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**Hegel and Deleuze: Immanence and Otherness**

by

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## **Declaration**

Some material from chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis has been published in another form as 'Ecstasy of Reason, Crisis of Reason: Schelling and Absolute Difference', in *PLI-The Warwick Journal of Philosophy*, 8 (1999), pp. 25-45.

All material in this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted previously for a degree at another university.

## ***Abstract***

The thesis critically analyses the dominant foundationalist tendency of modern philosophy, with special reference to the sophisticated antifoundationalist critiques of foundationalism formulated by G.W.F. Hegel and Gilles Deleuze.

It begins by outlining a general methodological aspect of foundationalism, regarding the necessity of radical self-critique in philosophy, which directly connects contemporary thought with Cartesianism, via classical German philosophy.

In the philosophies of Kant, Fichte and Schelling, this self-critical project is transformed: they undertake to show that reason can, by examining itself, give an account of experience that is systematic, or consistent with itself. However, each of these thinkers fails to accomplish this, and indeed, the commitment to *a priori* foundations is itself undermined in Schelling's work, where a philosophical crisis of meaning (a 'trauma of reason', philosophical nihilism) emerges.

Deleuze and Hegel's contrasting critiques of foundationalism, and their positive reconstructions of the standpoint of philosophy, are then interpreted as non-foundationalist attempts to overcome this internal crisis of foundationalist thought as inadvertently exposed by Schelling. Both criticise certain subjective presuppositions common to foundationalist philosophies, which they consider constitute a dogmatic 'image' of philosophy, a kind of transcendental illusion that is the guiding force behind foundationalism. Both also aim to replace this with a genuinely philosophical image.

The thesis provides an original historical contextualisation of Deleuze's thought in relation to German Idealism, and Schelling in particular, with whom, it is argued, Deleuze has much in common. Deleuze's conception of pure difference is treated in this regard as a kind of 'absolute knowledge'. This contextualisation also allows the sometimes crudely understood antipathy between Hegel and Deleuze to be addressed in a more penetrating fashion, which shows that they have more in common in terms of their critical orientation than is usually supposed.

The thesis concludes with a critical comparison of these thinkers, which argues that, although both succeed in their own terms, in relation to a criterion of self-consistency, Hegel's philosophy offers a more satisfactory treatment of the ontological and historical conditions of philosophical activity.

## ***Abbreviations***

Standard A/B format is used for references to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Other references are to the original text and the English translation as per the following abbreviations and the Bibliography, and are given in the form:

WS 178/168

In cases where no English version was available, translations are my own.

Deleuze:

A	<i>Analyse de Logique et existence par Jean Hyppolite</i>
AO	<i>L'Anti-Oedipe/Anti-Oedipus</i>
B	<i>Le bergsonisme/Bergsonism</i>
CD	<i>La conception de différence chez Bergson</i>
D	<i>Dialogues Dialogues</i>
DR	<i>Différence et répétition/Difference and Repetition</i>
ECC	<i>Essays Critical and Clinical</i>
IL	<i>L'immanence: une vie.../Immanence: A Life...</i>
KP	<i>La philosophie critique de Kant/Kant's Critical Philosophy</i>
LS	<i>La logique du sens/The Logic of Sense</i>
N	<i>Pourparlers/Negotiations</i>
NP	<i>Nietzsche et la philosophie/Nietzsche and Philosophy</i>
SP	<i>Spinoza et le problème de l'expression/Expressionism in Philosophy:</i> <i>Spinoza</i>

- SQ *Sur quatres formules poétiques qui pourraient résumer la philosophie kantienne*
- TP *Milles Plateaux A Thousand Plateaus*
- WP *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie? What is Philosophy?*
- Fichte:
- CC *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre/Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre*
- DSL *Über den Unterschied des Geistes und des Buchstabens in der Philosophie/Concerning the Difference between the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy*
- RA *Rezension des Aenesidemus/ Review of Aenesidemus*
- WL *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre/Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*
- WLnm *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo/Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*
- IW *Erster und zweiter Einleitungen zur Wissenschaftslehre/Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre*
- Hegel:
- DS *Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen System der Philosophie/The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*
- EL *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften Erster Teil Encyclopaedia Logic*
- FK *Glauben und Wissen/Faith and Knowledge*
- PR *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts Elements of the Philosophy of Right*

PS *Phänomenologie des Geistes/Phenomenology of Spirit*

SL *Wissenschaft der Logik/Science of Logic*

**Kant:**

CJ *Kritik der Urteilskraft/Critique of Judgement*

CPrR *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft/Critique of Practical Reason*

CPuR *Kritik der reinen Vernunft/Critique of Pure Reason*

GMM *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten/Groundwork of the  
Metaphysics of Morals*

P *Prolegomena/Prolegomena*

**Schelling:**

DPE *Darstellung des philosophischen Empirismus*

EE *Einleitung zu seinem erster Entwurf eines System der Naturphilosophie*

IPN *Ideen zur einer Philosophie der Natur/Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*

LMP *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der neueren Philosophie/Lectures on  
the History of Modern Philosophy*

PO *Philosophie der Offenbarung*

SPL *Stuttgart Privatvorlesungen/Stuttgart Seminars*

STI *System des transzendentalen Idealismus/System of Transcendental  
Idealism*

THF *Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit/Treatise on Human Freedom*

WA *Die Weltalter/The Ages of the World*

WS *System der Philosophie überhaupt/System of Philosophy in General  
(‘Würzburg System’)*



## Chapter One

### Introduction: Philosophy, Immanence and Otherness

#### *i) Preliminaries*

Thus, because our senses sometimes deceive us, I decided to suppose that nothing was such as they led us to imagine. And because there are people who make mistakes in reasoning, committing logical fallacies concerning even the simplest questions in geometry, and as I judged that I was just as prone to error as anyone else, I rejected as unsound all the arguments I had previously taken as demonstrative proofs.<sup>1</sup>

With these lines from the *Discourse on Method*, Descartes announced the Reformation of Scholastic philosophy and a decisive redefinition of philosophy's conception of itself. The modernity of Cartesianism lies in its confidence in the ability of the individual reasoning subject to determine the truth about being, and further, in its confidence in the ability of the individual to *prove* that it possesses this truth. It is this latter assurance that represents a direct assault on medievalism, for it confers final authority on the faculty of reason, and thus removes it from the hegemony of tradition and its institutions, the ultimate sources of all Scholastic arguments previously accepted as 'demonstrative proofs'.

At the close of the twentieth century, such confidence seems to be at once an intimately familiar feature of the way we imagine ourselves, and yet somehow outdated, to be spoken of with ironic, even cynical detachment. Over two hundred years of

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<sup>1</sup> Descartes, 1966, p. 59.

relentless criticism of traditional accretions of authority, stretching from the American and French Revolutions, and taking in the rise of mass industrial societies and the social and political convulsions of the twentieth century, have seen Cartesian confidence replaced by the riven stance of the individual who listens to and accepts the long-familiar claims of reason, without ever genuinely believing in them, seeing reason instead as simply another traditional authority to be criticised, without knowing where the resources for such a critique are to be found. This condition, which Nietzsche referred to as 'modern nihilism', finds a particularly suitable home in the twentieth century, the time of genocide carried out by regimes that employed bureaucratic reason exclusively in the service of their 'passions'.

How does this situation make itself felt in Western philosophy? One definition of its violently altered self-image is given by the British philosopher Gillian Rose. Commentating on a selection of modern Jewish thinkers within the pantheons of existentialism, critical theory and post-structuralism, ranging from Martin Buber to Jacques Derrida, Rose wrote that 'their different ways of severing existential eros from philosophical *logos* amount to a *trauma within reason itself*'.<sup>2</sup> The meaning of such a statement is not immediately apparent. *Trauma* in its usual meaning refers to the experiencing of a violent physiological or psychological shock that induces a pathological condition within the organic or the psychic system. What can it mean to say that *reason* experiences such a shock and is confined by such a condition?

One thing is clear from Rose's remarks, however. This trauma cannot be reduced to an effect of conditions external to the activity of philosophy. Philosophy, in some sense, inflicts the wound on itself. To anticipate a little, we can say that the trauma of reason appears in the modern age because of the nature of the vocation that philosophy assumes for itself: namely, the Cartesian epistemological project, whose goal is the discovery of incorrigible criteria for objective knowledge, and along with this, the

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<sup>2</sup> Rose, 1994, p. 1.

justification of the autonomy of pure reason. The goal of my thesis is firstly to outline a convincing definition of the philosophical provenance of the trauma of reason, and then, in the main part of the thesis, to assess the work of two of the most trenchant critics of the modern Cartesian project, G. W. F. Hegel and Gilles Deleuze, considered as ways of ‘working through’ this condition that provide resources for reconceiving the vocation of philosophy.

*ii) The Ambition of Philosophy: Immanence*

Our first object of enquiry has to be the Cartesian revolution itself, with the aim of penetrating a little deeper into its meaning as a philosophical event. The sceptical method is a way of redefining philosophy according to Plato’s question in the *Theaetetus*: ‘what is knowledge?’. Descartes’ vision thus still affirms philosophy as the highest discipline of human knowledge, that is, as the knowing of the *meaning of knowledge*. Critical epistemology, despite its modernity, remains knotted to the longest threads of Western thought. A constitutive element of its definition is the distinction between philosophy, which deals with knowledge as such, and specific sciences that deal with particular modes of knowing: natural science, psychology, political science, economics and so on. Behind this privilege accorded to philosophy is still the complex Greek notion of *logos*, the ‘gathering’ of being that informs Plato’s conception of dialectic and Aristotle’s view of metaphysics as first philosophy. Philosophy remains the discipline whose *eros* for being is pure, and which consequently possesses the *logos* absolutely, gathering being for knowledge without presupposing anything specific about the nature of being. This is what divides philosophy from, for example, the natural sciences, which assume for their purposes the existence of a matter whose nature can be described mathematically or empirically.

The Aristotelian and Platonic legacy to philosophy is this faith in the essential purity of reason, and in the universality of what it, when unhindered, discovers of being.

There is an affinity between reason and being. Reason is the most direct form of access to being, a purer mode of seeing. Being is a medium within which reason moves without hindrance. That which actually exists, the world that enfolds everyday life and constantly upsets our plans and evades our predictions, possesses an essential, internal order which reason can reveal precisely because it corresponds to the internal structure of reason itself: the discursive interconnection of orderly entailments, of grounds and consequences. Reason, to use more Platonic language, is the true suitor of being. It is always already in union with, is *immanent in* being. In relation to reason, our other faculties through which we become aware of the world, such as our senses, our memory and so on, must be judged and found wanting as modes of ‘seeing into’ being. Through them, the world is necessarily distorted, for being *resists* them. This does not simply mean that occasionally we may be mistaken about the world, but more radically, that the world itself appears through our senses and memory as shifting, provisional, elusive — in short, without *certainty*. Through our other faculties, the unity of reason with being is lost, and we become aware of the world as an opaque horizon of awareness; we recognise it in its *otherness*. Reassurance, however, is provided through reason, before which otherness recedes. This, we are sure, is because being always already belonged to reason anyway. It is reason, for example, that allows us to correct the mistakes we make through relying too much on our senses.

The idea of philosophy as an activity intimately bound up with the internal order of being, and which can therefore do without presuppositions about specific modes of being, already constitutes an attack on such particular presuppositions. From Parmenides onward, the implication is that, despite their necessity in the subordinate sciences, specific assumptions about the *essence* or meaning of being cannot ultimately result in anything more than a distortion of pure knowledge. The role of philosophy is therefore a sceptical one in relation to other sciences. In claiming for itself the role of *archē*-science, philosophy simultaneously withholds from subordinate disciplines the possibility of

justifying their own claims about knowledge. Each 'inferior' science is linked to a specific region of being, which is cut out of the whole, as it were, through the acceptance of axiomatic presuppositions.

In relation to the fundamental philosophical faith in reason, Scholasticism represented for Descartes a negative development. Scholastic philosophy, from his point of view, did not allow itself to be guided solely by the reason of the individual, but was instead assured of its status by Church dogma, a corpus of traditional beliefs whose authority was simply assumed. Consequently, the idea of the purity of the philosophical *eros* for being takes on an active, ascetic aspect in the Cartesian sceptical method. The certainty of reason's immanence in being cannot be secured simply through traditional doctrine and belief. It has to be demonstrated, and this can only occur through a free process of reasoning that is sceptical about all accepted beliefs, and which results in the discovery of an objective foundation of the unity of reason and being. Unless this certainty is secured in this way, then it will itself remain a belief, a matter of faith. If this is the case, then the Cartesian view of philosophy as *archē*-science is no different from that which it criticises. The need to prove that individuals, simply because they reason, have *a priori* knowledge without the need to rely on tradition, thus addresses two issues: a) whether a critical viewpoint can be taken upon accepted belief and tradition, and b) whether this viewpoint can, once it has raised the issue of the legitimacy of common assumptions, justify its own assumption of the unity of reason and being.

Importantly, this unity is interpreted by Descartes as the correspondence of the subject's own representations of the world (sensory, mnemonic, conceptual etc.) with a reality that is really external to or *other than* the subject. All knowledge of the world, of the soul or of God necessarily implies the presence of subjective representational content of one form or another. Thus it is from this content that a foundation must be extracted. No specific content (*doxa*) can be assumed to be such a firm foundation until it has been

subjected to a test, designed to expose any content whose correspondence with reality could be conditional or accidental.

It is Descartes' third methodological hypothesis, the excessive gesture which (temporarily) transforms God (the theological guarantee of correspondence) into an evil, deceiving demon, that makes the question of *conditional* knowledge decisive: anything that objectively (in all cases of its occurrence as an opinion or *doxa*) presupposes either pre-given conceptual knowledge, as in the case of a proposition like 'man is a rational animal',<sup>3</sup> or the intervention of faculties other than thought, as with all opinions that rely upon sensory evidence, can be considered to be only doubtfully valid. Such opinions are objectively dependent for their validity upon conditions, and as long as this is the case, we cannot know *that* we know them to be true, for the possibility of deception is held open as long as there remains a difference between an opinion and the criteria of its truth.

This problem of *certainty* requires its solution to be in the form of *unconditional* knowledge, foundational knowledge that we immediately know to be true without further criteria. The Cartesian *cogito* is supposed to serve as such immediate knowledge by virtue of both its content and its form: the proposition 'I am thinking' (*je pense*) together with the immediacy of the self-reflection that constitutes this thought is indubitable proof of my existence. When I entertain the proposition 'I am thinking' I know this without reference to criteria that may be doubted; indeed, to doubt the truth of this proposition is to produce a contradiction. Thought and the nature of an existent here correspond perfectly, if only temporarily, for the immediate certainty that guarantees the *cogito*, precisely because it is constituted in an act of attending that is supposed to be a direct seeing into the soul, only endures so long as this attending is maintained.

It is thus necessary to go further. The *cogito* grants formal certainty, for it gives us criteria for the objective correspondence of representation and reality, namely 'clarity' and 'distinctness', which are possessed by different classes of representation in various

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<sup>3</sup> Descartes, 1996, p. 17.

degrees, with the highest degree belonging to concepts. The move from the *cogito* to the proof of the existence of God is thus motivated by the needs of method, for in addition to formal criteria of certainty, it is necessary to establish the necessary existence of an objective ground of the necessary correspondence between all clear and distinct ideas and reality.<sup>4</sup> Again, this can only be achieved through the examination of subjective representations. Now, however, it is possible to go directly to the subject's store of *conceptual* representations, for these possess the required degree of clarity and distinctness. The notion of God, Descartes reports, is unique among these concepts, for it alone represents a perfect being. Through the notorious 'ontological proof', Descartes connects the idea of the infinite perfection that necessarily belongs to the idea of God with the idea of necessary existence: if God were to be thought as non-existent, then he would be imperfect and would not be God. Given that this premise produces a contradiction, God necessarily exists, as a real ground of the objective correspondence of our clear and distinct representations with reality.

Descartes believes that this result is a justification of the unity of subjective representation and reality, qualified by the restriction of this unity in its full sense to representations of reason. If this is so, then Cartesian reason proves its autonomy: it will have demonstrated that it possesses genuine knowledge of being (of the *res cogitans* and God), without requiring specific presuppositions about being in order to do so. The immanence of reason in being will have been proven, and otherness will have been domesticated.

The charge made against Descartes' rationalism by those who brought a parallel and also characteristically modern form of thought, namely empiricism, to fruition, however, is that his critical method is not critical enough. Despite beginning correctly, within the representations of the subject, it fails to adequately address the question of its own presuppositions, for in order to begin as Descartes does, it is necessary above all to

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<sup>4</sup> See Cottingham, 1995, pp. 64, 70-1.

maintain a faith in the autonomy of reason in order to eventually demonstrate it. This faith is not simply a temporary postulate, but is, in the form of Descartes' reliance on *innate ideas* as tools of method, actually an assumption that goes acknowledged. The ideas of the *res cogitans* and the infinitely perfect God are held to have a natural, *a priori* relation to being because of their content, for the content of either, when doubted, produces a contradiction. However, the idea that such concepts, because of their representative content, thereby possess a special ontological status, is placed under suspicion by the empiricists, and above all by Locke and Hume.<sup>5</sup>

This idea is itself, for the empiricists, an unwarranted assumption about the nature of reason, indicating a residual and reassuring faith in the immanence of *a priori* reason that remains unquestioned, which means that effectively Descartes already knows the answer to his enquiry when he sets out upon it. Pure reason only grasps being because being has already been gathered by reason, via an unacknowledged presupposition, and the boldness of the reason that makes God into a devil is simply show. Against this background assumption of the immanence of reason in being, the empiricist method concerns the genesis of representations, and of concepts in particular. The question of how representations come to be present in the mind at all is privileged as more fundamental than the problem of how it is possible that these representations could adequately represent being, and be a source of objective knowledge.

Through his account of the origin of ideas in sensibility, the passions, and the associative principles that act as natural laws of the mind, Hume above all others constructs on an empirical basis a notion of reason as concerned only with *belief* in the regularity of our subjective experience, as opposed to objective knowledge of the uniformity of the order of external being. Reason is therefore heteronomous, a subspecies of passion, an *eros* without any overtones of 'gathering', its function instead being to support those beliefs about experience that are based upon good evidence

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<sup>5</sup> As when Hume (1990, Bk 1, pt 3, §1) distinguishes matters of fact from relations of ideas.



(constant conjunctions of impressions). The issue is no longer the correspondence of representations with what exists outside the subject. For Hume, the meaning of the idea of necessary connection is not dependent upon its reference to, say, a causal power that inheres in substances. Instead, its meaning comes from the relations that exist between ideas imprinted in the memory by constantly repeated instances of pairs of impressions. The only relation of representation exists between impressions and the ideas that literally *re-present* them.<sup>6</sup> Hence reason confronts mental contents that retain for it a certain opaqueness or otherness, for they are somehow given to it, and are indeed its own wellspring. The idea that it can overcome this opaqueness is the result of a misapplication of reason beyond the bounds to which it is limited by its contingent, merely given origin.

The empiricist critique of Descartes' defence of the immanence of reason in being is important for our theme of the trauma of reason. For Hume, reason is dependent on an empirical contingency that it cannot itself account for. The possibility of there being a regularity that is internal to the source of impressions, whatever it may be, cannot be thought without abstracting from the contents of the mind. The otherness of external reality is here seen as the genetic condition of reason itself, for it somehow provides an opaque stimulus that gives rise to the habit of reasoning.

With Kant, the validity of *a priori* reasoning is defended in a way that cedes ground to the empiricist critique, but then goes on to undermine it. The methodological stance reason takes with respect to itself is no longer sceptical in Descartes' sense, where one only has to rid oneself of the conditionally certain in order to ascend without difficulty to the unconditional. *Kritik* as method signifies that the *very capacity* of reason for knowledge must itself be examined and criticised. Kant agrees with the empiricists that pure ideas alone cannot provide an adequate measure of what constitutes genuine knowledge of objects. Sensibility has to have a role, and so if reason is to be

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<sup>6</sup> Hume, 1979, §2, §4; 1990, Bk. 1, Pt 1, §1 & Pt 3, §§2-8.

autonomously capable of providing *a priori* knowledge, it must itself be the condition of possibility for making judgements about the external world to which sensibility gives access. Hence Kant, in agreeing with the empiricists, simultaneously turns against them. For Kant, it is the spontaneous and discursive-rational structure of the representing subject's consciousness that makes possible the kind of discriminating power that enables Hume's subject to even tell the difference between two impressions. For Kant, *transcendental subjectivity* is necessary in order to make subjective *presentations* possible, without which the thought of real externality and of *re-presentations* would be impossible.

For Descartes, the immanence of reason in being (the autonomy of philosophical reason) had to be demonstrated with reference to the content of our representations of what is. This provoked the empiricist response. Kant, however, understands the demonstration of the immanence of reason in being, of the right of reason to determine what is, in a formal sense. Our very consciousness of external objects, and even of individual impressions, is only made possible by the structure of our reason. If we can determine this conditioning structure, we will have proof of the autonomy of reason. The capacity of reason to determine 'what is' is thus conditioned by its capacity to determine itself, to be immanent to itself. In this way, Kant sees reason as having the power to recognise its own limits as immanent to it — as necessitated by its own structure, rather than being forced upon it from outside, as in Hume's account. Reason has the right to *a priori* knowledge because it also has the power to legislate the forms of possible experience, under which alone objects can be presented. Knowledge of these forms thus constitutes objective *a priori* knowledge of experience. Once this right has been proved, pure reason will have, through a consistent critical epistemology, demonstrated that it alone has the right to assess truth-claims about being.

Reason is thus, for Kant, immanent to our experience of objects, and this is demonstrated by an immanent self-examination on the part of reason. But this

determination of 'what is' is *our* experience, our presentations of objects: an element of externality or otherness remains, in the *Ding-an-sich*, the thing-in-itself, which is never an object of experience, only a limit on the extension of objective knowledge and the source of sensation, the material of experience.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, this limit is immanent to reason's own structure, for it establishes the boundaries of objective knowledge. While reason has this proper (*de jure*), autonomous or immanent limit, it nevertheless tends to transgress it, and mire itself not in error, but in *transcendental illusion*, by claiming knowledge of the nature of the thing-in-itself, as in the modern rationalist tradition from Descartes to Wolff. However, reason is sovereign within its own limits, and must defend its domain (*ditio*) (CJ 174/13) by showing how it is possible to determine concrete *a priori* knowledge of both theoretical and practical or moral matters (what *is* and what *ought to be*, finite necessity and infinite freedom) within these limits, thus demonstrating that both natural science and ethical life can be accounted for by self-critical reason.

Kant's defence of *a priori* knowledge develops as a response to the German Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*), by taking a stand against the resurgence of an unprincipled *faith* in reason. As such it is coeval with a more direct and negative reaction against the Enlightenment, beginning with Hamann and Herder. Nevertheless, Kant remains allied with the *Aufklärer*, raising the standard of independent, protestant reason against all traditional forms of authority, whether Church, State or academy. The struggle for the right to use one's own reason brings to light the implicit political dimension of the modern epistemological tradition: all claims to authority must present themselves before the tribunal of reason and be judged. But first, as Kant acknowledges, reason has first to criticise its own excesses, in order to provide criteria by which illegitimate claims can be exposed, and in order to justify the authority of its own tribunal. This is the central import of our presentation thus far.

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<sup>7</sup> See P §9.

Despite Kant's restrictions on reason's right to determine 'what is', however, the problem of presuppositions returns, concerning the self-consistency of the critical method. If critical reason alone is to determine the validity of its claim to *a priori* knowledge, then a question arises: how is reason's right to *criticise itself* justified? Chief among the tenets of critical reason is that everything can be criticised, except the immanent relation of reason *to itself* that defines the very concept of criticism.<sup>8</sup> This relation seems to testify to a residue of otherness, for reason's right to examine itself is accepted as *given*. The immanence of reason to itself has not been demonstrated, and so neither has the right of reason to determine 'what is', even within certain limits.

Massing behind the vanguard of the direct reaction against the Enlightenment and its supporter Kant, and appalled at the political and theological consequences of unrestrained critique, opponents of the critical turn gave a different form to the sceptical question: they raised doubts about the supposedly singular right of reason to question everything else. One such thinker, F. H. Jacobi, gave a name to a pathological condition of modern thought, exemplified by Kantian philosophy and defined by a need always to validate values, to provide sufficient reasons for beliefs: nihilism.<sup>9</sup> The major symptom of this condition is an infinite regress of justifications, which results from the attempt to locate a first principle capable of grounding knowledge. Reason's right to critique must be established, and then the right of reason to establish the right of critique, and so on. This impossible labour creates an abyss of meaninglessness into which all beliefs and values disappear.<sup>10</sup>

At this point, the question of a trauma of reason that is truly — immanently, one might say — a pathology of reason can be raised. The modern epistemological tradition, by allying itself at a fundamental level with scepticism, has courted this condition in

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<sup>8</sup> Beiser, 1987, pp. 1-2; Cutrefello, 1994, pp. 1-5.

<sup>9</sup> Beiser, *op. cit.*, pp. 81ff.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30-1.

various partial forms. We have still not yet arrived, in this account, at the point where it insinuates itself into reason itself, perhaps finally severing, in Rose's words, *eros* from *logos*. We have, however, seen reason driven back into itself, from an initially assumed position of confidence, forced to become ever more wary of its own pretensions, until, with the reaction against the Enlightenment, the political and philosophical desire for freedom from illegitimate authority becomes paralysed by the self-defeating attempts of reason to justify itself as a universally competent judge, capable of stopping the desire for freedom from becoming arbitrary and mired in violence and cynicism.

Nevertheless, a further step remains to be taken in this narrative. Almost a century after the struggle between Kant and his opponents reached its height, Nietzsche, in thematising 'modern nihilism' as the most pressing problem of the age, described it as an antagonism between two tendencies — '*not* to esteem what we know, and not to be *allowed* any longer to esteem the lies we should like to tell ourselves', a 'process of dissolution'.<sup>11</sup> The philosopher finds herself faced with a fabricated world to which she has 'absolutely no right' simply by virtue of her reason,<sup>12</sup> and must confront it through the medium of a force that is like a surging 'otherness' at the heart of reason itself, namely the will-to-power. The next chapter will give an account of how Western philosophy comes to be faced by this situation, by showing how reason, at the height of its ambition in German Idealism, subjects itself to this its own deepest pathology. As we will see, the result of Fichte and Schelling's attempts to provide foundational justifications for the right of reason to examine itself result in the discovery of an irrational 'remainder' that is not simply other than reason, but is an otherness that is 'inside' reason, and indeed is its own condition. This will threaten reason with the possibility that it *cannot* be immanent even to itself.

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<sup>11</sup> Nietzsche, 1968, §5.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, §12.

Before we take this step, a word about the choice of Hegel and Deleuze as mediators between ourselves and the trauma of reason. The significance of this choice can only ultimately be proven by the rest of the thesis. However, a few preliminary remarks about the general approach I am taking in relation to these figures are in order. Given that my presentation of the trauma of reason is completed with an examination of Schelling, with whom the development of the trauma is consummated, the period of historical time in which the trauma could be said to be the central if not always acknowledged problem in Western thought is one in which Hegel and Deleuze stand at opposite ends, and also one in which Hegel's influence has, up to the present, been largely decisive.

Deleuze's desire to break radically with the Hegelian tradition is, I think, particularly suggestive of the difficulties that philosophical thought faces in the wake of Schelling's critique of *a priori* reason, for the redefinition of critique that Deleuze undertakes is, in method, execution and result (as I shall show), directly related to the results of Schelling's critique. I shall argue in Chapters Three and Four that Deleuze's ontological turn against Kantianism (and its phenomenological legacy) in general performs a similar philosophical role to Schelling's ontological turn against Fichte. My emphasis will be on the continuity of Deleuze's thought, from the early 'historical' writings to *What is Philosophy?*, more specifically, the way in which it is an attempt at a fully rigorous meditation on the role of the Absolute in philosophy. This stress on continuity, and the foregrounding of the Absolute, is in my opinion absolutely necessary in order to grasp the uniqueness of Deleuze's position in post-war French philosophy as an *ontological* thinker of difference. For reasons of space, given this concentration on continuity, I have unfortunately had to omit any extended investigation of the specific social-theoretical concerns of the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, without, I believe, doing any excessive violence to Deleuze's multifaceted *oeuvre*, in so far as its development is concerned.

The relationship between Hegel and Deleuze has often been viewed, by both Hegelian and Deleuzian commentators, as one of utter incommensurability.<sup>13</sup> However, by reading their work together in the context of a common thematic territory, I hope to dispel inaccuracies, or rather, illusions emanating from both camps. The notion that Deleuze is simply a bad reader of Hegel, and the opposed idea that Deleuze gets Hegel absolutely right and can thus dispense with him, both evince equally Oedipal attitudes (with a conservative and a radical inflection, respectively). Deleuze's own remarks on the aesthetic effect of Hegelianism upon him (D 21-3/12-15) should alert us to the possibility that his 'creative misreadings' of philosophers such as Spinoza and Nietzsche might stand alongside an equally strategic treatment of Hegel. This means that, in re-reading Hegel, it is necessary to point out how Deleuze distorts his work, but this does not immediately serve as a justification for discarding Deleuze. The overriding issue will be the trauma of reason, and how this crisis which, as I suggested at the outset, has become intimately familiar to Western philosophers, might be overcome. Hence the philosophies of Hegel and Deleuze must be understood *for themselves* in relation to this issue, before they can be assessed in relation to each other.

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<sup>13</sup> See in particular Williams, 1997 (Hegelian), and Hardt, 1993 (Deleuzian).

## Chapter Two

### Kant, Fichte and Schelling: the Trauma of Reason

#### *i) Introduction*

For Kant, the emphasis placed by the Enlightenment upon the entitlements of pure, disinterested reason requires that these entitlements be proven. Hume's account of the empirical origin of ideas, and his distinction between mere relations of ideas and matters of fact, compromise any rationalist faith in pure reason and mean that a justification of the validity of *a priori* judgements is needed before the Enlightenment's all-encompassing critique of tradition can claim any degree of success. The political content of this critique has been well-documented: a revolution directed against 'superstition' by a freethinking élite in the name of the powers of universal reason. But in order not to contradict its own aims, the political critique requires an epistemology founded upon an objective foundation of reason's authority in disputes concerning legitimacy. This project of justification drives Kant's mature thought, throughout the three *Critiques* and beyond. By outlining Kant's critical project, and the ways in which Fichte and Schelling address issues arising out of this project, this chapter will determine the meaning of what has already been referred to as the 'trauma of reason'.

#### *ii) Kant's Critique of Knowledge*

Kant's famous remark that it was the philosophy of Hume that first caused him to awake from the 'dogmatic slumber' into which Wolffian rationalism had cast him gives us a starting point for our enquiry. Hume's denial of objective validity to *a priori* judgement, and particularly to the rationalist keystone, the principle of causality or of sufficient reason (in both its 'strong' and 'weak' senses<sup>1</sup>) exemplifies for Kant the danger radical scepticism poses to its

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<sup>1</sup> On the 'weak' sense (every event has a cause), see Hume, 1983, §§ 4-5, 7; on the 'strong' sense (similar events have similar causes), see Hume, 1990, Pt. III.



parent, philosophy: an ‘anarchy’ (CPuR A1x) of the kind he himself was subsequently accused of creating, where no sure foundations of knowledge exist.

With Hume, psychology becomes a sceptical weapon: reason’s functions are constituted according to habit and the rationally unaccountable and contingent passions. An adequate response to Hume must show that knowledge through reason alone does necessarily or *de jure* possess objective validity. Thus Kant’s ‘subjective turn’ entails an examination of reason conducted by reason itself, in order to, following Locke, ‘examine our own powers, and see to what things they [are] adapted’.<sup>2</sup> The first move is to distinguish between this preliminary task of immanent *critique* and real knowledge (metaphysics) itself: the possibility of objective *a priori* knowledge must be established by enumerating all the principles without which such knowledge would be impossible, a negative *canon* of principles as opposed to a positive *organon* of actual knowledge (CPuR A12/B25-6; A62-3/B87-8).

For example, Hume argues that the principle of causality cannot be objectively valid independent of empirical experience, given that it is only through recurring experiences of conjunction that we become conscious of it in the first place. This principle is thus only an abstract idea, the means by which consciousness represents to itself a feeling connected with the character of its experiences, and is thus only contingently valid. Kant questions the presuppositions of Hume’s genetic account of the ‘feeling’ of reason, by asking how it is possible that conscious experience should itself be of such a character as to contain such things as conjoined representations. The empiricist *tabula rasa* brackets out the question of the possibility of experience, that is, of its necessary formal constituents, in favour of the question of its actual, contingent origins. For Kant, as for Leibniz, the *tabula rasa* must itself already possess a certain structure if it is to be capable of representational consciousness, i.e., consciousness of real externality. This structure would in fact be presupposed by any enquiry like Hume’s.

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<sup>2</sup> Locke, 1990, Introduction, §7.

Kant entitles this deep structure the *transcendental* region of subjectivity, through which the determination of the empirical, conscious subject, the object of psychology, is itself made possible. The principles that govern transcendental subjectivity are the necessary conditions of any experience of real existence, whether that of an independent object or that of the subject itself. If these principles can be completely enumerated (CPuR A13/B27) and proven to be necessary formal constituents of experience, then reason's right to *a priori* knowledge, and hence its autonomy, will have been justified.

Important to both the Leibnizian and empiricist lines of post-Cartesian descent is the distinction between knowledge of matters of fact and knowledge of relations of ideas. The problem of objective validity only arises in the former case, as relations of ideas merely imply *analytic* relations of entailment, whereas *synthetic* propositions about matters of fact have a bearing on the actual content of experience, which is given to the subject in some sense, and which, as Hume in particular emphatically points out, cannot therefore be assumed to be structured in accordance with the formal, discursive rules that determine conscious reasoning.

Kant's response is that the very presentation (*Darstellung*) of the content of experience itself is only made possible by formal transcendental principles or structures. These structures are necessary conditions of all actual empirical knowledge of objects and thus our knowledge of them constitutes foundational knowledge of the nature of all possible experience. Our knowledge of them will be both *synthetic*, in that the structures that are its object purport to describe the inner structure of the given, and yet *a priori*, in that these structures are the necessary conditions of all empirical experience and knowledge. If objective knowledge through pure reason alone can be had, then the discursive or rational components of these formal structures must ultimately be the necessary conditions of the possibility of the non-discursive formal components. While Kant affirms the traditional dichotomy of reason and intuition, via his methodological distinction between spontaneous and receptive faculties (CPuR A51/B75), he also affirms the inseparability of their respective functions in relation to knowledge under the overall dominance of reason.

This is not the limit of Kant's project. If reason must determine what it can know about real entities, and thereby limit itself, it must also establish its own freedom, by showing that it can prescribe forms of principled action beyond the limits imposed on human beings by the present. This practical dimension is both moral and political, for it implies both regulation of an individual's own actions, and the possibility of criticising prevailing institutional constraints on individual agency. Human being has two major aspects, the powers of cognition and desire (CJ 167/3-4), each related through reason to a different object: the theoretical object, which is given to the subject as actually existing, and the practical object or end, that which *ought to be*, which the subject produces (CPuR Bix-x). Reason thus has a theoretical and a practical form, and Kant's project must be to determine two sets of conditions, for cognitive and for moral experience. A full justification of reason must show that, in both cases, the conditions under which an object can be objectively known are themselves *unconditionally* knowable through pure reason alone, an aim that Kant sometimes describes as the discovery of the ultimate unity of these two forms of reason, a proof of its final autonomy (e.g. CPuR A326/B382-3; A333-4/B390-1).

#### **a) *Theoretical Knowledge***

The ultimate conditions of theoretical knowledge are those discursive forms which alone present (*darstellen*) an object as existing *in relation to* subjectivity in general. Objective theoretical knowledge is thus only knowledge of objects as determined for the subject under these forms. To represent (*vorstellen*) an object as it is *in itself* is not at all contradictory. However, precisely because this represents the object without relating it to the discursive and non-discursive conditions of real objective knowledge, Kant assigns to it the status of the purely *thinkable*, that which accords with the rules of formal logic but not with those of the *transcendental* logic that governs the conditions of the possibility of experience (CPuR A50-

7/B74-82). Nevertheless, Kant does not entirely follow Hume's injunction to commit such ideas to the flames,<sup>3</sup> as we shall see.

Rationalist metaphysics assumes that reason is immanent in being, as we saw in Chapter One with respect to the doctrine of 'innate ideas'. The ontological proof is the capstone of this assurance: metaphysics, down to Kant's own day, is satisfied that its objective validity is ultimately *analytic*. It believes it can have objective and *a priori* knowledge of a thing-in-itself, because, above all, the ontological proof demonstrates that reason is capable of proving the existence of the highest entity by simply examining itself and its own idea of God. But the empiricist critique forces a re-evaluation of this assurance, by pointing out that the mere analysis of an idea, even when this is an idea of God, can only evaluate its logical validity and not its relation to matters of fact. Kant's response is to give ground to empiricism, by denying objective validity to representations of things-in-themselves. Metaphysics assumed that reason, considered as an 'intellectual intuition' independent of sensibility, can objectively represent things-in-themselves. For Kant, this is a wholly unrestrained and therefore *transcendent* use of pure reason (CPuR A569/B597), to which objectivity must be denied.

With this in mind, we can now examine Kant's attempt to inventory the conditions of possible experience, beginning with the non-discursive. For Kant, the forms inherent to intuition allow us to both present a given sensation to ourselves in empirical experience as something manifold or differentiated, and to present *a priori* intuitions of objects, as in geometry. These forms are *a priori* because they cannot be abstracted from empirical objects; instead, they are necessary if any presentation of an empirical object is to be even possible. If it is possible to be conscious of an object as distinct from anything else, including ourselves, it must first be distinguishable according to its spatial and temporal location; minimally, we must be able to mark it as 'here' and 'now' (CPuR A23-4/B38-9; A30-1/B46-7). The divisible unities of space and time are thus not given to us within an intuition of an object, and so they must 'come first'

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<sup>3</sup> Hume, 1983, §12, Pt. 3, p. 165.

as formal intuitions, constituting the *a priori* conditions of the possibility of any intuition. This means, though, that they are simply forms of *our* intuitions, and that the manifold of intuition is only the appearance (*Erscheinung*) of objects in relation to us (phenomena), while still being *given* to intuition and not somehow generated subjectively as an illusion (*Schein*) (CPuR B69-70).

Kant needs to show, however, that it is *reason* that legislates the forms of possible experience. The opportunity to demonstrate this is offered by the fact that the possibility of formal intuitions, i.e., intuitions of the form of space and time in general, cannot be explained solely with reference to intuition. From the standpoint of intuition, it is not possible to examine its essential forms in order to account for them in any way. This is because intuition, being non-discursive and passive, is only 'in' its forms. Reason, on the other hand, is spontaneous and capable of reflecting upon itself. In CPuR's 'Transcendental Deduction', Kant develops reflexive arguments to show that, from the standpoint of reason, formal intuitions are only made possible by reason's own structure.

If this is so, then certain discursive determinations will be necessary to stabilise any possible intuitive presentation. These must be a finite set of lawlike principles, in order to safeguard the regularity of experience by giving it definite limits. Kant differentiates these finite principles of knowledge from the infinite (but unsecured) possibilities afforded by pure thought with the aid of Wolff's distinction between two spontaneous, rational faculties:<sup>4</sup> Understanding (*Verstand*) and pure Reason (*Vernunft*). The Understanding's *a priori* elements, the rules that stabilise the manifold of intuition, comprise Kant's table of twelve *a priori* concepts or categories, which mirror, within transcendental logic, the purely formal functions of judgement in general logic (CPuR A70/B95; A80/B106). The transcendental syntheses of the manifold made possible by these rules will be synthetic in an analogical sense: they will constitute the identity of heterogeneous elements (CPuR A79/B104), of the non-discursive and the discursive.

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<sup>4</sup> Caygill, 1995, p. 347.

Kant's use of *Deduktion* as the title for the central section of CPuR does not, then, imply a deductive argument based on an unconditionally true proposition. Instead, the sense of this term as employed by German jurists of Kant's time is intended: the *de jure* right of reason to the matter at hand, objective knowledge, must be proven or deduced (CPuR A84-5/B116-7). The deduction of the categories will be completed by a final, discursive foundation of possibility: a condition of all the other conditions that requires no further proof of its own possibility.

The A and B versions of the Deduction, despite differences of approach and emphasis, both argue that the discursive concept, as a predicate of synthetic judgement, is a necessary condition of both the unity of the manifold in the presentation of an object, and of the possibility of its being subsequently recognised by the subject or reproduced in acts of remembering. Each version also proposes that a foundational condition of possibility must entail the necessary formal unity of all possible contents of consciousness. Kant calls this condition the transcendental unity of apperception, a thought or representation of the fundamental unity of the subject with itself that is necessary if consciousness is to be determinate at all. This unity is thus the unity of all the possible presentations which the subject can have of an object, or the sense in which all these contents (whether *a priori* or empirical) must necessarily belong to the same subject in order for them to be synthesised in the first place. This unity cannot be explained as either a product of mechanical causation or as an attribute of noumenal substance, as it is a *logical* unity required by any representation, including those representations determined according to the categories of causation and substance. As such, it is the most fundamental form of regularity to which the intuited manifold is subject, and can only be a relation of the subject to its own activity that does not itself presuppose any of the conditions enumerated so far. Kant thus shows that, in order for there to be experience of objects, it is necessary for the subject to be implicitly conscious of its own determining activity with respect to the object, that is, of the fact that it 'takes' itself to be determining an object in

such-and-such a way.<sup>5</sup> This self-consciousness is neither knowledge of the subject as a phenomenal object, nor some ‘intellectual intuition’ of the subject as it is in itself.

Kant remarks in the second edition of CPuR that the representation ‘I think’, which can potentially accompany all representations as a mark of self-consciousness and thus identify them as belonging to a single subject, is always itself accompanied by the subject’s indeterminate empirical sense of its own existence (CPuR B422-3n)<sup>6</sup>. This intuition of existence is, unlike empirical intuitions of subjective states, not given through the mediation of other formal conditions (‘existence’ here is ‘not a category’). Neither, however, is it an intellectual intuition of a thing-in-itself. Instead, it is represented by the *purely intellectual* representation ‘I think’, a representation that denotes (*bezeichnet*) the reality of the foundational spontaneity of the subject.<sup>7</sup> The ‘I think’ does not therefore express *a priori* knowledge of the essence of a substance, as it did for Descartes. It simply points to an actuality that can never be determined for consciousness under the rules that make objects of experience possible, as it is itself the condition of all conscious representation. This logical and negative (as opposed to metaphysical, substantial and positive) result completes the formal deduction of the categories and the first part of Kant’s justification of reason.

The Deduction, however, only demonstrates that a certain formal unity of the subject is necessary for the conscious experience of an object in general to be possible. It does not show that this unity is actually specified as synthetic *a priori* knowledge of the determinate form of an object. Kant undertakes this task in the Schematism and the Analytic of Principles, where he aims to show that the categories understood as purely logical functions *do* provide determinate rules for the synthesis of intuitions. This would demonstrate that the rules of synthesis they

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<sup>5</sup> Pippin, 1987, pp. 459-60.

<sup>6</sup> See also Makkreel, 1991, p. 105.

<sup>7</sup> Pippin, *op. cit.*, pp. 454-5.

represent are *actually* transcendental conditions, and not merely logically possible modes of synthesis.

Time is the form of *inner* intuition in which all appearances are given. Each category is thus shown to represent a general rule for a synthesis of time. The applicability of this rule to particular intuitions has to be established, in order to knot together the faculties of intuition and Understanding within a synthetic unity. This is ensured by the role of the productive imagination, a mediating faculty that partakes of the natures of both the other faculties (CPuR A138/B177), and which produces a *schema*, a determination of time that is given *a priori* by the imagination to each category. For example, the schema of *permanence* applies to the category of substance, while that of *irreversible succession* applies to causality. Insofar as the schema participates in the sensible, intuition gives it specificity in time or particularity; insofar as it participates in the conceptual, the Understanding grants it universality. The schemata show that the categories do, in actuality, constitute *a priori* knowledge of the form of an object in general.

#### ***b) The Ideas of Pure Reason***

The forms of intuition, the categories, the spontaneous unity of consciousness, and the schemata, complete Kant's inventory of the transcendental conditions that are *immanent to* or *constitutive of* possible objective experience (appearance). The first *Critique's* 'Transcendental Dialectic' uses this inventory to criticise the Understanding's natural tendency to extend the use of the forms of intuition or the categories beyond the limits of their legitimate employment to appearances or *phenomena*. This tendency consists in the conviction that the formal conditions of knowledge also apply to judgements about things-in-themselves or *noumena*, as in the proposition that the basis of consciousness is an enduring soul-substance. To claim either that space and time (instead of being forms of *our* intuitions) actually inhere in the substance of things-in-themselves, or that they do not although we can nevertheless objectively determine things-in-themselves as, say, causes or substances, is to contravene the immanent restrictions



upon valid *a priori* knowledge. Such contraventions are not, therefore, erroneous judgements about real thing-in-themselves. For Kant, they are distortions of the immanent role of reason in experience, or *transcendental illusions* that illegitimately presuppose an entitlement for reason that it cannot justify.

Despite this, representations of thing-in-themselves do have a transcendental role with respect to objective knowledge. This concerns the sense in which, as a concept of an object isolated from the conditions (*Bedingungen*) of objective knowledge, the concept of a thing-in-itself is connected to the logical value of the unconditional (*das Unbedingte*). Following Plato, Kant entitles such a representation an Idea (*Idee*) rather than a category. Whereas the category has objective validity because it determines the intuited manifold, the Idea by definition does not relate to any possible intuition. As a concept of pure reason, it is only related to other concepts, via general logical principles.

However, Kant finds that he has to give an epistemological role to the Idea in order to provide a truly comprehensive answer to Hume. By denying objective validity to the principle of necessary connection, Hume attacked the notion of causality on two fronts. The principle of necessary connection, for Hume, conceals the presupposition of the uniformity of nature. Behind the ‘weak’ sense of causality, i.e., that every event has a cause, lies the ‘strong’ sense, i.e., that effects of type *y* necessarily have causes of type *x*, and so future occurrences of *x* will necessarily be followed by cases of *y*. Kant recognises these two aspects, arguing that ‘appearances are themselves subject to [a fixed] rule, and that in the manifold of these representations a coexistence or sequence takes place in conformity with certain rules [...]’ (CPuR A100).

In order that experience should not be, at bottom, essentially chaotic, it is necessary that it possess a unity both formal and material: it should be subject to a fixed, general order, and should also happen ‘in conformity with certain rules’. In other words, experience should exhibit an overall regularity, together with a concretely specified uniformity. Kant’s Transcendental Deduction and the schematism of the category of causality in the Second Analogy demonstrate

that conscious experience exhibits, from moment to moment, a formal regularity.<sup>8</sup> However, this only demonstrates that causality in the 'weak' sense is a principle that is constitutive of experience and therefore objectively valid *a priori*. It does not show that similar events have similar causes, and cannot therefore demonstrate that the uniformity of nature is a necessary condition of experience.

