Given the complexities of Deleuze’s theory of time, which has been analyzed well by others, we intend

296 See Baugh’s excellent account of this issue of the sense “loss” in relation to the virtual in contrast to Hegel’s account of actualization as an “enrichment.” “Actualization: Enrichment and Loss,” in Deleuze and Hegel, eds. Houle and Vernon, 76-96.
merely to present a single line of argument to show the concern with explaining vanishing in relation to the problem of the ground. In this section we consider in detail Deleuze’s holistic account of temporality through the three synthetic series that Deleuze argues dialectically (1) founds (the living present), (2) grounds (pure past), and (3) ungrounds (future) the order(s) of temporality. We maintain that this Deleuzian dialectic proceeds on the grounds of explaining the foundational vanishing of the present. If vanishing is the articulation of becoming, then for Deleuze, everything begins and ends with the question: Why does the present pass and vanish? To put the question another way: how do we comprehensively explain the becoming that time is?

(1) The Living Present. The synthesis of present is the “foundation of time” [la fondation du temps] (DR 79/108). Deleuze’s account of the present does not begin, as might conventionally be the case, with the discrete instant as presence, but with the “lived, or living, present” as a “contraction” of a multiplicity (of at least two) instants necessary to constitute a “repetition” (DR 70-71/97). Deleuze’s assumption here is that an atomistic “succession of instants does not constitute time any more than it causes it to disappear” (DR 70/97). Deleuze does not begin his analysis with the immediacy of vanishings in the way that Hegel does (cf. Chapter 1), but rather with “elements” contracted in “cases” of repetition (e.g. in the example of <tick-tock>). While this might appear as an augmented case of succession, albeit with a “contractile power” of associating and retaining differences, we argue that the underlying presumption Deleuze is working with, which partially explains his dismissal of a time founded by succession, is that the “originary” nature of time is that it passes or vanishes. This is why Deleuze later construes the “claim of the present” to be “precisely that it passes” (DR 79/108). A succession of isolated instants that would each “have to go outside itself in order to pass from past to future” (DR 71/97) cannot “constitute time” as a “lived” passage or movement that it is, but only indicate time’s “constantly aborted moment of birth” (DR 70/97). The time of the present forms
a “passive synthesis” of a multiplicity of repeated cases. It is only this type of synthesis that is adequate to explaining the passage of time in terms of the present, and it attempts to do so by staying within the present. Thus the present isn’t simply present, but contains the retention of passed cases, which in turn explains the anticipation of the arrival of a future element. Following Deleuze’s (Humean) example, to experience the passage of the present in the present means that when I hear one element of a differential case (tick) I immediately anticipate the (tock) that should follow on the condition that my subjectivity is constituted foremost by the passive habituation of previous (tick-tock) associations. The present lays claim to the whole of time, past and future being dimensions of the present itself.

(2) The Pure Past. “The ground [le fondement] of time is Memory” (DR 108, my translation). Deleuze presents the movement from the first synthesis of the present to the second synthesis of the “pure past” as a deductive argument. The synthesis of habit forms the foundation [la fondation] upon which the passage of time can occur, “the moving soil occupied by the passing present” (DR 79/108). However, he argues that the present, despite its inclusion of the past and the future within itself as temporal dimensions of the present (retention and anticipation), is “no less intratemporal.” Deleuze’s idea here is that there “must be another time in which the first synthesis can occur” (DR 79/108). This forms a “paradox.” The present “constitutes” the whole of time; all time is in the present. However, it constitutes time as one that passes. The present is thus both what time passes in and the time that passes in itself. The second synthesis forms “the being of the past” that not only forms the volume of time which the present can pass into, but also that which “causes the present to pass” (DR 80/109). This leads to a compelling series of “paradoxes” regarding the pure past. Our concern here is the claim that the “past, far from being a dimension of time, is the synthesis of all time of which the present and the future are only dimensions. […] It is the in-itself of time as the final ground of the passage of time. In this sense it
forms a pure, general, a priori element of all time” (DR 82/111). The pure past provides a kind of container in which the present can pass while the pure past retains itself as a pure element that grounds time by never becoming present. But it itself cannot provide the sufficient reason for why the present passes in the first place; it can only ground this passage by retaining the passage in ways that the present could only “live” out. If the past were the agent of passage of time, then only the same would ever return masquerading as the time, but this is not what Deleuze has in mind. We therefore need a third synthesis that can provide the agency of the vanishing of time.

