

SOMERS-HALL, Henry. *Hegel, Deleuze, and the Critique of Representation: Dialectics of Negation and Difference*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012. xvi + 289 pp. Cloth, \$85.00—In this rich and impressive new book, Henry Somers-Hall gives a nuanced analysis of the philosophical relationship between G. W. F. Hegel and Gilles Deleuze. He convincingly shows that a serious study of Hegel provides an improved insight into Deleuze’s conception of pure difference as the transcendental condition of identity. Somers-Hall develops his argument in three steps. First, both Hegel and Deleuze formulate a critique of representation. Second, Hegel’s proposed alternative is as logically consistent as Deleuze’s. Third, Deleuze can account for evolution, whereas Hegel cannot.

As a first step, Somers-Hall shows that Hegel and Deleuze develop their philosophical position in reaction to the same issue: the problem of identity and difference (chapters one and two). They encounter this problem in what Deleuze calls “finite representation.” This model of finite representation underlies both classical logic (Aristotle) and transcendental idealism (Kant). In classical logic (as well as in modern logical systems, for example, Kant, Russell), this finite representation is obtained by organizing differences in a hierarchy that ranges from the universal (the highest genus, that is, being) to the particular (understood as the lowest species). However, as Somers-Hall makes clear, it is precisely at these two extremities that the problem of representation comes to the fore. At the level of the universal, finite representation cannot account for the unity of being (“being is said in many ways,” as Aristotle himself acknowledges). This means that the notion of a unifying essence becomes problematic. At the level of the particular, finite representation cannot account for temporal becoming and semantic change, because it relies on an atemporal conception of essence. In other words, the notion of the accidental becomes problematic. Kant tried to resolve some of these difficulties by making a distinction between the appearance of a finite thing (which is accidental and can be represented) and the thing-in-itself (the “essence” of the thing, which cannot be represented and is not determinable). For Kant, the whole of being can only be thought as the sum of appearances, never as a whole in itself. As Somers-Hall indicates, neither Hegel nor Deleuze is entirely satisfied with this solution. In their view, Kant still operates within the static model of finite representation.

Somers-Hall’s second step is to analyze Hegel’s logic of contradiction and Deleuze’s logic of pure difference on their own terms

(chapters three through five) and to bring these logical systems into relationship with each other (chapters six and seven). As Somers-Hall points out, Hegel resolves the problem of identity and difference by incorporating both principles as moments in the dialectical movement of infinite thought. Deleuze rejects this solution because it still subordinates difference to identity. In Deleuze's view, identity is always generated by difference and not the other way around. He makes a distinction between the actual that can be represented (identity) and the virtual that cannot be represented but is still determinable (pure difference). Somers-Hall stresses that for Deleuze the virtual and the actual are not opposed to each other as reality and possibility, but "operate as tendencies within the real." In Somers-Hall's account, the confrontation between Hegel and Deleuze results in a deadlock. To show that Hegel is wrong, Deleuze has to prove that it is "the prioritization of identity itself" that is responsible for the problems of representation. To rebut Deleuze, the Hegelian has to demonstrate that "the virtual transforms itself into the actual and the actual into the virtual." According to Somers-Hall, this confrontation between Hegel and Deleuze will remain inconclusive as long as we only look for deficiencies in their logical systems. Both systems are logically consistent and can withstand criticism from the other side.

In the final step of his argumentation (chapter eight), Somers-Hall shows that Hegel cannot incorporate "two major prerequisites for evolutionary theory: the theory of homologies, which allows us to posit connections between different organisms, and the theory of teratology, which allows us to understand variability positively." From Hegel's teleological perspective, the unity of the organism is defined as a functional totality. For this reason, he cannot account for intermediaries between species nor can he give a positive explanation of aberration. Deleuze, on the other hand, gives a non-teleological account of the unity of the organism. For him, this unity functions much "like the virtual, as that which is actualized, while differing in kind from its actualization." This approach enables him to link different species without implying a correspondence between them. Moreover, he can give a positive explanation of aberrations. Somers-Hall concludes that when applied to concrete situations in the world, Deleuze's logic is in agreement with evolutionary insights, whereas Hegel's logic is not.—Martijn Boven, *University of Groningen*.