A further problem is that a proof of the transcendental status of the uniformity principle would require that nature is *in itself* uniform. Kant's restriction of properly *a priori* knowledge to the canon of conditions that make experience possible means that such a proof could not be given *a priori*, as the entirety of nature cannot be given to the subject as the object of a single intuition (CPuR A328/B384). In this case, it seems that a complete justification of the principle of necessary connection is not possible. Nevertheless, the argument in the Second Analogy cannot be the last word, as Kant has stated from the outset that the critical philosophy must show how natural science is possible (CPuR B17-18). Science presupposes the possibility of the objective existence of a regular or unified empirical manifold, which is guaranteed by the category of causality.

What the category of causality does not guarantee, however, is the actual or material regularity of the manifold. There is thus no guarantee that empirical nature exhibits an overall systematic regularity, or in other words, that empirical concepts of nature can have necessary interconnections. As John H. Zammito puts it, while Kant 'argued against Hume that the concept of causality was necessary at the transcendental level, he acknowledged at the same time that Hume has every right to consider any empirical application of that principle contingent.'<sup>9</sup> Hence Kant has not shown that natural science is indeed based on firm foundations, and has thus not shown that reason is capable of *a priori* knowledge. Unless the assumption of the uniformity or *systematic* unity of the manifold can be deduced as a

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<sup>8</sup> On the aim and scope of Kant's argument in the Second Analogy, see Allison, 1983, Pt. III, Ch. 10, esp. p. 216.

<sup>9</sup> Zammito, 1992, p. 159.

transcendental condition of the actual employment of the Understanding, then, as Kant recognises, not only will there be 'no coherent employment of the Understanding', but also 'no sufficient criterion of empirical truth' (CPuR A651/B679).

Kant attempts to solve this problem in CPuR by showing that pure reason is the faculty that directs the empirical use of the Understanding. This would prove that the *a posteriori* discovery of the real forms of the uniformity of nature is possible for science, while avoiding the illegitimate conclusion that these forms can be known *a priori*. In the Transcendental Dialectic, Kant tries to show that the Idea of the uniformity of nature is a necessary condition of any empirical use of the Understanding. If this is successful, then Kant has demonstrated that pure reason can furnish the *a priori* principles of natural science.

Because the thought of an object in general depends upon the *a priori* concept of causality, Kant can argue that reason, understood as that faculty whose role in general logic is to determine the analytic relations between pure concepts, has the transcendental vocation of enabling specific empirical relations of ground-and-consequent to be determined between objects of the Understanding, with the overall purpose of unifying empirical scientific knowledge. General or formal logic relates propositions to each other by means of syllogisms. In any given syllogism, the truth of its conclusion is conditioned by the truth of its premises, which can be thought of as determined by other syllogisms, and so on to infinity. But we have a non-contradictory idea of the totality of truth-conditions, which is itself subject to no further condition (CPuR A321/B377ff). This unconditional logical *Idea* has to be distinguished from the categories. Whereas the categories are transcendental versions of the logical functions of judgement, the *unconditional* logical *Idea* is the formal basis of the three pure transcendental concepts or *Ideas*. We are aware of our own state and the state of independent objects, forming two series of conditioned objective determinations. We can represent with an *Idea* (*soul* and *cosmos*) the unconditional totality of conditions in each case, and can also represent the unity of the two series in another *Idea* (*God*) (CPuR A333-4/B390-1), preserving the overall unity of the natural order.

The unconditional allows, in formal logic, the construction of series of syllogisms in ascending or descending directions. Ascending, these determine the conditions of the premises at increasing levels of generality; descending, these situate each conclusion as a premise of a new syllogism. In its transcendental role, reason determines appearances in a similar twofold way — subsuming them under empirically determined principles of classification at levels of increasing generality, or enabling future cases to be inferred on the basis of previous regularities.

However, Kant is careful to withhold from the Ideas the objective and *constitutive* epistemological status attributed to the categories. The unconditional totality of conditions cannot be given in an intuition, for the Idea of it represents, not just a finite aggregate of objects, but a unity with infinite extension that cannot itself be conceived of as conditioned by, or subject to, the forms of space and time. Hence the Ideas do not represent an illegitimate use of reason, but are instead *regulative* rules for the systematic investigation and mapping of empirical experience. In this, they are analogues of the schemata (CPuR A664-5/B692-3), but are not constitutive as they are derived from the merely subjectively valid principles of general logic, which operates independently of intuition (CPuR A336/B393). It is thus a necessary condition of empirical science that we should *assume* that the order of nature is structured to conform to our reason. We do not therefore know that nature is in itself systematically structured, but we do know that reason is capable of discovering conditions (the Ideas) that justify our assuming this so that we can go on to discover actual regularities in nature *a posteriori*. The Ideas of pure reason, while not being constitutive conditions of any possible experience, are regulative conditions of empirical experience.

### c) *Practical Knowledge*

Kant sets out to explain the possibility of the objective validity of representational consciousness, which requires that he divide the actual experiential domain into experience of objects that *exist* and experience of objects that *ought* to exist. Experience of existing objects

requires consciousness of necessary connection to be a condition of the manifold of intuition, which would prove that natural science is possible. The second kind of experience demands that it be proven that consciousness of freedom is a condition of purposive action, which would demonstrate that morality is possible.

Kant's analysis of the practical employment of pure reason in CPrR and GMM is intended to demonstrate that there are secure foundations for *a priori* knowledge of an objective morality, which would both prescribe a universal duty for all rational beings, and demand that the authority of this moral order be recognised as supreme over and above that of existing political arrangements. A universal morality would only be objectively possible if reason possesses by right a concept of causality that is objectively valid *without* the schema of succession, an unconditional, free and purposive mode of causation (GMM 397-400/10-13).

The Idea of purposive or rational freedom is central to Kant's resolution of the Third Antinomy of Pure Reason in CPuR, where it is discussed as the purely thinkable, hypothetical causality that we can attribute to the unconditional or thing-in-itself (CPuR A538/B566). The Third Antinomy is an undecidable conflict between two theses on causality: a) that freedom is the necessary ground of appearance, and b) that the only form of causation is mechanical. The first thesis dogmatically posits the Idea as an objective ground of existence, while the second assumes that such a ground cannot exist. Kant's answer to this conflict refuses the former as transcendent and the second as against the interest of reason in morality. Instead, he gives a *negative* presentation of freedom as the merely thinkable Idea of the regulative unity of all causal conditions, in the manner discussed in the previous section.

If this negative, formal definition of freedom could be objectively justified in the sphere of practical reason, then pure reason would be shown to have an objective practical component that would buttress the regulative role of pure reason. The assumption that the natural order is inherently uniform would therefore not only be theoretically necessary in order for empirical scientific investigation to be possible. It would also be an indefeasible moral duty to assume the overarching existence of such a unity, which implies not merely mechanical uniformity, but a

purposive totality. Kant thus refers to freedom as 'the keystone of the whole architecture of the system of pure reason and even of speculative [theoretical] reason' (CPrR 4/3), explicitly elevating practical reason above the theoretical form (CPrR 120-1/124-6). The final unity of reason would thus consist in this hierarchical relation.

So Kant must show that we can know *a priori* that we can act freely to produce real effects in the world, independently of natural causal series. All motivations that prescribe particular goals, such as hunger, sexual desire and so on, belong to such natural causal series. These series generate subjective inclinations towards the satisfaction of needs. Such inclinations are *heteronomous* motives for action to which, for Kant, we freely accede. They are actual determinations of the empirical subject, rather than transcendental conditions of all practical experience.

A determining motive with an absolute, objective value as opposed to a conditional, subjective one would have value only through itself. A candidate for this role is the love of duty, a will to act in accordance with the moral law out of respect for the law alone, rather than in the service of a particular goal — a *disinterested* practical interest to mirror the theoretical interest in disinterested, objective truth. For this motive to be objectively possible, reason must be able to freely determine the will to act without imposing a particular content upon it as its conditioned object. In other words, the will must be capable of being given a purely formal determination. Kant formulates this condition of possibility as the 'categorical imperative' in its first, canonical form: 'Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law' (GMM 421/30). The only condition to which this principle refers is the purely formal, and therefore unconditional, rule of non-contradiction.

The categorical imperative plays the role of foundational condition of possibility for morality, just as the unity of apperception does in relation to science. It is, for Kant, that which enables us to assume that we are free, the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom (CPrR 5/4) that requires no further explanation of its possibility. The imperative operates as a foundation both objectively and subjectively: objectively, the criterion of universality it presents is the condition

of action as such, for it expresses the ultimate necessity of an action, the rule that something *ought* objectively to be the case (GMM 449-50/51). In such wise, it forms the unconditional condition for any action, whether autonomous or heteronomous, for all willing aims to create an objective existence. Its possibility cannot be explained further because it has the form of pure universality, which is *a priori* binding on all rational subjects because it is the formal definition of pure reason itself, and is thus 'an apodictically certain fact, as it were, of pure reason' (CPrR 47/48).

Subjectively speaking, the law is a disinterested motive, determining the will to want only the universal (GMM 401/14n; CPrR 75/77). This affirmation is felt as an immediate, unconditioned determination, namely respect or reverence (*Achtung*), which the subject directly associates 'with the consciousness of [its] own existence' (CPrR 162/166). Respect is the subjective recognition of the unconditionality of duty, and affirms that no obligation outweighs that to obey the moral law. It is also the feeling 'that it is beyond our ability to attain to an idea *that is a law for us*' (CJ §27, 257/114).

Thus Kant's defence of freedom is simultaneously a defence of an indefeasible obligation. The fundamental Kantian methodological principle, that experience necessarily depends upon the structure of the transcendental subject, is transformed for the practical sphere via the notion of a self-legislating moral subject. In this concept of self-legislation is implied both a) the free causality of the will, that is, the noumenal subjective agency that *gives* the law, and which is guaranteed by the objective deduction of the law as a fact of reason, and b) the receptivity of moral feeling, the reverential affirmation of an obligation through which the phenomenal self is *given*, or *subjected* to, the law, and constrained into suppressing inclination.

Kant derives from the law itself conditions of possibility for the fulfilment of the obligation it stands for, given that all action must take place against a background of 'imperfection', the realm of nature, incorporating natural needs and inclinations. These 'postulates of practical reason' (immortality, freedom and God) are no longer regulative transcendental Ideas as they were for theoretical reason, but are presuppositions that

give objective reality to the ideas of speculative reason  
in general (by means of their relation to the practical sphere).  
and they justify it in holding to concepts even the possibility of  
which it could not otherwise venture to affirm.

(CPrR 132/137)

Therefore, Kant's justification of practical reason and objective morality is meant to make the regulative Ideas not just regulative conditions of empirical scientific investigation, but objectively valid, constitutive conditions of the possibility of moral experience. The assumption of the uniformity of nature, and the affirmation of the ultimate unity of reason, are both demanded of us insofar as we are conscious beings.

### iii) *Fichte: the Circularity of Transcendental Philosophy*

That Kant was not himself satisfied with his achievements in the first two *Critiques* is indicated by his attempts in the third *Critique* to redefine the unity of reason in terms of a principle of reflective judgement to which both theoretical and practical knowledge are epistemically related. Perhaps more important however, historically speaking, were the objections to Kant's method put forward by thinkers identified with the *Sturm und Drang* such as Herder and Hamann. The first and second *Critiques* both attempt to show that *a priori* synthetic knowledge of objects is possible. They proceed by proving that the formal conditions of possibility for speculative or moral experience are structures that reason itself possesses *de jure*. Kant thus demonstrates that experience is only possible because the intuited manifold is



subject to the discursive structure of transcendental subjectivity. The otherness of the manifold, its stable objectivity, is thus shown to be made possible by reason itself.<sup>10</sup>

Kant admits that his project begins from empirical experience, and is bound up with fundamental interests of reason. In this, it is not presuppositionless in Descartes' sense, but this is not a problem insofar as Kant is not attempting to begin from metaphysical first principles, but is instead trying to show how metaphysics is in fact possible (CPuR Bxxii-xxiii). However, Kant *has* assumed a certain content for the term 'metaphysics', by assuming that the field of possible experience is restricted to the experience of an object as defined by Newtonian natural science, or the experience of a moral object as defined by a Protestant morality. When the foundational conditions for the possibility of a metaphysics of nature or of morals are determined, they are presented as facts whose possibility needs no further epistemological explanation. However, the content that they condition has simply been assumed, and their own formal structures reflect this content (Deleuze, as we shall see, points this out).

For example, the first *Critique's* inventory of constitutive transcendental conditions comprises the divisible unities of space and time, together with the table of twelve categories. These forms are derived from Newtonian science and Aristotelian logic respectively. Kant's arguments show that it is possible to deduce formally necessary foundational conditions, such as the interplay of intuition, imagination and Understanding as subject to the unity of apperception, that make possible these particular accounts of what experience is like. What they do not show is that these accounts of experience are anything more than *particular* descriptions of the nature of the content of representational consciousness. They can certainly be shown to be universally possible forms of experience, but they have not therefore been shown to be unchanging and necessary forms of experience for all rational beings. Hamann and Herder's critiques of Kant concerned the way in which the forms of experience that the critical philosophy set out to

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<sup>10</sup> This reading of Kant is not uncontroversial; Allison (1983) insists on a different interpretation of Kant's account of intuition, focusing on the possibility of 'pure intuitions'.

ground could themselves be said to be made possible by preconscious, social or historical conditions.<sup>11</sup> If this were so, then Kantian method would be heteronomous and in fact *uncritical*, insofar it would be incapable of knowing the source of its own interests.

The first generation of Kant's sympathetic critics linked the weaknesses of the critical philosophy to two related problems. Firstly, by limiting philosophy to the negative task of enumerating a canon of the necessary conditions of experience, Kant was unable to demonstrate the real necessity of scientific and moral experience. In order to prove their necessity and universality as modes of experience, an organon of principles would have to be constructed, a complete system of all the forms of experience that are inherent in representational consciousness. Secondly, the real difference between the faculties of intuition and reason, which is a condition of the specific problem identified by Hume that Kant's project is meant to solve, suggests that they are really heterogeneous. But this is an epistemological presupposition that is common to both Newtonian science and Christian morality: Kant is perfectly happy to assume that a thing-in-itself influences the receptive faculty of intuition in some occult way (P §9; CPuR A19/B33), in both speculative and practical experience.

One way of criticising Kant while recognising the validity of his overall epistemological aims would be to question the foundations of the difference between intuition and Understanding, given that, in conscious experience, both are subject to the unity of apperception. This is the approach of K. L. Reinhold, for whom philosophy had to begin with self-consciousness, the unity of apperception itself, as the objective presupposition of all representational consciousness, and then derive the forms of experience from this fact as from an unconditional first principle (*Grundsatz*).<sup>12</sup>

This effectively turns the critical philosophy upside down, as it makes the unity of apperception into an unconditional principle by positing it as both the formal ground of the

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<sup>11</sup> See Beiser, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-22 and pp. 142-4.

<sup>12</sup> See *ibid.*, Ch. 8.

possibility of experience, and the material ground of its actuality. Formally or negatively speaking, experience is impossible without it, and materially or positively speaking, if this unity is above all rational, then the forms that knowledge and experience take must follow necessarily from the actual nature of consciousness, which can be discovered via an immanent examination of self-consciousness. This would, it was hoped, avoid the Kantian problem of heteronomy, as no determinate or positive content would have been assumed as essential to experience. Philosophy would begin from a wholly indeterminate first principle.

Fichte differentiates his own stance regarding the foundation of an organon from that of Reinhold in responding to criticisms of Reinhold advanced by G. E. Schulze in 1792. Fichte agrees with Schulze that the *fact* of the unity of consciousness, as deduced in CPuR, cannot be foundational as there is no absolute certainty that such a pure fact does not depend on a further material or formal condition. To define the unconditional, Fichte follows Spinoza in talking of that which is the formal condition and material ground of itself, only then to invert Spinoza's concept of substance by recasting it in terms of subjectivity.<sup>13</sup>

For Reinhold, the fact of consciousness is meant to remove Kant's division between intuition and Understanding, which is still haunted by the thing-in-itself. Yet the pure fact of consciousness is only the abstracted subjective half of this opposition. For Schulze and Fichte, Reinhold, like Kant, is still guided by presuppositions about the essential nature of experience. His unconditional principle is still determined in opposition to the object, and represents consciousness as the merely abstract foundation of a particular form of experience. For Fichte, this represents a regression, insofar as the abstraction of consciousness as a formal condition is also an abstraction from subjective freedom. The entire practical sphere would thus remain unaccounted for. In his earliest attempts at a critique and successful completion of the Kantian project, Fichte stresses that the Absolute or truly unconditional is essentially a principle of *practical* reason. The genuine unconditional must be conceived of as that which underlies *all*

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<sup>13</sup> Guérout, 1974, p. 8.

representation, the Absolute Subject, 'the representing subject which would not be represented' (RA 9-10/65).

This Absolute Subject would be the ground of all the forms of consciousness by virtue of the free causality that defines the practical will. As a principle, it would be

a transcendental idea which is distinguished from other transcendental ideas by the fact that it is realised through intellectual intuition, through the *I am*, and indeed, through the *I simply am, because I am* [*Ich bin schlechthin, weil ich bin*]  
(RA 16/70)

'Intellectual intuition' designates the mode of this subject's indeterminate and immediate unity or familiarity with itself, prior to any determinate representation, and is thus 'that whereby I know something because I do it' (WL 463/38). The 'I think', as a representation of the subject's own spontaneity and synthetic unity, is seen to depend upon an indeterminate and absolute 'I am', which is a synthetic unity produced through the subject's own act. This is the practical essence of apperception: the Absolute Subject produces itself through its own freedom, bringing itself into existence or enacting itself. The subject's *being* entirely depends upon its absolutely free *act*,<sup>14</sup> and so the subject is not (unlike Spinoza's substance) a self-grounding metaphysical *entity*. Instead, it is directly opposed to 'being' or givenness as a pure deed of bringing-into-being.<sup>15</sup> For the early Fichte, this practical causality on the part of the subject secures the unity of theoretical and practical reason by making theoretical consciousness dependent on the practical subject. The self-generating subject is thus genuinely unconditional,

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> See Williams, 1992, pp. 36-7.

for Fichte, unlike Reinhold's subject, which remains, like Kant's, determined in relation to assumptions about what constitutes the essential, positive content of conscious experience.

Intellectual intuition is not, then, an expression of dogmatic faith in the existence of an absolute substance, but of the absolute certainty *for* the subject of the subject's own indeterminate existence as a *knowing*. The existential proposition it implies 'is valid only *for the I itself*', rather than being '*valid in itself*' (RA 16/71). But by being absolutely certain for the subject, it is therefore a formal condition of all possible experience, as all forms of representational consciousness are determinations of the indeterminate synthetic unity of consciousness.

Or put another way: every determinate synthetic proposition about experience possesses mediated validity, positing a state of affairs which can have meaning only relatively to other states of affairs represented by other propositions. The validation of such propositions, if it is possible only with reference to other such propositions, would have to be an infinite process in order to be complete, thus destroying the very possibility of adequate proof. The only alternative, if objective knowledge is to be possible, is a secure rational foundation that is the necessary condition of any synthetic proposition.<sup>16</sup> For Fichte, intellectual intuition provides such a foundation, as it represents, not a relative synthetic proposition of existence like 'I built this house', but rather an absolute or *thetic* proposition of existence,<sup>17</sup> which depends solely upon the proposition 'I am' being *made*, and not upon any further objective condition. Nevertheless, this proposition is only valid for the subject who has the intellectual intuition, and is not an 'objectifying thesis'<sup>18</sup> that posits the absolute subject as a transcendent substance, which is how Fichte is often misinterpreted.

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<sup>16</sup> Zöller, 1995, pp. 119-20.

<sup>17</sup> Pfau, 1994, p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> Makkreel, 1994, p. 8.

Even though the subject as the absolute enactment (*Tathandlung*)<sup>19</sup> of itself is thus, for Fichte, the formal presupposition of all representation, it cannot initially be understood as more than a *postulated* ground of consciousness. Why is this? The individual subject can be absolutely certain that its experience of intellectual intuition shows it its own formal ground, but the way in which the absolute subject is a ground, that is, what materially makes it a ground, remains unknown. The absolute subject has not yet been posited for subjectivity-in-general, that is, in the totality of the forms under which it can determine itself. At this point, the Kantian problem of the relation between canon and organon is being raised. Postulating the absolute enactment as a thinkable 'noumenon' that underlies all representation provides representation with a formal foundation, but does not demonstrate that the Kantian forms of experience, or any others, are necessary, universal and unchanging conditions of objective experience. The absolute enactment may be the beginning of all consciousness, but it remains an *abstract* or subjective beginning until we can draw out the rational forms inherent in it, thus discovering the totality of necessary laws through which the Absolute Subject determines consciousness as consciousness of something, and thus acts as a material ground of experience.<sup>20</sup>

Fichte thus recognises that, given Herder and Hamann's criticisms of Kant, if we are to demonstrate that reason can have synthetic *a priori* knowledge, we must deduce a complete system of the necessary forms of experience from a foundational principle. The subject must be understood in two guises: as the unconditional, canonical *thesis*, and as the totality of the forms of theoretical and practical experience, an absolute organic *synthesis*. The transition from the one to the other, from canon to organon, cannot be effected immediately. A method is required in order to ensure that this transition remains immanent to the foundational principle. In Fichte's early work, this consists in the analysis of the pre-representational subjective unity represented

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<sup>19</sup> I have used 'enactment' as a translation of *Tathandlung* (literally 'deed-act') to suggest both the *act* of the subject and its *decree* of bringing-into-being, thus mirroring the two aspects of Kantian self-legislation.

<sup>20</sup> Breazeale, 1994, pp. 44-5.

by the 'I am', and a subsequent deduction of the necessary forms of experience that follows rules derived from the preliminary analysis, thus showing that the forms of experience are necessary because they are forms immanent to the Absolute Subject, forms of its own appearance.

But would this really be a deduction in the Kantian sense of *Kritik*, rather than a metaphysical method of derivation that assumes the existence of entities? In the first version of WL, Fichte endows his method with a specific criterion of completeness. Completion entails proof that the absolute enactment is the objective condition of consciousness-in-general. This proof will consist in a system of forms, where each form is the condition of possibility for the one that precedes it, and which returns, in a grand circular movement to the absolute enactment itself, understood now, not as a postulate, but as an objective foundation and real ground. This will show that the principle of the system is indeed self-grounding, proving its status as Absolute by actually demonstrating that it is the ground of all forms of experience. There is no metaphysics here: until the system is complete, its principle can only possess hypothetical objective validity. The method is an epistemological experiment (CC 54/113), for the criterion of circularity implies that, in the interim, we can only *assume* that what is deduced from the first principle is objectively valid, and that the principle is indeed capable of serving as the *Grundsatz* of a system: 'There is thus a circle here from which the human mind can never escape. It is good to concede its presence explicitly, in order to avoid being confused later by its unexpected discovery' (CC 61-2/119).

Fichte's method aims to demonstrate that the absolute enactment must support relative synthetic forms and thus become determinate *as* discursive consciousness, and that this follows analytically from its nature as a unity. The indeterminate identity of the subject, expressed by thethetic proposition  $I=I$  ('I am I'), is the absolute beginning. Fichte claims that this unity, which represents the source of the formal law of identity ( $A=A$ ), cannot be thought without passing to the thought of its opposite, the source of the formal law of non-contradiction ( $A\neq\sim A$ ), i.e., the proposition  $I\neq\sim I$  ('I am not not-I'). The I cannot at one and the same time posit

itself absolutely as both I and not-I. The second proposition thus represents a necessary, but *antithetical* act by which the absolute subject produces or posits its own outside as absolutely independent of it. This absolute other is the postulate of the enactment of the not-I, the basis of all knowledge or consciousness of the objective world, which follows necessarily from the freely posited unity of the subject.

The independence of the second postulate arises as the result of a necessary contradiction: the I, *qua* absolute, cannot be simultaneously I and not-I, for then it would not be absolute. But this independence produces another contradiction: if the absolute subject and the not-I are *both* posited absolutely, then they are absolutely external to each other or incommensurable, and would be equiprimordial. However, the absolute other depends upon the absolute subject, and so cannot be absolutely different and equiprimordial. Paradoxically, if the not-I is utterly independent of the I, then it must simultaneously be absolutely dependent upon it, as the two postulates are linked by analytical necessity.

A third act of the I is the condition needed to make the positing of I *and* not-I possible. It cannot be formulated via further analysis, given that an absolute contradiction has arisen. Instead, it is thought as a freely generated synthetic product of reason that relates I and not-I to each other in a non-contradictory way. This new relation is one of opposition, where each term has a limited degree of reality with respect to the other: each *is* insofar as the other *is not*. This general synthesis, which completes a triad of postulates, states that in general subject and non-subject can only be related without contradiction in a relation of mutual quantitative limitation. Fichte's method, then, defers to Kant by recognising that the result of attempting to think the unconditional is necessarily an antinomy. Like Kant, Fichte holds that an antinomy can be dialectically resolved once the terms under which it is conceived are explicitly related to the subjective conditions of experience. Unlike Kant, however, Fichte sees dialectic as having a positive role in elucidating exactly what these conditions are — initially, simply this general relation of reciprocal limitation.



With respect to the Absolute Subject itself, these three postulates show that, in order to posit itself freely at all, it must necessarily posit itself as relatively different to and relatively identical with something else. Synthesis in general, as the form of positing that subsumes relative difference and identity, is thus deduced as the *necessary* form under which the Absolute Subject *freely* determines itself. Each determination of the Fichtean organon will, within the overall hypothetical unity of the activity of the transcendental subject, constitute a synthetic relation between a finite, conscious subject and a presentation of an object — a form of objective experience or knowledge.

The philosopher must methodically reconstruct the totality of forms — which must all be postulated as posited simultaneously within the unity of the Absolute — via a deduction, in time, of the series of triads that constitute these modes, repeating the initial deduction of postulates: the analytic (necessary) deduction of antinomically related opposed terms, and the spontaneous (free) generation of a synthesis that resolves the antinomy with a new form of experience. Each triad thus reflects Kant's conception of practical autonomy, by embodying autonomous self-legislation, the unity of freedom and necessity. In each and every case, the synthesis is a condition of the possibility of the thesis and antithesis, yet can itself be further analysed into a thesis and antithesis that also demand reconciliation. In this way, successive syntheses, as well as being conditions of the manifestation of the absolute enactment, are conditions of previous syntheses.

Reconstruction begins with the third postulate, the most general and least determinate form of synthesis. I and not-I are posited as limiting and determining each other, and so either i) the not-I limits the I, or ii) the I limits the not-I (WL 125-6/121-3). This antinomy is the basis of the distinction between theoretical and practical philosophy. In the first case the conscious I will feel itself determined by an object, while in the second this I will come to know itself as the cause of determinations in the object. In the early Fichtean system, this antinomy can only be resolved by the completion of the system — in other words, only the absolute relation between the totality of necessary forms of knowledge can be a synthesis adequate to the resolution of the

antinomy. The conscious I must come to know itself not as determined by the presented object, or as that which determines the presented object, but as the absolutely free act that determines all presentation in consciousness, the subject-in-itself.

The early system begins with the theoretical portion of philosophy, as the proposition that the not-I determines the I assumes only that the I *feels* itself to be determined, rather than assuming that the I, as practical philosophy always already does, is opposed to an independent object. The very objecthood of the not-I, and all the forms under which this can be determined (the forms of intuition, the categories) will be deduced from the bare awareness of limitation or determination as such (the *Anstoß* or 'check'). Nevertheless, it is necessary that a transition to practical philosophy should eventually occur, so that practical, active synthesis in general will be deduced as a transcendental condition of externally-delimited theoretical knowledge and the system can ultimately return to the absolute subject.

At the end of the theoretical portion (WL 227-46/202-17), the finite, conscious I is aware of itself as essentially different from the presented object. This prepares the ground for practical philosophy, where the finite I is aware of being divided internally between the theoretical 'intelligence', and the active practical subject that transcends the limitations of the intelligence simply by being aware of it (WL 247/218-9). This internal division is a basic practical antinomy whose final resolution would complete the system by returning to the unity of the absolute subject. Crucially, completion will not only depend upon the deduction of the moral law, but also on the conditions under which it can be *actually* realised among moral subjects, namely the necessary forms that must be realised in history in order to create a rational constitution, and which replace Kant's postulates of practical reason.

The practical portion reveals two fatal weaknesses in the system, however. Firstly, the transition from theoretical to practical proves impossible to formulate satisfactorily. The unity of reason that Kant's deduction of the moral law sought to establish is vital to Fichte's early system, as the practical, self-generating activity of the Absolute Subject must be proven to be the unconditional foundation of experience, thus showing that theoretical, reflective reason

depends upon practical, productive reason. However, the first principle of the system turns out to undermine this overall aim: the way in which Fichte determines the postulate of the absolute I that he takes to be necessary for consciousness-in-general destroys the coherence of the two halves of reason.

As Frederick Neuhouser has noted,<sup>21</sup> Fichte's 'transition' is only necessary if the end result of the theoretical portion directly contradicts the first principle of the system, thus maintaining the essential disunity of the finite subject. Otherwise the practical portion would be unnecessary, as the conditions of the unity of consciousness would be exhausted within the bounds of the general relation between an I and a not-I that determines it. The theoretical portion ends by showing that the intelligence knows itself to be separate from the object that determines it (WL 249/220-1); for this to directly contradict Fichte's first principle, the Absolute Subject must from the outset have been known to be the ground of both object and finite intelligence. But this knowledge is what the system is supposed to demonstrate. A distinction must be drawn again between the canonical form of the principle and its positive form, whose validity remains to be proven. In its canonical form, the principle is, for the subject, the necessary condition of all consciousness and thus claims the right to be a first principle, but insofar as it has this form, it is no different from the unity of apperception, which may be spontaneous, but is not a free, sufficient ground of consciousness. The *proof* of its status as first principle, i.e. proof that it is a self-producing ground, depends upon the completion of the system. Hence the content of the real beginning of the system (the canonical principle) is the same theoretical form of consciousness that Reinhold failed to transcend, and does not contradict the end of the theoretical part of the system. No transition is necessitated.

The second difficulty concerns the possibility of completing the system, even if the transition were necessary. Practical activity is the realisation of ends within the natural world. Activity, as an *ought*, is a striving (*Streben*) that aims to overcome the division between the

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<sup>21</sup> Neuhouser, 1990, pp. 49-52.

finite intelligence that *feels* itself to be determined by the natural world and the infinite practical, purposive activity that aims to realise absolute freedom within this world. However, this striving is necessarily unending. Even if the formal conditions of possibility for the realisation of freedom (legal institutions, the State, etc.) can be deduced, this does not itself complete the system.

This is because practical knowledge entails the *realisation* of its conditions, and hence the activity of real subjects. The divided subject can only know itself as absolutely free if it realises this freedom. The system is seen in the historical context of a nation of subjects striving in unison to realise a single grand practical synthesis. Because the very basis of practical activity is a real difference between the autonomous desire for a practical end and one's heteronomously-determined consciousness of natural inclinations that limit practical activity, the realisation of final unity is infinitely postponed. At every level of practical philosophy, any realisation of a purpose depends upon a difference that escapes this unity, given that a difference itself is necessary for any practical activity to begin. The absolute unity of consciousness becomes impossible to reach: once the system opens onto historical time it cannot be completed. The demonstration of the objective validity of the postulate of the absolute subject remains infinitely deferred, the highest practical 'ought'.

In later versions of the system constructed from 1796 to 1802, the primacy of practical philosophy is, in response to these problems, displaced by a new principle closer to Kant's one reason 'differentiated solely in its application' (GMM 391/4), the notion of a fundamental subjective activity of 'self-positing'.<sup>22</sup> First, the beginning of the system is reworked in the two 'Introductions' to the WL composed in 1797. The question of beginning is now addressed, not in terms of the quest for an objective beginning or conscious certainty (*Gewißheit*), but in terms of a subjectively necessary beginning, a belief (*Glaube*) in freedom. This reorientation also responds to a methodological antinomy which Fichte sees as universal for the philosophy of his

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 11-12.

time: whether to begin with a subjective *Grundsatz*, or to revert to a realist first principle — ‘idealism’ or ‘dogmatism’. Neither position can establish its validity against the claims of the other. In both cases, the validity of any system produced from the first principle is only relative to the overall validity of the principle (freedom or causal determinism), which the system itself cannot prove but has to assume. For Fichte, the only factor behind choosing one over the other must be a subjective one: a practical faith in freedom or determinism.

The implication is that the WL’s first principle cannot be an absolute confirmation of the subject’s freedom, and that the beginning of the WL is in fact incompatible with its aim, despite being a condition of consciousness-in-general that could be affirmed by any subject. Instead, the system will begin with a principle that only *ought* to be affirmed by any subject, meaning that the system itself will be genuinely circular, grounded only upon the practical affirmation of the value of a belief in freedom.<sup>23</sup>

The changes in Fichte’s method are exemplified by the WLnm of 1796-99. Here, Fichte begins from the postulate that the absolute subject, whether determined theoretically or practically, always posits itself. That which is not-I cannot simply be opposed to the I from the outset, as in WL. Instead, the deduction must remain wholly immanent to the self-positing I, and deduce the conditions that make it possible for the I to limit *itself*, rather than show how the I can know itself to be limited from without. This will entail an ‘original duplicity’ of opposed activities (WLnm 185/365) within the I, as the ground of all its self-positings or representations of itself.<sup>24</sup> The WLnm explicitly shows that ‘difference is not merely the opposite of identity: it is the condition of its possibility’.<sup>25</sup>

Fichte argues that self-positing is that by which, when one thinks ‘I am’, ‘one feels one’s consciousness to be determined in a particular manner’ (WLnm 28/110). This feeling can only be felt in opposition to a feeling of repose or indetermination, however (WLnm 32/116).

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<sup>23</sup> On Fichte’s ‘antifoundationalism’ see Rockmore, 1994, esp. p. 105.

<sup>24</sup> See Zöller, 1995, pp. 116, 123.

as if one intuited a figure against the ground from which it emerges. In the bare feeling of being determined, then, is a difference between that which is merely given to consciousness, or posited *for* it, and the Absolute Subject that posits the determination *for itself* (WLnm 20/112, 37/124). This is the difference between the theoretical and the practical, given that it comprises a free, actualising activity (practical), and an ideal (theoretical) consciousness of this activity (WLnm 47/140, 49/142-3). In the feeling of being-determined, the most abstract synthetic form of experience, the subject's immediate intuition of itself wavers between the repose that precedes the feeling, which is represented in consciousness by the concept of the indeterminate, and the feeling itself, represented by the opposed concept of the determinate. For the feeling to be posited in consciousness, the passage from indeterminate to determinate must be made possible: consciousness must become *determinable*. The determinable-as-such is the first condition of the absolute's self-determination, and thus the first content of the system proper.

This condition is now analysed in order to deduce the further conditions which make the I determinable, i.e., capable of being limited. This must happen through the I's own activity; we cannot simply assume that it is determined from without. The doctrine of the *Anstoß* is revived to show how this happens. Daniel Breazeale points out that 'check' translates this key term inadequately, as it denotes both an obstacle, and an original impetus that allows the I to become determinate.<sup>26</sup> Feeling (*Gefühl*), as a power of the transcendental I, can serve as an *Anstoß* as it is purely subjective and yet is not finally produced by the I,<sup>27</sup> being composed of the infinite expansion that characterises the absolute I's activity, together with a limitation or contraction that cannot ultimately depend on the I. So, the immanent examination of the conditions that must pertain to the Absolute Subject posits a condition of all determination that, because it is basic to the system, cannot itself be analysed further within it. For theoretical philosophy, it is sense impressions that both restrict and invigorate consciousness. For practical

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<sup>25</sup> Breazeale, 1995, p. 100.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

philosophy it is the impression of the freedom of other human beings, the 'demand' or 'summons' (*Aufforderung*) that restricts one's own actions out of respect (*Achtung*) for others' autonomy by stimulating the will.

The emphasis now changes as Fichte analyses the feeling of determination itself, deducing from it the various theoretical and practical modes of the I's activity. Once the Absolute Subject has become determinable, it then takes on determinations that are the different modes of experience, freely posited in conformity with its own nature, and beginning with the positing within consciousness of a representation of that feeling which initially made it determinable (WLnm 65-7/171-3). Feeling is the condition of the fact *that* the I determines itself; an opposed synthesis within the absolute subject conditions the *what* of the act of positing, the representational content of the determination of conscious experience. This synthesis, the ultimate condition of being able to represent feeling as dependent upon an object — that is, the condition of our notion of object-hood itself — belongs to the productive imagination, 'the power to grasp absolutely opposed things in a single act' (WLnm 201/399), which renders discrimination and judgement possible by providing a whole, an overall context of relatedness as such (WLnm 201/398-9).

As a condition of any representation, this power immediately grasps the totality of forms of conscious experience inherent in the absolute subject. This conscious thought 'cannot do, since thinking is purely discursive' (WLnm 202/401). Feeling and imagination are equiprimordial, non-discursive powers that are ultimate conditions of consciousness within the transcendental subject. The imagination is especially important: it 'creates the material for representation: it alone shapes everything that is found within empirical consciousness and is the creator of this consciousness itself' (DSL 2/193). Fichte identifies it with Spirit (*Geist*), Kant's 'animating principle in the mind [...], the ability to exhibit aesthetic ideas' (CJ 313-4/181-2). The imagination, seems to be a symbol for the Absolute Subject, for it has an autonomy of the kind attributed to the *Tathandlung*: imagination 'obtains its rules from within itself. It needs no law; it is a law unto itself' (DSL 7/198). Yet despite its non-discursivity, it remains subject to

the inherent rationality of the absolute subject, and to determination via the discursive, analytic power of judgement, which sequentially dismembers the synthesis of imagination (WLnm 203-4/403-4).

Throughout the system, feeling and imagination allow consciousness to become determinate through judgement: aware of its object, aware of itself as aware of the object, and aware of itself as positing determinations within the object. Consciousness can thus be aware of an object that limits it, in various forms; it can also be variously aware of its own activity. But in either case it is aware of itself only as determinate, as limited from without or within, and as such remains different from the Absolute Subject, which, being the totality of these determinations (the subject-in-itself), can alone be truly self-determining.

To know the Absolute Subject *as* absolute remains an infinite task: the imagination provides us with an Idea of the whole, giving to judgement a rule or *schema* which it is to follow in reconstructing the instantaneously-grasped whole in time, this rule being that of striving for unity within a consciousness split between theoretical and practical activities (WLnm 415/208). This 'striving' is now a generalised rule of self-positing, by which the Absolute Subject determines itself according to ever more comprehensive syntheses (the forms of intuition, the categories and so on), until it posits itself as aware of itself as containing, as transcendental structures, these forms as conditions of the experience of an independent object. For this practical self-consciousness, striving is the demand that absolute freedom, the unity of the subject be realised in the world, as in the WL. This vision of infinite practical striving returns us to the demand with which the system began, the demand to affirm freedom as the beginning and end of all consciousness. However, the demand is *only* a demand, a *Sollen*, and the question of the objective validity of the beginning, which is conditioned by a theoretical criterion, i.e. the justification of the foundational status of the absolute subject, cannot be settled by the fulfilment of a merely practical criterion, i.e. that we prefer freedom to unfreedom. The question could only be decided by the perfect realisation of the kingdom of ends, as in the WL.



Fichte's failure to demonstrate the foundational status of the Absolute Subject depends upon a contingency his method cannot eradicate. The Subject always needs feeling in order to become determinate, for feeling introduces determinability, potentially determinate difference, into the absolute act's indeterminate identity. Now feeling is entirely subjective or private, yet does not depend entirely on the subject. The I, in becoming determinate, 'is not the sole author of its own being'<sup>28</sup>. Consequently, feeling, as a condition of all consciousness, cannot itself be explained by something like a determinate form of consciousness. In other words, the fact that the subject *is* divided from itself and *is* actually determinate is, as far as consciousness is concerned, entirely contingent, and not caused by any necessary law, as was the case at the beginning of WL. But if this is the case, all consciousness has for its *necessary* condition its own *contingent* or unexplainable division from itself. This means that, in actuality, it will necessarily always be divided from itself, as the practical part of the system shows.

Early and later versions of the system encounter this same problem. The WL attempts to avoid it by using the analytic identity of the absolute I as the means of deriving the difference between I and not-I, but this makes the absolute too much like the merely theoretical unity of apperception, failing to go beyond the Reinholdian position that Fichte himself criticised. The problem really surfaces in the practical portion, and is still not solved in the WLn<sub>m</sub>. Real striving on the part of actual individuals is necessary to realise the goal of the system, to make the Absolute itself an object of knowledge, but this fulfilment of philosophy remains infinitely deferred.

For example, the creation of a legal order derives from the conflict of individual wills, and seeks to preserve universal freedom, thus reconciling the contradiction between freedom and domination that prevails in the war of all against all. But as an actual, and not merely possible mode of action, this is a piecemeal project, depending on the internal division of the practical subject between determinate ends and natural inclinations, which in turn depends on

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

the moral feeling of real differences between one's own will and that of others. Every attempt to reconcile a difference with a synthetic identity itself depends upon a further difference, and it is this dynamic that infinitely postpones the full presence of the Absolute. Reason now finds itself faced with an aporia that is no longer Kantian. Whereas Kant's transcendental method contingently assumes the necessity of certain actual forms of empirical experience, Fichte's project appears to show that Reason, no matter how far it goes in deducing and realising determinations that are actual forms of experience and conditions of its own employment, must always presuppose a contingent difference that it cannot legislate for. Reason has been placed in a position where it must bear the burden of an infinite labour, without ever knowing for sure at any stage if it has indeed proceeded correctly.

*iv) Schelling: The 'Ecstasy of Reason'*

*a) Reason and the Absolute: Negative Philosophy*

Fichte takes up Kant's central contention that objective knowledge depends formally upon the structure of the transcendental subject, and attempts to answer Herder and Hamann's objections by boldly making this transcendental subject the sufficient condition of all consciousness. As we have seen, this attempt to provide secure foundations for knowledge fails, for it sets up a project that is *de jure* impossible to complete. However, Fichte's failure changes the orientation of foundationalist method. Kant begins with the assumption that reason is capable of an immanent examination of its relation to empirical experience, but this assumption is qualified by the further assumption that empirical experience is itself always already known. Fichte argues that, because reason can determine what is fundamentally necessary in any experience, that is, the Absolute Subject, it is necessarily immanent in this foundation, and by analysing it, will demonstrate that reason can deduce the systematic totality of the forms of experience.

But the question of criteria of *certainty* of knowledge remains. The system is complete only when we are certain that the absolute subject is *known* as absolute, when we have its whole

content before us. But finite consciousness is posited as doubly conditioned. It is conditioned by the self-grounding identity of the canonical unconditioned, but also by an 'original duplicity' (WLn 185/365) of feeling. Hence the attainment of absolute knowledge (when the content of the system is completed and utterly certain knowledge of the unconditional achieved) is infinitely postponed. An other (feeling) that necessarily escapes being fully determined within the system proves in fact to be a condition of the system itself.

The failure of reason to prove its autonomy by fulfilling its own criteria of certainty can be seen to be at the heart of the reaction of the Romantic movement against Kantian philosophy, which, among other things, centres upon questions regarding the relation between the unconditioned foundation of experience and the subject of knowledge. The Romantics took up themes which we have already encountered in relation to the leaders of the *Sturm und Drang*, Herder and Hamann. Chief among these was what we might call the 'situatedness' of reason, the way in which any account of the foundations of knowledge depends upon historically specific linguistic conventions and wider historical conditions that are presupposed by any actual account of what genuine knowledge is. Epistemology may seek to determine the conditions of the validity of synthetic a priori propositions, but in doing this it has to presuppose the universality of the forms of experience (natural science, morality) whose possibility it is attempting to ground. There is an essential circularity in the epistemological project, as Fichte clearly saw: in attempting to explain why certain rational terms are universal conditions of our experience, philosophy assumes a pre-given set of meanings that enable it to get started, a set of subjective presuppositions — just as, for Fichte, Kant assumed the difference between subject and object without showing how this would necessarily arise given the nature of reason. In attempting to account for its own first principles, Fichte's epistemology had to impose a doctrine of activity upon practical reason, and the motivation behind this imposition was itself practical: a choice 'governed by caprice, and since even a capricious decision must have some source, it is governed by inclination and interest' (IW 433/18). Fichte

thus recognised that critical philosophy must begin with faith, but this left his own project ungrounded.

The problem of the historical conditioning of reason led the Romantics to consider the possibility of a non-rational grounding of reason in a higher, primarily aesthetic faculty. This idea, as developed by Jacobi and Hölderlin, proved decisive in breaking Schelling's early attachment to Fichte, as it seemed to promise a means of leaving behind the circle of subjective presuppositions. Schelling's earliest work as a student of Fichte concerns itself largely with the exposition and defence of Fichte's system and method. During the mid-1790s, however, a decisive change in orientation occurs, with Schelling proposing not a single organon of knowledge founded upon the Absolute Subject, but *two* parallel systems, one dealing with the Absolute Subject, the other with the unity of nature. This move away from Fichte's refusal to assume the not-I as a posit parallel to the I may appear to be a regression to a pre-critical realism (which is largely how Fichte interpreted it). However, the reasons for Schelling's change in approach stem from the same problems regarding the meaning of 'criticism' that forced Fichte to rework his system in the *WLnm*.

As we saw above, Fichte found that if he insisted on the *practical*, essentially free subject as the *Grundsatz* of his system, then he faced an antinomy concerning the objective beginning of philosophy. The Absolute could be consistently defined as either essentially real or essentially ideal, and a system constructed accordingly, without either principle being capable of refuting the other. 'Dogmatism' and 'criticism' (as Schelling called them) were incapable of contending with each other philosophically, as each claimed the Absolute for itself with the aid of an immediate intuition.

Whereas Fichte sought to resolve the antinomy by preaching an affirmation of idealism and criticism in the interests of freedom, Schelling proposed that, by redefining the antinomy, it could be solved. The opposed 'dogmatic' and 'critical' Absolutes can be viewed together in two different contexts that correspond to differing basic philosophical questions. The antinomy itself depends upon a pre-Kantian ontological question regarding the essential nature of Being. But if

the two absolutes are seen in the light of a specifically Kantian epistemological problem, namely '[h]ow do ideas of external things arise in us?' (IPN 15/12), the antinomy need not come about. If this question is asked, then nothing is assumed beyond the *de facto* and formally non-contradictory assertion that the independence of entities can be conceived, whereas the ontological question assumes their existence, and then posits an Absolute as a highest entity.