(3) The Future. “Time is the most radical form of change, but the form of change does not change” (DR 89/120). With the third synthesis, time has “overturned its own ground.” The past provided an infinite volume of co-existing levels of past time. It initially presents itself as what “causes” the present to pass (DR 80/109), but this is not sufficient. When the past is represented as the “cause” of the passing present, then the movement of time is represented as a circle. But when the cause of time is seen as a “caesura” or “fracturing” of the present, time as a circle “unfolds.” The third synthesis of time, by fracturing the present, constitutes a relation of “before” and “after” that provides a direction of time to the “absolutely new itself.” If it provides a “totality” to the series of time, this is because it connects it with an ungrounding force that can be seen neither as a foundation nor ground as a volume of circular retention. The future is not a reserve of determinate content to come, but a force of differentiation that alone is capable of explaining the passing of the present in its effectuation.

7. Conclusion

Hegel’s account of “ground” [Grund] in the “Doctrine of Essence,” we argue, shares a common accomplishment with the “ground” of “difference” in Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition. Methodologically, both take the ground seriously in order to show that ground as foundational essence fails to do the work of grounding real phenomena. They both thereby reappraise the idea
of ground as an immanent process of difference production. The simultaneous production and vanishing of difference is the double-movement that for Deleuze constitutes the ground of “different/ciation,” and for Hegel the ground of “appearance.” For us, each is a ground of becoming. Given Deleuze’s appeal to the ground as “groundlessness” [sans fond] and “ungrounding” [l’effondement], this proposition is inevitably paradoxical. However, this claim must be situated within the critique of philosophical grounding that runs through his work and finds its culmination in its concluding chapter. Deleuze’s “ground” must thus be distinguished both from its threefold operation in representation and from a ground without difference (abyss). Deleuze’s innovative thesis is that stable, self-identical, and “foundational” grounds cannot do the grounding work of explaining dynamic and constitutive differences. Hegel for his part challenges the traditional idea of foundationalism from the beginning of the Logic, but this critique finds its culmination in the “Doctrine of Essence.”

Both Deleuze and Hegel are poorly understood if they are thought to under- or over-determine reality respectively, to lose difference in an undetermined chaos (Deleuze) or to bind it to rigid, schematic movement between oppositional categories (Hegel). Neither of these characterizations fit the nuances of their ontological systems. At stake in both Deleuze and Hegel’s concern with the ground is a philosophy of immanence. Immanence is first achieved by the disappearance of the foundation. When the ground collapses into the grounded its power as ground is not erased but rendered infinite as a process of appearance or difference generation. Vanishing and appearance become their inverse dynamics of the ground itself as becoming.

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297 Houlgate rightly sees Hegel’s understanding of ground as accomplishing an immanent “process” rather than a transcendent substratum of essence beneath appearance. However, he is too quick to reject Deleuze’s philosophy of difference as inadvertently presupposing a substrative ground of difference in its explicit effort to overcome the ground of identity. “Hegel’s Critique of Foundationalism,” 44.
It is in this sense that Deleuze characterizes the “plane of immanence” as a “chaos,” which is defined “less by the absence of determinations than by the infinite speed with which they take shape and vanish [s’ébauchent et s’évanouissent]” (WP 42/44). “The problem of philosophy is to acquire consistency without losing the infinite into which thought plunges” (WP 42/45).
Conclusion: The Abiding of Vanishing

1. Charted Path: Vanishing from Being to Ground
2. Hegel and Deleuze Revisited
3. The Role of Verschwinden in Hegel
4. Becoming-Imperceptible and the Way of Vanishing