Two systems could be constructed as solutions to the Kantian problem, one based on the concept of a real Absolute, the other on the basis of an Absolute Subject. Both would have the same *explanandum*, the emergence of consciousness of objects, while each utilising a different principle as *explanans*. The system of *Naturphilosophie* would entail a deduction of the actual natural forms necessary for the emergence of consciousness, while the *Geistesphilosophie* would follow the Fichtean model of the *Wissenschaftslehre* in deducing necessary forms of consciousness from the Absolute Subject. Neither system can be constructed without reference to the limitations of consciousness, and so each is circular. Given the fact that we have ideas of external objects, *Naturphilosophie* constructs, on the basis of the concept of a self-determining Absolute Life, a natural history of the role of nature in determining consciousness, an organon of general principles for natural science. *Geistesphilosophie*, on the other hand, constructs a programme for the realisation of freedom, an organon for practical philosophy, on the assumption that the subject determines the object.

Neither system could contest the claims of the other, as each has a different perspective on the ground of the distinction between subject and object. Each holds sway over its own domain, the one beginning from the perspective of preconscious forms of 'experience' from which representational consciousness, and thereby philosophy, emerges in the course of natural history, and the other beginning from consciousness itself. Both systems give a genetic account of consciousness beginning from an absolute principle, and reach the same conclusion: that subject and object are *in themselves* the same. It is for this reason that in 1797 Schelling calls the higher or true philosophical viewpoint that which assumes 'the fact that the absolute-ideal is the absolute-real' (IPN 59/44). Just as the relative difference between the subject and object in

either system depends upon a higher identity, so the *Grundsätze* of either system are actually subsumed by a higher principle that is the *indifference* of both nature (Absolute Life) and spirit (Absolute Subject). While the principle of a system can be either subjective or objective, the principle of principles, Absolute Indifference, is simultaneously *both* subjective and objective, and *neither* subjective nor objective. This true Absolute is without a unique essential determination, and Schelling calls it the absolutely necessary presupposition of all philosophy, the necessary condition of all knowledge.

Schelling's concept of the true Absolute thus initially plays the role of a negative unconditional condition in the same way as Fichte's Absolute Subject, and retains the same hypothetical validity. *Positing the Absolute as Indifference*

in no way proves anything as to the reality of this idea which [...] being the ground of all evidence, can only prove itself. Our inference is merely hypothetical: if philosophy exists, then that is its necessary presupposition.

(IPN 59/44)

However, Schelling conceives of the Absolute as 'higher' or more inclusive than the Absolute Subject, for it subsumes both *Natur-* and *Geistesphilosophie*. Fichte's major objection to his former disciple's foundational concept is that it must necessarily collapse philosophy into dogmatism or realism, as it appears to result in a system that, by giving a genetic account of subjectivity that is dependent on natural process, actually reduces subjectivity to this natural, necessarily mechanistic process, destroying the possibility of real freedom.<sup>29</sup> But Schelling's point is that the Absolute, considered as indifference, is the indifference of the subject of knowledge and objective being, and is reducible to neither. Hence both subjectivity and

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<sup>29</sup> See Vater, 1994, pp. 198-202.

objective being have a common root that expresses itself immanently in both, as different *potencies (Potenzen)* of itself. Subjectivity expresses this root with a higher exponent, as it were, given that the forms it takes on express a reflexive *awareness* of both nature and itself. Hence a relation between subject and object in the theoretical portion of the *Geistesphilosophie* cannot, for example, be reduced to a relation between expansive and contractile basic forces in the *Naturphilosophie*, whereas a lawlike relation between bodies can be reduced to a relation between forces.

Like Fichte's hypothetical postulate, Absolute Indifference must prove itself. If systems of nature and spirit can be completed upon this basis, then this *Grundsatz* will show itself to be the necessary and sufficient condition of all knowledge and existence. However, the philosophy of nature is based on a misconstrual. The *Naturphilosophie* purports (unlike, say, Spinoza's philosophy) to describe what nature must be like in order for there to be representational consciousness. In such wise, while positing the Absolute Life as a uniform whole, *Naturphilosophie* only renders this whole determinate in relation to consciousness. If a genuine deduction of nature *in-itself* is not possible, then *Naturphilosophie* is not a separate system as such, but remains immanent to the general viewpoint of *Geistesphilosophie*. The 'two-system' viewpoint cannot sustain itself if *Naturphilosophie* can be reduced in this way to part of the system of subjectivity, for then all the principles it derives have the merely subjective status of speculative fictions, rather than being necessary determinations of nature.<sup>30</sup>

After 1800, a methodological shift occurs. In 1800, Schelling's STI, the second half of his double system and his attempt at a Fichtean *Geistesphilosophie*, ends by following Novalis in making aesthetic intuition a privileged mode of access to the Absolute. The final condition of the practical realisation of the Absolute Subject is deduced as the work of art. In the practical part of STI, Schelling lays out the dangerous practical consequences of the infinite labour of self-positing required by the Fichtean system. The lack of a promise of final fulfilment results in

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<sup>30</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 201, on Fichte's view of accounts of nature as 'fictions'.

a final dichotomy within consciousness: the entirety of the history of the realisation of the Absolute is conceived as either being determined with *a priori*, pre-given necessity or being utterly indeterminate, and subject to no law (STI 601-2/209). The categorical imperative of infinite *Streben* results either in fatalism and *accedia*, or anarchism and chaos, both equally destructive of the political and legal order that strives to realise the Absolute.

The only way of redeeming practical subjectivity of its ultimate dividedness is if the Absolute can actually be present in consciousness as a 'providential' unity of necessity and freedom. Schelling recognises that the truth of Fichteian, subjective self-legislation is the unending *Streben* to fulfil an abstract practical doctrine, and proposes instead that true experience of the absolute unity of freedom and necessity lies in artistic production. Art unites both conscious, subjective activity (the artist-subject's grasp of a *telos*) and unconscious, objective activity (the meaning of the artwork is inexhaustible). Art can represent as an aesthetic whole the historical situation of humanity, in all its division and disunity: '[s]cience and morality forever seek; art forever possesses'.<sup>31</sup> Importantly, the experience of aesthetic creation or reception expresses a unity that is no longer just subjective, but which is instead the unity of nature and spirit. This experience is without determinate differentiation, and is thus a productive intuition of the absolute unity rather than of the merely relative unity of consciousness, which always relies on differentiation, and can thus never be at rest.<sup>32</sup>

Already in the earlier bi-perspectival system, the postulate of a 'higher' Absolute divided into natural and spiritual principles demonstrated the presence of a non-Fichteian inspiration in Schelling's work. After 1800, Schelling's attempts at constructing an organon of the necessary determinations of experience utilise this higher foundation as their first principle, transforming the STI's aesthetic intuition into an intuition of reason. This turn away from the Fichteian Subject can be understood in relation to the critique of transcendental philosophy that

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<sup>31</sup> Fackenheim, 1996, p. 89.

<sup>32</sup> Frank, 1995, p. 75-6.



is furnished by Hölderlin, Novalis and above all, Jacobi, and initiated by Jacobi's rediscovery of Spinoza.<sup>33</sup> Jacobi argued that the genuinely unconditioned presupposition of knowledge has to be thought of as transcendent to all conditioned forms of knowledge, and thus cannot be reduced, as Fichte had argued, to the subject's knowledge of itself.<sup>34</sup> Fichte's Absolute is posited as a subject opposed to the abstract thing-in-itself of realism: it is a form of knowing that is defined over against a being, and is thus conditioned. For Jacobi, if the unconditioned can be known, then it is in an intuition that is utterly immediate. Our experience of this transcendent Absolute would thus be indeterminate, being an intuition, not of an object conditioned by a category, but of primordial Being.<sup>35</sup>

Hölderlin concurred with this view in the fragment 'Judgement and Being' (c.1794-5), arguing that Fichte's intellectual intuition cannot be immediate, for it is supposed to represent the subject's intellectual 'perception' of itself, yet this perception of subjectivity cannot be defined without mediation, without presupposing a relation between subject and object.<sup>36</sup> The absolute knowledge spoken of by Jacobi and Hölderlin, however, is a certainty that is radically *blind*.<sup>37</sup> The circularity that Fichte acknowledges as a necessary feature of his system can thus be criticised from a 'higher' standpoint as a kind of transcendental illusion in Kant's sense (see p. 25 above). The unconditioned is meant to allow the possibility of experience to be explained with reference to a secure foundation. However, Fichte's unconditioned cannot explain this possibility. If representational consciousness is characterised by awareness of the difference between subject and object, then Fichte's Absolute cannot account for this difference, for the definition of it as a subject already presupposes the distinction between subject and object. It is thus not genuinely unconditioned, and is only an abstraction from our experience (this, as we

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<sup>33</sup> See Beiser, *op. cit.*, Ch. 2 on Jacobi's discovery of Spinoza and his early critique of Kant.

<sup>34</sup> Frank, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-7.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 67, 74.

<sup>36</sup> Hölderlin, 1988, pp. 37-8. See also Bowie, 1993, pp. 17-25.

<sup>37</sup> cf. LMP, 12/48, on the nature of absolute certainty.

shall see, anticipates Deleuze). The Absolute is thus assumed to be a substantial image of the forms of experience with which we are familiar. Whereas Kant gave a merely formal deduction of the possibility of certain varieties of experience whose universality he simply presupposed, Fichte assumes that the Absolute resembles in its internal articulations our familiar (and historically situated) experience. Hence he posits the Absolute as having an internal or necessary relation to representational consciousness that is only assumed and cannot be proven.

Once Schelling had attained a 'higher' point of view on the Absolute afforded by the non-Fichtean elements of his *Naturphilosophie* and the account of art in STI, he could attempt to remedy these deficiencies of Fichte's approach. Despite agreeing with Jacobi and Hölderlin on the transcendence of the Absolute with respect to all conditioning relations, Schelling still wanted to demonstrate the autonomy of philosophical reason by using this Absolute as the foundation for an *a priori* system. But in order to do this, this foundation had to provide a genuine explanation of the possibility of experience, and this, as we shall see, raises real problems. Jacobi and Hölderlin had argued that, if it is possible, then all conditioned knowledge must presuppose the immediate identity of the knowing subject and the Absolute. But this only meant that a negative, canonical foundation had been adduced. Like Fichte, Schelling saw that only a complete organon or system of knowledge derived immanently from this foundation would suffice to ground *a priori* synthetic knowledge and secure the autonomy of reason. Hence the necessary relation between the Absolute and the *genesis* of representational consciousness had to be demonstrated. The difference between subject and object had to be shown to be an immanently necessary determination of an Absolute that in itself transcends all such conditioned forms. In this way, the Absolute would be *known* rather than simply presupposed, unlike Fichte's *Tathandlung*.

With this change in viewpoint, Schelling develops what would become known as the 'Philosophy of Identity'. The dual system is replaced by a single system based on the ontological postulate of Absolute Identity, out of which nature and subsequently consciousness in its theoretical and practical forms have to be deduced. Schelling's project, having rejected the

Fichtean standpoint, now seems to have taken on an explicitly pre-Kantian, Spinozistic flavour. However, the Philosophy of Identity is not dogmatic in Kant's sense; it does not claim a superior intuition of the nature of the thing-in-itself. Like Fichte's system, it remains hypothetical and circular until it is complete. In order to explain the possibility of experience, the unconditioned foundation or in-itself of experience, the indeterminate Absolute Identity of all conditioned forms must itself be shown to be inherently rational. This rationality of the Absolute is the assumption with which the system begins. It can only be proven by a system that returns to its beginning, as Fichte's was supposed to, and thus completes and grounds itself.

Despite its Spinozistic overtones, then, Schelling's approach remains critical, as it makes the objective validity of its assumption (that the Absolute is rational and can thus be *known* as the sufficient ontological ground of all determination) dependent upon the proof of this assumption, rather than dogmatically assuming that the Absolute is necessarily rational. To paraphrase Schelling, if philosophy, articulated *a priori* knowledge of the Absolute, is *real*, then the absolute identity is its objective presupposition (IPN 59/44), but this means that the reality of philosophy, and thus the existence of the Absolute as unconditioned, positive and necessary ground has to be demonstrated. In this way, the Absolute will no longer be only a presupposition, but will have proven its absoluteness. The system itself, then, must begin with the hypothetical proposition that, if the Absolute is indeed ontologically absolute or self-grounding, this self-grounding is also absolute self-knowing.

For Schelling, this means that the antinomy of 'dogmatism' or 'criticism' that the earlier system set out to solve can now finally be addressed properly. While the unity of reason and Absolute is the presupposition of all philosophy (whether realist or idealist), in order to resolve the antinomy a system must be unfolded out of this unity that encompasses both viewpoints. The Absolute must be shown to be the unity of freedom and necessity, rather than simply a pure, self-abiding indeterminacy.<sup>38</sup> From it must be deduced a *Naturphilosophie* that

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<sup>38</sup> On the importance of this criterion for Schelling, see White, 1983b.

gives an *a priori* account of the determinations of nature in itself, independently of the subject, and a *Geistesphilosophie* that accounts for the actuality of human freedom. 'Experience' is now to be understood as including, not only the practical law, the categories and the forms of intuition (Kant), and their internal, preconscious articulations (Fichte) but the unconscious determinations of nature out of which subjectivity has to be thought as emerging. In this way, the subject of 'experience' is no longer the finite, human subject *per se*.

Hence the new system, in its highest stage of development in WS (1804), takes on an increasingly theological as well as epistemological aspect: the analysis of the Absolute will derive the determinations of subjectivity out of nature, but this natural history will simultaneously be the history of the living Absolute's own progressive self-revelation, its experience of itself, in a universe that it creates while still remaining eternally united with itself above this process as its transcendent or unconditioned condition and ground. The Absolute is, for Schelling, immanent in the universe, but is also irreducible to it and thus transcends all its determinations and the conditioning relations between them.<sup>39</sup> However, at this most developed stage of articulation, Schelling begins to abandon the standpoint of the Philosophy of Identity. The reason for a further change in Schelling's approach concerns, as we shall see, his own failure to provide a genuine explanation of the possibility of experience.

Schelling begins by acknowledging that reason must presuppose that it is identical with the Absolute. To reiterate, this unity has always already overcome all oppositions between subject and object, and so from the perspective of the system, 'only totality *knows* in me' (WS 140/143). Hence reason, in its identity with the Absolute undergoes a kind of *ecstasy*, as Jacobi and Hölderlin had already noted; this identity is not conditioned knowledge, but knowledge beyond all mediation. The Philosophy of Identity has been interpreted as proto-Heideggerean for this reason, given that such an ecstatic unity of reason and Absolute, beyond conditioned knowledge, seems to be reminiscent of the primordial openness of *Dasein* to the Being of

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<sup>39</sup> See Schulz, 1954, esp. pp. 349-50, on this transcendence as exemplified in Schelling's later philosophy.

beings.<sup>40</sup> Schelling's intentions remain tied to the idea of an absolute system, however: he assumes that pure reason is the essential mode of the Absolute's self-expression, through which it immediately knows itself (WS 151/149-50), and thus it claims a certainty that, whilst being blind, is still 'an intuition of reason or [...] an *intellectual intuition*' (WS 153/151). Philosophy can thus begin without having to first hone its methodological tools and search after determinate grounds for its claim on *a priori* knowledge, as in Kant and Fichte. This is because the positing of the universe is grounded in the very nature of the presupposed identity, or so Schelling proposes. However, there is a crucial ambiguity in this idea that endangers Schelling's project, one with which he would wrestle throughout his career. We will now draw this out.

Schelling begins by analysing the Absolute. Its defining feature is its immediacy: hence the Absolute or God, considered in itself as the condition of all difference, is the pure affirmation of itself (WS 164/158-9), and this affirmation is the Absolute's knowledge of itself (WS 154-5/152). The Absolute is thus implicitly that which is affirmed of it, and that which affirms itself. On this basis, Schelling argues that the Absolute is implicitly completely differentiated. It contains within itself an 'ideal universe' or 'first creation' of its logically possible determinations, which follow with analytical necessity from the implicit opposition between its affirming and affirmed aspects. Its eternal unity, Schelling argues, necessarily implies its differentiation, because its unity contains this negative opposition, the archetype of all conditional relations, in which each term (affirming and affirmed) requires the other in order to be what it itself is. This ideal differentiation is only ideal, however, representing the formal or purely reflexive side of pure reason to which Kant had allowed only subjective validity. The first creation is a totality of eternal Ideas, and is thus the merely formal or possible aspect of the Absolute (WS 204/187) — it does not explain the emergence of any actual difference within the Absolute, and thus cannot ground synthetic *a priori* knowledge. With regard to this dimension

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<sup>40</sup> Ohashi, 1975, pp. 29-30, 37. Schelling himself describes absolute reason as 'ecstatic' much later in his career: '[...] therefore reason is, in this positing, posited outside itself, absolutely ecstatic' (PO 162-3).

of the Absolute, we should note that, in addition, our knowledge of it can only be historically, rather than logically, completed. We will only find within it content that reflects our historically situated experience back to us.

There is still, then, the question of how the Absolute *actually* differentiates itself. If the Absolute is a genuinely transcendent condition, then it is the unity of all conditioned determinations. In order to enter into a determinate relation with itself, to become known to itself (and to our reason), it must divide itself. But if it is a genuinely transcendent unity of all conditioned determinations, then the process of division cannot be understood in terms of relations familiar from experience that are themselves conditioned. We could, for example, imagine that the formally necessary logical determination of the Absolute (the first creation) explains the emergence of real difference. But this would be to posit a purely ideal or subjective content for the Absolute that, as in Fichte, presupposes the reality of a conditioning relation. Here, this relation is that between necessity and freedom, each of which can only be understood with reference to the other. Such an explanation of the emergence of real difference would be circular and thus illusory, for it would simply presuppose, like Fichte, that the Absolute is itself conditioned, being nothing but the image of our beliefs about experience (e.g., our conviction that experience is characterised by necessity). Hence, following Jakob Böhme, Schelling begins in the Philosophy of Identity to think of the Creation in Christian terms as the Fall, a disruption of God's unity that is both necessary and yet freely enacted.<sup>41</sup> In order for real difference to actually be posited, there must be a free and hence *ungrounded* positing of what is already formally implicit in the Absolute itself.<sup>42</sup>

Importantly, Schelling conceives this ungrounded act as an absolute positing of determination that is grounded only in the Absolute as an immediately affirmative unity. In other words, it is unlike the Fichtean Subject's positing of a not-I, in which the negative,

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<sup>41</sup> See Brown, 1977, pp. 107-12.

<sup>42</sup> Carl Eschenmayer, a student of Schelling's, made this point in 1803; see Esposito, 1977, p. 141.

limiting relation between I and not-I that is the necessary basis for all determination of consciousness is supposedly freely posited. This would simply assume that the freedom of the Absolute or its transcendence is identical with the relation of opposition between the subject and the object that is constitutive of representational consciousness. By arguing that negative opposition is the archetype of necessity that determines the merely *formal* first creation, Schelling has refused to take this view. The actual, rather than merely ideal or possible, positing of opposition requires that the Absolute introduce within itself and through its pure immediacy an ontological difference (WS 174/165). This positing is described by Schelling as the potentiation or raising-to-a-power of the Absolute: the differences that constitute the actual universe are powers (in the mathematical sense) of the Absolute, for the Universe and everything in it can only exist because the Absolute affirms itself in them, even though they themselves are determined through negative conditioning relations, from the basic opposed forces that produce matter, up to the subject and its object (WS 210/191). In this sense, the being of the Universe and its constituents is identical or univocal (WS 187/174-5), and actual difference is thought of as having its basis in pure affirmation rather than negation, being produced by 'an infinite potentiation [*Potenzierung*] of the identity of identity',<sup>43</sup> even though negative relations are comprised within this unity of being.

However, with this recognition of the difference between possible and actual differentiation that is necessary in order to effectively overcome Fichte's position, the ambiguity and circularity of Schelling's own position becomes apparent. There are, in effect, two postulated Absolutes in Schelling's system. On the one hand, there is the purely affirmative Absolute in which all distinctions are dissolved, and which putatively serves as the ungrounded and unconditioned ontological ground of all determination simply through its affirmation of itself. On the other, there is the Absolute as rational, as immediately self-knowing, which serves as the foundation of all knowledge. Schelling has to presuppose from the outset that these two

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<sup>43</sup> Von Uslar, 1968, pp. 503, 507.

aspects are united, and acknowledges this assumption. However, his account of the ecstatic unity of reason and Absolute allows the latter aspect to predominate. Absolute reason is literally beyond itself in that which transcends all mediated knowledge. This is the first Absolute, the purely affirmative aspect, the distinctionless unity of itself and reason, an *arational* unity. But insofar as the Absolute is the unity that is the foundation of genuine knowledge and the autonomy of pure reason, the unity whose *necessary* consequence is the first creation, then reason is assumed to have found itself again in this distinctionless Absolute, as it were. But this presupposes that the determinate conditioning opposition between relations of necessary entailment and relations of contingent juxtaposition is already known, and that the relation of the Absolute to itself is known to be characterised by necessary entailment. But reason's immediate unity with the Absolute cannot provide any such knowledge of determinate difference and identity, by definition. Hence the presupposition that the transcendent Absolute is nevertheless predominantly rational is as subjective and as circular as Fichte's postulate of the Absolute Subject. In order to explain and ground experience, it seems, we need to presuppose that our foundation or *explanans* always already reflects essential features of experience, and *must* posit itself determinately in and through them. But this cannot provide us with a real explanation of the actuality of experience, as it supposes that the real substantiality or transcendence of the Absolute is constituted by its rationality. This, however, is not real transcendence: as we have seen, the transcendence of the Absolute and the 'higher' nature of Schelling's viewpoint are to be constituted by the *arationality* of the Absolute. Only by taking this higher viewpoint seriously can Schelling hope to explain actual determination. Yet by doing this in his later thought, as we shall see, he places the foundationalist project in jeopardy.

In summary, Schelling cannot avoid positing an Absolute whose exact status *vis-à-vis* reason is ambiguous. On the one hand, the Absolute has to be understood as a genuinely transcendent, 'higher' unconditioned, which unifies in itself all conditioning relations, such as that between subject and object, and which therefore cannot be defined by any term that is part of such a relation. This Absolute is represented by Schelling's talk of the purely affirmative



unconditioned. On the other hand, if the Absolute is to be the foundation of a system designed to prove that *a priori* synthetic knowledge is possible, and that reason is autonomous and immanent to itself, then it has to be defined in terms of one pole of a conditioning relation, i.e., as predominantly rational. But this determination of the Absolute is, therefore, no less subjective than Fichte's.

The Philosophy of Identity simply assumes that the overall unity of the Absolute is rational, and *necessarily* gives rise to the actualisation of the totality of possibilities that follow logically from the very idea of the Absolute as an immediate unity.<sup>44</sup> The element of irreducible freedom has disappeared, and has been subordinated to a theological schema: the Absolute is conceived as positing itself because of its internal teleological necessity, a desire to know itself, which implies distinction within the eternal Absolute itself. In order to demonstrate that reason can *know* that the Absolute is the foundation of *a priori* knowledge, a complete system of the Absolute is needed. But if this system is only subjectively valid, derived like the 'first creation' from a purely rational foundation, then it is not complete, even if it begins and ends with the idea of the Absolute. The only proposition to be extracted from such a system is hypothetical: if synthetic knowledge through pure reason alone exists, then this system is the form it will take. But does such knowledge exist? *Can* we know that 'the real and the ideal universe are but the same universe' (WS 187/205)? This cannot be decided except by taking up the genuinely 'higher' viewpoint on the Absolute. About thirty years later, in criticising Hegel's account in SL of the Absolute Idea, Schelling would accuse his former collaborator of formulating a wholly *negative* philosophy, concerned only with the interpretation of the Absolute as the source of categories that stand over against the empirical manifold as merely *possible* forms of experience. This evaluation was also extended by Schelling to his own earlier *Identitätssystem* (LMP 137/142). We will now examine Schelling's attempts to adopt the 'higher', arational Absolute as the foundation of his system.

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<sup>44</sup> On this necessary character of the actualisation, see Fuhrmans, 1954, p. 42.

b) *Development Towards 'Positive Philosophy'*

In the Philosophy of Identity, Schelling forsakes the Kantian and Fichtean emphasis on reflexivity as the condition of knowledge, by positing a transcendent, non-reflexive ontological foundation of knowledge with which reason is *immediately* united in an ecstatic intuition.<sup>45</sup> In this, as I noted, he appears almost Heideggerean: Schelling proposes that if finite beings are disclosed to us, then this necessarily requires in the background a primordial openness to the Being of these beings.<sup>46</sup> This ontological turn had been in evidence since the earlier *Naturphilosophie*, where the unity of nature was conceived as a primordial, self-limiting Life (EE 287-8). However, the Philosophy of Identity is more radical in that it makes the Absolute from the outset a unity of nature and spirit that transcends both. Nevertheless, this move is, despite its theological character, epistemologically necessary, for this definition of the Absolute is, for Schelling as for Jacobi and Hölderlin, the only legitimate, non-illusory or non-circular way to understand that which all determinate knowledge must presuppose.

Subsequently, however, it becomes apparent that the transcendent Absolute itself needs to be thought as doubled: it has to have rational and non-rational sides, and also has to be the unity of these. Only then can it serve as the foundation of a system of actual and not merely possible determinations of being. This doubled Absolute also appears for the first time in the early *Naturphilosophie*, where Schelling notes that, if the unity of Nature is to divide itself, it must be, at one and the same time, both primordial unity and a primordial 'duplicity' (EE 288), like Fichte's Absolute Subject in *WLn*m. The problem is, how to take up the 'higher' perspective on the Absolute and think these two aspects together, without effectively subordinating one to the other. Here, the Philosophy of Identity produced a transcendental illusion. It presupposes that the unity of the rational and non-rational Absolutes is itself rational,

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<sup>45</sup> See Bowie, *op. cit.*, p. 135, and Frank, 1975, p. 29.

<sup>46</sup> On Heidegger and Schelling, see Bowie, *op. cit.*, pp. 53, 64 and Sikka, 1994, p. 428 ff.

positing this rationality in an eminent, theological form, i.e., an inner *telos* that necessitates the self-division of the Absolute, thus leaving the actual self-division of the Absolute, which must be *ungrounded*, unaccounted for. Schelling has acknowledged that reason must presuppose from the outset that it is identical with the Absolute, but now this does not seem to be enough. His renunciation of the viewpoint of the Philosophy of Identity leads to the middle period of his career, and his most sustained attempts to realise the higher perspective on the Absolute.

Above all, then, the self-division of the Absolute cannot be conceived as a necessary self-limitation, as this would simply affirm the identity of the Absolute with the rational aspect of experience, i.e., the conditioning relations of opposition between its determinations, whilst ignoring its transcendence or otherness. In this way, no explanation of the actuality of division would be given, and, as happened in WS, the identity of Absolute and experience could only be secured beyond their distinction by presupposing a pre-existing *telos* of complete divine self-knowledge, with this division then becoming merely a privation necessary for the realisation of this higher end. Against this position, Schelling subsequently attempted to think the self-division of the Absolute, and its necessary consequences, as a positive realisation of the Absolute's freedom rather than as a negative self-limitation, without, however, lapsing into arbitrariness and irrationality.

From 1809 to about 1815, Schelling's preoccupation is with how reason is *a priori* capable of an insight into such a positive notion of freedom without simply reducing it to the purely logical possibilities outlined by negative philosophy.<sup>47</sup> He thus proposes that the transcendent Absolute in its eternal unity must be conceived as a free principle or will, yet a will without subjectivity, one which wills nothing. This is now the negative foundation of all knowledge, being potentially a conscious will and thus potentially rational *and* free, or conditioned *and* unconditioned. However, an account still has to be given of how the Absolute

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<sup>47</sup> While Schelling's works from this period exhibit real and important differences in their accounts of the Absolute, there are equally, if not more important features that they share, upon which I will concentrate in this section.

immanently, i.e., through itself, divides itself. If this higher Absolute transcends all dualities, then how can it be thought as dividing itself without presupposing the implicit or pre-existing possibility of these dualities as the ground which *necessitates* the division of the Absolute?

Schelling's attempts to solve this problem hit on a solution that recalls again Fichte's account in *WLm* of the 'original duplicity' within the Absolute Subject. However, they also take on ever more esoteric, mythic forms. But this methodological shift is, paradoxically, epistemologically necessary: the higher perspective cannot deduce self-division from the idea of the Absolute — rather, it must think a *groundless* act of differentiation that opens up the narrative of the revelation of a transcendent God. Schelling describes the state of the primal Will outside time as that of a restful unity that 'rejoices in its nonbeing' (AW 49/134). In addition, though, he proposes that this eternal unity is implicitly differentiated. This implicit differentiation has two aspects: the Absolute is conceived as containing its possible determinations, as in the earlier philosophy, as its own ideal and specifically eternal dimension. But the Absolute is also implicitly determined in a pseudo-temporal fashion, containing the shadowy presentiment of itself as split into a 'before' and 'after'. In *WS*, Schelling was quick to identify the implicit 'affirmed' and 'affirming' aspects of the Absolute with logical constituents of a knowledge-relation. Here, however, he separates the rational and non-rational aspects of the implicit distinction. On the non-rational side, the Absolute as Will is immediately both Will as the ground of its existence, and Will as its actual, determinate existence (THF 357/31-2). Like 'feeling' in relation to the Fichtean subject, the 'will of the ground' here is within God, yet is not truly God himself, 'inseparable from him, to be sure, but nevertheless distinguishable from him' (THF 358/32). For Robert F. Brown, the nature of this 'dark' will of the ground is to be 'intermediate between unconsciousness and consciousness and therefore [it] is a striving that is neither rigidly necessary nor fully free'.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

This 'dark will' is what will serve as the ground of determination within the Absolute. However, it is an odd sort of 'ground', if we understand grounding in the sense of necessary entailment. Like Fichte's 'feeling', it is a problematic term that introduces determinability into the indeterminate Absolute unity. But here, it is an ontological factor, the 'incomprehensible basis of reality in things' (THF 360/34). And consequently, and again like *Gefühl*, it is somehow 'in' the Absolute, but not entirely 'of' it, for although it will become the ground of the Absolute's determinate existence, it is not posited *by* the Absolute through something like a conscious act. Within the Absolute, it emerges as a 'longing' (*Sehnsucht*) without an object (THF 359/33-4), and the belonging-together of this obscure difference with the pure unity of the Absolute can only be articulated as a paradox: 'the more this composure is profoundly deep and intrinsically full of bliss, the sooner must a quiet longing produce itself in eternity, without eternity either helping or knowing' (AW 53/136). This disturbance introduces the impetus towards the act of creation. Hence, unlike Fichte, Schelling sees the problematic, purely determinable element as the positive ground of all determination: precisely *because* it is problematic, its essence (conscious or unconscious will?) radically undecidable, its presence in eternity creates an existential tension within the Absolute Identity. This tension propels the act of actual division in which the world is created, and which replaces the unresolved tension within eternity with the stable, unidirectional progressivity of linear time (SPL 428/203).<sup>49</sup> In this act, the Absolute contracts itself into or posits itself in the 'dark will' as its first potency. Schelling proposes that because the dark will and the opposed element, the will to determinate existence, are inseparable within the Absolute, this contraction releases the will-to-existence, which, by opposing the dark will, draws out of it the actuality of the logical possibilities contained in the Absolute (the eternal ideal universe or first creation).

In this way, the positing of actual determination appears as ungrounded, and as positive or affirmative in relation to the Absolute itself. The blind and forced contraction of the Absolute

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<sup>49</sup> On the positivity of this act, see Žižek, 1996, pp 31-2.

is, as with the division of the arational Absolute in the earlier philosophy, its 'doubling' (*Doublirung*) or 'intensification' (*Zunehmung*) (SPL 424-5/200; AW 55-7/137-8). It posits the Absolute *absolutely*, yet as actually differentiated. This difference is simply the affirmed will of the ground, however, and is thus problematic or determinable: it is only through the active opposition of the will-to-existence (the second potency or difference of the Absolute) that a determinate synthetic product is produced, in which the overall unity of the Absolute is reasserted (its third potency or difference from itself). For example, in the classic formulation of the *Naturphilosophie*, gravity (first potency,  $A^1$ ) and light (second potency,  $A^2$ ) are the actual conditions of the emergence of matter (third potency,  $A^3$ ). In this way, Schelling envisions a dialectical deduction of nature and spirit proceeding, once again, from the Absolute. In this way, the inherent rationality of the Absolute will exert itself through the second potency, and will come to dominate the dark will. The self-unfolding of the Absolute in time is thus conceived as comprising three qualitatively different epochs, each ruled by one of the proto-temporal dimensions that are dimensions of the Absolute in eternity, and each of which includes different synthetic forms: nature (the dark will), theoretical and practical human consciousness (will-to-existence), and the yet-to-come 'spirit world' (the Absolute unity of Will) (THF 405/85-6; SPL 482-4/242-3).

In this way, Schelling explicitly reintroduces the historico-practical dimension of Fichte's system, but in a theological form analogous to the Joachimite 'third dispensation'. The completion of the Schellingian system is God's work (*his* experience of his own inherent rationality), even more than ours, and so this completion of the system is beyond the labours of our reason, requiring an actual transformation of the condition of the world that can only be effected through grace rather than human practical effort. The providential unity spoken of in STI, which Schelling had emphasised against Fichte's practical *Sollen*, thus reappears as a *Sollen* of faith. This is underlined by Schelling's talk towards the end of THF of the Absolute, *qua* higher Absolute or *Ungrund*, as a unity expressed not by the notion of divine Reason, but by that of divine Love (THF 404-8/84-90).

In this way, however, Schelling's attempts to resolve the problem of circularity are compromised. The Absolute is thought of as having arational (the dark will) and rational (the will-to-existence) aspects, but these remain united in a higher Absolute that is still not truly transcendent and unconditioned. The *Ungrund* in this period remains a teleological unity, in which the emergence of the dark will within eternity, 'without eternity helping or knowing', is actually subordinated to the higher unity of the Absolute as Love. This expresses a higher necessity, through which the Absolute *has* to divide itself from itself in order to become what it only implicitly is (the first creation). The emergence of difference within the Absolute, which also has to be an *Ungrund*, is actually grounded in a pre-given purpose, the 'final purpose of creation' (THF 404/85). Once again, the Absolute is only illusorily conceived of as unconditioned, for it reflects the forms of experience with which we are familiar, with this resemblance 'grounded' in a higher *telos*. The horizon of our theoretical and practical experience within the second epoch of the Absolute is thus fixed by the providential, unattainable unity that is always-to-come.

Yet again, we have to presuppose that the determinateness of our experience is grounded in a predominantly rational unity, but the objective proof of this subjective postulate is infinitely deferred, for it will only be given with the advent of Schelling's third epoch. Once more, as in Fichte's philosophy and in Schelling's own earlier systems, a foundationalist method leaves reason ungrounded. The assumption that the Absolute is rational is only an assumption. However, another problem has now emerged. It appears that without this presupposition, the system will be based on an unaccountable dissonance within the Absolute that is equiprimordial with its identity. If *this* ground (the dissonance) is an *Ungrund*, that is, not determined by another term and hence unknowable, then the system is based on an arbitrary identification of our forms of experience with the Absolute, for it cannot in principle be known to be necessarily immanent in them. Yet at the same time, we require this ground (the dissonance) to be an *Ungrund* in order to explain the possibility of there being any

determination at all, without getting caught in a circle of presupposing what we are meant to be explaining.<sup>50</sup>

The irony of Schelling's middle period works is that, despite their theosophical character, they fail, not through their obscurity, but because they are, in their own way, rigorously foundationalist. In attempting to prove the entitlements of pure reason, Kant, Fichte and Schelling all try to show that reason is capable of immanently deducing the incorrigible foundations that are necessary for the possibility of knowledge. Yet each of these foundations finds proof of its own *sufficiency* as a condition — the criterion of genuinely objective knowledge — always displaced beyond the limits of the enquiry. Kant's unity of apperception and categorical imperative are only abstracted from given forms of empirical experience that form the subjective presuppositions of transcendental method. Fichte's self-identical absolute subject, as the negative condition of all consciousness, is displaced by feeling, an element of actuality and difference that cannot finally be cancelled within the Fichtean organon, in order to complete the system and ultimately demonstrate that the subjective presupposition from which it began is in fact objective. And now, Schelling's Absolute Identity, the necessary, negative condition of all determinate being and all knowing, is displaced by the 'will of the ground', the sufficient condition of real difference and determination, which 'ungrounds' (subverts) the subjective presupposition that the Absolute is essentially rational.

Reason is forced to recognise its own lack of autonomy, its dependence on something that is not fully its own. The conditions and form of the problem have altered, however: whereas, with Kant, reason had to assume the reality of historically given forms of experience, Schelling's version of the foundationalist project demonstrates that reason is *internally* heteronomous. It has to presuppose a genuinely transcendent Absolute that is incommensurable with reason and that is yet immanent within the universe, and thus within reason, in some way as an unknowable activity that grounds all determination, an unconscious of thought within

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. Bracken, 1972, p. 71.



thought. Reason, it seems, is no longer even in principle immanent to itself. The final period of Schelling's career, his 'positive philosophy' shows how ruinous this problem is for foundationalist thought.

The purely 'negative' philosophy of identity was a dialectical system of possible forms of the Absolute, leaving out the problem of actuality. To paraphrase a remark of Schelling's on Descartes (LMP 15/50), it showed that God, the actual unity of the world, exists necessarily in certain forms, but only if he *actually* exists. Earlier, we restated this critique of the ontological proof in an epistemological form: *a priori* knowledge of actuality *must* conform to certain necessary determinations if it exists, but this itself is no proof that there is any such knowledge. If philosophy exists, then the pre-eminently rational Absolute Identity is its condition of possibility — but does it indeed exist? Is the hypothetical system produced by reason applicable to the actual world? This problem is, as we have seen, appears objectively irresolvable, for an affirmative answer can only be based on assumption rather than proof. And Schelling addresses this problem once again, as did Fichte, in terms of faith.

With respect to 'negative' philosophy, as Emil L. Fackenheim puts it,

The problem is that dialectic cannot understand the *meaning* of existence; and this means for Schelling that dialectic cannot absorb existence into a system. Dialectic is fragmentary knowledge and must turn to experience for the knowledge of fact.<sup>51</sup>

The objective applicability of rationality to experience still presupposes the original, non-rational act of differentiation that alone can ground actual difference. Existence, for the Schelling of the positive philosophy, is therefore prior to essence, or, the ground of conscious

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<sup>51</sup>Fackenheim, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

experience and of our reason is itself incommensurable with reason and conscious experience. It is the meaning of the *fact (Tatsache)* of the genesis of the world (DPE 228) that the positive philosophy takes for its object, and this attunement to fact requires a methodological realignment: Schelling, like Fichte in the WLnm, chooses to acknowledge the extent of his reliance on faith and the experimental nature of reasoning, referring to the basis of his new system as a 'philosophical empiricism'.

This new title signifies a real affirmation of the difference between thought and existence, against those philosophers who follow Descartes in collapsing being into thought (DPE 233-4), like Fichte and Hegel. Reason may be capable of constructing an *a priori* system that begins from the presupposition of the unmoved Absolute, and sets out from the act of creation to cover the totality of nature, theoretical and practical spirit, and the futural period of God's true existence, but these three periods of revelation remain only possible without actual experiential proof: if God exists, he does so necessarily, but he must be first *shown* to exist. The transcendental Idea of the unconditional ground is non-contradictory, but the fact of its existence is not demonstrable *a priori*. The reality of its ideal determinations has to be proven.

Hence Schelling can no longer just employ dialectical constructions, which derive from a theoretical reason that merely conducts an *a priori* reflection upon the nature of the Idea of the Absolute. Instead, it is necessary to assert again the primacy of the *practical*, which here stands for a freely willed affirmation of God as the real, absolute ground, which ignores the inability of negative philosophy to encompass God in this sense. As Fackenheim puts it, this 'leap' is, while being 'outside all reason', still not 'arbitrary', as the 'predicament from which it arises is the human condition itself, in which rationality itself is rooted'.<sup>52</sup> Schelling's positing of an ecstasy of reason as the foundation of the system is now recast as the practical, subjective and private affirmation of the *existentially* and not just historically rooted character of human reason, which

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<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, p. 115. On the fact that the higher Absolute cannot be reached through reason alone, see also Bracken, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

is nevertheless simultaneously the affirmation of this existence as somehow rationally determinate, despite the lack of *a priori* foundations for this faith. The only ground for this affirmation is that it is in the interests of the philosophical search for foundations and thus of the autonomy of reason.

The experience of the affirmation is meant to add what reason alone could not produce: certainty in the validity of the purely hypothetical system. The second stage of the process now consists in carrying out an empirical confirmation of the system in detail, which entails the kind of research that constitutes the empirical part of the later Schelling's historical philosophy of mythology. The private, practical affirmation of the sufficiency of the Absolute would be publicly vindicated by the elaboration of a positive, factual system, based on historical and anthropological research.

The failure of this final effort of Schelling to construct a system upon a basis that denies neither necessity and theoretical knowledge, nor freedom and practical will, is not caused by the infinite labour required by the empirical task it sets. In fact, it fails because it sets up a new antinomy of 'dogmatism' and 'criticism', which actually threatens the possibility of foundationalist thought itself: it is here that we finally encounter the 'trauma of reason' that we made our object in Chapter One. The shift from negative to positive philosophy, the moment of affirmation, derives from a crisis of reason that is caused by the failure of negative philosophy to encompass the freedom of the Absolute. As such, the moment of affirmation presents, not a solution to this crisis, but merely an acknowledgement of it, and hides a fundamental contradiction that has threatened Schelling's thought from the Philosophy of Identity on.

What is this contradiction? Reason, in reflecting on knowledge in general, is able to state that its unconditional negative condition is the indeterminate, immediate Absolute Identity. This much Schelling has insisted on since the *Naturphilosophie*, taking on the insights of Jacobi and Hölderlin. It is also the case, however, that reason is capable of showing that the unconditional condition of *determination* as such, that is, of there being any stable difference, any order, any rational being at all, is a positive ground that is not itself rational. The connection

between this ground and that which it grounds is not itself rationally statable, given that the grounded term here is rationality itself. Schelling refers to this ground as a problematic *me on*, or a non-being, not in the sense of that which is wholly without any being at all (*ganz und gar nicht Seyende*), but that which is not *a* being, as it lacks essence (DPE 235-6).

The problem is that the system of determinations reconstructed in thought out of the Absolute can only be objectively valid if the Absolute is inherently rational. But just as an arational and free act is presupposed as the ground of difference that impels the Creation, the system itself, a rational construction, paradoxically presupposes such an act as the condition of its applicability to the real or actual world. So the validity of the system depends simultaneously upon the essential rationality of the Absolute, the necessity of a dialectical process of revelation (the position of the *Identitätssystem*) and upon the Absolute being essentially incommensurable with reason.

As the positive philosophy shows, philosophical reason is faced with a choice: either the hypothetical system produced by a negative, theoretical reflection on the concept of the Absolute, or the practical affirmation of the real ground as commensurable with reason, entailing reason becoming utterly ecstatic, no longer accountable to itself, no longer immanent to itself. The inadequacy of the former is matched by the final impossibility of the latter as a route for a *philosophy that seeks to justify the autonomy of reason*. Importantly, if the leap is made, then the connection between the ground and reason is just as unstatable as it is if one remains within the perspective of negative philosophy. Reason is conditioned heteronomously by something that it cannot assimilate, but rather than impinging from without, as with Kant and Fichte, the otherness here is the existential ground of reason itself, internal to its own activity. The incommensurable ground is therefore not the negative or opposite of reason. Its relation to reason is more problematic, for it is only the ground of reason in so far as it is incommensurable with it, irreducible to any determinate conditioning relation. It thus stands outside any system of

rational relations, but as the ground of any such system, a ground whose relation to the system is unstateable in terms of any such system.<sup>53</sup>

The choice of negative or positive philosophy thus becomes a dilemma: either there is no proof that the Absolute takes on determination according to the dialectical process considered as its own inherent law, or the sole ground of actuality is affirmed as that which need not give itself *any* specific law: the ground 'might express its will in an indefinite number of ways, rationality being but one of them'.<sup>54</sup> This dilemma can be said to mark at once the highest point and the failure of the modern philosophical project conceived of as a search for a secure foundation of knowledge. The only possible viewpoints seem to be either an unjustified rationalist dogmatism — the affirmation of the apodictic validity of reason — or an ungrounded epistemological scepticism. This latter option leads to relativism and ultimately to self-refutation: there can be no objective knowledge, either theoretical or practical, because the objective ground of reason is itself incommensurable with reason. But if theoretical reason reaches its limit in this fashion, it forces us into a crisis. If we go beyond this crisis by affirming that this ground *is* non-rational, then we affirm that at least *one* proposition is objectively valid, i.e., that nothing is objectively valid because of the *nature* of reason. We thus ignore the status of this ground as a postulate, and can therefore have no *de jure* right to either viewpoint, and thus no distinction between criticism and dogmatism can be made, for there is no way to tell if one viewpoint is illusory as opposed to the other.

When the Enlightenment staked its success on the discovery of secure foundations for the authority of reason over experience, the conditions for this dilemma were created. With Schelling, the Idealist project seems to have committed suicide, and its death has not simply placed epistemology in question. As in the case of the early reactions against the Enlightenment and its offspring, the French Revolution, the assumed primacy of pure reason in the matter of

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<sup>53</sup> Bowie (*op. cit.*) emphasises this point in arguing for Schelling's historical and philosophical importance in relation to 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century thought.

<sup>54</sup> Fackenheim, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

judging the legitimacy of traditional institutions is again placed under suspicion. If philosophical reason is itself heteronomous, how can it assume the right to criticise existing political arrangements? We have reached a stage where, according to Nietzsche, modern nihilism is born, where the highest values, such as objective knowledge, suffer a devaluation of themselves. The interest of reason in its own autonomy has, in taking up seriously the issue of the justification of this autonomy, shown itself to be ungrounded, requiring instead a faith in itself that takes the field against other forms of belief without being able to decide the issue of its right to do so. The result of the immanent examination of reason by itself undertaken by Kant, Fichte and Schelling is that it becomes impossible to distinguish dogmatism from philosophy, and the trauma of reason is embodied in the Schellingian epistemological dilemma.

## Chapter Three

### Deleuze: Philosophy as Practice

#### *i) Introduction*

The trauma of reason signifies, above all, a limit point in modern philosophy. In examining the versions of antifoundationalism formulated by Deleuze and Hegel, we will discover how these thinkers attempt to account for this limit-condition, and thus surpass it, with reference to the Kantian notion of transcendental illusion, thus establishing that it is more than just a purely accidental historical phenomenon. Their own doctrines of transcendental illusion, neither of which require the distinction between dogmatism and philosophy to be fixed with reference to an unchanging transcendental or ontological foundation, also go beyond Kant by subjecting his influential model of critical thought to critique. In this way, the Enlightenment's conception of reason, which affirms and attempts to extend the foundationalism of Descartes, will be undermined, and with it the crisis that results from the foundationalist project.