“But what is such a thought [without an image], and how does it operate in the world?”
– Deleuze

“One has to disappear, to become unknown.”
– Deleuze

1. **Charted Path: Vanishing from Being to Ground**

Our project began with the provisional consideration that the tradition of ontology, as it has predominately been conceived, would appear to reserve no place for a logic of vanishing. Ontology concerns what is – what has being – and vanishing suggests a deficiency of a being: what appears, in the latter case, tends gradually to the non-being in appearance that promises little for philosophical thought. In the most extreme case, vanishing thus forms only one phenomenon in the limits of our perceptual experience in the visual world. The perennial problematics of metaphysics (being and becoming, determinacy and finitude, the infinite, and grounding) would then owe philosophically little to the language of vanishing that perhaps manages only to creep into these investigations through the flourishes of human language that thought is wont to employ to make sense of the world in which it is embedded. Following Hegel’s demand at the beginning of the *Logic*, our venture began with the wager that in taking up the question of “being,” of what is most primarily, it would be inadequate to presuppose in advance what ways being will ultimately show it itself to be. By following the above problematics in a single line from the immediate exposition of being, we have shown that vanishing as such proves to be an essential dynamic in some of the most central ontological concerns. Moreover, through Hegel’s *Logic* we have shown that rather than being an accidental way of describing the

298 *DR* 167/217.
299 *D* 45/56.
movement of being, or an incidental component of more essential mechanisms, vanishing is in fact the condition for the generation of these ontological problems from one another. For Hegel, the logical structures of being are generated through a movement of vanishing and emergence. Taking this movement seriously allows us to recognize the enduring significance of the irreducible becoming at the core of what is.

We began in Chapter 1 with Hegel’s demand that a presuppositionless exposition of the structures of reality must begin with the idea of “pure being” as a “ground” [Grund] (SL 70/56) and a “foundation” [Grundlage] (SL 71/57) that determines itself in the course of its development. Both Hegel and Deleuze have showed us how the apprehension of being in its “pure” self-reference, however, fails to provide a stable foundation; being immediately entailed a dynamic process of becoming [Werden] that being always is. We therefore argued that becoming, as an unlimited process of disappearance and appearance, forms the genetic ground for ontological movement. In Chapter 2, we considered Hegel’s account of how this ceaseless becoming nonetheless stabilizes itself in the equally “immediate” but newly “determinate” form of being [Daseyn]. This determinacy manifests itself first as limitation and further as the finitude in which something becomes itself only by moving beyond the limit that defines it. In the interplay between the determinacies of self and other, the finite is itself only through the other, and is the other only by moving outside of itself; the finite is thus realized through the vanishing of itself. In Chapter 3 we considered the logical consequence of Hegel’s account of finitude: the finite discovers the ground of its becoming in its “beyond,” in the “true infinite” as a process of becoming that emerges within the finite itself, that is, in the immanent movement of finitude. Between being and the infinite, we showed how vanishing, rather than being an ontological dynamic proper to the inadequacy of pure being, is actually a constitutive feature of the most fundamental structures of reality from indeterminate being to determinate quality and quantity.
In Chapters 2 and 3, we correlated this account in Hegel’s *Logic* with Deleuze’s historical account of “finite” and “infinite representation” respectively (*DR* 30-58/45-82, 262-272/337-355). Between the formally different accounts provided by Hegel and Deleuze, there is a common philosophical insight: the reality of the finite is not opposed to the infinite, but proves to have the infinite as its ground or reason for being the limited being that it is. It is the infinite that explains and sustains the unlimited becoming that the finite is. On Deleuze’s account, Leibniz and Hegel both make great advances in recognizing the constitutive role attributed to the power of the infinite. However, Deleuze argues that the infinite, in both cases, invokes a foundation defined by the form of identity. We argued that for Deleuze, it is neither the infinite nor the ground in themselves that are problematic ideas. Rather, Deleuze argues that where both Leibniz and Hegel, as proponents of “infinite representation,” fall short is in conceiving the ground in terms of identity. However, we have tried to show that Hegel’s account of ground also contains an important insight about the vanishing of a foundational ground of essence in the becoming of the “appearance,” issuing, and production of difference within an immanent reality.