In my opinion, the importance of Deleuze in this regard, which makes him unique among post-war French philosophers, lies in his commitment, throughout his career, to two seemingly incompatible problems: a) how to formulate a consistent perspectivism that avoids collapsing into a dogmatic relativism of the kind that posits an objective foundation (the nature of thought, say) for the fact that we lack genuine *a priori* synthetic knowledge, and b) how to think the Absolute, given that an ontological commitment of this order is, for Deleuze, necessary in order to maintain philosophy's unique identity as a genuinely critical discipline. Deleuze's main inspirations in these two areas are Nietzsche and Bergson, but as I will argue in the next chapter, he is also (through Bergson) close to Schelling's attempts to adopt a 'higher' perspective on the Absolute. By tracing this relation to Schelling, I will explain how Deleuze conceives the immanence of the Absolute in that which it conditions. Deleuze's commitment to critique

means that, as I will show, he remains a thinker of Enlightenment who wants philosophy to free itself from its internal illusions concerning the Absolute. This can only be done, however, by re-evaluating the meaning of philosophy as an *ethos* or way of living and being.

In a 1971 discussion with Foucault, Deleuze agrees that the essence of philosophy can no longer be considered to be disinterested knowledge of the universal. Philosophy as primarily theoretical and disinterested knowing has undergone some kind of crisis in modernity. 'Theory' derives from the Greek *theoros*, a spectator at a festival, implying a pure attitude of disinterested attention, being 'purely present to what is truly real'.<sup>1</sup> For Foucault and Deleuze, the question of how to think the situatedness of philosophy, its relation to real interests, has become urgent. The faith of modernity in Enlightenment reason, being ungrounded, is implicitly contradictory and nihilistic, for these thinkers. When pure reason uncovers the extent to which it is ungrounded, alongside the possibility that it is merely the expression of certain existential conditions, the Enlightenment commitment to the critical dissection of dogmatism is in danger. Philosophy can no longer be theory if by theory is meant 'an illumination from a safe distance' (Foucault), a representation of the essence of being. Instead, philosophy must take its situatedness, its relation as a *practice* to other practices, seriously. The new *ethos* of philosophy will be that a theory 'is exactly like a box of tools ... It must be useful. It must function' (Deleuze).<sup>2</sup> In this way, Deleuze, like Foucault, envisions the modernity of philosophy as an attitude (*ethos*) towards its own limits that can be realised at any time, rather than as a historical epoch in its objective development as a theoretical discipline.<sup>3</sup> Only by changing philosophy's image of what it means to philosophise, can this modernity be truly established. In this chapter, I will examine Deleuze's analysis of

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<sup>1</sup> Gadamer, 1993, p. 124.

<sup>2</sup> See 'Intellectuals and Power' in Foucault, 1977, p. 208.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Foucault, 'What is Enlightenment?', in Foucault, 1984, pp. 32-50, at p. 39.



what he considers to be the historical barriers to the realisation of this *ethos*, with reference to his notion of the 'image of thought'.

## ii) *Circularity and Modern Critical Thought*

One important aspect of Deleuze's relation to Schelling lies in the way he appreciates the omnipresence of circularity in philosophies that stand forth and proclaim their unique grasp of a foundation that entitles them to mark boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate truth-claims. This is what I want to explore now, by presenting a necessarily brief historical overview of certain aspects of the post-German Idealist philosophy of finitude in relation to Schelling's inadvertent undermining of foundationalism. As we shall see, post-Schellingian developments reinforce the epistemological nihilism of the trauma of reason, bringing out more ethical and political dimensions of this nihilism.

We will focus initially upon Marx's thought, as the most influential post-German Idealist philosophy to have accepted Schelling's critique of transcendental thought, while still holding to the desire for a rigorous critique of the present. The similarities between Schelling's late critique of negative philosophy and Marx's critique of Hegel have been treated in exemplary fashion by Manfred Frank.<sup>4</sup> The result of Schelling's critique of negative philosophy is, as we saw in the previous chapter, that the existential, contingent or factual aspect of human being is seen as more primary than the rational or essential. With Kant, thought loses its grip on the infinite, becoming instead immanent only to itself. This provides an anthropological definition of philosophy, by making human reason the measure of knowledge. Schelling, by attempting to overcome this anthropological definition, actually takes things a stage further by showing that thought is not even immanent to itself, but receives its limitations from conditions that it cannot comprehend *a priori*. To overcome this irreducible contingency requires an ungrounded

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<sup>4</sup> Frank, 1975.

and hence dogmatic faith in reason. In this way, the foundationalist project, which sought to establish a genuinely universal meaning for human knowledge is rendered problematic by the notion that reason is itself rooted in obscure real processes that cannot be transparent to pure reflection. This relative primacy of existence, over the 'essence' of the Absolute as delineated by the categories of pure thought, was taken up as a major theme among the Left Hegelians, and particularly by Marx.<sup>5</sup> This development means that the goal of knowledge of the Absolute is renounced.

For Marx, the real processes within which philosophical reason is rooted are material relations between social classes. These classes are themselves historically differentiated by changes in the organisation of the material base of a society's existence, the means of fulfilling its economic needs. 'Morality, religion, metaphysics [...] thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. [...] Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life'<sup>6</sup>. Philosophy, which presupposes itself to be absolute because of its reliance on pure reason, in fact has objective conditions in the real interests of social classes. The subjective presuppositions of philosophy are thus rooted in objective reality, in the material base of a society.

The meaning of history is vital for understanding this objective base of consciousness, for the dividedness of representational consciousness is itself representative of the real structure of society. Hence Marx criticises Feuerbach for positing an abstract, ahistorical sensuous human essence. Human existence is determinate or concrete only when it is conceived of in sensuous but also in economic terms, that is as defined by relations between humans and nature, and by relations between humans themselves, that are all subject to a process of constant historical variation dependent upon the organisation of production. The meaning of critique is also tied to the meaning of this objective process. Critique itself is interested, but this interest has to be shown to

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<sup>5</sup> Löwith, 1991, pp. 134-5.

<sup>6</sup> Marx, 'The German Ideology', in Marx, 1977, p. 164.

be more than merely subjective: the social relation *its* consciousness represents has to be the yet-to-be-realised objective resolution of contending subjective interests, and this is only possible if critique is scientific, based on knowledge of the material basis of social existence. Philosophy, *qua* disinterested knowledge, is illusory, as it does not take for its object the real material and social conditions of its own form of consciousness. The philosopher's role as a representative of the supposedly universal interest in objective, *disinterested* knowledge hides an *ideological* claim, given that 'disinterested' *a priori* statements about 'the way things are' seek to displace all interested claims about the way things *ought* to be. In this way, a division between 'dogmatism' and scientific criticism is set up, with Marxist 'theoretical reason' forming the basis for the prescriptions of Marxist 'practical reason'.

The meaning of history has, then, to be based on empirical investigation into the real conditions of consciousness. In this way, the divisions of the present and the details of the objective goal of history can be determined. However, Marx's critique of bourgeois philosophy and its epistemological dilemmas cannot itself avoid the issue of circularity.<sup>7</sup> Marx had to develop a positivistic notion of science, as opposed to the 'absolute knowledge' of German Idealism, in order to get at the history of the real conditions of consciousness. But to believe that the facts speak for themselves remains an assumption that requires justification. The foundation for this faith in facts is Marx's definition of the 'species-being' of humanity, the sensuous human being as *homo faber*. But then the question arises, which of these terms is the foundation of the other? Do the former establish the latter, or does the definition of human being actually make possible the selection of the facts?

This question is not merely scholarly, but has had a real political and historical presence. The reasons why the enormous influence of Marxism internationally as a political movement began to wane after the Second World War are various. One way of

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<sup>7</sup> Cutrefello, *op. cit.*, p. 9, quoting Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*.

accounting for this change, though, would be to show how, in connection with real political events such as the French colonial wars in Algeria, much effort was expended on the Continent in drawing out Marx's own *a priori* ideological presuppositions. For example, in relation to the historicist orientation of Marxism, the definition of human being that serves as a foundation of history must rest on a non-ideological science of natural distinctions between humans and non-humans. But these distinctions themselves are either simply accepted, or derived from empirical, historical documents of the activity of human beings. Marx's determination of the real conditions of consciousness thus rests upon an abstract, unhistorical definition of human essence, which simply reflects an interpretation of historical experience that purports to *always already* be science. The horizon of Marx's conception of history is the human as *homo faber*, and this gives impetus to his analysis of 19<sup>th</sup> century capitalism and the idea of an objective interest in critique. But this interest, from which Marx derives his *Sollen*, communist society, is ungrounded if its foundation can only be defined circularly. The Fichtean and Schellingian problem of the inconsistency of foundationalism, of presupposing subjectively what was meant to be demonstrated (in this case, that there is an objective rather than merely subjective distinction between ideology and science) has not been solved.

Marx's supposed foundation could be (and has been) situated as an ideological form of consciousness within other histories. The basis of these histories would be the difference between other interests, such as those of colonists and colonised (a history of racist imperialism), or those of men and women (a history of patriarchy). These histories themselves would also, however, face the problem of self-consistency in having to account for their own subjective presuppositions. Nevertheless, the influential Marxist paradigm for conceiving of critique as the distinction between ideology and science has thus been placed in question. Its circularity is not only epistemologically but also politically suspect, and has occupied Marxists themselves, with regard to the relation of

theory to practice: must the theory of capital and its anthropological underpinnings objectively justify practice, or will practice prove theory by bringing about socialism? How can we act without objective justification of our programme, given that we shall be opposed by other interests who claim absolute right for themselves? But how can we wait for the theorists to do their work, when we are oppressed?

Other movements on the philosophical and political left, particularly in post-war France, have taken this problem of circularity to be definitive of the whole Enlightenment paradigm of philosophical thinking that is established most firmly by Kant. This predominant modern paradigm attempts to establish a distinction between knowledge and non-knowledge in relation to the freedom of an agent. The interest of the Enlightenment in autonomy of thought and action is thus the justification for this attempt. Hence the issue for some currents in post-war French thought, under the influence of Nietzsche and Heidegger, became the possibility of a new paradigm of critique, which would remain true to the Enlightenment's interest in freedom without getting trapped in the dominant paradigm's recurrent epistemological circularity. Central to this turn, I would argue, are objections to the idea that the interest in critique is founded upon an integrated subject of knowledge and action, whose unity is epitomised by the faculty of reason. This was true of Descartes, Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Marx, for example.

This idea of a subject that transcends the distinctions within the reality that it is conscious of in experience is criticised by both Nietzsche and Heidegger. In this way, the attack on the autonomy of reason begun by Marx in the name of 'the real' is continued. For Heidegger, any claim to possess a privileged, transcendent viewpoint on the world simply presupposes the identity of being and reason,<sup>8</sup> which, as Schelling showed, philosophy has to acknowledge as its own fundamental assumption. Such claims always presuppose a privileged subjectivity (the *theoros*) as foundation or *hypokeimenon*, 'what

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<sup>8</sup> See the remarks on reason as the 'presupposing faculty' in Heidegger, 1989, p. 37.

lies present in advance of everything, what already presences and presences in advance'.<sup>9</sup> Even Marx presupposes such a subjectivity, governed by a positivistic *logos* that performs a pre-gathering of what is to count as knowledge. This Heideggerean attack on the foundational subject is well represented by Foucault's denial of the Marxist idea that practice must seek to realise the true essence of the human being, no longer estranged from itself by the deformations of history.<sup>10</sup> Subjectivity is itself rooted in existential conditions, modes of the disclosure of Being, that are pre-rational. This is the Heideggerean real 'beneath' consciousness.

The influence of Nietzsche on the disparate thinkers known as 'post-structuralists' was perhaps even more decisive.<sup>11</sup> The result was the adoption of 'genealogy' as a rubric for a number of different ways of practising critique, whose difference from the dominant paradigm was marked by the inversion of the relation between theory and practice, which I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. This represents, again, an attempt to relate consciousness to its real basis. Genealogical critique, for various post-structuralist thinkers, posits the dependence of representational consciousness upon interest, but refuses to restrict the domain of interest to individual subjects or to social classes. These 'interests' are the material base of consciousness in that they are practices or ways of being (*ethoi*), in relation to which consciousness is an epiphenomenon. Consciousness is, for Nietzsche, the product of forgetting the impact of practices of training and discipline upon the body. In this way, the idea of a transcendent subject or *theoros* in which the essential identity of being and thought is preserved is a fiction born of the insecurity of consciousness. Hence foundationalist philosophy is a practice that aims to preserve a fragile form of being by fostering illusions, yet it gets caught up in dilemmas such as the trauma of reason and those which beset the Marxist paradigm.

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<sup>9</sup> Heidegger, 1989, p. 182.

<sup>10</sup> Miller, 1993, p. 174, p. 336.

<sup>11</sup> See Smith, 1995, Ch. 5, esp. pp. 140 ff.

which render it impotent to resolve issues concerning the status of subjectivity. For genealogical critique, issues concerning domination and freedom, or dogmatism and criticism, can only be settled by evaluating individual practices according to their own immanent tendencies.

The inevitable epistemological rejoinder to both of these positions concerns the issue of self-consistency, pointing back to Schelling and the trauma of reason. If the condition of consciousness is the immanence of an opaque, pre-rational real in it, then the question is how this relation between the real and consciousness can be known. If it cannot be known and is thus without foundation, then how can such critiques of subjectivity have any status beyond that of an interesting fiction? But if it is supposed that it *can* be known, does this not once again imply a transcendent conception of immanence, a conception of an identity of thought and being that is 'higher still'? Does the persistence of a critical orientation towards the presuppositions of truth-claims not testify to an implicit 'higher subject' whose interests drive the denial of transcendence to reason? The question of the identity of this subject becomes urgent. In whose name are critiques of the Cartesian, Kantian, etc. subject conducted? Suspicions that such critiques are not resistant to the emergence of irrationalist and thus potentially totalitarian or fascist subjectivities have been voiced.<sup>12</sup>

It is from this point of view that we can approach Deleuze. I will contend, in this and in the next chapter, that this problem of consistently grounding critique is a central concern of his. Central to this concern is the question of his relation to Schelling. Deleuze's Nietzschean emphasis on the question of how the primacy of practice over theory should be conceived is, I shall argue, due to his appreciation of the problems involved in constructing a discourse of the real once the issue of how this discourse can ultimately justify itself has become explicit — problems which, in Schelling's work, produced the trauma of reason and an impossible choice between dogmatic rationalism

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<sup>12</sup> Eg. Frank, 1989, pp. 341-2.

and dogmatic relativism. Further, he attempts to overcome these problems by pursuing a recognisably Schellingian strategy, concerning how the 'higher' Absolute is to be thought, beyond the illusions of foundationalist philosophy. For Deleuze, only by reintroducing the theme of the Absolute can the suspicions regarding the circularity of both the Marxist and post-Marxist paradigms of critique can be addressed. As we saw, these positions, from an epistemological point of view, seem to renounce the transcendence of reason in favour of its finitude, only to smuggle in a transcendent subject without realising it. Deleuze wants to establish a post-Marxist paradigm by, in a sense, returning thought to the infinite. This, as we shall see, relies on Bergson's transformation of Schelling's conception of absolute intuition. Deleuzean critique, then, is neither Kantian foundationalism nor a Nietzschean doctrine of pure 'fictions', but a paradoxical version of absolute knowledge.

### iii) *The Trauma of Reason as 'Double-Bind'*

Given that Deleuze remains committed to a notion of philosophy as critique, and thus in a certain sense, to the goals of the Enlightenment as expressed by Kant,<sup>13</sup> we need first to understand the basis of his orientation, given that it cannot be grounded by a transcendent foundation. Deleuze's stance can be referred to as antifoundationalist, in that it refuses a certain image of what 'philosophy' means, thus reflecting the influence of Heidegger and Nietzsche.<sup>14</sup> We must first understand what exactly is being refused here, and why it should be refused, which I will examine in the rest of this chapter.

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. the remarks on Deleuze and the Enlightenment in Hallward, 1997, p. 17. On the connection between the Enlightenment and the 'new paradigm' of critique see e.g. Miller, *op. cit.*, pp. 301-4, on Foucault's 'Qu'est-ce que la critique?'.

<sup>14</sup> The idea of such a refusal, as we shall see in Chapters Five to Seven, is also what connects Deleuze to Hegel.



The meaning of philosophy that Deleuze questions is that which has been central to the foregoing chapters, namely that philosophy is a discipline of pure knowledge, for which immanence is the identity of reason and being in some form. To justify this assumption is what foundationalist thought attempts to do. Now, the only proof of this immanence can be a secure foundation that transcends all conditioned cases of knowledge. Without this foundation, there could be no sure means of distinguishing between knowledge and mere belief. In this way, foundationalist thought presupposes that there is an *objective* difference between genuine knowledge and dogmatism, i.e., between securely grounded knowledge and conditioned or subjective knowledge that simply believes itself to be objective. This has been the case, as we have seen, with Descartes, Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Marx: the distinction has had to be presupposed in order to be proven, but it eventually becomes apparent that if we have to presuppose an objective distinction of this kind, we cannot prove it. For Deleuze, these thinkers posed the distinction as if it could be made by a *theoros*, the perfect disinterested observer of being. Following Heidegger and Nietzsche, he refers this hypothetical perfect observer back to the 'real' of its preconscious orientations, the realm of practice or activity, in relation to which it becomes, in Deleuze's view, an illusory posit. We thus have to consider what becomes of the dogmatism/critique distinction if it is made at this level. Can this be done without presupposing a foundation of our 'knowledge' of the practical realm?

This is a complex question and one which will have to be approached circumspectly. Firstly, we turn to what Deleuze means by practice. A partial answer to this question concerns what we assume the *meaning* of an activity to be, that is, what rules mark it off against other activities. Foundationalism is thus a certain practice or activity, one which defines philosophy as outlined above, and which thus follows certain rules of conduct rather than others. This enables us to re-examine the trauma of reason 'from below', as it were, and discover its mechanics. This dilemma, as we saw in

Chapter Two, is inherent in Schelling's philosophy, and arises from a meditation on what foundationalist method requires in order to be able to explain the possibility of knowledge or experience. It presents us with two incompatible options: either affirm the identity of reason and the Absolute (dogmatic rationalism), or affirm the incommensurability of reason and the Absolute (dogmatic relativism). This choice is a dilemma due to two features: a) both options advance truth-claims that are meant to be objectively valid, yet b) we are only forced to choose because the possibility of a foundation for any truth-claim has been denied.

As with Fichte's 'idealism' versus 'realism', neither option can be justified against the other. Although the relativist option has the appearance of a limited, epistemological scepticism, one suggesting that, *for all we know*, there are no secure foundations, it actually contains an ontological claim, namely that it is because of the *nature* of reason that objective justification is impossible. Reason, if it is to be consistent, has to affirm that to choose either option would be actually irrational. Worse still, if we opt to deny both options as unjustified, and thus remain nominally rational and critical, we have nowhere to go. Philosophy is thus caught in anxiety over its fate, faced with its own nothingness. As Nietzsche suggested, the crucial aspect of nihilism is the meaninglessness that it finds in real suffering.<sup>15</sup>

The idea of a trap that confines thought is often evoked by Deleuze, with the implication that such traps arise because of the rules that govern an activity of thinking. A clue to how we can understand the trauma of reason as such a trap is offered by Andrew Cutrefello's use of a relevant Foucauldian notion, 'discipline', in examining the legitimacy of Kantian critique.<sup>16</sup> The central tenet of the modern epistemological tradition, as previously discussed in Chapter One, is the idea of the self-justification of

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<sup>15</sup> E.g. Nietzsche, 1994, III, §28. For a different analysis of the affective aspects of nihilism in terms of an excess of knowledge, see Ansell-Pearson, 1999, p. 127.

<sup>16</sup> Cutrefello, *op. cit.*, esp. Chs. 1 & 5

reason, which assumes that there is a distinction between knowledge and dogmatic belief. Kant's concept of a *Deduktion* gives this notion its purest form, that of a legal or juridical proof of objective entitlement, derived, as Cutrefello notes (citing Dieter Henrich), from the real practices of German jurists.<sup>17</sup> Cutrefello thematises this institutional connection in order to make plain that there is at the heart of Kant's project an unexamined *practice* of thought, that of legal justification.

If Kantian philosophy presupposes the universality of certain forms of experience and is thus circular, this is only a secondary phenomenon. It is heteronomous primarily because it models itself upon another practice that thus determines its own meaning. Philosophy has thus already accepted a method or set of procedural rules as given, rather than being truly self-legislating and autonomous.<sup>18</sup> Consequently it busies itself with a tortuous and circular task without ever actually questioning the legitimacy of this task *as a practice*. In Foucauldian language, thought has been disciplined, and has become dominated from without. Discipline is a process whereby a body, the material and existential precondition of thought, is 'trained' by historically specific practices which force its capacities to function according to certain habits and rules. There is, then, a productive and reproductive relation here between a material ground that operates on bodies ('power') and thought, conducted through empirical practices. Once the capacities of bodies have been trained so as to render them harmless to and complicit with real structures of power, the discipline exercised upon them becomes domination.

This kind of conception of domination also plays a role in Deleuze's work. A clearly delimited example of a technique of domination is described in AO, Deleuze and Guattari's fierce critique of the disciplinary force of psychoanalysis. Using Gregory Bateson's concept of 'double bind', they describe the wider socio-historical conditions within capitalist society that reproduce the underlying social structure by subjecting the

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<sup>17</sup> Cutrefello, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6; CPuR A84-5/B116-7.

<sup>18</sup> Cutrefello, *op. cit.*, p. 8 & Ch. 5, *passim*.

individual psyche to the Oedipus complex. The nature of these conditions need not concern us now. The structure they produce is more important for our purposes, this being the 'double bind' itself, a psychic, existential dilemma which forces the individual to accept that his/her very individuality depends upon the choice between the constraints on sexual desire that exist within the capitalist family (prohibitions on incest), and neurotic fantasies about breaking these taboos (AO 93-4/78-9). The dilemma is that even if one 'resolves' the Oedipus complex and avoids neurosis, one internalises the constraints on desire and thus *reproduces* the complex itself in a new mode, with an external authority-figure as object.

Hence the problem of individual psychic development as constituted by capitalist society, the Oedipus complex itself and its resolution, sets up a situation similar to the classic prisoner's dilemma. Either the individual accepts that the restrictions on desire are relevant to him/her and that s/he is thereby guilty, thus effectively affirming the irresolvability of the complex even as it is 'resolved', or one becomes neurotic. Neither option really resolves the problem, even though one must be chosen, given that the structure of the capitalist family actively creates the complex itself, by subjecting desire to certain constraints: either it takes on incestuous forms or it does not.<sup>19</sup> The situation is one where

an alternative, an exclusive disjunction is defined in terms of a principle which, however, constitutes its two terms or underlying wholes, and where the principle itself enters into the alternative [...].

(AO 95/80)

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<sup>19</sup> See also Bell, 1995, p. 371, pp. 375-6.

The structure of this ongoing emotional crisis also recalls that of the trauma of reason: an irrational choice between 'two terms' or illusory solutions is rendered necessary by an underlying 'principle' — not a principle in the sense of an objective foundation, but rather a *practical imperative* of desire or a subjective presupposition, i.e., a presupposition on the side of desire, that is merely given to desire. Here we can make a link with the trauma of reason. Psychic identity is constituted via the imperative 'the oedipal crisis of incestuous desire must be resolved'; modern epistemology, epitomised by Kant, assumes that 'Reason must justify its *a priori* employment'. In either case, a set of practices, rules or procedures is given that must be mastered in order to resolve the problem. However, if one plays by the rules in accordance with the 'principle', resolution actually becomes impossible, and the choice, together with the practice that forces it, is faced with a crisis of meaning. Given a capitalist familial structure, either another neurotic is produced, or Oedipus is internalised (thus producing another neurotic who remains within the Oedipal crisis). If that the practical imperative of foundationalism requires that we discover an objective foundation for the distinction between philosophy and dogmatism, the result of this imperative as it plays itself out is the trauma of reason: either reason (inconsistently) denies its own *a priori* validity, or it dogmatically asserts it (thus simultaneously denying it).

Deleuze and Guattari remark, in a manner reminiscent of both Marx and Wittgenstein, that the oedipal problem 'is not resolved until we do away with *both the problem and the solution*' (AO 97/81). That is, the rules of the game must be refused outright, but in the name of an alternative practice, in order to escape, as Cutrefello points out with respect to the prisoner's dilemma.<sup>20</sup> In order to avoid Oedipus or the trauma of reason, we require a new mode of desiring or thinking that does not fall victim to these double-binds. This means that a new distinction between 'dogmatism' and 'critique' is being suggested. What this might be, we are not yet in a position to see. The

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<sup>20</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 72-3.

first step towards understanding Deleuze's version of this distinction will be to examine the practical elements of 'dogmatism', i.e., the rules of the foundationalist 'game'.

### *iii) The Image Of Thought*

For Deleuze, philosophical anxiety is a product of a dogmatic or heteronomous form of philosophy that is no longer able to function (N 186/136). As we saw in the last section, this practical definition of heteronomy implies the unquestioning acceptance of problems and methods that reflect those that define other practices. In this stress on the connection between the acceptance of problems from elsewhere and philosophical crisis, Deleuze is, above all, Bergsonian.<sup>21</sup> For Deleuze, it is the history of philosophy as a scholarly sub-discipline that works to reinforce and reproduce this state of heteronomy around the repetition of problems that are themselves never questioned — in fact, it is 'philosophy's own version of the Oedipus complex' (N 14/5). This emphasis on the history of philosophy as a scholarly practice, rather than, say, a universal narrative of the 'forgetting of Being' means that, as Foucault puts it, there is no 'great Repressed of Western philosophy' for Deleuze; instead the history of philosophy is understood in relation to local, partial compromises agreed with forces that seek to dominate thought.<sup>22</sup>

If philosophy unquestioningly takes up problems that are not its own, then it will develop an image of itself, of what it means to *do* philosophy, based on these problems. For example, we saw in the last section how Cutrefello's reading of Foucault makes the link between juridical practice and Kant's image of the 'tribunal' of philosophy: in this image, critique is divided against itself, being both judge and defendant. This image of thought (DR 172/131) forms the basis of the unquestioned practical imperative that

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<sup>21</sup> See Bergson, 1960, p. 105.

<sup>22</sup> Foucault, 1970, 890/172, modified.

drives a heteronomous philosophy, and the rules that it gives itself. The history of philosophy, in Deleuze's view, functions to consolidate this image of thought as an imagined timeless essence of philosophy that is subject to minor variation throughout its history, as the basic problems of philosophy are subjected to different treatments and different solutions are proposed. In this way, philosophy is reproduced as an actual, empirical practice that is defined by certain subjective (i.e., on the side of thought) presuppositions (DR 169/129), which philosophy reflects back to itself in an illusory image of its timeless essence.

What are these presuppositions? Deleuze characterises his thought as 'transcendental empiricism' (DR 79-80/56-7), which already contains echoes of Schelling's 'philosophical empiricism'.<sup>23</sup> Again, this is a complex term that needs unpacking. In the present context, it is enough to note that 'empiricism' here means that the subjective presuppositions of a philosophical *ethos* or practice are to be discovered in its empirical products, i.e., philosophical texts. In this way, the real, i.e., the practical preconditions of a form of philosophical experience or consciousness will be laid bare. Although Deleuze produces differing empirical analyses of the same philosophical practices throughout his career, the idea of an essentially invariant and reproductive image of thought reinforced as an 'essential' *ethos* by the history of philosophy remains a constant, its continuing importance directly affirmed by Deleuze himself.<sup>24</sup>

During the late 60s, Deleuze identifies this *ethos* in DR and LS as 'Platonism'. He suggests that there is within Plato's philosophy a moment where the practical imperative that philosophy will subsequently consolidate as its essential or transcendent image of itself can be discerned clearly (DR 82-3/59), and related to other practices.<sup>25</sup> Plato's philosophy takes up a specifically political problem, which we could relate to the

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<sup>23</sup> See Baugh, 1993, p. 26 and Boundas, 1996, p. 87.

<sup>24</sup> On the importance of the 'image of thought', see Martin, 1993, 'Lettre-préface de Gilles Deleuze', p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> On Deleuze and Plato, see also Patton, 1994.

instability in Athens following the Peloponnesian War. This concerns the mediation of competing claims on authority within the *polis*, and desires an ultimate and universal standard by which the validity of such claims can be measured. Plato's philosophy takes up this problem, binding the destiny of thought to the task of differentiating good claims from bad ones, and thus securely distinguishing the meanings of 'pure' and 'impure', 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' (LS 293/254). The Platonic imperative, which already suggests the need for a foundationalist method, reflects the assumption that the most desirable State would be one where individuals, instead of being free to usurp power through violence or cunning, are allocated the roles they are naturally or *essentially* suited to.

Plato's philosophy thus simultaneously transforms this political problem into one that exists for pure thought, whose *eros* is supposedly directed towards that which is unchanging, universal, and therefore the highest object of desire, the Good itself as a higher ontological unity. In this way, the political project receives legitimation from the philosopher, the friend (*philos*) of wisdom, who claims access, through his mental discipline, to that which alone is truly transcendent and foundational, above the distinctions and confusions of *polis* and *physis*. For Deleuze, Platonic philosophy thus claims the right to survey the field of contesting claims and gather them, placing them, together with the particular desires to which they give expression, in hierarchical order, according to how close they approach to the universal, the model of which they are only more or less exact copies. Platonic dialectic is the method by which claims are related to the specific Idea (justice, love etc.) they refer to, and by which questions such as 'who is the true lover?' and 'who is the true statesman?' can be answered. The Idea has a positive ontological status: the copies refer to their model on the basis of their actual *participation* in its being. Only Justice is truly just, but the various claimants who contend for the position of judge each possess the quality of being-just in varying



degrees, a distribution that is decided according to the content of their claims, and what this reveals about their way of life or *ethos* (DR 84-5/60; LS 293-4/253-4).

Platonic philosophy is thus defined as a practice by a political problem which it accepts, and in terms of which it imagines itself. In reflecting on the possibility of a real, stable political unity that would be governed according to a higher criterion, it imagines itself as a search for that which is genuinely transcendent, a pure unity of thought and being that is known as such and which can thus function as a foundation, a criterion for judging contending claims. In this way, Platonic thought ‘borrows its properly philosophical image from the State as beautiful, substantial or subjective interiority’, and thus ‘invents a properly spiritual State, like an absolute State’ (D 20/13). Later, Deleuze and Guattari call this Platonic and foundationalist image that of ‘State philosophy’, which is ‘capable of inventing the fiction of a State that is universal by right, of elevating the State to the level of *de jure* universality’ (TP 465/375). This illusory meaning of philosophical activity is thus forced upon thought, and interiorised by it.

This ‘forcing’ is important; the adoption of an image of thought is not just an arbitrary decision by a thinker, an implicitly autonomous (and thus transcendent) subject, but is forced by the relation between thought and other practices extant within a society, a relation which is mediated by the body of the thinker. Hence the notion of habit is central for Deleuze. Bodies are educated or trained by forces, a process in which functional habits that are needed to regulate humans within a unitary social order are inculcated.<sup>26</sup> This, for Deleuze as for Nietzsche and Bergson, is as true of the discursive faculties and consciousness as much as it is of the non-discursive faculties of sensibility, intuition and imagination (DR 128-9/96-7). With respect to Platonic philosophy, the training of the body of the philosopher is also bound up with political interests. The political desire for the State is realised in physical forms that imply specific spatio-temporal relations between the body and its environment (TP 483-4/388-9). The physical

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Nietzsche, *op. cit.*, II, §§ 1, 16.

space of the *polis* is consolidated as a geometrical space of extension, a divisible unity defined by the city's limits, which acts as a material boundary of inclusion for the citizens (TP 483-4/388-9). The citizens themselves are distributed within the *polis* according to a process of division that assigns them subordinate unities or territories within the city (DR 53-4/36). Time in turn is administered in terms of space as a divisible unity, and thus subordinated to it. Means of measuring time depend upon a linear and irreversible model of the repetition or addition of smallest units defined by movement in an extended space between two fixed points (DR 367/287; B 7-8/18-19, 22-3/31).

The role of Platonic philosophy is, in essence, to secure the *best* division of the established space and time of the *polis*: Plato's dialectic, for example, attempts to establish differences within an undifferentiated yet divisible material unity, the *polis* as a mass of people (TP 484/389; DR 82-4/59-60), according to the natures of classes of people and their proximity to an Idea, differences which then form, for example, the basis for prescriptions concerning the general administration of tasks within the *polis* and in particular, the organisation of work. In this way, the rules that govern Platonic *thought* will be functions of the 'sedentary' (DR 54/36) spatio-temporal conditions of physical existence within the *polis*. In this way, the practice of philosophy is formed through the training of the body. Deleuze thus posits a genetic relation between certain forms of practice (such as the ordering of space and time) and others (such as Platonic philosophy). Hence a heteronomous philosophy's unquestioning acceptance of certain problems implies a cluster of pre-existing practices that constitute the real and 'objective' (i.e., external to thought) preconditions of this philosophy's image of thought (its subjective presuppositions), and which inscribe a habitual orientation upon thought.

The dogmatic image of thought is constituted by a set of rules, the 'institutions' of the spiritual State, which are subject to modification, yet derive from the same condition, the presence of a problem that thought does not set for itself. In DR Deleuze extracts the basic forms of these rules from Aristotle rather than Plato, given that Aristotle

consolidates the dogmatic image for thought by intellectualising it. For Deleuze, Aristotle's criticisms of Plato centre on the perceived inadequacy of the Idea as a ground of difference. The allocation of degrees of participation in the Idea is based on an esoteric insight expressed by a myth of metempsychosis (DR 85-6/61; LS 293-4/254-5), in which the souls of the various claimants approach or recede from the perfection of the Idea according to their *ethos* in life. When it is asked *why* a given claimant is assigned a particular rank, only a circular justification can be given, one which relates the hierarchy in the *polis* to the mythological heavenly order. The *polis* should, according to the Platonist, reflect the ideal, substantial, spiritual State, and thus realise its essential relation to the ground of its being.

Against this concept of division, the Aristotelian notion of contrariety is an attempt to give, in every case, a *reason* for the differences between entities, namely a genus within which species can be defined as contraries: e.g., the genus 'animal', specified as 'with feet' and 'with wings' (DR 45-6/30). The ground of difference is thus to be found in the intellect. However, this completes the colonisation of thought begun by Plato, by making the 'spiritual State' completely internal to thought, rather than positing it as dependent on an unaccountable intuition. Aristotle thus presupposes and reinforces the subjective presuppositions of the dogmatic image, demonstrating that the role and definition of the State within thought is the same as that of the State *per se*: the conservation of a way of being (DR 172-3/132; TP 441/357).

Deleuze analyses these subjective presuppositions of thought as follows. The political problem of turning the indeterminate mass of people into a self-sufficient unity is reflected in the philosophical State by the assumption that 'thinking is the natural exercise of a faculty, and that this faculty is possessed of a good nature and a good will' (DR 173/132). Everyone can think, and this means that everyone essentially thinks in the same way; this presupposition implies that thought is the source of true unity, and that it possesses by right an affinity with the universal, the unchanging, the true. Therefore

everyone is inherently a *theoros*. The virtuous *eros* of pure thought, its affinity and desire for the universal, is reflected in its *good sense* (*bon sens*) and *common sense* (*sens commun*), the French *sens* here designating both a mental faculty and a direction of activity common to all minds, a supposedly universal context or horizon of meaning (DR 171-2/131).

When thought conceives of an object, it is determined by two assumptions: that this object would be conceivable for any other thinker (good sense) and that it is conceivable in the same way, or is essentially the same for any thinker (common sense). The harmony of these two practices, which constitutes the general form of the activity of State-philosophy, is *recognition*: good sense in reciprocity with common sense, as when one greets friends, engages in debate, or advances a claim to be judged (DR 174-7/133-5). Recognition assumes that individual experiences are representative of the universal or essential character of experience. Recognition itself takes place within an encompassing horizon of thought. Platonism assumes an external and an internal essential form of unity, 'the Whole as the final ground of being or all-encompassing horizon, and the Subject as the principle that converts being into being-for-us' (TP 469/379), with the latter deriving its affinity for the former from the virtuous *eros* of thought. These forms define a milieu, co-extensive with *cosmos* and *polis*, in which State-philosophy can be practiced, that of *representation*, which is the form of philosophical consciousness as such, governed by four principles that make it possible to construct determinate relations of difference and identity between the object and the subject, exterior and interior.

First and foremost, the *identity of the concept*, the unity of the thinking subject as such. Like Kant's unity of apperception, this reflects a fundamental formal integrity of the subject which, for Platonism, is a necessary condition of any discursive thought, prior to the work of common sense and good sense (Deleuze does not consider this a fundamental condition of any thought, as we shall see in the next chapter). *Opposition* makes possible the determination of the empty concept, via the differentiation and

comparison of possible predicates and their opposites, and regulates the faculty of imagination. *Analogy* allows the faculty of judgement to determine objects with concepts, by making possible the apprehension of the difference-in-identity that characterises synthetic knowledge: the object *is* and *is not* identical to the concept. Finally, the *resemblance* of the object with respect to itself, its continuity across time, is a necessary condition of the application of concepts to objects (DR 44-5/29, 49-51/33-4, 179-80/137-8, 337/262).

For Deleuze, the model of representation can be clearly discerned beneath Aristotle's notion of contrariety. The specification of real differences can only take place according to the principle of contrariety (perfect opposition), and this only within the identity of a higher concept, the genus, a third term that establishes the ground of difference for its species: birds and men are different *insofar as* they are both animals (DR 45-9/30-3). Whereas the Platonic mode of determining difference is circular, esoteric and 'capricious' (DR 83/59), the Aristotelian mode affirms the real autonomy of rational thought, by making the identity of the finite, determinate concept into the ground of difference. This complete internalisation of the State is a more efficient means of regulation, as it means that thought will not only denounce bad claims that destabilise the unity of the *polis*, but will also police itself, and become engrossed in its own internal dramas, such as periodic epistemological crises that render it temporarily unable to function: minor double-binds that act as blockages. In this way, it will eventually come to write its own history, or rather, what amounts to the history of its uncritical compromises with existing practices, of its heteronomy and domination.

The type of dogmatism Deleuze finds in Plato and Aristotle constitutes an *organic* form of representation (DR 44/29), part of an *ethos* of contemplation (WP 11/6-7, 21/15). This specificity of the *ethos* constitutes its historical concreteness as a unique form of compromise. Contemplation is a meta-physics: it assumes that it has an essential affinity with, and thus possesses as its object, the real ground of all real difference within

the *physis* or physical universe. This ground cannot be part of the universe, and is thus posited as transcending its tangled distinctions and confused mixtures. Platonism thus posits its relation to this universal, its identity with it, as being beyond space and time.

We now need to explicitly relate this analysis of the dogmatic image of Platonic, foundationalist philosophy to the trauma of reason. For Deleuze, the Christian era, within which modern philosophy is firmly rooted, sees the image of thought's outline shift, as the form of the identity of thought and being that it presupposes changes from contemplative identity to reflective identity, moving from the relative priority of the object and the finite concept, to that of the subject and the infinite concept (WP 11/6-7). Reflection as the new *ethos* of Platonism, implies a change in the practice of philosophy. This is brought about by a consciousness of the separation of thought from the universal that has to be overcome. Cartesian doubt, as a variation on this *ethos*, presupposes a representational consciousness structured according to a presentation of a unified space and time, common sense and good sense (as presuppositions of the sceptical method), and the postulates of identity, opposition, analogy and resemblance. But now knowledge has to be *guaranteed* by the subject itself as a ground of reflection, in relation to both a subjective ground of certainty (the *cogito*) that provides unchanging and transcendent formal criteria for objective knowledge of the world through reason alone ('clarity' and 'distinctness'), and an objective ground of being that acts as an unchanging and transcendent real criterion for this knowledge and is thus the true universal (God).

It is clear, I think, that in the post-Enlightenment period, the difference between subjective certainty and objective truth is explicit for Fichte and Schelling, who distinguish between formal and material criteria of truth. The distinction of reason between these criteria has to be reduced to an identity, and this is supposed to take place via an intellectual journey, which begins by reflecting upon the formal ground of certainty understood as a postulated material ground, and then attempts to return to it via a well-marked circular path upon which all the forms of knowledge are encountered, thus

showing it to be the true universal. The formal departure point is defined by a moment of absolute experience (common sense) that connects the finite subject to its absolute precondition, the foundation of the difference or mediation that characterises representative consciousness. The moment when the circle is closed, however, is always postponed, because the difference between the necessarily transcendent ground (*Tathandlung* or Absolute Identity) and that which it is the foundation of is in practice infinite. That the foundation can be *known* as the ground of all actual experience, the true universal, can only be presupposed and not proven.

The trauma of reason arises in relation to Schelling's philosophy when we realise that negative philosophy cannot make the connection between the transcendent, self-identical ground and real difference without a practice of affirmation that actually makes *knowledge* of such a connection impossible. The intellectual intuition or experience of a rational Absolute which is presupposed as the inner, common sense (meaning and direction) of representational consciousness cannot ground the determinate differences that are subsequently deduced 'from' it. Both the Fichte of the WLnm and (more radically) the later Schelling inadvertently show that a purely transcendent, self-identical universal cannot serve as a sufficient ground of difference even though, if philosophy exists, it must presuppose that it *is* a sufficient ground of difference. The modern Platonic project of justification must therefore fail. The real existence of the true universal (the rational Absolute) and reason's knowledge of it, can only ever be presupposed rather than known. Philosophy thus faces the double-bind of the trauma of reason, which from Deleuze's point of view would be a trap prepared for it by its *eros* for the universal.

This desire for the true universal, in which all differences are unified and which can thus serve as the ground of difference, is related by Deleuze, as we saw, to a political project. This desire stems from a problem which is forced upon thought by other practices, and which it then transforms, creating a heteronomous philosophical practice.

In this way, Platonism or foundationalism, as the dominant tradition of Western philosophy, assumes that the destiny of thought is to determine the essential, timeless and transcendent meaning of the universal. In relation to other disciplines, philosophy sees itself as setting out to give final unity to human knowledge, by determining the transcendent meaning, the Truth, of what is. Deleuze, following Bergson, criticises Platonism, not for being a 'bad claimant' with regard to its conception of the True, but for beginning with a problem which is simply assumed to be universally relevant, the problem of problems.<sup>27</sup> It is this problem that, along with its various solutions, Deleuze will try to 'do away with' (AO 94/81).

The traumas that Platonic/foundationalist thought undergoes are not wholly accidental. They result from an illusion within thought that for Deleuze, as we shall see in the next chapter, is a transcendental illusion (one immanent to ontological conditions of determination). This illusion, which marks the *sens* (meaning/direction) of Platonist thought arises from the 'social problem' that defines Platonism, and is an illusion of thought's *transcendence*. That is to say, Platonism seeks the true, timeless Universal that will act as a foundation for all knowledge of real difference. Because this search will define philosophy as the discipline that unifies all human knowledge, Platonism thus assumes a) that thought's true essence and meaning is to seek this Universal within itself, and b) that thought thus always already dwells implicitly within this Universal. For example, Descartes constructs a method in order to reach the universal, but the method already presupposes that a medium of universal common sense (innate ideas) exists. Kant proposes that the transcendental method of critique will show that pure reason has a right to claim objective *a priori* knowledge, but he also presupposes that the transcendental method is itself *de jure* universal, given as such within the medium of common sense.

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<sup>27</sup> Bergson, 1962, pp. 355-6.



The content or meaning of the Universal will thus secure the horizon of meaning embodied in the presupposition of a common sense.<sup>28</sup>

This means that Platonic thought is subject to a constraining double movement, which is exemplified by the Fichtean and Schellingian systems. In particular, Schelling's system shows an appreciation of this double movement as a necessity for thought (though Deleuze would ask for what kind of practice this movement becomes necessary). As we saw in Chapter Two, Schelling's *Philosophy of Identity* recognised that the ultimate presupposition of all knowledge was the immediate unity of knower and known, which in itself could be reduced to neither subject nor object (WS 137/141, 145-6/146). This unity itself has to be postulated as inherently rational, i.e., as an ontological unity that is also an *immediate* knowledge, a blind certainty. However, as we also saw, this postulated foundation could not be posited as simply rational. In fact, if the Absolute was neither subject nor object, its content was also neither simply rational nor simply irrational. The task Schelling undertook in his middle period was thus to demonstrate that this Absolute had an inherent tendency to become more and more rational through positing itself. But this tendency itself was presupposed in positing the *Ungrund* as divine love. Schelling's project, to prove that reason could know the Absolute foundation of experience, the true Universal, eventually inadvertently demonstrated that reason could only ever presuppose this knowledge and could *never* prove it. Foundationalism has to presuppose that the timeless essence of thought is to know the universal. It cannot show that this is the case, for thought's search for the universal — the unity of all distinctions — within itself presupposes the reality of the distinction between thought and its implicit essence (its real unity with what is). The reality of this distinction is what foundationalist thought cannot itself account for, even with reference to Schelling's Absolute. All it can do is illegitimately posit that this distinction is a necessary

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Heidegger's presentation of 'metaphysics' as the inquiry which discovers only by anticipating (*vorwegnehmen*), 1976, p. 108.

consequence of the Absolute, as when Schelling posits a conceptual 'first creation' as the basis of determination. But this positing of the distinction as necessary can only be circular and hence subjective.

To reiterate, for Deleuze such traps result from the illusions of transcendence that characterise foundationalist thought. As we have just seen, the primary aspect of such illusions is to posit an essential, timeless inner resemblance between that which is to be conditioned, i.e., the real distinctions within the *physis* and *polis*, and that which is to act as the foundation of these distinctions, providing an explanation of their possibility (LS 128/105). The foundation is thus posited as the substantial aspect of these distinctions, securing them within itself and abiding immanently within them in their real separateness. But all that this means is that a transcendent condition has been posited whose only content is the distinctions with which we are already familiar. Its only additional determination is formal: it is a 'higher' unity of these distinctions. If it possesses within itself an inherent real tendency to give rise to these distinctions, this itself has to be presupposed, as was shown by Schelling's identification of the possible (the 'first creation') and actual dialectics of the Absolute's self-determination.

The crucial aspect of the illusion of transcendence for Deleuze is the way in which it posits the Universal as a reflection of real practices. These practices are those real, habitual modes of being that regulate the behaviour of human being as social habits, such as common sense and recognition, the harmonious functioning of intuition, memory and thought that allows us to identify the same objects at different times. Such habits are not innate, but are inculcated in us by the material limits of our social existence. Opinion and judgement, practices that seek to determine what the meanings of these unitary objects really are, follow in the wake of recognition, regulated by common sense and the principles of representation. Platonic philosophy thus abstracts from these habits the Universal as that which is meant to perfectly regulate opinion, judgement and recognition. In this way, bad opinions and bad judgements can be distinguished from

good ones according to a timeless, invariable standard. The transcendent Universal is thus an imagined pure case of recognition on the part of a virtuous thinker who attends to thought itself in order to trace the Universal within it and discover its essential determinations.