2. **Hegel and Deleuze Revisited**

This work has been oriented toward the relation between Hegel and Deleuze’s ontologies, that is, what they each contribute to a study of the nature of reality as such. The Introduction to this work situated both thinkers in relation to the field of scholarship that has accepted and moved to problematize the reading that they offer incommensurable philosophical systems and insights. Furthermore, we argued that the projects of both the *Science of Logic* and *Difference and Repetition* begin with critiques of philosophical method that preconceive the nature of thought and thereby derive forms and products of thinking that are not sufficiently grounded. This point of departure leads to two innovative, challenging, and audacious accounts in contemporary philosophy to think the absolute or ultimate nature of reality without modelling it on the terms of
an already formed experience or conceptual understanding of the world. These respective systems culminate in Hegel’s notion of the “Concept” [Begriff] and Deleuze’s notion of “difference in-itself.” Adequately appreciating the richness of their philosophical symmetries and dissymmetries, and to satisfactorily appraise their ultimate philosophical positions, would mean thinking seriously about not only their works as a whole, but the implications of these two ultimate notions in relation to each other. Such a task is unfortunately beyond the scope and aims of this project, but it is one that this project aims to make possible in a new way.

More modestly, we have endeavored to follow the philosophical encounter between these two texts and to chart its course according to the insights that each offer. This has meant letting the texts themselves speak to us and determine how we have approached them. We have thus examined their relation according to four major points of encounter set out in Difference and Repetition (being, finitude and limit, the infinite, and ground) and in the order of presentation offered by Hegel’s Logic. In doing so we have endeavored to show three principle things. First, rather than largely abjuring a direct engagement with Hegel’s philosophy, Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition offers not only a direct, compelling, and philosophically rich engagement with key moments in the Logic, but also a longer and more implicit symmetry with the course of Hegel’s “Objective Logic.” Second, in following this course, their accounts show common philosophical insights about the nature of reality – despite a substantially distinct set of terminology – rather than divergent conceptual prerogatives. Third, at the end of the path we have followed, there is not enough to suggest a stringent opposition between their projects. Each moves from a critique of the insufficiency of self-identity to the reality that something is only in its self-differentiation and its becoming-other than it itself. We do not think it sufficient to merely note that this becoming-other is thought in terms of “absolute negativity” in Hegel’s case and “affirmative” difference in Deleuze’s. Following from the philosophical story we have told here, it would be
necessary to examine these two ultimate terms, as we have maintained throughout, as foremost conceptions of becoming constitutive of reality in its dynamic, complex presentation at both the level of the concept and the real. Fourth, rather than developing a systematic and definitive interpretation of the respective notions of becoming, we have chosen to elucidate a compelling component of each (vanishing) that has received little attention in scholarship. By way of conclusion, we would like to briefly reconsider the function of vanishing as we have followed it in each, and finally to offer some insights about how it is informative of our experience of the world.

3. The Role of Verschwinden in Hegel

This work has provided a close study of four major moments of Hegel’s *Objective Logic* with an order and selection determined, as we have stressed, by Deleuze’s implicit and explicit engagement with Hegel’s *Logic* in *Difference and Repetition*. As such, it is full of holes, vanished and excluded parts, and a whole left unexamined. To fully appreciate all the intricacies of Hegel’s text, and the ultimate value that the whole offers us, would require a much closer, and substantially longer and dedicated study. Nonetheless, we hope that what we have offered will have value to those approaching Hegel from Deleuze’s philosophy, and to those that have not yet approached Deleuze from Hegel’s. In the course between these four major moments of the *Logic*, we have made a single, consistent line of interpretation to show the presence of something of interest to both thinkers: for something to be, in different levels of determinacy, means that it is intrinsically involved in the movement of vanishing as the condition for its emergence in new, more sophisticated forms.