For Descartes, the Universal was God conceived as the real ground of being and knowledge, a role secured for the concept of God by analogical argument. God is the supreme being and real ground because his nature is infinitely perfect. In other words, he possesses in an *eminent* sense real finite qualities which derive their meaning from familiar opinions, such as goodness, wisdom and power, and it is this eminence of God's nature that makes him God (SP 45-6/54-5, 60-2/70-3). For Kant, the Universal was the transcendental subject, whose determinations (such as the categories and forms of intuition) reflected the most general constituents of our received opinions about the nature of experience. This subject thus represented a tautological, formal abstraction from Newtonian science and Christian morality, an 'originary consciousness' at the base of consciousness (LS 128/105).

These elements of eminence and tautology represent respectively the essential difference of the Universal from that which it conditions and its essential identity with it. This equivocal sense of the Universal is best expressed by Fichte's Absolute Subject; indeed, it is just this equivocation that Jacobi, Hölderlin and Schelling reproach him for. The *Tathandlung* is postulated as a) an absolute and thus self-producing act, and b) as subjective. This, however, is impossible, for to be subjective implies self-consciousness over against an object, and this is a conditioning relation. The *Tathandlung* is thus postulated as both unconscious (self-producing or eminent) and conscious (self-knowing or tautological). This equivocal definition is also present in Schelling's definition of the Absolute as the already rational unity of all difference, for if Schelling's project is to succeed, the Absolute has to be both a 'higher' Absolute, essentially neither rational nor irrational, and a predominantly rational Absolute. This requirement of thinking the

Absolute as simultaneously radically different from *and* identical with the field of experience also means that Schelling's project must fail, however, as we saw.

The abstraction that characterises Platonism/foundationalism is thus a supreme analogy posited between the Universal and that which it is meant to condition, the real differences that make up the world. In this way, the transcendent Universal is posited as immanent in the conditioned while still transcending it: like Schelling's Absolute, it posits itself in finite things while remaining above them as their eminent foundation. But this relation is only presupposed, being secured only by the tautology that is also posited between condition and conditioned: the Absolute always already contains just those determinations that we are familiar with, and thus formally justifies their possibility, but leaves the real ground of their necessity still to be discovered. The fact that for Platonism the stress is on the tautological aspect makes the analogy between condition and conditioned a bad one. The problem that we discovered in Kant's philosophy, the merely formal tracing of the conditions of experience that assumes the universality of a definition of experience ('psychologism'), is discovered by Deleuze to be a recurrent problem for the dominant tradition of philosophy. There is always an internal relation of unity being posited between a transcendent Universal and that which it is supposed to condition, such that the content of the Universal only repeats that of 'received opinion', the product of given, empirical practices that goes unquestioned by Platonism. In the next chapter, we will see how Deleuze makes and justifies a distinction between this illusory belief or dogmatism and a non-illusory critique or philosophy, without making a similar move himself. In this way, the *ethos* of Deleuzean 'Enlightenment' will be distinguished from the heteronomous, unenlightened dogmatism of Platonism, which cannot acknowledge its own lack of transcendence, i.e., the degree to which it is genetically related to the disciplining of bodies and of thought.

## Chapter Four

### Deleuze and the Absolute

#### *i) Introduction*

At the beginning of the previous chapter, I noted that for Deleuze, as for Foucault, understanding modernity or Enlightenment philosophically becomes, not a matter of defining a historical epoch containing specific modes of reflection upon the timeless problems of philosophy, but one of realising an *ethos*, practice or 'attitude' defined over against other *ethoi*, predominant among which is Platonism/foundationalism. This indicates a refusal of any timeless essential and universal meaning that has been posited for philosophy, with the consequence that that the task of 'modern philosophy' is the *renversement* of Platonism (DR 82/59; LS 292/253). On the one hand, *renversement* means 'overturning'. This is the task taken up by Deleuze in his analyses of the dogmatic image of thought, showing how Platonism can be referred back to subjective presuppositions (internal to thought) and objective presuppositions (external to thought) that, as components of practices, remain unaddressed within it, given that it assumes itself to be a transcendent practice capable of seeing into what is. *Renversement* also means 'inversion', however. Deleuze's procedure of inverting Platonism will be traced in this chapter, in order to show how he redefines the task of philosophy in terms of non-illusory problems without appealing to a transcendent foundation in order to justify this redefinition. Against the model of education appealed to by the Enlightenment, in which a mind is purified of its illusory opinions about the world in order to reach the genuine Universal, the foundation of true knowledge, Deleuze constructs a model of training or apprenticeship designed to reshape the meaning and orientation (*sens*) of the subject and thus overcome habituated modes of thinking that are implicated in nihilism, the loss of all meaning for philosophical thinking

that is experienced in the trauma of reason. Deleuze thus aims to restore meaning to this 'suffering' of thought.

This chapter will thus show how, even though he provides (as we saw) an account of the real, genetic grounds of the illusions that define Platonism. Deleuze does not simply repeat Marx's mistake, by relying in this account on a presupposed and unprovable definition of a human essence, and thus on a 'knowing before knowing'. On the contrary, Deleuze, in his inversion of Platonism, remains true to Schelling's insights into the impossibility of foundational philosophy. Moreover, his Bergsonian and Nietzschean reinvention of philosophical modernity is consonant with certain tendencies within Schelling's own thinking of the Absolute, which I shall draw out in order to understand Deleuze's notion of immanence, which is no longer defined as the identity of being and thought in knowledge. In this way, we shall progress towards an understanding of the distinction Deleuze draws between dogmatism and genuine philosophy, illusory and non-illusory modes of thought.

## *ii) Towards Thinking Absolute Difference*

The key to my interpretation of Deleuze is the conviction that, with him, philosophy returns to the Absolute in order to distinguish dogmatism, with its concern for the transcendent Universal, from philosophy. It is this attention to a theme that is often understood by 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy to be a worn-out notion that allows Deleuze to carry out a radical excavation of the presuppositions of philosophy. In addition, how the Absolute or unconditioned has to be thought in order to 'modernise' and restore meaning to philosophy is, as I will show, a constant concern. In showing this, I will draw on various sources, ranging from his early work on Bergson where he first announces

that '[t]he Absolute is difference' (B 27/35) to his final published essay on the meaning of the notion of absolute immanence, developed with Guattari.<sup>1</sup>

I referred previously to Deleuze's thought as 'transcendental empiricism', and to the positing of a transcendent Universal as the foundation of real difference as the primary 'transcendental illusion' of Platonism. The sense of 'empiricism' was related to Deleuze's investigation of actual philosophical practices which allowed him to define Platonism. What, though, does 'transcendental' mean in these two expressions? In the first case, it does not, as with Kant, refer to that which is the essential condition of the possibility of experience and which can thus be known as such independently of experience. Instead, it refers to those conditions of experience which thought must presuppose as real but also as being actually incommensurable with thought, and yet which thought must try to think (its 'objective presuppositions'). Here, a firm connection with Schelling's concept of a 'higher' Absolute, irreducible to our concept of it, can be made. In the second case, 'transcendental' reflects the Kantian sense, though modified through a reading of Bergson, pertaining to a tendency within the real conditions of experience to give rise to illusions within thought. Transcendental empiricism, as it has the goal of dispelling illusion, will as we see constitute a kind of absolute knowledge, though in a very special sense, which owes more to Bergson than to Schelling.

Like Marx's analysis of bourgeois philosophy, Deleuze's attack on Platonism accuses it of reversing an actual, empirical relation. If Platonism, in positing the Universal as the object of a privileged thought, thus abstracts its object from real practices of judgement, opinion and recognition that regulate life within the secure, sedentary bounds of the *polis*, it ignores, for Deleuze, the real conditions of experience, which are themselves incommensurable with Platonic thought, defined above all by the subjective presupposition of the identity of the concept with being. These real conditions are thus defined by their *difference* from the regulated thinking of Platonism. Deleuze

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<sup>1</sup> See IL 3-4/3-4 (on the difference between immanence and transcendence as a difference between

thus claims that they are real differences that are transcendently prior to the Platonic image of thought, in that they can explain the genesis of such practices, and thus account for real forms of experience. To assume that these differences are reducible to being thought in terms of the identity of the concept, which seeks to regulate difference within the *polis* so as to secure its overall unity, is the fundamental subjective assumption of Platonism, which is incarnated in the positing of a Universal. Of course, Deleuze's claim itself appears simply a presupposition at this stage. We will now examine how he attempts to show that it is more than just an assumption, beginning by returning to Schelling's 'higher' Absolute, through Deleuze's late distinction in IL between 'relative' and 'absolute' immanence. This attempt will require that these real conditions, which are suppressed by Platonism, are made into the positive basis of a new image of thought, not as knowledge of a Universal, but as *creation*. For Deleuze, it is only through such a positive inversion of Platonism that a true critique of it can be constructed.<sup>2</sup>

Deleuze's critical distinction between 'relative' and 'absolute' immanence (IL 3-4/3-4) distinguishes two forms of philosophical thinking of the relation between thought and being: on the one hand, the immanence of the transcendent, and on the other immanence 'in itself', which 'is not in something, not *to* something' (IL 4/4). The first, Platonic form, seeks the Universal that is to serve as the ground or *explanans* of difference. This ground is therefore posited as being immanent in or to what it conditions, i.e., real difference, while nevertheless subsisting beyond it. Kant's transcendental subject is immanent to the empirical, experiential medium of representational consciousness, and yet cannot itself be experienced. Schelling's Absolute expresses itself in the determinations of its finite and infinite potencies, yet it remains in-itself or essentially neither one nor the other of these potencies (AW 34/126). For Deleuze, even Heidegger does not escape this illusion, for he relies on the notion of a pre-ontological understanding of Being (DR 169/129, 188 fn./321 n. 11). In each case,

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unconditioned and conditioned).



the condition is posited in an equivocal relation with the world that we experience as a differentiated manifold, i.e., as simultaneously separated from and immanent in it.

Looking back on the issue of the consistency of historical versions of critique, as discussed in the previous chapter, it seems that we can say that, in a general theoretical sense, critique after Kant came to refer to the practice of demonstrating the dependence of a determination that had been posited as absolute upon a ground of explanation, an objective presupposition with greater or more general explanatory power. For example, in epistemology Jacobi, Hölderlin and Schelling showed that Fichte's *Tathandlung* was *a priori* dependent upon a more comprehensive unity. In political economy, Marx showed that bourgeois economic theory was dependent upon specific empirical social formations, and that a history of these formations could be constructed on the basis of a general anthropology. The inconsistency of this foundational model of critique lies, for Deleuze, in its repetition of a basic illusion of transcendence. In this way, the critique of one form of thought by another operates by demonstrating that the principle adopted by the form to be critiqued is itself based upon distinctions that it cannot explain, as is clearly the case with Fichte's *Tathandlung*. The discovery of a new principle is meant to undercut the old principle by accounting for its determination and relation to those determinations that condition it, as when Schelling posits the Absolute as neither subjective nor objective, yet as expressing itself (somehow) in both. For Deleuze, however, the universality of this principle in relation to real difference is in every case only assumed and cannot be justified or proven. This is another way of expressing Schelling's insight that the essential connection between the Absolute and our experience is a matter of faith rather than of demonstration. Such a foundationalist principle can, for Deleuze, only be an illusion, the result of abstraction from accepted practices: these pre-philosophical presuppositions thus give form to philosophical thought, and *doxa* becomes reflected as *ur-doxa* (DR 175-6/134).

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<sup>2</sup> See Hardt, 1993, esp. pp. xiii-xviii.

Deleuze aims, like Marx's critique of the model of exchange provided by bourgeois political economy, to explain the fact that an abstraction has been posited. In this sense, he seems to approach the model of critique just discussed, in aiming to explain the determination of a practice. However, the 'ground' he appeals to does not imply the presupposition of a Universal that somehow enfolds or subsumes the determination of that which it is meant to explain by transcending it. The difference between his critique and this 'relative' mode lies, as we shall see, in his conception of the relation between real difference and thought, which does not presuppose that thought, thanks to its supposedly unique identity with being, is capable of transcending difference towards that which, remaining eternally independent of difference, contains it in its totality.

Although Platonism is that *ethos* of thought that, in affirming certain problems, drives the history of Western philosophy and thus dominates our image of what 'philosophy' means, Deleuze refuses to posit philosophy as such as monolithically dogmatic. He is enthusiastic about an alternative tradition, including Lucretius, Spinoza, Hume, Nietzsche and Bergson (N 14/6) who manage to resist thinking grounds in terms of their relative immanence, and instead promote a different image of thought, which affirms the centrality of the problem, not of knowing, but of creation. These are thinkers who do not adopt an illusory image of thought from pre-philosophical *ethoi* and model concepts upon it; rather, they *invent* concepts that are not posited as transcending difference, but as following its real articulations, as being *absolutely* immanent.

For Deleuze, thinkers who are otherwise Platonic in the extreme occasionally achieve such conceptual invention. An example is the 'pure and empty form of time', the medium of the Kantian ego's empirical self-perception, which ensures that the transcendental ego and empirical ego can never be identical in and for consciousness (DR 81-2/58, 116-8/85-7; KP vii-viii; SQ 29-30). Another such, even more emphatic case, I would suggest, would be Schelling's vision of the 'higher' Absolute. My

discussion in Chapter Two of the 'two Absolutes' in Schelling is reflected by Deleuze's assessment of Schelling's achievements: on the one hand, he brought 'difference out of the night of the Identical' (DR 246/191), but on the other the Absolute Identity remains an abyssal 'nothing' (LS 130/107) that 'cannot sustain difference' (DR 354/276).

I now want to suggest that an important connection can be made between Schelling's account of the Absolute as primordially dissonant within itself and the notion of absolute immanence, which will help us to understand this Deleuzian idea. As we saw at the end of the previous chapter, Platonism believes that the Universal internally resembles that which it conditions: as Deleuze writes with respect to Kant, the error of transcendental philosophy is to 'think of the transcendental in the image of, and in resemblance to, that which it is supposed to ground' (LS 128/105). Schelling, however, shows us that there is no *a priori* reason to assume that this is the case. It can only be justified (which is to say, *not* justified) with reference to our *faith* in the autonomy of reason.

Schelling proposes that the presupposition of all philosophy is this faith, the unity of reason with a transcendent Absolute Identity. However, this is only the formal presupposition of philosophy. It does not demonstrate that philosophy, *qua* absolute knowledge, in fact exists. In other words, it does not show that this Universal is the real ground of difference. To show that this is the case, Schelling attempts to think the Absolute as different within itself at the same time as thinking it as a transcendent unity. These two aspects prove ultimately irreconcilable, however. In fact, the obscure difference within the Absolute, which reason needs to presuppose in order to account for real difference, functions like Fichte's *Gefühl*, making a system impossible to complete. Because the difference is itself non-rational and unaccountable, an *Ungrund*, it cannot be taken up into the system, which means that the system is incomplete and not absolute. Reason thus has to presuppose a primordial difference that it cannot subsume under the identity of the concept, relying instead on the presupposed eminent identity of the

Absolute as divine love. An otherness is active *within* reason itself, a pathological condition that makes absolutely *a priori* synthetic knowledge impossible.

For Deleuze, Kant's moment of true invention lies in introducing a problematic, purely determinable term (the empty form of time) as constitutive of the relation between the indeterminate condition and the conditioned it determines. Fichte and Schelling are forced to introduce their own versions of this determinable term, thus effectively removing the possibility of grounding difference in a higher identity. In this way, a radical or primordial difference is introduced into philosophical thought: as Deleuze puts it with respect to Kant, this moment in transcendental philosophy is 'a matter of establishing the difference and *interiorising it within* being and thought' (DR 117/86, my emphasis).

Schelling actually goes further than Fichte or Kant, however, something which Deleuze does not explicitly acknowledge. He tries to think a higher Absolute, one that transcends reason, not as an eminent form of identity, but as incommensurable with it, and yet which can still serve as the foundation of a system. The former requirement is necessitated by the need to explain determination but, as we have seen, it upsets the latter requirement. Nevertheless, Schelling still attempts to think the relation between this Absolute and creation through his theory of potencies, as a positive dialectic of production, an *Erzeugungsdialektik*.<sup>3</sup>

In Chapter 2 (pp. 62-3 above), I noted that the ungrounded act of the Absolute that posits actual difference is conceived in the Philosophy of Identity and thereafter as an absolute positing that is grounded only in the Absolute as an immediately affirmative unity. This has to be distinguished from the Fichtean Subject's positing of a not-I, in which the negative, limiting relation between I and not-I that is the necessary basis for all determination of consciousness is supposedly freely posited. Here, Fichte has merely assumed that the freedom of the Absolute is identical with the relation of opposition

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<sup>3</sup> This is the term employed by Beach, 1994, pp. 84-5.

between the subject and the object that is constitutive of the conditioned unity of theoretical and practical consciousness. Schelling had argued that negative opposition was the purely necessary mode of differentiation that determines the merely possible first creation, and wants to think the freedom of the Absolute differently, so as to avoid positing it under the form of a conditioning relation that simply reflects the constitution of the finite.

Schelling's doctrine of potencies is thus an attempt to understand the unconditioned immediacy of the Absolute in such a way as to account for the emergence of real difference with sole reference to this pure immediacy. Difference is thus to be thought without negation, that is, without self-limitation as conceived either on the Fichtean model or as in Schelling's more Neoplatonic moments, when the positing of difference in the Absolute appears to be necessary. The emergence of difference has to be thought of as the realisation of the Absolute and not as its degradation. In Schelling's middle period, this requirement is fulfilled. The act of positing is an utterly blind and spontaneous passage from the non-actual to the actual that Schelling describes as a contraction, self-doubling, or intensification of the Absolute. It arises from the initial impulse provided by the 'dark will', which emerges unaccountably in eternity, within the peaceful Absolute. The dark will is neither fully conscious or fully unconscious, and thus indicates a problematic, primordial and pseudo-temporal ('before and after') dissonance within the Absolute itself. In relation to the actual temporality of the world, this dissonance is always already past, a substantial rather than vanished past that continues to influence the actual universe (AW 24-5/120-1). In the blind act of contraction, the Absolute posits itself through this dissonance.<sup>4</sup>

The theory of potencies indicates how this affirmative positing is carried over into Creation. The first potency intensifies rather than negating or limiting the Absolute, creating a real tension within it. The first potency as actually produced, or B in

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<sup>4</sup> On the act of contraction, see Žižek, 1996, pp. 31-2.

Schelling's notorious shorthand, is the affirmation of the disturbed Absolute (A) in which the dark will and the will-to-existence have begun to emerge, and so it repeats and intensifies their difference within itself, which Schelling represents with  $A = (A=B)$  or  $A^1$  (SPL 440-1/211-2). The process continues like a series of lightning-flashes: the tension in  $A^1$  is the difference between it and the A (the initial state) that it augments.  $A^1$  is not identical with itself but implicates this difference within it as its condition, and so its ultimate condition is the original, unactualised difference between itself and the second potency, the unrest that paradoxically arises within that which is eternally at rest, which the first potency brings to life and actively expresses. Hence A is intensified through the first potency again, this time in another direction or mode, that is, in the second potency, the will-to-existence, posited alongside the first as  $A^2$  (SPL 425-6/200-1).

The third potency, that of absolute indifference, is posited next in sequence, as a relative identity of the first two potencies. At this point, Schelling is concerned to reassert the overall priority of the Absolute Identity. The positing of real difference from within the Absolute 'awakens' the *Ungrund* understood as eminent identity, the Absolute-in-itself, God as Love, thus subduing the raging individual powers within a synthetic unity, making them into opposites. Like the Fichtean I and not-I, they limit each other, but unlike the Fichtean postulates, they do so actively, as they each internalise the potential power of the Absolute. Nevertheless, they have entered a relation of limitation that defines a synthetic identity, and in this way a 'cooling' of the process of *Erzeugung* is effected.

This third potency is the stable relation of mutual limitation between the other two. With the positing of  $A^3$ , the absolute attains a stable form of actual existence, but this is only a relative identity, for it still implicates within it, as its condition, the primordial dissonance of the Absolute. As such it cannot be equal to the *Ungrund*. In so far as it implicates this difference in its own existence,  $A^3$  remains only relatively stable. The power of the Absolute is once again augmented within the lowest levels of material

nature and so on, towards the point where, in human consciousness, the priority of the first potency, that of nature, is subverted by the developed second potency, that of spirit.

The irreconcilable tension in Schelling's work has been traditionally understood as that between freedom and system, or that between the unification of the absolute and its falling asunder into simply opposed real and ideal principles.<sup>5</sup> However, if we read Schelling as proposing that philosophy, in order to explain real difference, has to presuppose a primordial dissonance within the Absolute, then the tension in his work is between positing a 'higher' Absolute that transcends *all* difference as an eminent identity (and which thus illegitimately resembles that which it is supposed to condition and cannot therefore explain its emergence) or positing a 'higher' Absolute as a problematic difference that creates real difference *absolutely*, that is, through its own relation to itself. The self-identical *Ungrund* suffers from the disadvantage of relative immanence. It is assumed to be the measure of real difference, to be its transcendent foundation, but there is no way of demonstrating that this is the case. To explain real difference, an equiprimordial, pseudo-temporal difference has to be presupposed, but this means that the self-identical *Ungrund* cannot serve as a foundation without a difference that it does not itself produce. In this way, only the *Ungrund* conceived as primordial difference can be Absolute, that is, a self-related condition of actual difference, for as we have seen, it is only through the affirmation of this difference, its raising of itself to a higher power, that real distinction is posited. The relation between A and A<sup>1</sup> is not therefore one of resemblance but one of pure difference between two internalised differences posited without relation to identity.

The only ground for reducing this relation to one of resemblance would be our faith in the autonomy of reason, but this faith itself, our conviction that thought has an affinity for the Universal is, in Deleuze's terms, only a product of our attachment to habituated *ethoi* or forms of experience. In this way, it can be seen that our positing of a

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<sup>5</sup> See e.g., White, 1983b.

transcendent, self-identical Universal, and of an internal resemblance between it and what it conditions. is relative to our experience and not absolute. The *Erzeugungsdiagnostik*, however, is a construction which, though it is meant to explain real difference, implies an absolute positing of difference, that is, in relation only to difference. In this way, it is irreconcilable with foundationalist thought, for it appears to posit the Absolute as in principle unknowable, as infinitely different from or incommensurable with the concept. It also seems to be self-contradictory, proposing that we can know the Absolute to be unknowable. Nevertheless, the immanence of the disturbed and dissonant Absolute in its products is not relative immanence. It is, on the contrary, the univocal and unilateral immanence of one problematic difference in a further difference that it produces.

It is this kind of relation that Deleuze describes as absolute immanence, which 'is in itself' (IL 4/4), rather than being the relative immanence of a transcendent term in something else. As we saw in Chapter Two, Schelling cannot sustain this thought, however. It is opposed, even in his middle period, by his commitment to foundationalism, which requires that the Absolute be posited as an eminent identity (the *Ungrund* as Love). This unity is assumed to remain 'above' the real dissonance of the Absolute, making sure that things turn out alright, as it were. Schelling thus remains primarily a thinker of relative immanence, from a Deleuzian point of view.

We now need to examine the epistemological status of this Deleuzian absolute relation that results from the positing of the determinable within thought as its absolute ground. Schelling, as we saw in Chapter Two, posits a special intuition by means of which thought is united with the higher Absolute, and in which thought is literally outside itself or ecstatic. As a basis for constructing the determinations (potencies) of the Absolute, this ecstatic intuition is simply the immediate identity of thought and Absolute, through which the thinker gains insight into its nature.<sup>6</sup> In his middle period, Schelling conceives intuition as the unity of thought with the pseudo-temporal 'unconscious' of the

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<sup>6</sup> See von Uslar, *op. cit.*, p. 508.



Absolute before time (AW 12-13/116-7, 27/122). The exact meaning of the transcendence or ecstasy involved in this intuition is still ambiguous, however. Schelling describes it as access to an 'essence outside and above the world' (AW 5/114), which might be thought to imply the *Ungrund* as eminent identity or as Universal. What this essence is, however, is the substantial past, the problematically differentiated Absolute, which is *qualitatively* distinct from 'the world', i.e., the time of the present (AW 24-5/121), which differs in nature from the past because of its unilinearity, the fact that time as we commonly or habitually experience it is a succession of instants.

If Schelling, in thinking the absolute positing of difference solely with reference to a problematic difference, can be said to have gone beyond relative immanence (to an extent), it should be noted that this is because the role he assigns to intuition is connected with a concept of time. In this, a connection should be pointed out with Bergson, one of the most important of Deleuze's influences or 'mediators'.<sup>7</sup> Bergson had accused the post-Kantians of positing a 'timeless intuition' as the basis of philosophy, which, although it goes beyond Kant's stress on the finite Understanding and thus his formalism, remains connected to the false goal of a unitary *archē*-science grounded in a transcendent Universal.<sup>8</sup> This, however, is not entirely true of Schelling. Each epoch of time, for him, is a qualitatively distinct mode of being. The present exists, arising and vanishing constantly, but this is because of the substantial being of the past, the problematically differentiated Absolute, which is immanent in the present as its ground. Schelling thus tries to think the relation between past and present without reducing it to a temporal schema of succession that would depict the relation between Absolute and world as an already unilinear temporal relation between two instants. In this, he approaches Bergson's notions of duration and virtuality, which provide Deleuze with a model of absolute immanence in DR.

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<sup>7</sup> On Bergson and Schelling, see Lovejoy, 1961 and Merleau-Ponty, 1988, pp. 145-6.

<sup>8</sup> Bergson, 1962, p. 361

For Bergson, duration, as qualitative temporal distinction, is the Absolute itself, the ground of real differentiation. He proposes that knowledge of this Absolute is possible via an 'ultra-intellectual intuition' that would enable us to 're-live the absolute'.<sup>9</sup> 'Ultra-intellectual' here refers to an intuition that takes representational consciousness (the realm of *Verstand*) beyond itself into its inner lived experience of time, which Kant described formally as the 'pure and empty form of time'. This intuition gives knowledge, not of the transcendent, Universal foundation of determination, but of the 'virtual tendencies' that are immanent in the present existence of a phenomenon and mark the process of its evolution.<sup>10</sup> The Absolute here is not the transcendent Ground of which all things are internal determinations. Duration does not lie beyond all things, but rather can be traced in them as their own 'lived time'. It is problematically differentiated and thus internally different in kind from itself, or self-differentiating like Schelling's disturbed Absolute. Because it is internally different from itself, it is incommensurable with identity and thus with representational consciousness. It is thus transcendent only in this sense, in that our habitual practical orientations (representational consciousness) do not allow us to trace its influence. It is transcendental, in that it is the condition *in principle* of differentiation, yet is also empirical, in that it can only be traced in actual phenomena. Deleuze's 'transcendental empiricism' thus begins with Bergson.

As with Schelling's dialectic of potencies, Bergsonian duration explains differentiation as the congelation of its own internal activity. Yet the virtual or pure past as the being-in-itself of the present does not possess the same substantiality as is attributed to a transcendent Universal. Such a Universal, e.g., the earlier Schelling's eternal, self identical Absolute, is thought of as containing all determinations internal to itself as its own possible determinations, which somehow it comes to realise. This assumes, as I noted previously, the existence of an internal resemblance between condition and conditioned, which, as Schelling shows, cannot be justified *a priori*. The

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 359, p. 357.

idea of a Substance as that in-itself which contains within itself all determinations as possible, and which then realises them by limiting itself, like Fichte's *Tathandlung*, is opposed by Schelling's subversive thought of the dissonant Absolute, even though this conception is thought alongside that of a transcendent Substance (the *Ungrund* as Love, which supposedly belongs to the future *and* the past).

From a Deleuzean point of view, Bergson opposes this transcendence and the relative immanence it implies more consistently. Duration, being different from itself, has a power of variation which is intrinsically infinite, as each singular duration is *qualitatively* different from all others, and in this, its problematically (for consciousness) differentiated nature, resides its substantiality and thus its suitability as an *explanans*. Extension in the phenomenal realm as presented to representational consciousness, which is only infinite *quantitative* difference under a general form of unity (B 22-3/31), can thus be explained with reference to duration, which 'includes' it. All extension can be viewed as the phenomenal product of contingent modifications of duration in the temporal order of the present (in which time and space are constituted as infinitely divisible unities): a Bergsonian piece of wax is not defined, like Descartes', by the stable mathematical properties that it possesses by virtue of its extension and which allow it to be recognised, with the alterations it undergoes being modifications of extended substance. Instead, the instability of the wax and its alterations are primary: the melting of the wax in front of the fire is a pure temporal difference, a duration. The wax itself, *qua* extended substance, is an experience produced by a contingent modification of a collection of such variations, which constitutes a threshold of consciousness.

The substantiality of a transcendent Universal that contains all determination under the form of possibility is illusory for Bergson, and for Deleuze. The idea that this possibility that supposedly pre-exists all actuality can thus ground actuality is criticised by Bergson as an illusory projection into the past of the familiar image of the real that is

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<sup>10</sup> See Hardt, 1993, pp. 4-7.

produced in intuition and thought by our habitual *ethoi*.<sup>11</sup> It is thus an image abstracted from empirical practices in the sense that we have traced in Deleuze's critique of Platonism. Duration, on the other hand, includes in its virtual dimension a tendency to congeal as extended matter, so that actualisation is a matter of duration becoming external to itself rather than, as with a transcendent Universal, limiting itself. Duration, because it is internally qualitatively different from itself, is infinitely determinable being. As such, the being of Bergsonian substance is radically unstable, rather than being eternally self-identical. Deleuze suggests that such problematic being be written '?-being' (DR 89/64) or as 'non-being', though not in the sense of *ouk on*, that which has no reality, but rather *mē on* (DR 253/196), that whose essence or sense is undecidable and unstable. Schelling himself, as Deleuze recognises (DR 246-7/190-1), referred to the incomprehensible ground of real existence as a *mē on*, a non-being that is without stable essence rather than that which is without *any* being (*ganz und gar nicht Seyende*) (DPE 235-6).<sup>12</sup>

If this dimension of the real is incommensurable with consciousness, however, how can it be *known*? Where is the certainty that is demanded by foundationalism and which it seeks in a transcendent Universal that secures the unity of knowledge? Will not the method of intuition only produce arbitrary explanations of phenomena? For Bergson, the intuition of duration is continuous with sensory intuition, being simply a higher form of it that takes us beyond consciousness to dimensions of duration to which consciousness and sensibility, being tied to the temporal order of the present and the ordering and perception of extended matter, is inferior.<sup>13</sup> Bergsonian intuition, as previously noted, is related to the 'pure and empty form of time' that Deleuze sees as the truly transcendental moment of Kant's thought, the introduction of a pure difference that prevents the subject from knowing itself as it is in itself and which is nevertheless constitutive of the being of the subject. But for Bergson, this intuition is elevated to the

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<sup>11</sup> Bergson, 1960, p. 110.

form of a method, in which the incommensurability of different durations, the 'lived time' of different phenomena is experienced directly (as with the melting wax). Absolute Difference can be 'known' because it can be felt in this way. This does not, however, mean it can be represented, for it is still incommensurable with the identity of the concept. We now need to explore this notion of absolute knowledge as Deleuze uses it, in order to understand his distinction between dogmatic and critical images of thought.

#### *iv) Thinking Immanence*

Platonism's faith in the 'good will' of thought, i.e., in the essential unity of thought and being is, for Deleuze, testimony to its basis in a false problem, that is, how to achieve knowledge of the transcendent universal, the foundation of the good order. This goal is assumed to be the essential and definitive philosophical experience: *parousia*, Enlightenment. Deleuze and Guattari invoke another kind of experience, however, which testifies to the necessity of reinventing philosophical practice, that of a *pathos* of thought (TP 368/377-8), in which thought finds itself suffering a breakdown in which it can no longer find itself meaningful. This mode of being, which I earlier suggested was definitive of the trauma of reason, our philosophical double-bind, suggests another image of thought and different subjective presuppositions about what it means to think. This other image is that of the 'ill will' of thought, which arises from the experience of a 'malefic thinker' who is actually 'powerless to think' either naturally or philosophically and thus is 'without presuppositions' (DR 171/130). Only the thinker who undergoes such an intense intellectual crisis and finds it impossible to begin thinking again despite many frustrated efforts has achieved the Cartesian goal of presuppositionlessness.<sup>14</sup>

Such a thinker no longer has an image of what it means to think. Like Artaud, she strives not for any definite, predefined goal, but 'simply to manage to think

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<sup>14</sup> See also Scidcl, 1976, pp. 125-6.

something' (DR 191/147). There is no longer anywhere to begin from, for all the habitual practices of thought have broken down. Striving to regain the shattered perspective of the good will of thought would be a meaningless act. The trauma of reason undermines the Platonic/foundationalist image of thought itself, and with it, the unifying Universal as the destiny of thought. The trap set for thought by external forces (the objective presuppositions of Platonism) has been sprung. But this nihilistic overcoming of Platonism contains the seeds of something else. The problem that thought has to take up now is one that is not given to it from without, but one that is related only to its own destitute mode of being: how to carry on thinking without an image of thought? Referring to the difference between Eudoxus, the Idiot of Descartes who represents the innate good will of thought, and Dostoevsky's Idiot, Deleuze and Guattari write that '[t]he old idiot wanted truth, but the new idiot wants to turn the absurd into the highest power of thought — in other words, to create' (WP 61/62).

Importantly, this experience constitutes for Deleuze a different form of knowledge to that fetishised by Platonism. The trauma of reason arises because thought is forced to propose that the necessary condition of any determination is that the Absolute is incommensurable with rational thought. Philosophy is thus forced to conceive its own existence as ungrounded, that is, as dependent upon a difference that cannot be taken up into rational thought. This is a conclusion that overturns foundationalist presuppositions about the essence of thought, for here thought is without any stable meaning. The *pathos* of thought thus derives from the negative proposition that the existence of thought is dependent on and constituted by the infinite internal difference of thought from itself. This proposition gives rise to the dilemma between rationalism and relativism that constitutes the trauma as a double-bind. Nihilism is the condition of living with this difference of thought from itself: the effort to think is not renounced, but constantly reasserted as the conditions of living continue to make

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<sup>13</sup> Bergson, 1962, p. 359.

demands upon thought. But no beginning with any enduring consistency can be made. Nihilism is a lack of meaning characterised, not by a pure, Nirvana-like absence, but by a continual activity that fails to constitute any stable distinctions that constitute meaning. In this way, nihilism partakes of the nature of chaos as Deleuze and Guattari define it, 'an infinite speed of birth and disappearance' (WP 111/118).

In using the trauma of reason to throw a little light on the role of the *pathos* of thought, I want to suggest here that the aforementioned negative proposition concerning the existence of thought would be, for Deleuze, *knowledge* of nihilism. It is not objective knowledge that can be shown to rest on a transcendent foundation, but it is knowledge of the existential condition of thought, of the mode of being of thought. And not just of the *mode*: for Deleuze, if foundationalism is based on an image of thought that subjects it to an impossible task (as Schelling shows), then the idea of a transcendent Universal as the essence of being beyond its particular modes has to be suspended. Hence the knowledge of the mode of being (*ethos*) of thought counts for Deleuze as knowledge of the *being* of thought as such. To reiterate, however, this is not objective knowledge of the *essence* of thought, but knowledge of its *ethos*, of the style of *life* of thought. Further, it is not the pure insight of a *theoros* into the essential meaning of this *ethos*, but is knowledge that is bound up with the affective side of nihilism, the sense of constraint, of being unable to go on, the *pathos* of thought. For Deleuze, it is this aesthetic dimension that, paradoxically, makes this knowledge absolute knowledge, i.e., practical knowledge of the real, inescapable forces that drive a heteronomous philosophical practice. Foundationalist thought cannot deny its dependence upon a radical difference that it cannot consistently account for. In this way, the experience of nihilism contains practical knowledge of the constraints of an *ethos* of thought and thus of the meaning of nihilism itself. Kant's pure and empty form of time is another instance in which this nihilism of thought becomes known. In arguing that the empirical subject can only know itself as

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<sup>14</sup> See also Murphy, 1993, pp. 110-1.

determined under the form of time as the *a priori* form of inner sense, Kant effectively denies the subject knowledge of itself. All it can know is that it is determinate, and in being determinate it is determined somehow. The source of this determination is *de jure* unknowable, however. This testifies to the limits of the practice of Kantian critique, which then becomes dogmatic in positing a unified transcendental subject on the 'far side' of the crack of time that prevents the empirical subject from becoming present to itself (DR 116-8/85-7).

Deleuze's argument with respect to the practical knowledge of a malefic thinker is that what it presents is a minimal image of thought, one without orientation (*sens*). It has thus partially freed itself from the heteronomous problem that drives Platonism, namely, the desire to represent in thought the best order of the *polis* (DR 170-1/130). It has discovered another problem, one that is immanent in its own minimal image of itself — in fact, the problem of all problems for philosophy in Deleuze's view: how to create a new *ethos* of thinking. For Deleuze, this has already been part of the education of thought towards 'Enlightenment', or rather, disillusionment. However, it seems to have left thought without any resources to create with. The education of thought is thus unfinished. Thought must create itself, but, for Deleuze, it can only do this by staging encounters with other modes of being.

The Nietzschean and Bergsonian model of education that Deleuze formulates is fragmented and aesthetic. The question is how to force thought to begin anew and continue without immediately returning to its chaotic state, that is, how to revitalise thought? The key to this model is the *pathos* of thought, i.e., reconceiving thought, not as a pure *theoros* that transcends all physical interaction, but as itself imbued with a sensibility, an aesthetic capacity to be affected from without. This is not to be thought of mechanistically, which would imply foundationalist presuppositions. Instead, it has to be conceived in terms of the difference that thought has found within itself and yet cannot account for. Thought has to undergo a form of violent *paideia* in order to be re-educated



(NP 123-4/108-9). This requires a specific kind of singular, sensory 'encounter' with an object, one in which we are faced with an object that is incommensurable with the supposedly universal contexts of meaning associated with good sense and common sense.

Deleuze refers to Plato's distinction in the *Republic* between encounters with objects that can *in principle* be recognised and those which cannot (DR 180-1/138). If an object is in principle recognisable, it is constituted for the subject as commensurable with good sense, common sense, and well-trained faculties of intuition. If it is not, then it belongs to that order of objects that Plato called *simulacra*, and which do not belong to either the order of the Idea as transcendent Universal, or to the order of the copies of the Idea that participate in it (DR 167-8/128; LS 295-6/256). The simulacrum is a problematic difference, which does violence to the habituated thresholds of the sensibility. Deleuze uses the example of an individual learning to swim in order to clarify the conception of education implied by the encounter with simulacra. It is only upon entering the water that one really learns to swim, suddenly becoming overwhelmed by a sense of vertigo on being lifted by the waves (DR 35/22-3, 214/165). This encounter with the infinite variations of force propagated through the waves forces the sensibility of the swimmer to become habituated to new thresholds of activity. There is thus no essential method to Deleuzian education, one which would lead us to the truth of Enlightenment. Instead it is experimental, based on the determination to risk unforeseen encounters. An exemplar of this model of education might be Céline's Bardamu, rather than Rousseau's *Émile* or Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*:

Still, I believe I gained strength listening to such things, the strength to go further, a strange sort of strength, next time I'd be able to go down even deeper and lower, and listen to complaints that I hadn't heard before

or had had difficulty in understanding, because beyond the complaints we hear there always seem to be others that we haven't yet heard or understood.<sup>15</sup>

Philosophy, then, has to consist initially in forcing thought to risk encounters with other modes of being that are incommensurable with it, that is, in finding 'mediators' for thought (N 168-71/123-5). In order to be sufficient to force thought to think and give itself meaning and direction, these mediators have to be either practices that are external to philosophy (as when Deleuze encounters Francis Bacon and comes away with the new concept of the 'percept' and new analyses of the functioning of sensibility) or philosophical practices that attempt to think an ontology of Absolute Difference, as opposed to Platonic practices that think being in terms of transcendent identities. Nihilism forces thought to recognise its real dependence on difference, and this recognition as we saw constitutes a kind of practical knowledge. The only operation consistent with this insight is to realise philosophy as an ontology of the kind of being that is encountered in nihilism. This would be to transform passive philosophical nihilism into activity. Hence thought has to seek out among philosophical practices those *ethoi* which attempt to think that which is incommensurable with Platonic thought. In this way, philosophical concepts will be encountered that act as simulacra, forcing thought to think Absolute Difference, which appeared to be the basic presupposition and thus the internal limit of Platonic thought, and therefore literally unthinkable for it. In this way, and as I noted above with regard to Bergson's 'intuition', that which seems to transcend thought as unknowable (the Absolute) is not essentially unthinkable (which implies contradiction) but only unthinkable in relation to a specific heteronomous practice. If this practice is transformed, then the immanence of the unconditioned (Absolute Difference) in that which it conditions can be grasped (DR 182/140). Deleuze thus seeks out Bergson.

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<sup>15</sup> Celine, 1983, pp. 338-9.

Spinoza, Nietzsche *et al.*, in order to pass through a philosophical apprenticeship in which a new practice of thought is engendered. The problem of creation is thus faced head on.

Thinking will thus pass from a state of lack (the knowledge of the absence of foundation) to a new and singular thought of Absolute Difference in which thinking has affirmed its own difference from or lack of identity with itself as its own excessive being. This occurs a) through experimenting with mediators and b) realising the thought of Absolute Difference in a new form. The inequality of thought with itself remains, but is *lived* differently, according to a new *ethos*.<sup>16</sup> In this way, thought thinks the unconditioned transcendental condition of its activity immanently, that is, without presupposing that this unconditioned real difference is itself conditioned by a transcendent Universal. In this way, the new *ethos* of thought that develops an ontology of difference will be capable of explaining both its own emergence and that of other practices, such as Platonism. Consequently, a new distinction between dogmatism and philosophy can be established, given that Platonism always presupposes its own reality and thus cannot explain it.

An ontology of difference is a thinking of being as *Ungrund*, that which is without a transcendent ground. In affirming Absolute Difference as its unique object, thought is claiming not the transcendent, but the purely immanent; not the eternal, but that which moves with infinite speed (i.e., that which cannot be arrested in a single perception or thought). Hence there is a Deleuzean *quaestio quid juris*, but one that subverts the Kantian (Platonic) version: 'What thought claims by right, what it selects, is infinite movement or the movement of the infinite' (WP 40/37). Thought claims the right, not to determine the essential meaning of the transcendent Universal, but to be *without essence*, instead of interminably seeking its essence posited as a transcendent foundation of real difference. The objective (i.e., external) condition of determination is

no longer thought of as a fixed transcendent, but as a movement of difference across a transcendental field of conditions, as when Platonism is linked with the training of bodies in the *polis*. The new direction of thought presupposes only the *Ungrund* of the infinite variation of Absolute Difference as the movement from which thought begins: Deleuze concurs with Schelling that, before any thought of being, there is the being of thought, which is its difference from itself (DR 183-4/141). This claim to be able to trace the infinity movement of real difference will serve as the 'foundation' for an evaluative distinction between a 'heteronomous' (dogmatic) and an 'autonomous' (critical) image of thought. As Deleuze put it in an interview, 'if we're so oppressed, it's because our movement's being restricted, not because our eternal values are being violated' (N 166/122).

A thinking that thinks its own limit in such a way as to be able to immanently trace its real conditions has much in common with Bergsonian intuition. In thinking this limit, it retains a connection to its *pathos*, and thus refuses to renounce its aesthetic aspect in favour of the 'innocent' thought of a *theoros*. It thus exceeds its own habituated thresholds: in tracing the real movements of difference that give rise to phenomena, i.e., in analysing phenomena ontologically, it will be ecstatic to itself. The ontology upon which such analyses are based will establish this ecstatic *ethos* within thought. Hence the objective conditions of phenomena will be thinkable according to this aesthetic remodelling of thought, even if they cannot be objectively known as foundationalist method intends.<sup>17</sup> In this way, thinking the unconditioned as Absolute Difference does not infringe Kantian restrictions on knowledge of things-in-themselves. Absolute Difference is not a concept of the Absolute as such, which reduces it to a transcendent unity. Rather, it is always incarnated as a form of practical knowledge of the being of thought, an activity of tracing. To mark this absolute knowledge as different from that

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<sup>16</sup> On these two modes of inequality, and the 'crack' separating them, see DR 119-123/88-91, and cf. Murphy, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 106 ff.

<sup>17</sup> Baugh, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

claimed by the *theoros*, which is rooted in the supposedly transcendent unity of the concept, Deleuze and Guattari refer to it as a *diagram* (TP 176-7/141-2).

We now need to consider some aspects of the ontology Deleuze develops in DR, in order to see how the analysis of phenomena can proceed, and to thus flesh out the meaning of transcendental empiricism so we can understand how Deleuze secures his distinction between dogmatism and this *ethos* of philosophy. Deleuze follows Schelling and Leibniz in seeing conscious experience as the outgrowth of problematically differentiated unconscious forms of 'experience' that are immanent in consciousness, and thus developing a naturalistic ontology.<sup>18</sup> However, in DR this ontology is developed along Bergsonian lines as a novel account of the relation between virtual conditions of differentiation and actual differentiation, a philosophical practice driven by the problem of how to constitute a creative *ethos* of thought.

Deleuze's differential ontology is based upon the Bergsonian notion of tendency, which it employs to explain real difference.<sup>19</sup> A tendency of development is the past of a phenomenon which, in line with Bergson's thought, is immanent in or actively continues to insist in the present of the phenomenon. As such, the being of a tendency is virtual (the being of *mē on*) rather than actual or possible. Such a tendency is the movement of Absolute Difference, which differentiates itself as a line of development from other tendencies, and differentiates itself as the *actual* determinations of a phenomenon that, viewed on their own, constitute the history of the phenomenon. There is thus no linear, temporal ground-consequent relation here between virtual and actual, as if the virtual was a transcendent Substance that enfolded all the possible determinations of itself, positing them through a negative operation of self-limitation. 'A thing in itself and in its true nature is the expression of a tendency before it is the effect of a cause' (CD 83).