Like the more traditional mechanisms of “negativity” and “contradiction,” *Verschwinden* proves to be an important movement in which the terms of each of these moments present themselves. From the angle of identity, vanishing is a mode of negativity intrinsic to being. From the angle of difference, however, vanishing is the becoming that the immediacy of being shows
itself to be. In this becoming, being loses its one-sided, stable immediacy in order to become something other than and more than it was. For Hegel, therefore, vanishing is an essential facet of immediacy as such. Further, the fate of immediacy is that it cannot remain immediate, and what becomes from this can only do so insofar as the insular, self-identical state of immediacy is lost. This loss that vanishing effects, however, is not an absolute annihilation or negation of that which becomes; vanishing is in-itself the emergence of new forms, the retention of singular points of disappearance, and also the vanishing of its own process in the coming-to-be of new immediacies. In Hegel there is no definitive choice between immediacy or mediation, between affirmation or negativity, between identity and difference. The wealth of his exposition is to show that reality is effectuated always in the middle, in the space between the disjunctive choice, where what we are presented with is an irreducible and dynamic movement of emergence and vanishing – coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be – that is the condition of the real.\textsuperscript{300}

By confining our study to the \textit{Objective Logic}, we have in many ways barred ourselves from the capacity of making a definitive statement about the status of vanishing in the system of logic’s “totality” which is achieved only in the “Doctrine of the Concept” with the “absolute Idea.” Can it not be argued that – while \textit{Verschwinden} certainly has a role in the “Doctrine of Being,” with its account of the ways in which immediacy presents itself, and even a significant, though less pronounced role in the “Doctrine of Essence,” insofar as the mediation of essence still involves modes of immediacy – that vanishing in fact plays a diminishing role as the \textit{Logic} progresses? If vanishing realizes its most pure form in the absolute indeterminacy of Becoming [\textit{Werden}], do not the increasingly determinate forms of the \textit{Logic} involve a progressive vanishing of vanishing itself?

\textsuperscript{300} Our claim is not that the whole of the \textit{Logic} can be reduced to a mere repetition of the initial indeterminacy of Becoming [\textit{Werden}], nor is it that nothing in the \textit{Logic} truly moves beyond this notion. Thus, when we have claimed that the “true infinite” or the “ground” in Hegel is a process of becoming, this has not been to say that these distinct nominations say nothing more than what \textit{Werden} affirms.
Deleuze characterizes the “reprises or repetitions” of Hegel’s “infinite representation,” in this sense, as expressing only “the conservation of the whole, all the forms and all the moments, in a gigantic Memory […] which conserves” (DR 53-54/76). If the “Spirit” of the Phenomenology is an “immanent differentiation,” the “labour which it accomplishes as actual History,” it is also the “circle that returns into itself [and] presupposes its beginning and reaches it only at the end” (Ph 488/429-430 ¶802-803). Its “Becoming,” culminated in “Absolute Knowing,” is thus the totality of its forms that, once having vanished, are now “preserved” in a “slow-moving succession of Spirits,” held together in its “gallery of images” (Ph 492/433 ¶808) and the total spectatorship of spiritual, cultural life. Hegel similarly describes the “Concept” [Begriff] as the “kingdom” in which “freedom is disclosed”: “The concept is free because the identity that exists in and for itself,” while “sublated,” is also “posited” and thus “self-referring” in its “very identity” which has become “self-transparently clear” (SL 513/15-16). “Vanished is the obscurity” of previous moments, Hegel notes, that seemed to be self-subsistent in relation to their other: “Reason, which is the sphere of the idea, is the self-unveiled truth in which the concept obtains the realization absolutely adequate to it” (SL 527/30). “The absolute idea alone is being, imperishable life [unvergängliches Leben], self-knowing truth, and is all truth” (SL 735/236). Is then the absolute – whether of phenomenological or logical exposition – not the termination of the movement of vanishing in the holding fast to and unification of the immanent becoming that it was? Does an unchecked vanishing not risk eluding the totality of the system, ungrounding its claim to grasp the whole of itself transparently and with stability?301

Considering the role of *Verschwinden* in the whole of Hegel’s system – which is not only logical but also phenomenological, aesthetic, and political – would take another study altogether and would require considering the coherency of these accounts for understanding human life and experience at the center of Hegel’s thought. We can, however, offer a number of provisional thoughts from the work we have done here. First, that the potential elimination of vanishing at the end of the *Logic* does not undermine the fact that vanishing as such is a metaphysical and meta-categorical movement through which the whole of the *Logic* is accomplished. Second, that the pervasiveness of vanishing throughout the *Logic* shows that determinacy is accomplished by a repetition of, and sinking into, indeterminacy that is and not cannot be permanently resolved but is realized as the conditions for the production of the new. Lastly, that the final, consummating moment of the *Logic* is less the totalization of reality as it is the immediate “externalization” of itself into “nature.” Just as the *Phenomenology* realized itself at its pinnacle as the possibility of a new stratum of analysis in which experience would have to be forgotten, the “absolute idea” of logic “freely discharges itself” into the “externality of space and time absolutely existing for itself without subjectivity” (*SL* 753/253). The full determinateness of the logical Concept becomes, once again, a new form of indeterminacy where we will discover the vanishing endemic to temporal existence.302 Logic then less a closure than it is the unravelling of the circle and the opening of the world.

4. **Becoming-Imperceptible and the Way of Vanishing**

We have largely devoted our study to the role of vanishing in *Difference and Repetition*. However, as we indicated in the Introduction, this work has value for interpreting a perplexing and controversial later claim that Deleuze and Guattari make in *A Thousand Plateaus*: all

302 “The dimensions of time [are] the becoming of externality as such, and the resolution of it into the difference of being passing over into nothing, and of nothing as passing over into being” and as “only this vanishing” (37) or “Becoming directly intuited” (34). Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 33-40.
becomings are “rushing toward” “becoming-imperceptible” \([\textit{devenir-imperceptible}]\). “The imperceptible is the immanent end of becoming, its cosmic formula” \((\textit{TP} 279/342)\). Becoming imperceptible is “the final enterprise” \((\textit{N} 45)\). These principles have been worrisome to many commentators, potentially making of Deleuze’s philosophy of becoming a direction toward death or zero-point in terms of life, toward incomprehensibleness in terms of knowledge, and toward an abstract void of indifference in terms of ontology. I would argue that the thesis of “becoming-imperceptible” can be understood in the context of this problematic of the finite and the infinite that we have traced throughout this work. Becoming-imperceptible has a logical and a practical dimension.

The logic of becoming requires a tendency toward constitutive terms that are infinitely small, or at least below the level of quantity or perceivable forms. These terms of being are always on the point of disappearing without ever vanishing completely: singular qualitative intensities. “Everything becomes imperceptible, everything is becoming-imperceptible on the plane of consistency, which is nevertheless where the imperceptible is seen and heard” \((\textit{TP} 252/308)\). Of course we are populated by becomings that are imperceptible to us, passive syntheses of the body that act, contract, produce, and coordinate flows without the ground of an active subjectivity. But if we regard these becomings as constitutive yet other than us, effective but accidental, then we deny becoming itself in favor of an essential form that endures or sustains these co-minglings with imperceptible processes. To become with them on a univocal or immanent plane of composition would mean that we become by becoming-imperceptible, by entering into and living out, even to the point of our own death, the infinitesimally small fluctuations that compose us in this direction or that.