Deleuze adopts from Bergson the characterisation of tendencies as superior and inferior, depending on whether they implicate differences in nature (Absolute Difference)

or differences in degree (relative difference). The former are superior because they are themselves the sufficient reason of differences in degree. This is because they include within themselves their own difference in nature from differences in degree, whereas the converse is not the case. Differences in nature externalise themselves in differences in degree: duration 'relaxes' and becomes spatialised or extended. The virtual past is thus not an inert entity without an internal active principle, unlike a transcendent Substance. Tendencies actively differentiate themselves from each other, because they differ internally from themselves, and this virtual activity is thus the sufficient reason of actual phenomena. Nevertheless, the passage of the virtual into actuality is thus not predetermined by the content of the virtual, as there is no transcendent content to the virtual that is given outside of the process of its differentiation. There is thus no relation of internal resemblance between the virtual and the actual (organisms do not, for example, resemble their genetic codes (DR 239-40/184-5)), which, as we have seen, is not the case with the circular explanations of determination provided by foundationalism. There is no necessary development of the content of the actual running from past to future, for the future unfolding of the virtual depends solely on the difference in nature between what is actual and the virtual dimension of this actual, and is thus unforeseeable. This allows us to understand the sense in which Deleuze's ontology is a transcendental empiricism. The tendencies that make up the virtual can only be traced in actual phenomena. Nevertheless, these tendencies remain transcendental, being incommensurable with or different in nature from the actual, as they themselves differ in kind from themselves, whereas the actual tends to externalise these differences as differences in degree. In this sense, the actual is determined by the virtual, or the empirical by the transcendental, but the virtual is simultaneously determined by the actual, as only through actualisation do virtual tendencies become 'visible'. Given that

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<sup>18</sup> On Leibniz, see esp. DR 275-6/213-4, 325-6/253; on the genesis of conscious experience see also Smith, 1996, pp. 35-9.

<sup>19</sup> For fuller accounts, see e.g. Ansell-Pearson, 1999, and Boudas, 1996.

the sufficient reason of the actual is Absolute Difference, Deleuze's ontology in DR is not an ontology of knowable essences, but one of creative being.

Further, if thought is tracing these tendencies through its own being, which is Absolute Difference, then it is not simply 'driven' by the virtual past, but is itself active in differentiating those tendencies that are already active. Thought does not, then, belong to the past or to eternity, but to the future, for it intervenes in the past. This is exemplified, for instance, by Deleuze's own philosophical differentiation of thinkers in whom he takes an interest from their 'official' existence as historical figures whose value derives from their 'participation' in the essence of philosophy, with Spinoza being perhaps the prime example. By making connections between empirical philosophical practices without regard to the necessary processes of descent that have traditionally been traced by philosophers of history, Deleuze changes an image of thought in the present by retracing the tendencies of the past. Thought has the ability, by thinking the internal difference of its own being, to ascend to a thought of difference, as expressed in the idea of a virtual tendency, that in turn allows it to 'descend' to the actual, tracing its genesis and thus accounting for its determination. By affirming the substantiality of Absolute Difference, thought thus becomes an agent of change and creation in the present.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, this can only occur in relation to tendencies that are already present and are actualised in 'mediators', practices which are amenable to the thinking of difference.<sup>21</sup>

In this way, Deleuzean thought, like Bergsonian intuition, claims to be tracing real movements of difference. The product of this tracing is neither a concept of essence nor a concept of history, but a *diagram* of the becoming of a phenomenon, which for Deleuze is real in that it affirms the incommensurability that thought finds within its own being as the meaning of being itself, yet is at the same time fictive in that the interventions of thought within the actual are creative retracings of the becoming of the

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<sup>20</sup> See Deleuze's account of the Nietzschean eternal return in DR (esp. 311-14/241-44) as the 'untimely' thought of the future.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Bell, 1995, p. 379 on the need for a thought of both future and past for a creative image of thought, and Deleuze's remarks on his own 'history' of philosophy in N 15/6-7.

actual, that make new distinctions visible in what has been accepted as the history of a set of phenomena.<sup>22</sup> The new image of thought that Deleuze seeks to realise is a thought without essence, and the actual realisation of this image we have surveyed is his ontology, a doctrine of being without essence which allows accounts of real phenomena to be given. Tracing the becoming of phenomena in this way is thus to explain their genesis by 'subsuming' them under a 'higher' point of view. This point of view is not, however, that of a *theoros* who possesses the perfect concept of a transcendent Universal in which all real difference can be shown to be included, but that of a malefic thinker who traces the immanent movement of real difference in a diagram. The difference between these two *ethoi* is thus a matter of their respective fitness to think immanence, the infinite movement of difference in virtual and actual, which is complicated by the tracings of thought. Whereas the former can only follow the pre-given and thus heteronomous orientation of a problem that forces a double movement away from and towards a transcendent foundation, the latter, by affirming with the aid of mediators the problem of creation, rises to think the unilinear movement of real difference. Thanks to the fact that thought is capable, in moments of crisis, of discovering its difference from itself as the internal limit of its activity, it is capable of affirming the problem of how to create as its own *de jure* problem, a problem that is immanent in it as its orientation towards a (for Deleuze) genuinely self-determining thinking.

Hence the Deleuzean distinction between dogmatism and philosophy can now be understood on the basis of the ontology of Absolute Difference. 'Philosophy' is the realisation *in practice* of the retracing of the virtual becoming of phenomena so as to distinguish them from each other, not according to their essence, but according to their overall tendency. Platonism is a dominant tendency immanent in real philosophical practices, which is also mixed with other tendencies (as when Kant, Fichte and Schelling

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<sup>22</sup> On this fictive aspect, see Deleuze's remarks on the triumph of simulacra over essences (DR 167-8/128), and transcendental empiricism as 'a kind of science fiction' (DR 3/xx), or, as Ronald Bogue (1989, p. 159) has it, the modelling of 'imaginary worlds' based on paradoxical concepts.



posit a transcendental difference within the subject), which can itself be related to real non-philosophical practices that constitute its own tendency of becoming (the processes in which bodies are trained, the political tendencies of a society in which philosophy is practised, etc.). 'Modern', 'enlightened' philosophy is also a tendency, which Deleuze differentiates from Platonism by an active tracing of its becoming, through Lucretius, Spinoza, Bergson *et al.*, and whose tendency is marked by the thinking of differences in nature as absolute, i.e., as constituting the nature of being-in-itself. Platonic philosophical practices on the other hand are marked by their thinking of differences in degree as absolute: 'real' difference is thought of as being established between entities or forms that realise, to a degree, the unity of a transcendent Universal. Their resemblance to this Universal, the amount of its perfection they express, is hierarchically ordered, and maximised in philosophy, whose essence supposedly contains the Universal itself.

Deleuze's claims that his ontology (transcendental empiricism) enables the differences between actual practices to be traced via the transcendental movement of difference, which allows local, non-transcendent explanations of their genesis to be constructed. The genesis of practices which are illusory, i.e., practices that take the reality of their own internal Absolute Difference to be *unreal* (e.g., Schelling's negative philosophy), is a process that is thus immanent to the internal movement of being itself, for Deleuze argues, like Bergson, that differences in nature (Absolute Difference) are the sufficient reason of differences in degree that are defined in terms of identity.<sup>23</sup> Such illusory practices produce illusions that are both ontological and transcendental, for they are immanent in being itself. Nevertheless, the paradox of this thinking of difference is that although, for Deleuze, it thinks the real, it only does so insofar as it is simultaneously a fictive thinking, one that intervenes in the past in order to recreate the present. It thus only thinks the 'objective' conditions of phenomena (i.e., the active virtual or the movement of difference) in so far as it does so 'subjectively', that is, in order to realise a

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<sup>23</sup> See also Hardt. *op. cit.*, pp. 5, 125 n.2.

new difference, such as that between Platonism and Deleuze's 'philosophical modernism'. I would argue, then, that Deleuze's distinction between philosophy and dogmatism seeks to overcome the trauma of Platonic or foundationalist reason via a *perversely* foundationalist move. The traumatic discovery by philosophy of thought's lack of coincidence with itself can actually enable thought to realise itself as a self-determining practice on the basis of a problem that is immanent in this discovery itself. This problem is how to give meaning to a thought without essence, or more simply, how to realise philosophy as a *creative* activity. Hence Deleuze's new image of thought, which he attempts to realise in a differential ontology, and his manifold tracings of the becomings of phenomena, both on his own and with Guattari, are practices which, *as practices*, are meant to realise the difference between philosophy and dogmatism. They are thus exemplars of a practical attitude, rather than representations of a universal which we can have access to simply by reading Deleuzean texts. The difference between philosophy and dogmatism is a problem of the creation of meaning, not of the knowledge of essence, and is only realised as a difference when it is practically realised: 'it is not enough to say, "Long live the multiple", difficult as it is to raise that cry [...] The multiple *must be made* [...]' (TP 13/6). Foundationalism is thus displaced in Deleuze's practice by positing as ground a foundation that is fact a true *Ungrund*, a self-differentiating difference. The making of the difference between philosophy and dogmatism requires a practical construction of the meaning of this distinction, which can no longer be viewed as an eternally secure, essential difference, but one which is continually subject to practical variation.

To sum up: Deleuze sees nihilism as the outcome of a particular tendency within thinking, which manifests itself in Platonic philosophical practices that are not equal to the task of thinking the problematic difference that, as Schelling showed, is their own condition. In order to 'tame' difference, such practices assume that the Absolute is commensurable with thought. But the experience of nihilism, as in the trauma of reason,

where this assumption is overturned, leads for Deleuze to a potentially positive outcome. When thought finds itself confronted with its own dissonance with itself, it faces the (for Deleuze) undeniable fact that this difference is the minimal presupposition of any practice of thinking. To suppose that the essential task of thought is to understand in what disinterested knowledge consists is to ignore this fact. The problem that confronts thought in the experience of nihilism is, for Deleuze, an autonomous and immanent one, as opposed to the heteronomous tasks accepted by Platonism. This is because it is immanent to the experience of difference that constitutes the basis of nihilism. Nihilistic thought has to try to create itself anew according to a stable practice of thinking, which can only be one that recognises the irreducible character of difference and attempts to construct a philosophical practice that can trace the movement of real difference within empirical phenomena. Such a practice would be absolutely immanent to being, rather than positing being under a transcendent form of identity and as relatively immanent in empirical phenomena. As we shall now see, Hegel, who is often taken by his critics (including Deleuze) to be a foundationalist, a Platonic thinker of relative immanence, also conceives of genuine philosophy in terms of absolute immanence, of a thinking that avoids positing transcendence.

## Chapter Five

### Hegel's Critique of Representational Consciousness

#### *i) Introduction*

Deleuze, as we have seen, attempts to overcome foundationalism and its double-binds by renouncing, like Bergson, and like Schelling in his more antifoundationalist, 'Deleuzean' moments (see previous chapter), the Kantian paradigm of transcendental conditioning, in favour of an ontological account of the real genesis of determination. This was in one sense a response to the recurrent difficulties that critical thinking has faced in the post-German Idealist period right up to the present, caused by its failure to take the nihilism of the trauma of reason seriously enough. Taking Marx as an example, we saw how difficult it was, given a certain foundationalist 'image' of what philosophy, 'science' or critical thinking essentially is, to avoid simply presupposing absolute or *a priori* knowledge of the real, when any right to such knowledge was precisely what was at issue. Deleuze responds by viewing this image of philosophy ('Platonism') as an illusion inherent in the existential conditions of thought, which can be overcome by changing our model of philosophy as a practice of thinking.

The task for Deleuzean thought is to avoid all presuppositions about the nature and destiny of thought that imply the knowledge of a transcendent Universal, which is supposed to be immanent in the articulations of the real as their ground. Instead of this posited 'relative immanence' of the unconditioned in the real, the philosopher is required to force thought to become equal to the absolute immanence of real difference itself, by recasting ontology in terms of the ungrounded movement of difference that, for Deleuze, is the sufficient reason of all determination, and by using this ontology as a means of tracing the 'descent' of empirical phenomena. This requirement is 'grounded' by the negative, subjective experience of the difference of thought from itself that foundationalist thought undergoes when approaching its limits. The resulting decay of

the meaning of foundationalist philosophy presses home the task of using this very experience as the basis of a re-injection of *sens* (meaning/direction) into thought. Philosophy becomes a matter of affirming through practical activity the immanence of the incommensurable 'higher' Absolute in experience, with this redefinition of philosophy being grounded, not in a timeless Universal, but in a singular experience of crisis, a loss of essence, that nevertheless makes a kind of 'absolute knowledge' possible.

I now want to argue that, if we go back to the beginning of the historical period in which the foundationalist conception of philosophy has been in crisis, we can find another example of an attempt to realise an antifoundationalist version of critical thought that remains committed to the idea that thinking the Absolute is necessary for any such endeavour. This attempt was made by Hegel, at the same time as Schelling was undermining foundationalism from within. I omitted any mention of Hegel in Chapter Two so as to be able to trace clearly this internal dynamic of foundationalism which I have used to elucidate Deleuze's thought. In the course of this and the next two chapters I will show that Hegel's approach to critique has many strategic features in common with Deleuze's, before examining the differences between their respective critiques of foundationalism in the concluding chapter, in order to assess their respective success in overcoming the trauma of reason.

Central to this re-examination of Hegel is the claim that Hegel's Kantian commitment to the epistemological importance of logic, as against the special intuitions appealed to by Fichte, Schelling and others, is nevertheless also critical of Kant in a way that is consonant with the ontological turn carried out variously by Schelling, Bergson and Deleuze.<sup>1</sup> This claim requires that we distinguish between the reading of Hegel pursued here and previous influential interpretations of his work that fail to take the

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<sup>1</sup> The importance of Kant for Hegel is affirmed by such recent interpreters as Rose (1980), Houlgate (1986, 1991), Pippin (1989), Žižek (1993), Maker (1995), Pinkard (1995) and Düsing (1995, 1977).

problem of the incoherence of foundationalism as seriously as I think Hegel himself did. In addition, we must take into account the criticisms of Hegel advanced by both Schelling and Deleuze and respond to them, in order to delineate Hegel's unique reply to foundationalism. Hegel's Absolute Knowing is not, I shall maintain, mere knowledge of the forms under which thought must necessarily think being. This would be to agree with the later Schelling's assessment of Hegel, and to reduce Hegelian logic to the status of negative philosophy, which deduces possible determinations of the real without being able to show that they are also actual.<sup>2</sup> Nor is it knowledge of a transcendent metaphysical substance, which, like the Absolute as Schelling conceives it in the Philosophy of Identity, grounds all real difference as internally related to it through the necessary process of its self-limitation, and which is somehow given to thought as a positive foundation.<sup>3</sup> Hegel avoids these alternatives because he sees Absolute Knowing as knowledge of the structure of Being that does not posit Being as only determinate *for us* (as a Kantian phenomenon), or as a metaphysically determinate substance, a *thing-in-itself* of some kind. Our first task is to show how such a non-foundational, ontological reading of Hegelian Absolute Knowledge can be meaningful. This will require that we examine his extended critique of foundationalist theory, which is conducted in the *Phenomenology*.

## *ii) The Idea of a Phenomenology*

For Hegel, Absolute Knowledge, the standpoint of genuine philosophy, is embodied in a philosophical system that begins with logic. This standpoint has first to be attained, however. This entails a process of education, aimed at overcoming the habitual assurance of representational consciousness that its view of the world is definitive of

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<sup>2</sup> For a seminal version of this negative reading, see Hartmann, 1976, esp. p. 106.

<sup>3</sup> This is the Hegel of the British Idealists (see Russell's comments (1995, pp. 701-15)), but is also reminiscent of Taylor's (1975) reading of Hegel's Absolute as a real, substantial ground.

experience. Hegel thus affirms that a critique of presuppositions is a necessary part of attaining a genuinely philosophical viewpoint. He also anticipates Deleuze by arguing that this critique will entail overturning, not certain accidental errors or particular unquestioned habits, but a whole 'image' of thought, of what it means to think, and he affirms that this image infects both 'natural' consciousness and philosophy. Further, this image is a kind of transcendental illusion: as with Deleuze's account of Platonism, Hegel will account for dogmatism ('abstract' or finite thinking that takes itself to be absolute) ontologically as an illusory aspect of being itself, as we will see in the following chapters. The education of representational consciousness that takes us to this standpoint is undertaken in the PS.<sup>4</sup>

Hegel begins the Introduction to the PS by meditating on the requirement that critical thought, as an instrument for the discovery of truth, should be critical of itself above all. This already assumes a difference between thought and what it knows. It is this consciousness of distinction between subject and object that characterises representational consciousness. It was the conditions of possibility of this consciousness as a form of real knowledge that Kant, Fichte and Schelling were concerned with, as we saw. With this in mind, Fichte and Schelling responded to Kant's formal deduction of these conditions by affirming the need for a decisive break with the standpoint of representational consciousness in order to ground it. Without the unconditioned as the ultimate condition of possibility, we would remain in Kant's predicament, in which the necessity of the forms of our experience was unknowable. However, this move proved problematic because the unconditioned, in whatever form it was determined as the necessary ground of experience, could only be presupposed as this *necessary* ground in relation to our familiar forms of experience, rather than known unconditionally as such.

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<sup>4</sup> The role of the PS in relation to the System has, historically, been an object of controversy: see Pöggeler, 1993, pp. 174-85. Even Hegel's own view altered somewhat (*ibid.* p. 224). However, for a statement that remained unaltered even in the final version of the SL, see SL I, 42-3/48-9.

This inevitable circularity became in Deleuze's thought characteristic of a whole recurring practice of thought, in which the Absolute is posited as resembling the content of familiar beliefs about experience.

For Deleuze, the issue regarding the Absolute is how to think it as a Schellingian 'higher' Absolute, that is, as incommensurable with that which it conditions, as genuinely *neither subject nor object*, etc., and yet how this thought can be a kind of 'knowing' that is creative rather than contemplative or reflective, where both these latter images of thought imply a transcendent Universal that thought strives to know but can only presuppose as an illusory ground. For Hegel too, the standpoint of philosophy requires a refusal of the distinctions and oppositions that characterise representational consciousness. This will enable us to comprehend the Absolute as a 'neither-nor' structure (Spirit), not because thought has discovered a transcendent, substantial Universal that grounds the possibility and necessity of real difference, but because genuinely philosophical thought knows itself to be being that is insofar as it immanently determines itself (PS 25/14 §25). As we shall see in the next chapter, the relation of structures of otherness to this immanent process of self-determination will be crucial for this study.

Unlike Fichte and Schelling, Hegel sees the turn against representational consciousness as justified, not by an appeal to a special intuition in which the Absolute is known immediately, but by the structure of representational consciousness itself. This structure is self-contradictory, for it is characteristic of all determinations of consciousness that they are both immediate and mediated (EL §5; PS 57-8/41 §67; SL 66/68). For example, if an object is known, then this knowledge has to include both proof and certainty. The relation between these two aspects is necessarily circular, as the Fichtean and Schellingian systems demonstrate. In these systems, the intuitive certainty as to the nature of the Absolute *qua* condition of experience requires proof if this Absolute is to be objectively *known* as the ground of the necessity of our experience. Yet



the method of proof turns out to be an infinite deduction, and possesses no foundation except the initial certainty. In this way, the mediation of the intuitive certainty by proof and the immediacy of the certainty that justifies the method of proof are both needed as foundations of knowledge. But if both are essential and foundational, then neither can be, for they are each posited as the foundation of one another, as the means through which the other is known. This circularity, which gives rise to the trauma of reason in which foundationalism finds itself unable to continue, is, for Hegel, based on the conviction that the structure of representational consciousness which characterises all our familiar conscious experience, and which indeed could be said to constitute the 'familiarity' of this experience itself, i.e., the fundamental framework in which experience makes sense for us, must be relied upon as the basis of philosophy's image of itself.

It can be argued that Hegel was even in his earliest writings interested in the possible untenability of foundationalism, given its dependence on habitual, unquestioned structures of experience. From his Frankfurt period (1797-1799) on, he was, along with his friend Schelling, concerned with the legitimacy of Kant's distinction between *Vernunft* and *Verstand*, and the possibility of objective knowledge of the unconditional. In this period, Hegel and Schelling were influenced by their colleague Hölderlin's critique of Fichte's definition of the absolute subject. Hegel also determined the Absolute as immediate Being (*Sein*), and gave it a systematic role as the unconditional presupposition of synthetic and analytic knowledge.<sup>5</sup> As we saw in Chapter Two, this leads to the view that all determinate knowledge, even the Fichtean subject's supposedly immediate recognition of itself as determinately subjective, must depend upon a self-abiding absolute identity *and* an act of division that first makes the Absolute determinable. As Klaus Düsing shows, the central problem for Hegel throughout this period and the time he spent in Jena before writing PS is a similar one to that which plagued Fichte and Schelling: how to demonstrate that the Absolute, defined as the

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<sup>5</sup> Düsing, 1976, pp. 43-4, 49-50; Fujita, 1985, pp. 79-81.

unconditional condition of all knowledge, can be known immediately or *in itself*, beyond this relation to determinate forms of knowledge, as a genuinely immediate unity that is also the real foundation or ground of experience.<sup>6</sup> In the Frankfurt fragment '*Glauben und Sein*', for example, faith is assigned the role of knowing the Absolute. But this repeats in another form the Fichtean and Schellingian *aporia*: one must presuppose that the Absolute is known immediately (but subjectively) as the unconditional foundation in order to begin, but by doing this, one indefinitely postpones the final, objective justification of this beginning, for the immediacy of the beginning simply reinforces the difference between mediated, conditioned forms of proof and unconditioned immediacy.

This problem of the circular interdependence of immediacy and mediation is thus of primary concern to Hegel, as a basic, inescapable difficulty for the foundationalist philosophies of his time.<sup>7</sup> To understand how the PS addresses this problem in a way that owes much to Kant's influence, we must begin with the early Jena period (1801-4), when Hegel becomes explicitly interested in this problem, and when his critique of his contemporaries, and particularly of Fichte and Schelling, begins to develop as a Kantian reflection on the role of logic in relation to a system of knowledge, whilst also being bound up with a critique of the foundationalist aspects of Kantianism.<sup>8</sup>

Hegel later characterised Kantianism as being 'overawed by the object', which resulted in it being 'left with the residue of a thing-in-itself, an infinite obstacle, as a beyond' (SL I, 45/51). Hegel alludes here to certain presuppositions about experience, about the meaning of what is to think, left unquestioned by Kant and the post-Kantians. The central assumption here is that of the ultimacy of representational consciousness, or

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<sup>6</sup> Düsing, 1976, pp. 51-3, 81-3, 143-5, also 1969, p. 118-9.

<sup>7</sup> Hegel's awareness of this problem thus led him away from Hölderlin: see Henrich, 1971a, p. 11, p. 29., pp. 35-6.

<sup>8</sup> Düsing, 1976, pp. 21-3, 109ff. On the evidence that Hegel's critique of Schelling begins here, see Fujita, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-50, 156-60.

in other words, that this structure is representative of the meaning of thought as such. This leads to the assumption that thought is essentially finite, defined in opposition to an object of which it is nevertheless supposed to have knowledge. Out of this contradiction arises the question of the unity of representation and reality, and an image of philosophy as the search for an immediately certain foundation of this unity is therefore necessary.

But how, Hegel asks, can this vocation of philosophy itself, based on a structure of experience which is simply accepted as given, be justified? For Hegel, this self-understanding of philosophy is well represented by its image of itself as an ultimately impartial, critical judge of the legitimacy of representations of the real, which was consolidated by the Enlightenment's critique of traditional authority. In 1802, he describes contemporary philosophy as 'nothing but the culture of reflection raised to a system' (FK 322/64). In the Enlightenment, the emphasis on the empirical, intended to combat the excesses of rationalism as well as those of superstition, means that when thought inevitably turns to self-reflexively critique its own representations, the criteria for this critique are derived from familiar empirical experience (FK 318-9/60).

Kant and Fichte reacted to this movement by redefining the task of philosophy on the basis of altered conceptions of the nature of thinking. For Hegel, however, each in his own way defines thought as determined by the empirical. Their respective philosophies base themselves on notions of a self-identical and universal concept that, by right, formally subsumes all empirical instances, but which is still opposed to finite empirical content to which it, in terms of its content, can only be approximate. There is always a contingency or difference which these standpoints cannot in principle account for (Kant's reliance on presuppositions about the real content of experience or Fichte's *Gefühl*). Reason thus acquires what it takes to be its essential task by accepting its difference from the empirical as given, thus subjecting itself to an infinite labour (FK 320-2/62-3) that can never be complete. For Hegel, this purely *conceptual* infinite 'is itself not the truth since it is unable to consume and consummate finitude [*die*

*Endlichkeit aufzuzehren]*' (FK 324/66). The distinction between infinite and finite reason here, or between pure and empirical reason is weighted in favour of the finite or empirical. The infinite concept is infinite because it is not finite, and is therefore conditioned by the finite, rather than being genuinely infinite or unconditioned.

Consequently we can see that, for Hegel, if we attempt to reflexively determine the conditions of possibility for experience, the result will necessarily reflect our assumptions about experience. Primary among these assumptions is that of the difference between subject and object that defines representational consciousness. It is this assumption that, as noted above, creates an epistemological problem that seems to require a foundationalist solution. In this way, the foundation will inevitably reflect in its form the identity of subject and object, and in its content, modes of objectivity and subjectivity that we are familiar with from experience. Like Deleuze, then, Hegel discovers that the positing of a relation of resemblance between a transcendent or abstract condition and the conditioned is characteristic of foundationalist thought. For example, Kant's unity of apperception reflects the formal identity of subject and object in my consciousness, and thus establishes the formal possibility of knowing, but the determinations of this unity are simply read off other accounts of experience that are accepted as given. And with Fichte and Schelling, the Absolute is posited as the unconditional unity and foundation of all distinctions between subject and object, but when it comes to deriving the content (the totality of forms of our experience) that will establish it as the objective foundation of all experience, this process is unending, with the result that the relation between pure identity and the real distinction it is meant to ground becomes problematic. Both thinkers then conceive of this relation in terms of a primordial difference, which undermines their project, leaving the content that they construct for the Absolute as a merely subjectively valid reflection of our familiar experience, as in Schelling's construction of a 'first creation'.

For Hegel, then, foundationalism, in remaining tied to the structure of representational consciousness, must always presuppose something about the constitution of experience, an unquestioned nominal definition of experience that will be reflected in the foundation that it deduces. If this is the case, thinks Hegel, then the only alternative for thought is, instead of beginning with a relation to something simply *given* to it, to take up an active relation to *itself*, which nevertheless allows it to provide *real* definitions (EL §24 Zus. 2). All justifications of objective knowledge in relation to experience can only be valid relative to that content, and therefore Hegel's radical conclusion is that the whole foundationalist model of thought, and the assumptions that underlie it (the *given* difference between subject and object), must be done away with, for so long as foundationalism remains a blueprint for philosophy, thought will be unable to determine itself, that is, to stand in a truly infinite and autonomous relation to itself. As noted previously, for Hegel as for Deleuze it is an image of thought that we must reject, rather than certain configurations of this image. This image is that of foundationalism, the 'philosophical' transposition of representational consciousness into a supposedly transcendent realm (cf. DR 173-4/132-3). Hence Hegel's first task, as set in the early Jena writings, is to overcome the temptation to construct an image of philosophy out of presuppositions about experience. Later, he describes in PS the accomplishment of this task as the 'way of despair' (PS 69/49 §78) for representational consciousness. In genuine philosophy, the finite 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 §3).

If this overcoming is to be genuine, then Hegel's properly philosophical perspective must not itself rely upon any presuppositions about the object of thought. If such presuppositions turned out to be present, Hegel would have failed to transcend the standpoint of representational consciousness, by remaining tied to a conception of a determinate object that is somehow given to thought *as* determinate. This would mean

that Hegel makes the same mistake as the early Schelling, by presupposing that the object of thought is an absolute unity of subject and object that is given to us as inherently rational, and thus that negative philosophy alone is sufficient to know the Absolute. Despite the fact that the later Schelling criticises Hegel for just this error (LMP 143-6/147-9), Hegel is aware of the danger of positing the Absolute under a conditioned form in this fashion, both in the early Jena writings,<sup>9</sup> and later in EL (his denunciation of formalism in §12). His attempt at a solution to this problem centres on the thought that the attainment of a truly philosophical perspective must be dependent upon concrete forms of experience that constitute the living present of thought, and yet at the same time, this very dependence can be the means of overcoming representational consciousness *per se*, thus providing a total critique of representational consciousness that does not fall into a foundationalist *aporia* by presupposing that it is based on a foundation that is somehow immediately known as such.

In DFS (1801), which may have had a decisive influence on Schelling's development of the *Identitätssystem*,<sup>10</sup> the difference between the actual, present condition of philosophy and its eternal truth in absolute knowing is presented as the difference between a finite, reflexive *Verstand*, and an infinite, speculative *Vernunft*. Here, Hegel affirms that the genuinely philosophical standpoint requires a radical overcoming of representational consciousness: 'In order to reach the essence of philosophy it is necessary to throw oneself into it *à corps perdu* — meaning by "body" here, the sum of one's idiosyncrasies' (DFS 11/88). The question of the possibility of such a rejection of finite reflection then arises, which the Jena Schelling answers with the notion of an absolute intellectual intuition. For the Jena Hegel, it is already the case that the solution must involve a meditation on method, and the question of immediacy and

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<sup>9</sup> See Düsing, 1976, pp. 123-4 on Hegel's critique of Fichte's one-sided Absolute, and p. 131 on how this reflects Jacobi's *Fichtekritik*.

<sup>10</sup> Düsing, 1976, p. 139 and 1968, esp. pp. 95-6, p. 114, pp. 119-20.

mediation, which distances him from Fichte and Schelling and their idea of an intellectual intuition in which the Absolute is known in-itself. although he still employs the notion of a 'transcendental' intuition in a systematic role in the 1801/02 lectures on logic and metaphysics in order to make the leap into philosophy *à corps perdu*, a move he would later reject.<sup>11</sup>

In the pre-Jena period, Hegel had determined the relation between immediacy and mediation as a relation between an ultimately presupposed unity (*Sein*) and 'antinomies' produced by reflection.<sup>12</sup> In the Jena period, Hegel, in a similar way to Fichte, interprets the dichotomy [*Entzweiung*] that 'is the source of the need for philosophy' (DFS 12/89) as an apparently irreconcilable antinomical relation between different definitions of the Absolute that is definitive for the present culture of reflection and its philosophy. The Absolute, the in-itself of being, appears in this milieu as either the diversity posited by the Understanding, or the unity desired by Reason. In relation to the wider intellectual culture, the history of philosophy is seen here as a series of attempts to reconcile various dichotomous definitions of the real that arise through reflection on familiar experience (Spirit/Extension, Subject/Object etc.). These attempts have not resulted in a final and absolute reconciliation (for then there would be no history of philosophy), but have produced instead a plethora of relative identities that posit a resemblance between Absolute and conditioned. Reason continually identifies itself with the conditioned term that represents unity within the dichotomy (e.g., Spirit, Subject) and posits it as absolute (DFS 13/91), abstracting it from its relation to the other term. The Enlightenment culture of reflection presents a special opportunity to overcome this tendency, however, even as it continues it, for its own internal dichotomy, which is

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Düsing, 1976, p. 140-3 on Hegel and Schelling's use of intuition in the Jena period.

<sup>12</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 60-1, on Hegel's non-Kantian interpretation of 'antinomy': from the Frankfurt period onward, Hegel uses this term to refer to the relation of contradictory predicates to a subject, rather than to the relation between contradictory judgements and a thing-in-itself.

exemplified for the Jena Hegel by Fichte's thought, concerns the very relation between difference and identity.

According to Hegel, irreconcilable dichotomies arise for reflection because it is representational consciousness as such that is contradictory, rather than just some of its definitions of experience. The very fact that to represent something is to be aware of a difference between relative identities (e.g., subject and object), means that representation finds that it is dependent on contradictory presuppositions, in the following way. On the one hand, consciousness of the relative difference that defines representation presupposes the absolute unity of the differentiated terms (e.g., subject and object) (DFS 15/93), for only then could they be known as different. On the other hand, the 'emergence [*Herausgetretensein*] of consciousness from the totality' (DFS 15/93), and thus the absolute difference or lack of relation between the subject and what it is conscious of must be assumed. Representational consciousness is thus forced to posit both presuppositions as essential to it. When it becomes explicitly foundationalist, and reflects on which assumption is *more* essential or foundational for it, it is forced to affirm the presupposed unity, which it represents to itself as a given determinateness (as Subject, Knowledge, etc.). Without this recognition and this representation, it would be unable to posit an essential relation at all.<sup>13</sup> But this means that the absolute unity of the differentiated terms is represented as a relative identity, one whose positive content is a given determinateness, and which therefore implies conditioning relations with other determinatenesses. This representation, assumed as given, is thus conditioned by determinate relations that are derived from our familiar experience. A conditioned content has therefore been posited as corresponding to the content of the unconditioned or absolute that lies, unexpressed, in the background of representational consciousness. This positing of a relative content for the Absolute means that a resemblance has been

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<sup>13</sup> As we will see in the next two chapters, this foundationalist requirement of determinateness in the essential or foundational relation is criticised by Hegel in SL's Doctrine of Essence.



posited between the Absolute and the relative. This, for Hegel, is necessarily contradictory. The absolute difference which has to be presupposed is supposedly negated in a relative identity, which has its source in one pole of the difference. This is, however, just testifies to the unjustifiable foundationalist assumption (present in Fichte's philosophy, as we saw in Chapter Two) that the relation and lack of relation between two terms can both be grounded in one of these conditioned terms.

We have discovered here Hegel's account of a 'double movement', comparable with that which Deleuze suggests is characteristic of Platonism. Hegel, however, posits this tendency as an illusion constituted by the movement of reflection, rather than as the product of a non-conscious ontological tendency. Hegel concurs with Deleuze, though, in seeing foundationalist philosophy, understood as the tendency of reflection to posit the absolute in relation to the relative, as presupposing a subjective orientation that it cannot justify (DFS 16/94), an interest of reason (in Kant's sense) in unity, which arises out of forms of non-philosophical experience in which dichotomies that appear irreconcilable to foundationalist reflection are continually encountered. The trauma of reason represents a philosophical dichotomy in which this internal dynamic is laid bare, without being entirely understood. For Hegel, so long as the focus of philosophy falls elsewhere than on the inherently contradictory nature of reflection, this lack of understanding will continue, and dichotomies will persist in arising. Philosophy will thus be driven beyond itself again and again to the later Schelling's 'solution' to the problem of dichotomy: an implicit or explicit act of faith in which the reconcilability of the dichotomies of representation with reason, or the inherent rationality of the Absolute, is affirmed without being proven.

For Hegel, the difficulty for philosophy is ultimately that of articulating a relation between unity and difference such that the contradiction between them can actually be grasped as an essential element of the Absolute itself. The major obstacle to the success of any such articulation is the stubborn rigidity of representational

consciousness. For representational or 'natural' consciousness, the subject of a proposition is ruled by the principle of non-contradiction: if opposing predicates are posited in the same subject (e.g., the Absolute,  $x$ , is both absolute identity and absolute difference), then the result is a disjunction.  $X$  can be either, but not both. However, as we saw in Chapter 2 in relation to Schelling's acceptance of Hölderlin and Jacobi's critiques of transcendental idealism, for objective knowledge of disjunction to be possible, one must presuppose an Absolute that does not obey this law of disjunction. Hegel's attempt to provide a critique of consciousness must show how one can articulate such an Absolute in consciousness, without simply dogmatically presupposing that the essence of the Absolute in-itself is knowable, and without imposing the burden of proving the validity of this account of the Absolute as an infinite *Sollen* upon consciousness.

So the Hegelian Absolute must be understood as inclusive of absolute contradiction, as both 'Subject' and 'Substance' (PS 20/10 §17), and therefore cannot be articulated in opposition to the finite, for then it becomes the source of a *Sollen*, a merely 'conceptual' infinite conditioned by the finite. Further, an account of the Absolute, for Hegel, cannot be based on something like a Schellingian ecstasy of reason in which representational consciousness is annihilated in favour of pure immediacy,<sup>14</sup> for this option, by pointing to the 'outside' of reason, reinstates a disjunction between infinite (immediate) and finite (mediated or conditioned). Instead, critique must focus on the fixity of representational consciousness, the way it, as a habitual mode of thinking, remains wedded to the principle of non-contradiction, and thus to the opposition between identity and difference. Hegel will not rigidly oppose the immediacy of an intuition to the mediatedness of thought, but will instead demand of philosophy that it render finite

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. letter to Hegel, 04/02/1795, in Fuhrmans, 1973, p. 65: '[...] we should break down these barriers, i.e. we should leave behind the finite sphere for the infinite (practical philosophy). This also demands the destruction [*Zerstörung*] of finitude and will take us thereby to the supersensible world'.

thinking itself fluid,<sup>15</sup> i.e., capable of comprehending its own contradictory structure, which would mean that, in transcending the sphere of representational consciousness from within, thought has discovered its own genuinely infinite aspect.

In the later Jena period (1805/06), Hegel moves decisively away from the Schellingian theme of intellectual intuition and towards a theory of what might (despite the Fichtean connotations) be called absolute subjectivity, and thus away from the division he had hitherto made between a preparatory, critical *Logik*, in which finite reflection is undermined by showing how its determinations are inherently contradictory, and a subsequent, positive organon or *Metaphysik* in which the Absolute is known through its reflections in consciousness. This division is dissolved in a *Logik* that considers absolute knowledge, not as intuition, but purely as cognition, *Erkennen*. It is this move that sets the scene for the development of the model of absolute knowledge presented in the PS.<sup>16</sup>

How could an idea of self-grounding, *absolute* cognition, however, be anything other than a negative determination of merely possible determinations of being, which narcissistically assumes these forms to be true of being in itself? As previously noted, this was the charge brought by the later Schelling against Hegel: the notion of a pure thinking of antinomies as identical with absolute knowledge seems simply to have ignored Kant's distinction between intuition and the understanding, and Schelling's own distinction between the purely rational Absolute and the problematic, 'higher' Absolute. Hegel thus appears to be a kind of dogmatic Fichtean who assumes that being-in-itself has the same 'contradictory' structure as thought.<sup>17</sup> By turning now to directly examine the PS, we will discover how Hegel at least anticipates such objections.

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Fujita, 1985, pp. 156-8.

<sup>16</sup> See Düsing, 1976, pp. 156-7, p. 198.

<sup>17</sup> It is such a 'dogmatic' reading that informs Williams' (1989, p. 43) and Marcuse's (1997, p. 10, p. 38) Marxian assessments of Hegel's account of the relation between subject and object. Hegel is

For Hegel, it is foundationalism that is narcissistic or, in his terms, formalistic, for it is nothing but the reflexive, methodological expression of the 'natural', or rather, familiar and accepted, perspective of representational consciousness, and thus it presupposes the ultimacy of the divisions that characterise this consciousness. Foundationalism, understood as an expression of representational, and therefore contradictory, consciousness, will itself therefore be a contradictory position (PS 65-6/46-7 §73). Hegel's response seems Cartesian: he asserts that absolute knowledge or philosophy is absolute (and non-formalistic) because it is presuppositionless (SL 35-7/43-5), i.e., it does not begin from a positive, determinate definition of the meaning of experience.<sup>18</sup> The presuppositions of foundationalism concern the modes of experience that representational consciousness is familiar with, and are extracted from accepted accounts of the inner structure of these modes such as natural science. Foundationalism then attempts to show how such accounts are themselves possible as universally necessary forms of experience. Giving an account of the genesis of these presuppositions (which as we saw in Chapter 3, is central to post-Hegelian thought) that foundationalism cannot finally account for then becomes necessary. But if this is done, then a Schellingian objection suggests itself: any attempt to objectively explain the genesis of presuppositions already presupposes that their conditions are somehow known. Before the enquiry begins, a foundational, transcendent subjectivity (Deleuze's 'common sense') in which thought and being are unified has already been presupposed.

In relation to this problem, Schelling made the important point that, if foundationalism is to be self-consistent, then the diversity of presuppositions about experience must all be based on a fundamentally non-discursive, non-representational (and non-articulable) form of experience — a foundationalist proposition that places

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an 'absolute idealist' because he assumes that the object-in-itself possesses a dialectical structure. As we shall see, this is inaccurate.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Butler, 1996, p. 1, and Maker, 1995, Ch. 2, esp. pp. 59-60

foundationalism itself in jeopardy. However, for Hegel this appeal to an ineffable immediacy only repeats the *reflexive* principle that the mediated must rely on the immediate, and therefore ignores the fact that the converse is also true. Schelling does not consider how the act of abstracting the Absolute from the finite as its unconditioned, which is a form of reflexive mediation, inevitably implies the question of how the possibility of an actual *intuition* of this Absolute can itself be proven.<sup>19</sup> This difficulty necessarily resurfaces later in the systematic problem of the *Sollen*, which implies the subjection of the finite to the ‘bad infinite’ of an abstract concept in the effort to prove the objective validity of the intuition from which the system begins. This imperative places the finite under the domination of the thought of Absolute Identity as real ground, against which the determinateness of the finite cannot endure.<sup>20</sup>

If we are to have any hope of formulating a successful response to the problem of overcoming the circle of presuppositions without positing the existence of a special intuition, we must recognise, Hegel argues, that Absolute Knowing cannot begin otherwise than with both immediacy and mediation: its beginning must be both presuppositionless *and* historically conditioned. This historical conditioning has its proximate philosophical expression in Kant’s thought, for it is the modes of experience reflected in Kant’s philosophy that provide the intellectual historical environment in which Absolute Knowing can exist. Hegel’s assertion is that Absolute Knowing will therefore include or comprehend the dichotomies of Kant’s thought. The first intimations of this process in the PS are in the Preface, which outlines a wider dichotomy of diversity

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<sup>19</sup> Düsing, 1976, p. 21, p. 142; 1977, p. 120, p. 122, p. 127.

<sup>20</sup> Hegel’s criticises the *Sollen* because it implies an infinite division of concept and reality (EL §55, §60), and through this division, creates an ethical relation in which the concept of the absolute dominates the natural world, as in the revolutionary Terror (FK 416/174; PS 413-22/355-63 §§582-95). Cf. Rose. *op. cit.*, pp. 100-1, pp. 172-4)

and unity: the current historical situation of philosophical thought is opposed to anticipations of the new Absolute.

It is true that these anticipations can easily be misunderstood as unjustifiable abstractions about the nature of the absolute, that are somehow meant as foundations that will justify Hegelian Science from the outset. However, they appear in the midst of a discussion of what Hegel had earlier in Jena called the 'culture of reflection'. Hegel discusses contemporary views on the relation between the subject of knowledge and the Absolute that show Kantian, Fichtean and Schellingian influences. These are abstract reflections on familiar forms of experience (science, Christian morality, pietist faith), and have themselves become familiar tendencies within the wider intellectual culture. That which is merely familiar (*bekannt*), however, is through its very familiarity or immediacy, not mediated or genuinely known (*erkannt*) (PS 31/18 §31). This Hegelian distinction is not a difference between something, initially accepted on the word of another, subsequently doubted, only to return as a certainty grounded in one's own reason (PS 69/50 §78). Such a Cartesian model of *doxa* versus knowledge is itself a foundationalism, which begins from *accepted* definitions of what is to be doubted. As previously noted, Hegel agrees with Deleuze that it is the horizon of 'familiarity' *as such*, the inherent tendency of reflexive thought to rely upon the structure of representational consciousness in defining the relation of thought to being, that must be criticised in its totality in order to present a different image of philosophy.

However, the familiar cannot be negated by immediately proclaiming a new Absolute. This would simply reject previous versions of the Absolute in favour of a new determination, which would once again reflect dichotomies arising from a definition of experience that would itself be merely given or 'shot from a pistol' (PS 28/21 §37; SL I, 65/67). Representational consciousness, when it becomes foundationalist, demands that all truth-claims be justified or proven, and this means that, as Hegel recognises, simply insisting on the difference between proclaimed knowledge of the Absolute and accepted

opinion will not suffice. This would simply mean that Absolute Knowledge or Science 'would be declaring its power to lie simply in its *being*; but the untrue [i.e., familiar] knowledge likewise appeals to the fact that *it is*, and *assures* us that for it Science is of no account' (PS 68/49 §76). And a vindication of the possibility of Absolute Knowledge, if it is also to be a critique of foundationalism, must recognise the central Hegelian paradox in the PS, i.e., that representational consciousness can only be related to the Absolute through its own overcoming of itself. Any attempt to specify a new *beyond* of representational consciousness as its *negative* simply binds philosophy anew to representational consciousness, especially when this *beyond* is defined as utterly transcendent of consciousness as such (as when Schelling makes an ecstatic 'intuition' and a *Sollen* equally essential to philosophy). Hegel's goal is to allow representational consciousness, as concretely defined by historically-prevalent dichotomies, to demonstrate that the Absolute is not external to it. This demonstration must therefore itself be immanent to consciousness, involving no foundational method that has to be justified prior to the demonstration.<sup>21</sup>

This enables us to address the apparent inconsistency that results from a Preface that reinstates a duality of diversity (familiar dichotomies) and unity (the new absolute). This apparent inconsistency will turn out to be consistent in relation to the requirement of an immanent method. A consciousness schooled in the distinctions made by finite reason cannot be persuaded to lose its rigidity and reject the supremacy of the principle of non-contradiction simply by talk of an immanent method. In order to be forced to think inclusively, rather than disjunctively, such a consciousness must be subjected to paradoxes that erode its habitual orientation towards an object of thought, examples

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<sup>21</sup> Ohashi, *op cit.*, p. 21, points out that, for the early Schelling, the absolute had also to be conceived of as *within* consciousness, rather than as opposed to it. But Schelling, like Hölderlin (Henrich, 1971a, pp. 16-17) conceived of this internal relation as one between productive ontological tendencies, which would, for Hegel, be a *petitio principii*.

whose forms of expression are themselves selected abstractly from among the familiar, but which nevertheless force a consciousness used to abstraction to see itself and its truth in the paradoxes they contain.<sup>22</sup> Hence the Preface presents as familiar the abstractions of mathematical reasoning, formalism, and 'enthusiasm', before going on to present, equally abstractly, the paradoxical 'speculative proposition' (PS 52-6/35-40 §§58-65) in which, for Hegel, the Absolute is expressed, and finally, in the Introduction, we find within Kantian and Reinholdian aspects of the relation between the 'for itself' and the 'in itself' the paradox of 'determinate negation'.

So the purpose of these initial moves cannot be to determine the objective difference between a condition of 'fallenness' characterised by our reflexive awareness of difference and an intuition of the Absolute, for such a distinction would then itself require grounding. The Introduction and, in particular, the Preface (which was composed after the rest of the book was complete) constitute an apparatus for tempting representational consciousness, not to reject the familiar in favour of the claim of a magisterial intuition, but to recognise itself in something initially utterly unfamiliar to it and therefore without meaning for it. Thus consciousness must be induced to see itself as *containing* the absolute, rather than as being opposed to it.<sup>23</sup> This will subsequently give way to an immanent demonstration of this fact. It is clear, then, that Hegel, in opposition to Schelling, grants representational consciousness *qua* consciousness of difference an inalienable right over against the 'opposing tendency', the ardent desire for Absolute unity (PS 26/14-15 §26).

This immanent demonstration, the 'method' of the PS, cannot then be based upon a determinate foundation in experience that remains unquestioned.<sup>24</sup> Instead, it can be nothing other than a descriptive method, beginning with the experiential assumptions

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Rose, 1980, p. 151.

<sup>23</sup> See also Lamb, 1980, pp. 15-16.

<sup>24</sup> Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 30.



that characterise representational consciousness, and criticising them systematically, thus remaining immanent to its subject matter.<sup>25</sup> Yet such a 'method' has to begin somewhere. We could begin abstractly by enumerating (to use a Kantian term) the historically determinate presuppositions of a consciousness which Hegel characterises as 'natural' so as to sketch its 'ideological' character, its merely familiar convictions about what is 'natural'. We might include in this list of assumptions the following: that there is an essential relation of correspondence between the subject's representation and the nature of the object, that this relation can be articulated, and that the validity of this relation can be proven *a priori*. And even more basic, there is the assumption of the difference between the subject and the object itself. And then there is the self-sufficiency of the reason of the individual: there may be many *doxai* about the nature of the world, but the individual has the capacity to sort the true from the false (an assumption Deleuze also points to).

These opinions may be basic to the modern 'image of thought'. But there remains the problem of the necessity and completeness of our investigation of them. Kant's enumeration of the conditions of the possibility of experience was criticised precisely for its abstract and contingent character. In attempting to overcome this, a genetic method as employed by Fichte and Schelling finds itself having to begin by assuming the validity of a determination of the Absolute in order that the forms of experience can be deduced from it with necessity. But this necessity is consequently only *assumed* to flow from the nature of the Absolute, and nothing is thereby genuinely explained, as there is no guarantee of completeness in the deduction. In this connection, it is necessary to understand the PS, in its role as the introduction to Hegel's System, as a *transcendental deduction* of the idea of Absolute Knowing, which operates by

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<sup>25</sup> Dove, 1970, pp. 17-19.

progressively deducing the conditions of a basic form of consciousness, ending with the unconditional.<sup>26</sup>

There are thus two interpretative issues to be decided: a) the question as to where the PS must begin, and b) how the complete deduction of Absolute Knowing is to be understood. Beginning with the latter, we should note that Hegel's solution to the problem of presuppositions is Fichtean, in that he envisages a systematic deduction that is self-enclosed, requiring no externally given presuppositions. This influence is, however, tempered by that of Kant. Hegel refuses to begin from an intellectual intuition of the Absolute in itself, *qua* ground of determination. Yet, given Hegel's denunciation of Kant's critical philosophy as a merely finite form of reason, how can he affirm the foundationalist idea of a *Deduktion*? Does this not repeat the division of consciousness that Kant assumes as ultimate?

We should note that what Hegel sees as important in Kant's transcendental deduction is not the synthetic unity of consciousness defined over against the transcendental object, which was transformed by Fichte and Schelling into different forms of productive intuition, but rather the *logical* relation between consciousness and self-consciousness that is essential to Kant's argument. On Robert Pippin's interpretation,<sup>27</sup> for example, Hegel takes up Kant's argument (at CPuR B138) that it is only in relation to the unity of self-consciousness that even any *presentation* of an object in intuition is made possible, and that therefore there are no 'pure intuitions' without relation to self-consciousness. Experience, for Kant and for Hegel, is therefore not simply a change in the state of a subject, the reception of stimuli or the currency of a mental state, but is consciousness of an existing object.<sup>28</sup> In this way, Kant (for Hegel),

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<sup>26</sup> On the importance of the specifically Kantian notion of a deduction for Hegel, see Pippin, 1989, p. 6 and p. 19. Again, this role of the PS has not been uncontroversial: see n. 4 above.

<sup>27</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 20-3 and 27-9.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

shows that all experience of objects arises through a certain mode of self-relation on the part of the subject. The question is, how must this self-relation be conceived? Is it absolute knowledge understood as the self-presence of the subject, its knowledge of itself as it is in itself?

This cannot be the case, for this supposedly *a priori* knowledge would be an illusion of the kind that Kant refutes in the Paralogisms. Hence the self-relation here does not entail that we are intuitively present to ourselves alongside every case of presenting a synthesis of an empirical manifold to ourselves. The Kantian 'I think', in terms of transcendental logic, indicates an always potential relation of knowing (the representation 'I think' *can* accompany all my presentations): it is this potential knowledge of the discursive rules of synthesis for a manifold of intuition that is the condition of the difference between a merely subjective association of mental states and the consciousness of an object.<sup>29</sup> Kant's insight is thus that any knowledge-claim must presuppose that it is possible to become conscious of the discursive rules that allow the claim to be made in the first place.<sup>30</sup> In order to present *x* to ourselves as an object, it is necessary that we should be able to become conscious of the rules, the *practice* or 'point of view',<sup>31</sup> which we employ to present *x* to ourselves.<sup>32</sup> Importantly, knowledge of these rules is not knowledge of an object, but of the conditions of presentation for an object. In a sense, such knowledge is unconditioned, as it arises only through a relation of the subject to itself, but it is nevertheless not an intuition of the subject in itself.

Just as some of the assumptions, characteristic of the familiar or 'natural' consciousness, that will appear systematically in the PS's deduction of Absolute Knowing are first dealt with abstractly in the Preface, so is the Introduction an abstract

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19; Düsing, 1993, p. 499

<sup>30</sup> Pippin, 1989, p. 23.

<sup>31</sup> Pinkard, 1995, p. 52.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46; Pippin, 1987, pp 459-60

presentation of the necessary dynamic of the deduction itself, for it deals with the form of this self-relation of the subject. It explicitly discusses this issue in terms of the necessary relation between any intended object and self-consciousness, showing that this relation is a necessary internal *movement* of self-consciousness, rather than an intuition. This movement is a process of *Erkennen*, cognition, but also (to employ another of this word's meanings in German) *recognition*, or rather re-cognition, a necessary process of re-thinking a relation. This movement of re-cognition is a logical movement from an object to the rules that allow it to be posited, i.e., from conditioned to condition, rather than being a psychological act of matching up diverse contents with the aid of a concept that subsumes them all.<sup>33</sup> Unlike 'psychological' recognition, the logical movement of recognition actually *prevents* self-consciousness from affirming that the object it recognises as conditioned by certain rules is the *same* object of which it was initially conscious. It is this process, through which the object becomes *unfamiliar*, that the Introduction presents as the inner 'experience' (*Erfahrung*) of natural consciousness (PS 75/55 §86). In this way, the independence of an object is undermined, and consciousness becomes aware, not of the object as an independent entity simply *given* to it, but of the role of the subject in positing it as independent. It is this movement that will, in the course of the deduction, develop through several levels of complexity into Absolute Knowing.

We now need to examine the nature of this movement as the Introduction describes it. As we have seen, for Hegel representational consciousness has for its basic structure the awareness of being immediately conscious of an object opposite it. The content of this immediacy is what consciousness takes to be the Absolute, or to be the truth of the object as it is in-itself. But this consciousness is also aware of itself as different from the object, as the *knower* of the object, and thus in relation to it. The object is thus defined in a second aspect as only *for* consciousness. These two aspects

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<sup>33</sup> Pinkard, *op. cit.*, p. 362 n.10. For the *psychological* usage, cf. CPuR A103-10.

reflect Kant's account of the two modes of representing an object, via Reason and via the Understanding. The difference between these two aspects is thus one between: a) consciousness of the foundation of truth, and b) consciousness of the mode or method via which this foundation is known (PS 72-3/52-3 §§82-4). If consciousness recognises this difference, it alters its perspective on itself, effectively comparing one moment of itself (the definition of the foundation or of truth) with another moment (the knowledge of method or of the difference between consciousness and the truth), and thus becomes aware of the difference between a moment of immediate identity and one of mediated difference. This difference between moments does not become fixed, however, creating an either/or disjunction between the immediate and the mediated, as both these moments themselves 'are *for* the same consciousness, this consciousness is itself their comparison; it is for the same consciousness to know whether its knowledge of the object corresponds to the object or not' (PS 74/54 §85). The awareness of the difference between the two moments is this latter, disjunctive comparison, which inevitably demonstrates that the supposed 'in-itself' is only an immediacy *for consciousness*, that is, that the very immediacy of the object is only possible through a relation to consciousness. Through this experience, which is necessitated by the dualistic structure of representational consciousness, a further change occurs:

Since consciousness thus finds that its knowledge does not correspond to its object, the object itself does not stand the test; in other words, the criterion for testing is altered when that for which it was to have been the criterion fails to pass the test; and the testing is not only a testing of what we know, but also a testing of the criterion of what knowing is.

(PS 74-5/54-5 §85)

The supposedly immediate foundation and the conditional knowledge are not absolutely negated in this process, as in the kind of superficial scepticism Hegel denounces earlier (PS 52/56 §59) that knows how to point out the necessary difference between the two moments of consciousness but cannot produce anything positive thereby, and sees only a circular either/or, where each term is the foundation of the other. Such a capricious and subjective scepticism is opposed to the necessary and *absolute* scepticism that, for Hegel, is absolute because it is immanent to 'natural' consciousness. This absolute scepticism does not place in question our knowledge of objects, by raising the spectre of the unknowable foundation of knowledge or thing-in-itself, but rather questions the idea of the possibility of defining a thing-in-itself, or self-subsistent foundation, as such.

The in-itself is not just defined formally as 'external' or other, but also, seeing as it is defined as a foundation, it must have a specific content. The difference between the two moments of identity and difference is thus itself comprehended within a new unity, a new foundation or in-itself, a new definition of the object. The content of this new definition will follow necessarily from the difference between the two previous moments of consciousness: it is thus a *determinate* negation of what went before. And again, through its own formal relation to the subject, the content of this definition will prove to be afflicted with the difference between in-itself and for-another. This, then, is what logical re-cognition initially amounts to: consciousness recognises that the 'familiar' object is in fact *unfamiliar* to it, for there is a difference between the moments of in-itself and for-another that prevents the unity of knowing, of criterion and knowledge, from being simple and immediate.<sup>34</sup> Consciousness then finds that another object has arisen behind its back, as it were. In this way, a definition of experience, which implies a

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Rose, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-9.

specific practice, viewpoint or rule through which a particular object is constituted, undermines itself. As observers of the phenomenological development of recognition, we simply contribute to this process the tracing of the necessary connection between the content of one 'shape' of consciousness (the moments of identity and difference) and the one that replaces it (PS 76/55-6 §87).<sup>35</sup> That is, we can see new objects arising out of the contradictions implicit in the old.<sup>36</sup> Natural consciousness itself cannot become aware of the necessity of its journey until it reaches the end, where it reflects on its own progress.

This movement, which Hegel must simply describe (as a *phenomenological* observer) while at the same time pointing out the necessity with which each new object arises, is the phenomenological dialectic. Dialectic is thus not a method, formulated on the basis of assumptions about the content of experience and then applied reflexively to experience as to an external content,<sup>37</sup> but is a movement that arises immanently within representational consciousness itself. The 'antinomy' of consciousness is thus that between the object defined as in-itself and as for-another: the only way to resolve an antinomy, as for Kant, is to relate the opposing terms to their conditions of possibility, i.e., to a third term that makes the identity *and* difference of both possible. This active relating is the process that occurs behind the back of consciousness. The progression of 'shapes of consciousness' that is the PS is thus the variety of immanently-unfolding attempts on the part of finite consciousness to determine a foundation for its knowledge of the identity and difference between subject and object. And in fact it is only when these moments of determinate, relative difference and identity that define representational consciousness have been cast off at the end of the PS that this movement can finally be understood. By this time, consciousness will have become utterly

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<sup>35</sup> Dove, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>36</sup> This is why it is difficult to appreciate the necessity of the movement only with reference to the abstract Introduction, which, being abstract, can only *anticipate* what is to follow.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Butler, 1996, p. 12

unfamiliar to itself, precisely because these constitutive moments will have been exhaustively critiqued. Instead of focusing on a determinate object posited opposite it, consciousness will have transcended its representational structure, having attained a perspective where the process of its own movement, or its developed relation to itself, is its 'object'. This movement, however, is not a determinate object, but the process through which objectivity itself is constituted for the subject. If this viewpoint can be attained from within the PS, then the structure of representational consciousness will have been completely comprehended as a product of this movement itself. This, for Hegel, is Absolute Knowing.

The issue of the completeness of the deduction brings us back to the problem of beginning. Comprehending the difference and identity of the moments of in-itself and for-another means that consciousness will gradually come to understand its own role in the constitution of both. The definitions of the in-itself as criterion and of the moment of knowledge, which show themselves to be conditioned by a new in-itself, will eventually change so that the moment of knowing itself becomes the criterion. In this way, consciousness will gradually recognise (as will we) that only through the mediation of discursive rules can the immediate (the in-itself) be constituted for consciousness. Self-consciousness will thus be re-recognised as the condition of possibility for consciousness of an object. At this point of development (the chapter on Self-Consciousness), the general pattern of Kantian and Fichtean consciousness will have been reached. This form of abstract consciousness, however, already presupposes various complex assumptions about the nature of experience (the nature of intuition, the difference between theoretical and practical reason etc.). To anticipate the next chapter, the PS will show how these presuppositions, as modes of relating to objects, already presuppose historically-determinate relations between subjects. Intersubjectivity, rather than absolute subjectivity, will thus be the condition of self-consciousness. But because of the relative complexity of these modes of knowing, it is necessary to begin the PS proper elsewhere.



This is because the PS must be exhaustive, and the criteria for this exhaustiveness cannot be given outside of the phenomenological development itself (otherwise the foundationalist problem of circularity would return). The critique of the multiplicity of 'familiar' prejudices that constitute phenomenal knowledge in the present can only be consistent with itself if it proceeds with necessity, and begins from the most basic form of immediate identity that is possible for representational consciousness. The 'inconsistency' of beginning from the simple and immediate form of consciousness that Hegel calls 'Sense-Certainty', rather than from a historically contemporary Kantian or Fichtean presupposition, is thus consistent when viewed in the light of the requirements of an absolute critique of representation.<sup>38</sup> Crucially, this basic form of consciousness can neither be consciousness of an object as it is determined for us, nor can it be consciousness of an object in itself. Any such beginning would already presuppose a pre-given foundation and would thus still be circular: either a determination of a thing-in-itself in relation to which the object 'for us' is constituted, or the unity of consciousness and the thing-in-itself. The beginning can only be understood, I would argue, in relation to a moment in Kant's philosophy where the distinction between phenomenal objects and noumena, between objects-for-us and objects-in-themselves, becomes problematic. As an adjunct to his critique of rational psychology (including Descartes) Kant notes that the proposition 'I think' expresses an 'indeterminate empirical intuition' whose exact status is ambiguous: it

signifies only something real that is given, given indeed to thought in general, and so not as appearance, nor as thing-in-itself (*noumenon*), but as something which actually [*in der Tat*] exists, and which in the proposition 'I think' is denoted as such.

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<sup>38</sup> Rose, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-1.

The intuition here is an undeniable, though indeterminate, feeling of existence associated with consciousness, rather than Descartes' fully determinate intellectual intuition of a thinking thing. Its exact status in consciousness is problematic, being neither a representation of an intuited phenomenal object, nor a presentation given through a special form of higher intuition. It can only be called consciousness of being without further determination. In this, it is unconditioned, given that it has no determination either as for-us or as an in-itself. It does not presuppose any foundation in order to be known as this indeterminate term, whether this foundation be discursive (i.e., a determinate categorial synthesis of intuition) or non-discursive (a special intuition), and consciousness of it does not therefore presuppose a circle of conditions.

This immediate, indeterminate consciousness, in which there is no determinate distinction between our consciousness of being and being itself, is the 'pure Being' with which the PS begins. Upon reflecting on this unity, we find that it splits into two simple unities that constitute the determination of Sense-Certainty proper, opposed to each other as the immediate awareness of an object and the immediate awareness of being conscious of an object. However, these terms are not themselves opposed to the initial indeterminate Being. In fact, their relation to the initial unity is problematic: that both terms *happen* to 'emerge out of pure being [*aus dem reinen Sein [...] herausfallen*]' constitutes the 'crucial diversity' in Sense-Certainty (PS 80/59 §92, modified). From this initial division, the dialectic of PS begins: each opposed term is posited in turn by consciousness as the foundation of the other, and the resulting contradiction results in the overcoming of Sense-Certainty as a supposedly consistent form of immediate knowledge of an object. The completeness of Hegel's deduction of Absolute Knowledge thus rests on a) 'natural' or representational consciousness being educated so that it is aware, not of a particular object, but of objectivity itself as only constituted through a process that is

internal to consciousness, and b) beginning with a form of consciousness that is utterly basic in lacking the determinate structure of difference and identity that characterises representational consciousness.

In the next chapter, we will examine the process laid out in the PS in more detail, before turning to the SL, which for Hegel elaborates the standpoint of Absolute Knowledge as an ontology. Now, in concluding this chapter, we will review the project that PS is meant to fulfil. The immanent dynamic of the PS is, as we have seen, a process in which consciousness finds its unacknowledged presuppositions being laid bare, these presuppositions being rules that are constitutive of subjective perspectives on the world of objects. In this way, this process (understood negatively) can be called deconstructive, since it consists of an immanent examination of the claims of consciousness about the objective nature of experience that demonstrates that they are only made possible by unrecognised rules that are constitutive of objects *for* consciousness. However, acknowledging these rules makes the objectivity of the claims that depend upon them impossible to maintain once the link between rules and claim has been recognised, for the apparent givenness of the object has been undermined, and a previously unacknowledged element of constitutive subjectivity has been brought to light.

While this negative process is vital in demonstrating that the claims of representational consciousness about experience are ultimately illusory, it must simultaneously be viewed positively as a *re*-construction or deduction of the perspective of Absolute Knowing. Formally, it operates as a deduction (i.e., as a demonstration of the possibility of Absolute Knowing), but materially, it is a reconstruction, because it presents a new relation of consciousness to object in which 'it [consciousness] gets rid of its semblance of being burdened with something alien, that is only for it and as an other', for when consciousness comes to reflect upon self-consciousness as the condition of the object.

where appearance becomes identical with essence, [...] its exposition will coincide at just this point with the authentic Science of Spirit. And finally, when consciousness itself grasps this as its own essence, it will signify the nature of absolute knowledge itself.

(PS 77/57 §89, modified)

This is a reconstruction because the Absolute, the entirely new and unfamiliar 'object' of thought presents an actual task, rather than a mere hypothesis that remains to be proven. The deduction of Absolute Knowing would show that all representational consciousness presupposes an authentic and absolute unity of subject and object, which is itself the negation of the structure of representational consciousness, and therefore also of the need for a foundationalist image of philosophy.<sup>39</sup> This final stage will present a conception of the object defined as in-itself for consciousness that is actually consistent with the definition of its relation to consciousness.<sup>40</sup> However, this will also entail that there is no longer 'knowledge' as it has been understood by representational consciousness, for in order for there to be representational knowledge, there *must* be both determinate difference and identity between subject and object. Absolute Knowing, then, will be embodied in a negative unity of subject and object, a 'neither-nor' structure.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Pippin, 1989, pp. 103-5; Houlgate, 1992, p. 71.

<sup>40</sup> Westphal, 1979, pp. 11-12.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Maker, 1995, Ch. 3, on this difference between representation and absolute knowledge. Maker, however, stresses the pure negativity of absolute knowing (pp. 78-82) too much, for it is necessary to understand the positivity of this result too (the way in which it serves as the element of Science), without transforming it into a dogmatic unity of thought and intuition as in Schelling's *Identitätssystem*.

But this grasp of the fluidity or the 'vanishing' of the structure of representational consciousness still belongs to the perspective of a rigidly disjunctive consciousness that cannot tolerate paradox, and that, despite itself, finds its content perpetually disappearing in its internal dialectic. Like Deleuze, Hegel holds that it is also necessary to comprehend this loss of meaning as a positive result. Absolute Knowing is self-conscious knowledge of consciousness as that which only coincides with itself insofar as it always changes its limits, insofar as it differs from or exceeds itself. It is not knowledge of a foundational, transcendent meaning that fixes the horizon of a common sense. Instead, it is consciousness of the negative movement of the PS as being its own innermost meaning, an 'essence' which lacks any transcendent, foundational moment of presence. The end of the PS thus contains a form of knowing that is equal to the problematic, basic consciousness of unity that marks its beginning in Sense-Certainty. Self-consciousness as Absolute Knowing knows the logical condition of the determination of its object and of itself *vis-à-vis* each other insofar as this condition is simply its own self-differing, its 'failure' to coincide with itself in something like a plenary intuition — its fluidity or constant vanishing. The difference between negative and positive views of absolute knowledge is, for Hegel, the difference between dialectic and speculation, between a sceptical overcoming of *Verstand* or finite consciousness, and a comprehensive overcoming, which grasps the positive meaning of the instability of representational consciousness (EL §§81-2), an instability which is implicit in the beginning of PS and which reflection upon it draws out.

As with Deleuze, the minimal presupposition of determinate consciousness is shown to be the difference of thought from itself. But here the difference is a *conceptual* relation, not one thematised in terms of the being of thought as that which is utterly other than thought. And therefore the structure of this difference is itself comprehensible, for Absolute Knowledge still presents the *identity* of identity and difference. However, this does not, for Hegel, collapse back into a relative identity of concept and intuition,

subordinated to the concept. In order for there to be even the most minimally determinable difference between subject and object (as presented in Sense-Certainty), Hegel suggests, consciousness must be capable of knowing itself as self-differing, and with this knowledge one has authentically broken through the limits of representation, without giving up the idea of knowing.

Absolute Knowledge is not the abolition or *destruction* of finite consciousness in the name of a presupposed absolute unity.<sup>42</sup> Instead, it represents finite consciousness's renunciation of its own fixity, even though finite consciousness will inevitably remain the medium through which human beings habitually relate to objects. The Absolute here is not an unjustified, one-sidedly practical commandment, which subordinates all being to the project of its realisation. Instead, it constitutes an insight, won not through immediate intuition but through the 'labour of the negative' (PS 21/10 §19), into the non-subjective sense in which self-consciousness could be said to be a condition of objectivity as such. This is self-consciousness as the movement of what Hegel calls Absolute Negativity, in which the subjective presuppositions behind the positing of specific objects are revealed. This mode of knowledge turns out to be the negation of all foundationalism, because it is inherently without positive representational content, and yet it is the positive truth of the 'way of despair', because it comprehends what Hegel in the Preface called the 'tremendous power of the negative' (PS 32/19 §32) which gains expression in the determination of the different moments of in-itself and for-another and in the negation of this difference. In this way, Absolute Knowing comprehends the whole movement, and therefore the totality of consciousness, for it discloses a non-representational *logical* self-consciousness that is immanent within the negativity of representational consciousness.

To recap: Hegel opposes the foundationalist notion (affirmed by both Fichte and Schelling) that the object of philosophy is a ground of representational consciousness that is essentially opposed, as infinite or absolute, to all finite consciousness. Instead, Hegel

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<sup>42</sup> Rose, 1980, p. 150.

argues that the Absolute is immanent to finite consciousness, and shows that this is so by presenting in PS an internal, deconstructive critique of the structure of representational consciousness, in which Absolute Knowing emerges as knowledge of the movement through which consciousness undermines the fixity of its own structure. This means that Absolute Knowing is not *presupposed* as determined relative to our experience (which, as Fichte and Schelling showed, requires an infinite deduction to prove that it is *more* than just a presupposition), but is *demonstrated*. Hegel, like Deleuze, thus critiques a whole 'image of thought', and does this by tracing the immanent movement of the internal difference of consciousness from itself.

## Chapter 6

### Hegel's Account of Absolute Knowing: Logic and Being

#### *i) Introduction*

The result of the PS is the dissolution of the basic certainty possessed by representational consciousness, namely, that the essential structure of experience is the opposition between subject and object. Hegel believes that with this basic certainty vanishes the need for a foundationalist image of philosophy, as the need for a secure foundation only arises when we are conscious of a distinction between the object-in-itself and the object-for-us. Instead, we can now take up the standpoint of Absolute Knowing, in which the nature of the genuine, non-foundational unity of being and thought can be determined, or rather, allowed to determine itself through our thinking. Representational consciousness having been exhaustively deconstructed, self-consciousness is not now aware of the Absolute as an object (*Gegenstand*) over against it, but as its own truth, *die Sache selbst*. Reflection is no longer finite, related to a given foundation, but infinite, related only to itself, and thus immanent to itself. The SL thus aims to have thought think its own unity with being. For Hegel, this process does not begin from a supposedly fixed foundation determined reflexively in relation to a definition of experience which is accepted as given, and is in this sense non-foundational, presuppositionless and self-determining.

The idea of an Absolute that is identical with self-determining thought is the key aspect of Hegel's vision of the immanence of philosophy. The SL will not merely be a logic that details the inner determinations of thought, for then it could not be absolute. For Hegel's reconstruction of philosophy to be successful, the SL must also be an ontology that details the nature of being itself. This strong claim, however, has been the



main target of succeeding generations of Hegel's critics, beginning with Schelling.<sup>1</sup> In the last chapter, I noted that Schelling was critical of Hegelian logic for being what, in Schelling's view, could only be a negative philosophy that deduces categorial conditions without which being cannot be determinate for thought. In assessing the SL, it will be necessary to consider whether Hegelian logic can also determine being itself, or whether this rational unity of thought and being can only be an unprovable assumption for philosophy, as Schelling argued. If it is just an assumption, then Hegel has not overcome foundationalism, and has in fact merely regressed to Schelling's foundationalist position in the *Philosophy of Identity*.

My strategy in this chapter will be to defend Hegel's account of Absolute Knowing against various objections that are either implicitly or explicitly dependent upon Schelling's position. This will entail a deeper consideration of Absolute Knowing in PS, before going on to examine the SL itself. By focusing on Hegel's deconstruction of the notion of a transcendent ground in the SL's Doctrine of Essence, I will then show how Hegel reads foundationalism as a transcendental illusion rooted in being itself. The Schellingian objections to Hegel's position will thus be undermined, given that all of them rely on Schelling's own account of what reason must presuppose in order to get started in philosophy. Hegel's deconstruction of grounding will show how Schelling's foundationalism is inherently self-contradictory, and based on the unquestioned assumptions of representational consciousness. In the next chapter, I will pursue Hegel's claims further by examining, in relation to objections advanced against Hegel by Deleuze, the non-foundational ontological account of determination in SL, which, I shall argue, operates without reference to transcendent grounds.

There now follows a summary of the objections I will be considering here, which have been raised by Klaus Düsing, Walter Schulz, Manfred Frank and Andrew Bowie.

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<sup>1</sup> Qv. Bowie, 1993, Chs. 5 and 6. Frank, 1975 gives a good account of Schelling's influence on Feuerbach and Marx.

a) *Düsing* provides a 'strong' interpretation of Hegel, reading SL as both an account of absolute subjectivity and an ontology. For *Düsing*, the negative unity of subject and object at the end of PS is meant to be a condition both of consciousness of an intuited manifold and of the determinateness of that manifold itself, and in this way, the Kantian distinction between intuition and understanding disappears.<sup>2</sup> *Düsing* relates this move, not to Fichte, but to Kant's account at CPuR B132-6 of the relation between two aspects of the synthetic unity of consciousness. For Kant, a synthesis in consciousness can only be produced by the productive imagination; however, the *unity* of this synthesis is contributed by the synthetic unity of apperception. As *Düsing* notes, the second edition of CPuR makes the work of the imagination dependent upon the unity of apperception.<sup>3</sup> There is an opening here for the idea that one could go beyond Kant by thinking the unity of apperception as determining *itself* in the manifold that is synthesised. But this would, for *Düsing*, only be a self-thinking apperception, not a self-*knowing* one, which for *Düsing* would be one that knows its own determinations to be identical with those of being-in-itself. Hegel assumes in the SL that self-determining thought will in fact be identical with real Substance, that which truly exists.<sup>4</sup> That one can think the determinations of what, *for us*, appears to be the only self-consistent candidate for the role of Absolute does not prove that these are themselves absolute: this thinking remains hypothetical.<sup>5</sup> Hence, the SL can only be circular, in a similar way to Schelling's negative philosophy.

b) *Schulz* focuses on Hegel's formulation of the speculative proposition, e.g., Substance is Subject, which is meant to express the true unity of subject and object achieved in Absolute Knowing, i.e., the dissolution of the fixity of representational

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<sup>2</sup> *Düsing*, 1995, p. 235.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 237-8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 239-40.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 226-7.

consciousness. This unity only arises through natural consciousness's experience of the forms of the difference between in-itself and for-another. Schulz thus terms the speculative proposition the 'unity of the related terms *and* their relation'<sup>6</sup> that has been developed through reflection on what is given in consciousness, with the final unity of the two terms being the Absolute that constitutes and is immanent in the whole phenomenological series. He sees Schelling's essential objection to the SL as being directed against the idea that reflection can *ground itself* by simply reflecting on this result. Reflection cannot ground itself in this way and be genuinely absolute, because it has, for Schulz, to recognise that there is a minimal difference between the process of reflection and the very *fact* that a process of reflection exists. And so this that-ness of reflection is not an arbitrarily posited being, but is reflection's *own* condition, in which it is 'always already inserted'.<sup>7</sup> As we saw in Chapter Two, Schelling claimed that it was necessary for reason to presuppose a 'higher', non-rational Absolute in order to ground reason. This Absolute is thus posited as transcendent to reason, as more than simply the totality of possible rational determinations of the Absolute, and yet also as somehow internally related to reason as its ground. Schulz agrees with Schelling that Hegel, by arguing that the fixity of the distinction implied by such transcendence is based on the prejudices of consciousness, betrays a basic unprovable and dogmatic assumption, that reason is identical with being.

c) *Frank and Bowie*. The critique presented by Schulz is related to the positions held by Frank and Bowie, which again focus on the issue of the absoluteness and self-sufficiency of reflection, and, like Schulz's, refer to Schelling's 'higher' Absolute. Frank recognises that Absolute Knowing is meant to be cognition of the immanence of the true infinite or unconditioned in the finite, and that this is a critique of both Fichte and

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<sup>6</sup> Schulz, 1954, pp. 340-1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 344-5.

Hölderlin.<sup>8</sup> He understands Hegel as wanting to show that the independence of that which exists outside the subject is an illusion that persists only because of the finite subject itself,<sup>9</sup> and argues that this move is repeated in SL. Here, Hegel begins by thinking the Absolute as an indeterminate unity (Being) and subsequently shows that this immediate unity requires as its condition of possibility a self-related, reflected unity (Essence) like the finite subject. But, for Frank and for Bowie, the problem with this move is that Hegel fails to distinguish between two kinds of immediate unity: an immediate unity posited in relation to self-consciousness, and a *real* immediate unity (Schelling's higher Absolute).<sup>10</sup> An immediate unity that is the relative other of thought, such as an object posited in relation to the finite subject, could unproblematically be said to be conditioned by self-related reflection. A real ground that is irreducible to reason, on the other hand, is the necessary ground of subjectivity which it can only presuppose, as Schulz, following Schelling, has already argued. As Bowie points out, Schelling here follows Kant by 'introducing a non-reflexive third term into the structure of knowledge', i.e., noumenal being-in-itself as against the subject and the phenomenal object which is only *for* the subject.<sup>11</sup>

That reason or reflection is identical with the real ground can only be an assumption, and so Hegel's Absolute Knowing cannot be presuppositionless or truly absolute.<sup>12</sup> Frank and Bowie both follow Schelling by suggesting that Hegel's mistake is the same as Fichte's: imagining that the unconditioned must resemble the finite, self-conscious subject, as an eminent kind of reflexive self-relation. Hegel thus produces an

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<sup>8</sup> Frank, 1975, p. 29.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>10</sup> Bowie, 1993, p. 135.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134-5.

<sup>12</sup> Frank, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-2, 55.

account of the Absolute that simply determines it in relation to the subject, rather than determining it as it is in itself.

*ii) The Ontological Sense of Absolute Knowing*

The question concerning the account of Absolute Knowing in the PS that we need to pose in the light of these objections is whether Hegel's phenomenological project implies unacknowledged foundationalist assumptions. These assumptions would concern a form of determinate knowledge that the PS has to presuppose in order to attain the knowledge that it claims is absolute. In other words, Hegel's proposition that Substance is Subject would, from this perspective, imply that the actually appearing determinations of objectivity are manifestations of a Substance that is in itself identical with the Subject-in-itself, this unity being expressed by the concept of Absolute Negativity. 'Spirit' would then refer to this certainty of essential unity. But, from Schelling's point of view, this unity can only be attained if it is first presupposed, and this means that the PS would be circular, and thus unable to achieve a total critique of representational consciousness. Hegel's acknowledgement of historical conditioning would thus only be a negative deconstruction of the subjective presuppositions of consciousness, and could not be absolute, as the only knowledge provided would be relative and negative, concerning the inability of representational consciousness to provide foundations for knowledge.

Can Absolute Knowing be characterised in this way? I want to argue that this critique is misplaced, given that the attainment of Absolute Knowing involves acknowledging the utter collapse of any foundational, transcendent conception of subjectivity, which is presupposed as given in advance as a 'knowing before knowing'. Absolute Knowing is not a process in which the subject becomes alienated from itself only to eventually return to its essence, the subject as it is in-itself. This would be to conceive the PS on the Fichtean and Schellingian foundationalist model, as systematic knowledge of the unconditional based on a special intuition of the non-reflexive unity of

the subject and object in themselves. I will now trace the development of Absolute Knowing as a progressive decentring of consciousness, which will demonstrate how the Schellingian critique misses its target.

Consciousness is first decisively decentred when it discovers that it cannot itself serve as a transcendent foundation of knowledge. This occurs in the sections on Self-Consciousness in PS. The transition from Consciousness to Self-Consciousness occurs because of natural consciousness's discovery that it is itself responsible for the positing of its object. The question that then arises for natural consciousness concerns its own determinateness as a foundation. Why does it posit objects in certain ways? This question was behind Fichte's critique of Kant: what is the sufficient reason, the real necessity, behind the specific determinations of transcendental subjectivity? How can a consciousness that is defined essentially by an activity of positing itself be determined?<sup>13</sup> Hegel shows that this question forces us to recognise that the idea of a foundational, transcendental subjectivity is not enough to explain its own determination.

The sections on Self-Consciousness bring out the previously implicit historical and social dimension of subjectivity. Self-consciousness, as it turns out, is only capable of constituting objects for itself if it is conscious of itself as being as other subjects view it through its actions. Initially, self-consciousness is undeveloped, conscious of the sensuous world confronting it as 'an enduring existence' (PS 133/105 §167), but also conscious of itself ('I am I') as an undetermined existence. The consciousness of problematic being, neither phenomenal nor noumenal, with which Sense-Certainty begins, has become this consciousness of *my* existence. The subject now posits itself as the foundation of objective determination. The criterion that would prove this constitutive relation, and thereby, self-consciousness's independence from the sensuous world, is the practical relation to objects constituted by its Desire for them, a relation through which it acts to negate the independence of objects and thus show its power over

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<sup>13</sup> Pippin, 1989, pp. 146 ff, pp. 154-5.

them. Desire is thus the subject's active attempt to realise the determination that it posits as its essential or in-itself side.

Crucially, this self-awareness turns out to be the subject's awareness of itself as lacking knowledge of its supposedly essential, foundational dimension, subjectivity-in-itself. Its active relation to objects is a practical attempt to establish its own difference, *qua* subject, from the objective world, which would not be necessary if it was somehow already present to itself as it is in-itself. This attempt fails, however, as the subject ends up *identifying* itself with the objective world, making itself dependent upon impulses which arise in it as given, and upon the objects towards which these impulses lead (PS 138/109 §175). Simple Desire, then, cannot be the foundation or essence of self-consciousness, but appears as a minimal, relatively asocial and ultimately untenable strategy of self-confirmation.<sup>14</sup> If consciousness is to become a self-consciousness certain of its constitutive role, it cannot just relate itself to natural objects, but must desire and have contact with objects that are not just objects, but are also self-conscious, in which it can find confirmation of its own freedom. Again, however, encounters with other subjects do not simply result in the mirroring of natural consciousness's essence back to it as in a passive medium. The subject's positing of itself as a free, foundational subject again goes awry.

Self-consciousness as such, it turns out, is only made possible by a relation to at least one other self-consciousness that is recognised as such in this relation: this relation is what Hegel means by Spirit, the "I" that is "We" and the "We" that is "I" (PS 139/110 §177). This is a relation to self that is *only* constituted through one's consciousness of being-for-another. However, once self-consciousness encounters a being that it posits or re-cognises as self-conscious, it discovers that this very act of positing entangles it in new problems. This act has to be reciprocal, in order that the

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<sup>14</sup> This counts against Kojève's anthropological reading of PS (1980, pp. 3-4). On this, see Williams, 1997, p. 12.

relation-to-other can ground the relation-to-self (certainty of one's independence) that self-consciousness posits as its own essence. The initial phase of the sections on the Lord and Bondsman, the struggle to the death for re-cognition, is the first of the increasingly intersubjective procession of attempts to realise reciprocal re-cognition that form the rest of the PS. It fails because it represents an attempt on the part of two self-consciousnesses to prove, each to the other, their freedom, and thereby the fact that they are able to recognise each other. But this can only occur through an attempt to kill the Other, and because of the need for reciprocity, through each risking his or her own life (PS 144-5/114-5 §§188-9). This strategy, however, is completely self-defeating, for re-cognition and knowledge of my own freedom is impossible if I kill the Other or the Other kills me.

To resolve this problem, one self-consciousness must capitulate, losing the struggle but keeping its life, re-cognising the freedom of the Other and thus coming to know itself as *unfree*. This situation is that described in 'Lordship and Bondage'. The importance of this 'advance' is that it introduces the idea of a shared social project (even if this project is not based on perfect reciprocity), in which an imperfect relation of re-cognition is facilitated by social practices.<sup>15</sup> These social practices, of labour and consumption, transform re-cognition through the medium of objects that are transformed into raw material for labour and goods for consumption. The Lord (re-cognised self-consciousness) knows itself as free through consuming the object that the Bondsman works on. The Bondsman (the re-cognising consciousness) knows itself to be unfree because of its service.

As is well known, however, this situation is upset: the Lord comes to re-cognise itself as dependent upon the Bondsman's labour (and thus as *unfree*), whereas the Bondsman comes to understand itself as responsible for the determinations of the object and thereby partially free. Crucially, however, neither discovers itself to be genuinely

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<sup>15</sup> Pinkard, *op. cit.*, p. 56.



free, for neither other-relation can ground reciprocal re-cognition,<sup>16</sup> and so the Bondsman is not, as often thought, the victor.<sup>17</sup> The result is a retreat from social relations, for consciousness now posits pure thinking, its ability to reflect upon its relation to objectivity, as the true foundation and expression of independence, thus metamorphosing into those forms that Hegel calls Stoicism and Scepticism. This new direction of desire in turn proves inadequate, ending in the internally riven form of the religious Unhappy Consciousness. Here consciousness is forced to re-cognise that pure thought is a self-contradictory foundation of the certainty of one's freedom, and that in order to resolve this contradiction, it is necessary once again to actively take up a relation to others as the means of understanding one's freedom. But this relation is one in which the individualistic understanding of freedom is again shown to be inadequate, for the Unhappy Consciousness, which posits the unity of its thinking outside itself as the unreachable divine ground of its freedom, is forced to recognise an Other as a priestly mediator between it and the divine (PS 168-9/136-7 §§227-9). This means that a different object, the impersonal unity of thought, has now replaced the natural object that formed the third term of the Lord-Bondsman relation. It is this impersonal viewpoint which serves now as the means by which natural consciousness recognises itself in an Other, namely, in the unity of the priestly mediator with the divine (PS 170/138 §230). The new object-in-itself, the new foundation of freedom, is this universal thinking. It is posited as the unity of all individual wills or desires, a common object for the interrelated subjects of the social 'We'. The initial indeterminate certainty of being with which PS began has thus been transformed into Substance, a foundation posited by representational consciousness in relation to other determinations: this was initially the subject's certainty of itself, which as we have seen, cannot be a foundation. Now, it is the impersonal unity

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<sup>16</sup> Pinkard, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>17</sup> This claim is above all Kojève's (*op. cit.*, p. 20). For a different refutation of this claim, see Rose, 1980, pp. 129-30.

of thought (Reason) which is taken to represent the true in-itself, divine Substance, rather than the individual subject.

The process of re-cognition that takes us from Consciousness to Reason cannot be reduced to the common misrepresentation of Hegelian phenomenology that views it as a process of simple reflection in which the subject finds, through its 'self-alienation', confirmation of what it presupposed about itself. In fact, the subject's attempts to find such confirmation are continually frustrated. Simple reflection on an object simply renders explicit what was implicitly assumed to be the case, thus preserving the foundational unity of the subject throughout a merely illusory moment of difference. Recognition, however, includes a moment of real difference, through which the subject's relation to its own certainty of being, and later, its consciousness of its own existence, is transformed — a movement which constitutes Hegelian 'experience'.

Just because self-consciousness has become aware of itself as Spirit, however, its education is not over. It continues to be frustrated in its attempts to establish a stable foundation. At the end of the sections on Reason, it finds itself once again opposed, as an isolated consciousness, to a body of historically given norms that constitute the being, Substance or actual Spirit of the society to which it belongs. These norms condition the content of its desire although it cannot rationally justify them. Passing through the sections on Spirit proper, that is, the concrete, historically determinate ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) of the society (which tell once more the same story from a more inclusive yet more decentred perspective), natural consciousness finds its freedom within a context of ends and values specific to that society, for which it itself is not responsible. The transformation of natural consciousness into the subject of Religion produces a new object again. Now, self-consciousness, as a developed consciousness of Spirit, opposes itself to the body of actual practices through which its ethical life is lived (PS 476/412 §678), and reflects on the purposes that these practices express. It thus represents to itself the highest ends of its ethical life, and reflects on their consistency as foundations of

knowledge.<sup>18</sup> These purposes are now taken to represent the Substance of social existence, its foundation and essential being. Self-consciousness that has become religious Spirit, which reflects on such ends, is thus reflecting upon their self-consistency when considered as Substance, as ultimate grounds for action. In positing them as objects of reflection, it represents them as divine, firstly as part of the natural world, then as stemming from the 'life of the people'. The third stage, the self-consciousness of Christian 'Revealed Religion', is when Spirit represents itself to itself as neither given, nor simply posited, but as self-renewing, as 'the *universality* of the Spirit who dwells in this community, dies in it every day, and is daily resurrected' (PS 547/475 §784). Reflecting on the consistency of a notion of actual Spirit that finds its ends external to it, and then upon one that creates its ends, self-consciousness finds that Spirit, the other-relation that constitutes all self-relation, must be a self-renewing positing of and reflection upon its ultimate ends, if it is to be self-consistent.

There is still a difference present here, however, between subject and object. This difference represents the infinite difference between the Substantial ground of determinations (God as the infinitely mighty Lord) and the representational consciousness (fallen humanity) through which reflection uncovers these determinations. In the Revealed Religion, the time of reconciliation between the self-consciousness of Spirit and its Substance is thus infinitely deferred (PS 549-50/477-8 §787), as was the case with Schelling's postulated third age of revelation (SPL 482-4/242-3). The transition between Revealed Religion and Absolute Knowing consists in self-consciousness becoming aware of itself as Spirit's *own* self-consciousness: the in-itself, the represented highest end (self-renewing and self-reflexive Spirit), is not itself different from that which posits and reflects upon it. It is different only *for* natural consciousness. Again, it must be stressed that this event is not the becoming-conscious of an intuited metaphysical Absolute. Instead, the phrase 'Spirit's own self-consciousness' defines

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221.

Absolute Knowing as a self-consciousness which is aware of the presuppositions behind its own determinate desires or practical interests, namely, the different levels of intersubjective mediation that constitute Spirit, and is thus aware of actual Spirit as its own being or Substance. In other words, it becomes conscious of the development of Spirit in PS as its *own development*, and turns to examine the *history* of this development (PS 552-3/480-1 §790, 565-6/492 §808).

Hence, self-consciousness cannot be thought of, at the end of PS, as coming to know itself as a putative 'in itself', as a transcendent, foundational and substantial subject. When self-consciousness is forced to turn and re-cognise itself in its history, it finds itself at the end of the path of despair: its former finitude and fixity has been given up for total fluidity, for it re-cognises its being as the *movement* of the determinations of Spirit. It has discovered that its initial, indeterminate and problematic being becomes developed as a foundational relation between a constitutive finite subjectivity and its objects, and which then becomes a relation between this subjectivity and intersubjective structures that act as its foundation. The initial indeterminate being of consciousness is thus determined as Spirit, a decentred structure of mediation in which self-consciousness itself proves itself to be the force behind its own decentring. But in thus re-cognising itself, self-consciousness appears to have been left with nothing, to have lost itself: if it is nothing but the movement through which subject and object are determined, then it is in-itself neither the finite subject nor the object. Absolute Knowing is therefore, from the perspective of representational consciousness, nothing but the collapse of all determinate relations into this neither-nor structure. The subject re-cognises itself in the content of its development as 'its own restless sublation of itself' (PS 564/491 §805, modified), that is, *absolute* or self-related negativity, an Absolute which 'cannot be stated' in a finite synthetic proposition that would express a relative unity.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

Nevertheless, self-consciousness has thereby come to comprehend *itself* in a way that is neither expressible in finite propositions nor grounded in an infinite intuition, but is not therefore simply nugatory. The distinction introduced by Hegel in the Preface between the finite synthetic proposition and the speculative (*spekulative*, but also *begreifende*) proposition can now be regarded as non-abstract, from the viewpoint of self-consciousness that has comprehended (*begriffen*) Absolute Negativity as the process of its own development. If the standpoint of Hegelian Science is expressed by the propositions ‘Substance is Subject’ and ‘Being is Thought’ (PS 48/33 §54), then we might understand this Science as reducible to finite synthetic propositions that would need to be grounded. Substance would have to exhibit a determination *in-itself* by virtue of which it could be identified with Subject — but then the certainty or knowledge of this determination would itself require justification from within the Subject, and we would thereby be caught up again in the contradictions of representational consciousness. However, Hegel’s account of the *speculative* proposition concerns, not a fixed, synthetic relation of two determinate terms, but the experience of the developing difference between two terms which is itself finally comprehended as their developed identity (PS 54/38 §61).<sup>20</sup> The emergence of Absolute Knowing is the comprehension of the unity within this difference, the unity of Absolute Negativity, which emerges as a ‘harmony’ (PS 54/38 §61) of historically determined Substance or objectivity-in-general (‘thinghood’, *Dingheit*) with Subject or subjectivity-in-general (PS 551/479 §788). Absolute Negativity, or as it will be called in the SL, thought or philosophical consciousness, appears in a positive sense as the overcoming of all determinate, representational differences between subject and object, thought and intuition, and thus as knowledge of their unity. And this unity results from the breakdown of the fixity of finite consciousness. It has not been abstracted from finite consciousness according to a foundationalist method, and posited as its absolute presupposition.