Becoming itself is the “pure movement” that composes us “below and above the threshold of perception,” “anorganic,” “asignifying,” and “asubjective” \((\textit{TP} 279/342)\). What
Deleuze calls the “virtual” \((DR)\) or the “plane of consistency” \((TP)\) is meant to articulate this formless, indeterminate ground of all determinate forms. If we insist on calling this a thought of the “absolute,” then we must not understand it as a whole or totality. To become is thus to enter into a “line of flight” \([\text{ligne de fuite}]\) in relation to determinate forms. *Une ligne de fuite* entails a route of escape, flows that leak out of channels, a becoming that eludes the trap of identity. Moreover, it is the direction toward *le point de fuite*, the vanishing point, in which something perceptible and discernible is lost to apprehension, in the distance, at the horizon, or into the ground. In entering a line of flight, a line directed toward your own disappearance, we are not *en route* to nothingness. There is no void. What is the vanishing point of becoming, if not the void? For Deleuze, to become is to be directed toward the plenum of real multiplicity, an infinite plane of “real experience” that both exceeds us and makes our becoming-different possible. It does not guarantee our identity, only our difference. The ground does not and cannot resemble us, but it is one that we cannot but express and participate in, and which exists only through its actualizations without being reducible to them. It is at once a vitalism and a virtuality, a life that is not in the image or negative of the actual, but the ground of the actual.

In the second case, there is pragmatics of becoming-imperceptible. Everyone desires their own modulation to a certain extent, the disappearance of certain traits, habits, needs. Take the subject that is always in the act of quitting, always in process, trying to foster the will to relinquish herself of the habits that define her. A desire to recompose one’s relations, the hope that habits will disappear, or the fear that one will remain bound to a form alien to what one could become. All this seems not to be easily resolvable by choice, since one is always haunted by traces, the strange permanence of vanished habits, the remnants of a world. Is this not the relation of the individual to eternity? Yet, there is a danger inherent in all becoming. There is the risk that we will go too far, to decompose too much, making certain forms, identities, and ways of life
impossible or unlivable. This is the problem of death, of course, but death is foremost not the absence of existence, but the loss of a determinate form. In the logic of relations, nothing is more important than the limit, but limits are always multiple. What is a required is a tactical disposition of thought and action: how far, to what limit, by what means? Norms, ends, and pragmatics aside, there is the reality of becoming, and it is not sufficient to say that we are what disappears in the act of becoming, since this is to posit a primary identity that is inevitably lost because it was there from the beginning. The reverse is true. We only are through an interchange of lost and acquired relations and intensities.⁴⁰³

Identity is a logical category, but it is also a mode of existence, a way of being in the world, and to a certain degree, it can be a wall blocking the creation of the world. For Deleuze, the most difficult and pertinent task, all the labor of becoming, is not in finding a way to be true to oneself, epistemologically or ethically, but in betraying oneself. In order to become, we must betray our identity, to lose one’s “identity, one’s face,” in the act of creation. “One has to disappear, to become unknown” [Il faut disparaître, devenir inconnu] (D 45/56). To become – that is, to become different, to let your identity vanish – is not merely to be a reality in the world, as if all amounted to an existential recognition of one’s own finitude in a repetitious cry: “Certainly, I will perish!” Life is not a spurious infinity, a belabored finitude. To become is primarily to “make a world” [faire un monde] (TP 280/343). But by the same token, the making of the world is to also unmake the world [défaire un monde], to destroy something of it in order to allow it to continue

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⁴⁰³ We can see how all this provides us with a metaphysics, perhaps a realism, certainly logic of relations. But in what sense can we see it as grounding an ethics? It’s clear that both Deleuze and Spinoza intend it to be. Deleuze and Guattari call “imperceptibility, indiscernibility, and impersonality” the “three virtues” (TP 280/343). But are not morality and ethics tied to the problem of normativity: what should we do, rather than merely what we are? I leave open the question if there is not, already, underneath this major narrative of normative ethics, another history of ethics concerned with the production of states of being and an ethics of capacities. Yet, is it in any way normative? What does it make possible being in every case once being is thought in its relation to an infinite potentiality of life?
worlding through the production of the new. Perhaps, then, to disappear is not necessarily to diminish one’s power, but to augment it.
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