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<sup>20</sup> See also *ibid.*, pp. 48-9.

To understand this overcoming, the sense in which Absolute Negativity can be Absolute Knowing or 'absolute reflection', as opposed to finite negativity, knowledge or reflection, this unity of objectivity and subjectivity must be compared with its Kantian analogue, the relation between the transcendental object, the 'concept of something in general' (CPuR A251), and the transcendental subject or unity of apperception (CPuR A346/B404).<sup>21</sup> The status of these transcendental forms remains problematic in Kant's account of the two 'regions' of experience. The transcendental object is not a noumenon, but neither is it a phenomenon, for it is the form of appearances in general (CPuR A253). And the spontaneous transcendental subject is not the ground of freedom which the subject as thing-in-itself can be *thought* to be (CPuR A538-41/B566-9), and nor is it an appearance in which the subject is determined for itself, for it is the condition of the synthesis of appearances (CPuR A354).

These unities are required by transcendental logic as ultimate formal conditions of experience, unities only comprehensible as determined neither for-another nor in-themselves. For example, the transcendental object, as the form of an object in general, is necessary for the synthesis of particular empirical objects under the universal categories. The formal conditions of unity are also a limit relative to the subject, for they define the object as it appears *for us*. Hegel's Absolute Knowing is knowledge of the relation between these formal constituents of representational consciousness in general. It is not a reflexive negation of the conditioned or 'for-another' aspect of objects that is supposed, simply through negation, to allow us to know them in-themselves, and does not therefore entail an identification of reason with intuition or of a postulated real Absolute with knowing. Thus far, it remains Kantian, for it is simply knowledge of the conditions of representational consciousness, and not a special kind of intuitive knowing. But at the same time, this knowledge has resulted from an exhaustive critique of the *very idea* of a

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<sup>21</sup> Žižek (1995) has pointed this out in his innovative and illuminating account of the relation between Hegel and Kant, which I have made use of in the discussion that follows.

thing-in-itself. It is knowledge that Spirit *qua* Absolute Negativity, the negative unity of all determinations of representational consciousness, is identical with the problematic being of Sense-Certainty. Hegel thus discovers that Kant's indeterminate empirical intuition of the being of the subject necessarily becomes determined, through its mediation as Spirit, as the identity of the formal unities of the subject- and object-in-general.

More evidence concerning the radically negative (neither...nor) character of Absolute Knowing can be found in EL §44, where Hegel dismisses the idea of an unknowable thing-in-itself. This dismissal does not mean that he thereby affirms that we can know the thing-in-itself, either through pure reason or in intuition. He notes that it is easy to abstract from the determinations of the object for-another, until only what is totally 'empty' is left, or at least, what is empty *for-us*, namely the 'beyond' of the in-itself, that which we cannot know. But secondly Hegel points out that it is equally easy to see this 'beyond' *qua* problematic existent as 'only *the product* of thinking'. The thing-in-itself as a '*negative determination*' is a product of thinking, for it is the reflection of the 'empty self-identity' of the transcendental subject. It is a product of the empty unity expressed by Kant's indeterminate empirical intuition of being, in which there is no determinate difference between subject and object or thought and intuition. Here, Hegel does indeed go further than Kant does, but not in the direction of the positive identification of reason with an intuition of a putative thing-in-itself. Kant pointed out that the transcendental object is correlative to the transcendental subject (CPuR A109-10). Hegel argues that the *empty* thing-in-itself is simply the reflected formal unity of the object rather than an unknowable yet still positively existent beyond. It is a negative determination of the simple unity of self-consciousness, for it is not found in experience but is 'listed among the Kantian categories' (EL §44, modified) as a concept of an object in general, a *concept of reflection* (CPuR A290/B346).

For Hegel, this identification of the negative unity of the thing-in-itself with the absolute reflection or self-determination of the transcendental subject is immanently justified by Absolute Knowing, where the movement of self-consciousness in PS is recognised as the condition of any positing of a determinate object. '[I]t is the externalisation of self-consciousness that posits the thinghood [*Dingheit*]' of the object (PS 551/479 §788). Self-consciousness does not, by knowing itself as Absolute Negativity, know itself as a putative subject-in-itself, as the Substantial ground of the *existence* of an object, but rather as the condition of the very externality or otherness of the object of experience. Absolute Knowing

has a *content* which it *differentiates* from itself,  
for it is pure negativity or the dividing of itself, it is  
*consciousness*. This content is, in its difference, itself  
the 'I', for it is the movement of self-sublation, or the  
same pure negativity that the 'I' is.  
(PS 559/486 §799, modified)

No positive determination of the object as it is in itself (even if this positivity is just that of an existent but unknowable thing-in-itself) would be possible without this negative unity of subjectivity and objectivity as a 'blank' which can never be directly experienced in representational consciousness. It is itself the condition of any representation at all, simply by moving through all representations without ever being fixed in a definite 'place' and becoming known in a positive, essential determination.

As the positing of an external unity is not a reflection of any positive, presupposed or given content, it is not a finite but an *absolute* reflection of the indeterminate unity of the subject. When self-consciousness re-cognises itself in the negative unity of subjectivity and objectivity, it is 'at home with itself in its Otherness [*in*



*seinem Anderssein bei sich selbst ist]*' (PS 559/486 §799, modified). But this 'being-at-home' is not a confirmation of the finite subject's assumption that it is the foundation of the determinations of the object, which occurs through the subject's 'self-alienation'. Such an externalisation would be relative to the presupposition that the finite subject could be posited as the foundation of the object, and would belong within the early sections of PS on Self-Consciousness, before such presuppositions are deconstructed in the emergence of Spirit. Absolute Knowing cannot fix the content of the Absolute as a foundational subject or object, for it is the moment when self-consciousness re-cognises itself in absolute fluidity, which is the negation of all determinate content.

The true radicality of Absolute Knowing, then, is the speculative truth that the identity of Substance and Subject can only be grasped when they have been shown to be absolutely different, as never coinciding with each other or themselves except insofar as they are always moving, always negative, always internally different from themselves. The Fichtean and Schellingian assumption that the Absolute is a positive, fixed essence *in itself* which then somehow becomes split, reflected in another or *for itself* and eventually becomes conscious of this fixed essence, is undermined. Substance actually suffers the *absolute* loss of itself as a self-subsistent, positive unity: it turns out to be Subject, but this subject is not itself foundational or substantial, but is the decentred movement of self-consciousness expressed by Absolute Negativity.

My claim is, then, that Absolute Knowing is absolute because it expresses, unlike Kant's transcendental logic, the ontological unity of subject and object as Absolute Negativity, but that it only has this ontological aspect because it is a unity that arises out of an exhaustive critique of a) the idea of any knowledge, whether reflexive or intuitive, of a thing-in-itself, and b) the very idea that a thing-in-itself (given as such independently of the activity of self-consciousness) could be ontologically real. Here, Hegel allies himself with Kant against Fichte and Schelling, who both find themselves having to posit a special intuition through which the Absolute can be known as it is in

itself. This Fichtean-Schellingian move introduces an infinite difference between this Absolute known in itself in intuition and the Absolute determined for us by reason. The thing-in-itself as the unknowable 'beyond' of the limit set by the transcendental object on our faculties of knowledge, is the Kantian element that is absent from Absolute Knowing at the end of the PS. For Hegel, even the delineation of a *positively unknowable* thing-in-itself involves positing the real existence of a *Ding* on the other side of a limit.<sup>22</sup> Unlike many interpreters of Kant, Hegel does not believe that the thing-in-itself is only present in the critical philosophy as a subjectively necessary posit. The epistemological difference Kant insists on between receptive and spontaneous subjective faculties reflects, for Hegel, an assumption that there is an ontological difference between the subject and the thing-in-itself, the objective 'correlate' (CPuR A30/B45, A19/B33) of sensation: '[t]he capacity (receptivity) for receiving representations through the mode in which we are affected by objects [*Gegenständen*], is entitled *sensibility*' (CPuR A19/B33). For Hegel, Kant's faculty-model is based on the unaddressed, contingent assumption that there is a difference between the subject and the object that 'causes' its sensations (P §9). Kant's deduction of the conditions of experience cannot account for this assumption, given that this deduction remains consistent only insofar as this presupposition remains unaddressed. Kant's method is thus itself conditioned by his assumptions about the structure of experience. For Hegel, on the other hand, self-consciousness (Absolute Negativity) that reflects or repels itself absolutely can be shown to be the condition for the positing of an existent something-or-other that is implied by Kant's assumption.

Absolute Knowing thus expresses the unity of being and thought, but Hegel refuses to identify the determinations of thought with the positive essence of a putative being-in-itself, which would mean that he had produced a merely negative (in Schelling's sense) model of absolute knowledge, one which rested on an unprovable presupposition.

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

The unity of being and thought in PS begins with the indeterminate, problematic unity of Sense-Certainty — *indeterminate being*, which is the minimal determination of any consciousness. On being reflected upon, this splits itself into two aspects. This negativity of simple being is eventually comprehended as identical with the immanent movement of self-consciousness itself. Being is understood by self-consciousness as *existence*, expressed by the ‘motionless tautology’ ‘I am I’ (PS 133/105 §167), a merely ‘passive [ruhige] unity’ (PS 132/104 §166). Later, it becomes the unity of actual Spirit, before finally becoming the unity of Absolute Negativity, in which self-consciousness knows its own incessant self-differing movement as the negative unity of the opposed aspects of its objects. This unity, which is only constituted through the experience of real, internal difference, expresses both mediation and an immediate certainty of being. This being, however, is neither simple Being nor Existence, but the Actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) of self-consciousness (PS 559/486 §800). Consciousness, in all its developments, is awareness of *being*, but this develops in PS from simple, indeterminate being to full actuality, which is distinguished from pure being by its explicitly developed content, i.e., self-consciousness as knowledge of being as always different from itself. Absolute Knowing is pure being once it has become self-consciousness that knows itself as *lacking an in-itself* aspect, an aspect that would mark it as a Subject that knows itself as a transcendent Substance that grounds all determinations as its own inner possibilities. And precisely because this supposedly foundational aspect, which was still posited in the early sections on Self-Consciousness, has collapsed, self-consciousness knows itself as always externalising itself *absolutely*. The actual being of self-consciousness is a movement that lacks a positive content and is also constantly exceeding itself — Absolute Negativity, which passes through all determinations as an empty space through which they first become determinate. Being is thus nothing beyond consciousness, existing as some sort of in-itself or givenness, even if this givenness is just the determination of unknowability.

Givenness itself has been shown to be an illusory determination, one which does not include any recognition of the role of self-conscious activity in its positing.

ii) *The Science of Logic as Absolute Knowing*

Absolute Negativity thus expresses the knowledge consciousness has at the end of PS of its own unconditioned presupposition. For there to be representational consciousness, that is, any determinate relation between the subject and an object which is defined as having positive content both for the subject and in itself, there has to be an absolutely negative relation of self-consciousness to itself, through which it repels its empty form out beyond itself. We can now see why the first of the objections to Hegel's model of Absolute Knowing listed at the beginning of this chapter, that advanced by Düsing, is mistaken. Düsing claimed that the identity of Subject and Substance in Absolute Knowing represented the certainty that the Subject *was* Substance, as if Hegel's speculative proposition were a straightforward finite synthetic proposition. This, as we saw, cannot be the case: Hegel does not *positively* identify the Subject with Substance, thus assuming that the Subject is some kind of transcendent metaphysical foundation or ground, in the manner of the Fichtean and Schellingian Absolutes. To do this, Hegel would have to assume that the difference between thought and being, the object-for-us and the object-in-itself, can be erased in an intuition in which the thing-in-itself, Substance, is somehow known to be identical with the Subject. This he does not do, showing instead that any epistemological difference between the object-for-us and the object-in-itself presupposes a form of experience in which the ontological difference between subject and object is accepted as real. Further, the PS shows that the presupposition of any such ontological distinction is the negative relation of self-consciousness to itself, which cannot be identified with either a phenomenal or noumenal subject, but which constitutes the actual being of self-consciousness.

As noted in the previous chapter, Absolute Knowing is, for Hegel, knowledge of a transcendental subjectivity. However, this subjectivity is radically decentred, yet knows itself as such. This unity of self-consciousness with itself is what Hegel calls the Concept (PS 34/20 §34). Absolute Negativity is not posited by self-consciousness as a transcendent foundation; rather, self-consciousness knows it as its own movement. This form of knowing marks a point where foundationalism has been exhaustively critiqued because there is no longer a difference between for-us and in-itself, knowledge and truth, claim and criterion. This foundational relation has been what the PS has sought to undermine from the outset. The Concept or Absolute Knowing is not the thought of a foundation, a positive in-itself. Instead, it is the thought of pure negativity, the loss of all foundations that is yet the ultimate presupposition of all representational consciousness.

With the Concept, all distinctions between subject and object, including that between possible or hypothetical knowledge and actual truth, have decisively collapsed for self-consciousness. No such distinction, even though it may be necessary for everyday life, can be thought of as absolute. Hence the Concept is not a hypothetical form of knowledge of the real, as Hartmann's 'negative' reading of Hegel suggests. It does not impose a *Sollen* upon thought in the same way as Schelling's or Fichte's concept of the Absolute. When the Concept is grasped, not just negatively as the consummation of representational consciousness's loss of itself, but also positively as the unity of self-consciousness with itself, it presents thought with an actual task, for it has led finite consciousness to the point where it has become philosophical consciousness. This task, which SL is intended to fulfil, concerns the further determination of the being of self-consciousness. While PS shows that Kantian or Fichtean representational consciousness that posits itself as the foundation of real objects is only conceivable as intersubjectively determined and later as the movement of negativity that is comprehended as the Concept, the determination of this negative movement has not yet been understood. In other words, self-consciousness does not know *why* it always

exceeds its own limits.<sup>23</sup> To attain this knowledge is the positive task that, for Hegel, restores meaning to philosophy after the prolonged journey through PS.

Given that, for Hegel, the Absolute must be the Concept, in which the negative movement of self-consciousness is not simply posited as a foundation, but is comprehended as self-consciousness's own being, the SL can only begin with this unity. It is this being that the SL will analyse. At this point, Pippin's understanding of the SL as a continuation of the PS in the sense of being an analysis of the logical rules that we require in order to posit any object at all is inadequate, and, in Schelling's terms, too negative.<sup>24</sup> The SL will, for Hegel, determine the structure of being itself, where being is understood in the radically negative sense elaborated by the PS. In this sense, the SL is historically conditioned: its standpoint presupposes or is justified by PS insofar as Absolute Knowing emerges as self-consciousness's 'liberation from the opposition of consciousness' (SL I, 43/49).

However, this is not a justification in the foundationalist sense, any more than Deleuze's positing of Absolute Difference is. Hegel notes that the PS is not a 'grounding' (*Begründung*) of Absolute Knowing (SL I, 42/48). Absolute Knowing is not knowledge of a positive foundation, a transcendent Substance which has its being in-itself, and for which all phenomenal determinations are its internal determinations. It is the knowledge that the fixity of representational consciousness has been overcome, given that representation is characterised by determinate structures of relative identity and difference that give stability to experience, and which make foundationalist methodologies necessary in order to show that these structures represent true knowledge. The PS is thus not the foundation of SL in that it justifies its validity with respect to an object of which it purports to represent the true determination. Such foundational notions of justification have been overturned by PS. Instead, the beginning of SL is immanent in

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Pippin, 1989, p. 176.

the PS. The 'object' of SL is not a *Gegenstand* over against consciousness, but is *die Sache selbst* with respect to consciousness, its internal negativity, its being. In *this* sense, the SL is presuppositionless, as its beginning has not required to be justified in a foundationalist fashion, by a determination of being-in-itself that is assumed to have been simply given to consciousness, e.g., through an ecstatic or superior intuition. Hence the beginning of SL is both immediate and mediated, for it begins immediately with being, yet does so *in actuality* only by sublating the whole of the PS, the developed actuality of self-consciousness (SL I, 68/69). The Concept includes within it or comprehends the mediated existence, the *actuality* of self-consciousness, yet does so in an immediate way (SL I, 66-7/68-9), in 'the ineradicable thought that thought is'.<sup>25</sup>

If all that philosophical self-consciousness — or more simply, *thought* — can do in Absolute Knowing is analyse simple being, then all it can do is begin with the simple Concept of itself, which cannot be distinguished from the empty unity of its being. This means that there can be no criterion for whether thought has proceeded correctly except that of self-consistency. In the Fichtean and Schellingian systems, this criterion was applied in terms of the grand circle which was to connect the Absolute *qua* formal postulate with the Absolute encountered again in the culmination of philosophy, this time as objective ground. No such distinction can be made in SL, however. The difference between hypothesis and objective knowledge is simply a determination of representational consciousness. The criterion of self-consistency can therefore only be applied to the content of thought itself: just as the PS allowed consciousness to compare itself with itself, so philosophical consciousness will compare itself with itself in SL.

Philosophical self-consciousness thus simply refuses to intervene in the process of analysis that is Absolute Knowing with any subjective assumptions about the nature of the Absolute, allowing instead the matter that thought has in hand (*die Sache selbst*) to determine itself. The necessity of the consequent stages of the process thus arises out of

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<sup>25</sup> Houlgate, 1992, p. 50.

the immanent self-refutation of inadequate determinations of the Absolute. Inadequacy here can only be indicated by the inconsistency of a determination of Absolute Knowing with itself. In this way, philosophical self-consciousness observes itself becoming conscious of its own ontological content. Because 'the beginning of philosophy' remains 'completely immanent in its further determinations' (SL I, 71/71), the process is, like in the PS, self-consciousness's own experience of itself, the experience of its actuality (the Concept) as mediated by consciousness's real difference from itself. A closer examination of the beginning of SL will show how this immanence operates.

The beginning is without 'any determinateness relatively to anything else', and 'cannot contain within itself any determinateness, any content' (SL I, 69/70). Hence the beginning is made with a determination of the Absolute which is not known through any method or any other determination. Such a non-foundational yet necessary determination can only be the unity of self-consciousness with itself that is expressed by Hegel as the Concept, and which cannot be distinguished from the being of self-consciousness. The beginning is thus made with the determination of Being as such, a simple, indeterminate unity. Dieter Henrich argues that, while the beginning has to be unconditioned, and thus its initial determination can only be negative, neither *this* nor *that*, it also has to be positively grasped or taken up in order to be the beginning.<sup>26</sup> Henrich sees this as problematic, for the absolute beginning has to be grasped absolutely, and insofar as it is grasped absolutely, there is a real difference between it and the rest of the SL, which follows from it and is relative to it.<sup>27</sup> If it is grasped as the absolute beginning *at* the beginning, then this grasping seems to be intuitive. If the beginning is intuited and the subsequent steps arise in thought as a consequence of thinking the content of the beginning, then we are close to the Schellingian objections advanced by Frank and Bowie. SL would be founded on the difference between a superior kind of intuition and

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<sup>26</sup> Henrich, 1971, 'Anfang und Methode der Logik', p. 80.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.



thought, which it then attempts to sublimate *in* thought, thus presupposing that the two are somehow given to us as identical.

This is not the case, however. The initial determination is a determination of thought in which there is no determinate epistemological difference between intuition and thought (SL I, 82-3/82). Such a distinction can only be made for or in relation to consciousness, but the basis of such distinctions, our conviction that the fixity of representational consciousness is basic to all experience, has been deconstructed. The act of beginning can be identified with the first of three moments of thought described by Hegel in EL. Thought, in thinking the Concept as simple Being, operates as *Understanding*, which, in thinking the Absolute, 'abstracts a particular category from its context and clarifies its specific meaning'.<sup>28</sup> The beginning only occurs when thought *qua* Understanding abstracts the simple, absolute unity of self-consciousness from the developed actuality of self-consciousness, and holds it fast as a determination of thought (SL I, 71/71-2; EL §80). Here, then, it is apparent that the fixity that characterises representational consciousness has an analogue in philosophical consciousness or in being itself. The illusory fixity of representational consciousness will thus reappear and be comprehended in SL as an ontological determination, as characteristic of being. Because this is a necessary determination of being, illusion is not simply accidental, but is ontologically rooted. Like Deleuze and Bergson, Hegel will thus identify the internal illusions of consciousness with the appearing of a tendency of being.

The inconsistency of the initial determination with itself (which we will examine more closely in a moment), the failure of Understanding to render the Absolute fully determinate, is the second moment of thought, thought as *dialectical*. This is not a different subjective faculty, but a relation of thought to itself that develops out of the moment of Understanding. It is thus not external reflection, which transcends what is given to it by opposing it to itself as an object, but the 'immanent transcending

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<sup>28</sup> Burbidge, 1995, p. 42.

[*Hinausgehen*]’ of Understanding, and ‘the genuine nature that properly belongs to the determinations of the understanding’ (EL §81). Through this self-transcending of thought ‘*immanent coherence and necessity* enter into the content of Science’ (EL §81, Hegel’s emphasis).

This negative moment in which thought experiences its real difference from itself is itself immanently transcended in the third moment of thought, thought as authentically *speculative*. In this moment, the difference of thought from itself is grasped as the reconstituted unity of thought with itself. This unity is no longer simple, like the unity of Being at the beginning of PS, but has experienced itself as different from itself, and so it is ‘something-concrete [*ein Konkretes*]’ (EL §82), like self-consciousness as actual at the end of PS. This result has emerged analytically from the initial, abstract unity of Understanding, yet it is a synthetic result, for thought has experienced itself as really different from itself. Through this development, thought recognises itself again, but also *re*-cognises itself, as altered from what it expected to find, for new content has emerged out of the preceding difference. The names used for the determinations of the Absolute that are arrived at in this way may be contingent from the standpoint of Science, for they are taken from a vocabulary that has developed historically. However, their *scientific* meaning as determinations of the Absolute, is not abstract, as it arises immanently within thought.

The transition from Being to the determination of Becoming provides a concrete example of this self-transcending of thought. Being is internally undifferentiated, and externally unrelated to any other determination. But Being is thus inconsistent with itself, for its content turns out to be Nothing, absolute nullity, empty thinking, lack of content (SL I, 82-3/82). There is nothing in Being to determine it as the grasping of content as against the grasping of a lack of content. Similarly, when thought considers the determination of Nothing, there is no positive content to mark it off against the content of Being, because although the determination of thought is now Nothing, this

determination still *is* thought (SL I, 83/82). Every time thought tries to separate them, it cannot find anything in its content to distinguish them, yet is still aware of them as different. Attending to itself as Being and as Nothing presents a difference, but one that is immediate. This distinction disappears as soon as it appears: every time Being or Nothing is grasped, it immediately passes over into the other, or rather, 'has passed over' (SL I, 83/83) into the other, for each, insofar as it is grasped as what it is, Being or Nothing, is always already its other. This paradoxical result is the dialectical moment of thought that results from the initial determination of the Absolute as Being.

But the difference of each from itself and its vanishing into the other cannot be separated from the vanishing of the other in it. This means that the difference of each from itself is a unity in thought, but one that has been constituted through a moment of difference. Thought re-cognises itself in this new unity, Becoming, as the restless relation of Being and Nothing (SL I, 83/82-3). This speculative moment comprehends the two initial determinations within a totality, which is constituted by Becoming as the determination that includes both their identity and their difference. However, this is an open totality, for Becoming is itself the negative unity of Being and Nothing, only grasped as a positive, immediate unity of the inconsistencies of each. Becoming contains negativity within itself, and will thus also show itself to be inconsistent with itself when it is isolated as a positive, fixed determination.

The process of determining the Absolute in SL can only be complete when this inconsistency or negativity of the various determinations itself becomes explicit for thought or being as a dimension of itself, comprehended or included within a determination that is not inconsistent with itself. The positive immediacy of the determinations of the SL's Doctrine of Being and their immediate difference from other determinations will themselves be understood in the second division, the Doctrine of Essence, as determinations of a foundation or ground that lies behind or within immediacy. Here Hegel attacks foundationalism head on, for this 'essential relation' will

itself turn out to be an inconsistent or illusory determination of being. This is finally demonstrated in the Doctrine of the Concept, where thought comes to comprehend its unity with being (the Absolute) as a self-determining unity, which is determined neither by its immediate difference from other, given determinations, nor by the mediation of an essence.

### *iii) Positing, Presupposing and Grounding in the Logic of Essence*

The argument of SL is thus that the absolute unity of thought and being cannot be consistently determined as either a simple, immediate unity, nor as an essence, ground or foundation, because of the negativity that these determinations imply in different ways. This, I want to argue now, means that Hegel directly addresses Schellingian objections to the absoluteness and presuppositionlessness of Absolute Knowing in SL. We have already seen how Absolute Knowing, as introduced by PS, emerges out of the deconstruction of finite consciousness and foundationalist method, and is not dogmatic in the way Düsing accuses it of being. We now have to consider the objections advanced by Schulz, Bowie and Frank, all of which focus on Schelling's positing of a 'higher' Absolute, an immediate non-rational unity of thought and being that is posited as the ultimate presupposition of all reason (including Hegel's Absolute Knowing), and which reason can experience through an ecstatic intuition but cannot know directly as determinate.

This unity is, as we saw in Chapter Two, posited as transcending even reason, and so eventually becomes the subject of a mythological narrative. Its becoming determinate for itself cannot be regarded as necessary, and so it is ungrounded, inexplicable. In the PS, Hegel treats the positing of just such an utterly transcendent unity, which is nevertheless immanent in what it produces, in the sections on Revealed Religion. The religious consciousness posits God as the foundation of determination, who becomes self-conscious through his relation to the world that he creates. However,

the creation itself is inherently mysterious. The sense in which God is immanent in or related to the world is impossible for representational consciousness to understand: the relation between them appears as an 'incomprehensible happening [*Geschehen*]', with God, the in-itself of religious consciousness, assuming 'the form of *indifferent being*' (PS 543/471 §780). Elsewhere, Hegel distinguishes philosophical cognition from 'narration[s] of happenings [*was geschieht*]', for philosophy must '*comprehend* that which, in the narrative, appears as a mere happening [*bloßes Geschehen*]' (SL II, 260/588).

Recourse to such 'happenings' in philosophy in order to explain determinations represents, for Hegel, the inability of a rigidly representational consciousness to think the Absolute successfully. Difference is posited as simply suddenly appearing in the Absolute, an event which can only be understood in terms of the 'before' and 'after' of a narrative, as in Schelling's mythology of creation. The positing of an utterly transcendent, indifferent term as the presupposition of philosophy which is known as this presupposition through a superior intuition means that knowledge of its immanence in the world becomes problematic. There is no way of making a necessary or essential connection between the Absolute and the relative without simply illegitimately presupposing that the Absolute internally or essentially resembles the relative.

Hegel sees the positing of a higher Absolute in which dissonance is simply an ungrounded 'event' as the illusory product of a consciousness that has not comprehended the negativity inherent in the determination it has posited in the Absolute. In the Doctrine of Being, as we saw, the immediate difference of one determination from another is something that simply happens to it. The Doctrine of Essence, however, comprehends this negativity as an effect of an essence, foundation, or ground. But this relation between essence and determinations of immediacy itself has internal negativity in a new form, and thus leads beyond itself. I now want to show how Schelling's positing of a higher Absolute can be read as inconsistent with itself by relating it, not to the Doctrine of

Being and Hegel's account of immediacy, but to the determinations of Presupposing and Positing Reflection in the Doctrine of Essence. In this way, the objections of Schulz, Bowie and Frank will be shown to be dependent on a definition of the Absolute that cannot explain finite determination.

In SL, Being and its subsequent determinations are immediately unequal to themselves: as soon as they are grasped positively, they differ from themselves. Being is immediately Nothing; later, Something is immediately Other (SL I, 125-7/117-19) and so on. In the first place, all the determinations of the Doctrine of Being simply *are*; yet through being determinate as themselves, they are also something other than themselves. All determinations of Being are thus inadequate to themselves, as they cannot comprehend their own basic instability as determinations of Being, which contains negativity and hence instability, but as undeveloped or implicit negativity.

The end of the Doctrine of Being sees Being itself sublated: rather than one unstable category of Being immediately becoming another category and thus sublating itself, all determinations of Being are sublated in the category of Absolute Indifference, which is the unity of all determinations of Being. But it is this unity only insofar as it is the *negative* unity of their internal movement, that is, of the immediate transitions that relate different determinations of Being to each other. Like the end of PS, it is a result that comprehends the beginning of its development, but knows it now as *posited* through an inherently negative movement. As the totality of the transitions that make up the Doctrine of Being, Absolute Indifference is therefore not itself an immediate transition (*Übergang*), but a negatively self-related and implicitly differentiated unity which comprehends all the foregoing determinations.

If Indifference is this unity, then the Being, Determinate Being etc. of anything *is* only because the absolute unity of thought and being shows itself to be Indifference. Indifference is the condition of the stability of Being and of its instability (SL I, 457/385). The determination of Indifference is 'a simple and infinite, negative relation-

to-self, its inherent incompatibility with itself, a repelling of itself from itself' (SL I, 456-7/384). Hence Indifference is not, for Hegel, the utterly transcendent 'irreflexive' determination of the higher Absolute that it is for Schelling.<sup>29</sup> It is a unity that is understood a) as the unity of the determinations of Being, and then b) as that which is other than Being and *posits* its determinations, which now appear as being what they are only because they are mediated (SL I, 457/384). Indifference has a further determination in b), and is consequently grasped as Essence.

Essence is not therefore simply an immediacy over against Being, and determined in relation to it as the immediate Other of Being. Instead, it is an 'advance' on Being, resulting from the sublation of the sphere of Being or of immediacy as such. Essence is what Being turns out to be when the inconsistency of the immediate with itself has been fully comprehended as that which defines all determinations of Being (SL II, 14/390). Hegel's claim is thus that any immediate determination of the absolute unity of being and thought presupposes Essence as the determination that renders immediacy thinkable or determinate. The determinations of Essence will comprehend the determinations of Being as mediated through Essence, as reflected, opposed, grounded, conditioned and so on. Essence is self-related negativity, that into which all immediate determinations of something are reflected. This mediated unity of Essence with itself (as opposed to Being's immediate inequality with itself) is why Essence is also unstable (SL II, 16/391).

Schulz, Frank and Bowie all read Schelling's higher Absolute as a critique of this Hegelian claim. Frank and Bowie, like Schulz, argue that reason has to presuppose that it is 'always already inserted'<sup>30</sup> in its existential ground, with which it is united in a superior intuition. This ground is an utterly immediate, unthinkable unity that is radically other

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Frank, 1975, p. 148 and Schulz, *op. cit.*, p. 347 on the Absolute as an *unvordenklicher Grund* that is nevertheless *the* ground of reason.

<sup>30</sup> Schulz, *op. cit.*, pp. 344-5.

than thought, while still being *the* ground of thought, and thus somehow immanent in it. In this way, the relation between the Absolute and reason cannot be reduced to a rational relation: the Absolute is not simply the relative other of thought, for this would conceive their relation as one of mutual negative conditioning, like that between the Fichtean I and not-I. To assume that the Absolute has to be defined through such a negative relation, or even *as* such a relation itself, is nothing more than an assumption which cannot be proven. The true Absolute has to transcend all such relations. For example, Frank acknowledges that Being in the SL is implicitly self-relation, and thus requires a negative unity of reflection as its condition.<sup>31</sup> But the idea that this is absolute knowledge means that, for Frank, Hegel moves in a circle. Immediacy is re-cognised as conditioned by mediation only because the immediacy that forms the beginning is a mere *concept* of immediacy. The identity of the Absolute and the concept of immediacy can only be presupposed.

We now turn to the Doctrine of Essence in order to assess these criticisms. Essence initially emerged as the negative movement of immediate Being, but defined over against Being as immediately *not* Being. This is Essence held fast as a qualitatively distinct kind of Being, as essential Being over against inessential (immediate) Being (SL II, 18-19/394-5). But Essence has already been shown to be the negation of all immediacy as such. Essence, as negative movement, thus expresses the self-nullification of immediate Being, for which all immediacy is now nothing but illusory Being, 'show' or 'shine' (*Schein*). *Schein* is immediacy that can no longer be self-subsistent simply through being immediate. Being turns out to be a moment of Essence, distinguished from it through Essence's negative relation to itself, and then sinking back into Essence, as this immediacy is itself nothing but the negative movement of Essence (SL II, 20-1/396-7). As Being is now conceived of as the 'shining' of Essence, Essence has shown itself to be internally different from itself, no longer simply a negative unity into which Being

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<sup>31</sup> Frank, 1975, pp. 33-4.



collapses, but also Reflection, its own internal movement of positing and return (SL II, 23-4/399; EL §112).

Being is not therefore simply nothing. It is an immediacy that is nothing but a movement of absolute negativity, yet is distinguished from Essence through Essence's own negative relation to itself (EL §112 Zus.). Hence there is nothing outside reflection to negate: there is no longer any immediately *given* otherness (SL II, 25/400).<sup>32</sup> Essence, as that which Being shows itself to be, will turn out to be a reflection that *excludes* itself from itself, or Opposition (SL II, 59/427).<sup>33</sup> It will thus posit itself as being, through its own self-relation, *really* different from or other to itself. This will be important, as we shall see in the next chapter, for Hegel's account of the emergence of real difference from unity in the Doctrine of the Concept. But with absolute or self-related Reflection, there is no real difference between Essence and its 'shining', only a distinction which is posited through or for Reflection, and is therefore not real, but constantly collapsing. This is because absolute Reflection has two moments, each of which thought isolates and each of which is internally unstable. *Positing* Reflection is the sublation of the restless negative movement that is Essence, and the positing of Being or immediacy in general, which is an absolute positing, i.e., one that occurs through the movement of Essence itself. But it is simultaneously *Presupposing* Reflection, as it requires that there be an immediacy that is dissolved into the restless movement of Essence that sublates all immediacy. So the positing of immediacy through reflection only occurs in relation to a given immediacy, and is not absolute but only relative (SL II, 26-7/400-1). Essence as a self-related unity cannot simply posit Being absolutely. This was the problem that Fichte encountered in WL, where the free positing of the not-I by the I has to be reconceived as the necessary, negative conditioning of each by the other, because an absolute positing of

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<sup>32</sup> Schmidt, 1997, p. 59 n. 80.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73

difference is inconceivable in terms of abstract unity — a proposition with which Deleuze would agree.

Hence Essence has shown itself to be that through which Being is posited, but only insofar as this positing of immediacy is also the presupposing of immediacy. Essence thus presupposes itself as its own 'foundation', its own 'in-itself', for it only emerges from Being if Being has already been posited as inherently negativity. Inherently circular, Reflection will turn out to be an inadequate determination, but not in relation to a foundation that is given to thought, such as the Schellingian higher Absolute. Instead, it will be inadequate *to itself*, for the incessant to-and-fro movement whereby it posits only because it presupposes and vice versa will actually be constitutive of a unity (Determining Reflection) in which thought comprehends this internal difference of Reflection in a new determination.

Initially, the presupposing side seems more stable. It may begin from an immediate that is only as positedness (*Gesetzsein*), but this immediate is determinate over against Reflection, as *not* Reflection. Reflection therefore appears as External Reflection, because it presupposes, not an immediately different other, whose difference from it would be vanishing or illusory, but *itself* as other, as an entirely sublated or negated movement of negativity (SL II, 27-8/401-2). This is Reflection's own other, resulting from its internal difference, so here there is a real difference between Reflection and immediacy.<sup>34</sup> Precisely because this difference is real and not illusory, however, it cannot be maintained: the presupposed immediacy is the other, not of an immediacy, but of Reflection as such. It has been *posited* as an immediacy that is absolutely (i.e., through Reflection's own self-relation) other than reflection, or as presupposed (SL II, 28-9/402-3). The apparent stability or full determinateness of External Reflection is only apparent: External Reflection presupposes itself as absolutely sublated, as the negative of

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

negativity, but this itself arises through the self-relation of Reflection. Even though it is the negation of all positing, it is still *posited* as this negation.

External Reflection too is not what it was taken to be. It is re-cognised as Determining Reflection, in which the immediate is constituted through the negative relation-to-self of essence, as being *itself* related-to-self. Here the immediate is posited as being related-to-self and thus as self-subsistent, *and* as related to another negative self-relation (SL II, 30-2/404-5). In this way, Reflection becomes determinate in relation to itself, positing itself as determinations (Identity, Difference etc.) which, because they are posited as related-to-themselves, subsist as really different to other Concepts rather than simply passing over immediately into them.

It is this whole sequence, from Positing through External to Determining Reflection, that Frank and Bowie make the object of a detailed critique. The pivotal issue for them is whether or not thought can be genuinely infinite and comprehend an absolute immediacy that is in-itself neither thought nor an object posited relatively to thought, and which is the presupposition of all reflection. They all argue that this cannot be the case, that thought can only presuppose that it can comprehend the Absolute. For them, Hegel's logic/ontology is purely negative, for it is a kind of presupposing reflection that assumes, as did Fichte, that the Absolute must resemble the finite subject, and be a reflexive self-relation rather than transcending all reflexivity as a truly 'higher' Absolute. Being, the immediacy with which SL begins, is nothing more than a reflection of the unity of thought, rather than being a true immediacy, which could only be known in a superior intuition. Consequently, Frank argues that thought cannot recognise the unity of Positing and External Reflection as absolute *in* thought, but can only presuppose that this unity is absolute. And such a presupposition fails to acknowledge the real difference between self-related reflection and reflection that is related to a true immediacy given through an ecstatic intuition. This is because, as Schulz argues, true immediacy is that which is positively and substantially self-grounding, that from which any reflexive recognition

begins. The immediacy that reflection posits, being a negation of the restless movement of negativity, is nothing positive, only immediate non-being or *Schein* in relation to the true, irreflexive and real immediacy that conditions the movement. Bowie notes that the unity of External and Positing Reflection in thought would have to include the real difference between a posited immediacy and the real immediacy of Absolute Identity, and their identity. This is not possible in thought, however, for any conceptual unity would simply be posited by thought, and would thus be negative in Schelling's sense.<sup>35</sup>

This critique is, in Hegelian terms, advanced from the perspective of representational consciousness, and posits an illusory distinction between the Absolute and the relative, and between intuition and thought. As we saw, the PS ends with the dissolution of all distinctions between objects-for-us and objects-in-themselves. Absolute Knowing is not therefore the dogmatic certainty of the unity of reflection with a superior intuition of the in-itself of objects. Instead, it is knowledge of the decentred mode of self-relation that is required for there to be any determinate positing of an object-in-itself or object-for-us at all. A possible Schellingian objection to this notion would be that the PS itself simply assumes that the real difference between an object-for-us and an object-in-itself is a difference *for* consciousness, when in fact it implies an irreconcilable difference between thought and intuition. The PS thus relies on an identity in consciousness of the object-for-us and the object-in-itself that is merely posited, and which thus does not acknowledge the absolute presupposition of all reflection. Hegel's response is clear: this objection simply repeats the difference of for-another and in-itself without comprehending it.<sup>36</sup> And to refuse to comprehend it is to ignore the fact that all experience of the difference between for-us and in-itself is consciousness's *own* real difference from itself, its own mode of existence which it *knows* as its own.

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<sup>35</sup> Bowie, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>36</sup> Pippin, 1989, pp. 94-6.

The difference between Schelling's positing of a higher Absolute as the ground of distinction and Hegel's immanent overcoming of consciousness is as follows. The repeated experience of consciousness's difference from itself is, for Schelling, the experience of an unoblatable difference between self-consciousness and the Absolute, which can only be overcome in the ecstatic experience of a higher identity through which the reality of the distinction is destroyed. For Hegel, this experience of difference constitutes the actuality of self-consciousness, and can only be overcome through itself, rather than by positing, in addition to this reality, a superior intuition which gives access to the true unity that grounds all experience. This intuition of an indeterminate unity that is nevertheless determinate as ground can only be posited as something that *ought* to be possible, but cannot in principle be *known* to be possible.<sup>37</sup> It can only be postulated as the equivocal ground of knowledge, as knowledge that is not-knowledge. The higher Absolute, as we saw in Chapters Two and Four, becomes posited in Schelling's more dogmatic moments, not as genuinely absolute, but as resembling in itself the relative.

For Schelling, the relation between self-consciousness and the Absolute is a contradictory one: an absolute opposition that nevertheless includes a ground of identity. Self-consciousness is an inessential, negative self-relation that produces nothing but *Schein*, whereas the Absolute has substantial, positive existence. From a Hegelian standpoint, it appears that, crucially, the ground of identity between them is merely posited: the Absolute is not just an indeterminate unity, but the indeterminate unity that is simultaneously *determined* as the immanent ground of reason. This problematic ground-relation is required in order not to reduce the Absolute to a relative other of thought, an object-for-us. Hence the Absolute does not have a determination that is presupposed by reason; it is determined or posited by reason as a foundation. And further, this positing is also on its own terms a presupposing, for it only happens in relation to given or immediate determinations of experience. The positing of an Absolute which is utterly

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Düsing, 1995, pp. 21, 142; 1977, pp. 120, 122, 127.

transcendent yet at the same time immanent in reason as its own condition is made necessary by presuppositions about experience. Primary here is the assumption that the difference between subject and object is the internal limit of consciousness that determines what will constitute meaningful experience for us, and that consequently all consciousness is representational. Hence the positing of a higher Absolute is relative to these assumptions.

Schelling's reliance on a superior intuition is meant to break the circle of Presupposing and Positing Reflection, for reason is understood as only presupposing this intuition. But if this presupposed intuition is knowledge of the Absolute determined as the foundation of all determination, then Schelling contradicts himself. The Absolute that would be experienced in such an intuition could not be intuited, as previously noted, as the ground of reason. Such an intuition could only contain the dissolution of all determination, as Schelling insists in his more consistent moments. In order to *know* the Absolute as the ground of reason, Schelling, like Fichte, has to take on the impossible task of constructing a complete system of the Absolute in order to fully determine this grounding relation. The paradoxical intuition through which reason becomes ecstatic in relation to itself and yet knows the Absolute as determined as its ground is thus merely *posited* as the foundation of philosophy. Schelling himself affirms this when he tries to think the Absolute in his middle period as genuinely 'higher', outside all relation to the finite yet still as the ground of determination. But this just affirms that the relation between the transcendent Absolute and determinate experience cannot in principle be known, just like the relation between the transcendent God and the world that is posited by the religious consciousness in PS.

We thus have to consider two points: a) Hegel's model of Absolute Knowing does not function as Schelling and his interpreters believe it does, and b) Schelling's own conception of the Absolute is contradictory, and afflicted with a negativity (the relation between Absolute and relative) that it cannot comprehend, but can only *posit* as

unknowable. The inadequacy of Schelling's Absolute can be further demonstrated in relation to Hegel's explicit attack on the idea of a transcendent foundation in the subsequent sections on Ground, in which the illusory basis of foundationalist thought is further undermined. Ground is the consequence of the collapse of the determination of Opposition. Opposition proves to be inadequate to itself, because it remains determined by the contradictory relation between self-subsistence and positedness (relation-to-other) that first arises with Reflection. The positive and negative poles of an opposition, such as Absolute Identity and self-relation, are simultaneously self-related and related to an other. This relation is asymmetrical, however, for the positive (Absolute Identity), insofar as it *is* positive, is opposed to the relation of opposition itself, or is independent (SL II, 58-9/426). The negative (self-related reflection) is the negation of the positive, and is thus the relation of opposition itself (SL II, 59/427). In this way, each is related to the other through itself: the positive is the exclusion from itself of the relation of opposition, and the negative is the exclusion from itself of the positive that is negated opposition. Here, the difference of thought from itself is no longer that which was known as Positing or Determining Reflection, but is now *Excluding (ausschließende) Reflection*.<sup>38</sup>

Essence is itself insofar as it excludes itself from itself or is external to itself: this is the result of Opposition, in which is made explicit the previously implicit determination of Contradiction, in which neither side, positive or negative, is positive or negative, or rather, each pole is both. Each pole excludes its own self-subsistence insofar as it is self-subsistent (SL II, 64-5/431) and is reflected into its other. These opposites thus ceaselessly collapse into each other (SL II, 70/435). This negative unity is Contradiction, but grasped as a unity that excludes itself from itself, thus *positing* the opposition, it is Ground. In terms of the relation between Absolute Identity and self-relation, Ground is the Absolute postulated as the unity of Absolute and self-relation, or of Absolute and relative (SL II, 84/447). However, it is no more stable than the relation

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<sup>38</sup> Schmidt, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-5.

contained in Opposition, for the contradictory relation between self-subsistence and positedness still determines it.

Ground is the unity of itself and that which it grounds. However, as ground of a grounded term, that is, as just *this* ground, the ground has both form and content, and is determinate, for it is Ground in relation to *an* opposition (SL II, 94-5/455-6). From now on, the problem of the circle of self-subsistence and positedness arises again. For example, with the Concept of Formal Ground, the grounding relation is constituted by the formal reflexive relation of Ground to itself, whereby the content of Ground is reflected in the grounded (SL II, 96/456-7) (Absolute Identity *qua* ground of knowing is posited as positing itself in and through the relative). However, in this way, the Ground is just as much posited *as* Ground by the grounded. The notion of an undifferentiated Ground that is the unity of itself and the grounded itself turns out to be already the grounded of another Ground. There is no stable difference between the posited term (initially, the grounded) and that which is presupposed (the ground), as they stand in the same relation to each other.

In relation to this development, Schelling's account of the Absolute as an unconditioned presupposition can only be consistent from within representational consciousness. Hegel shows that the idea that determination can be explained solely with reference to a transcendent ground is illusory, even though Ground arises as an immanent (though incomplete) determination of the meaning of the Absolute. Ground can never be simply presupposed: if it is understood as a ground, then, argues Hegel, it is only ground because of its determination in relation to that which it is supposed to ground. In this way, the Absolute conceived of as transcendent is either posited as a distinctionless, non-rational substantial unity, in which case it cannot serve as a ground, or it is posited as a rational substantial unity, as in Schelling's account of the first creation. In the first case, it cannot support determination, for it is posited as a formal unity without any determinate relation to the relative. In the latter case, the determinate relation between it and the



relative is simply posited in relation to experience, which breaks Schelling's own restriction on positing an internal resemblance between the Absolute as an ontological unity and that which it conditions. The only other option consistent with representational consciousness's awareness of difference is to think the Absolute itself as internally different from itself, but this also cannot, for Schelling, ultimately explain determination, as it undermines foundationalism from within.

Hegel's deconstruction of the structure of Ground is vitally important, as we shall see in the next chapter, for understanding the meaning of his enterprise in SL, for it marks the point at which his critique of the ontologically-rooted illusory nature of foundationalism begins to become explicit. Through it, he shows that foundationalism itself is based on a circular, internally negative structure of being and thought. A transcendent in-itself cannot serve as an unconditioned ground of determination, for insofar as it is unconditioned, it is without determination, and insofar as it is determined as a foundation *of* something, it is determined in relation to the subject and cannot be unconditioned. Further, if it is simply understood as a distinctionless unity, it is neither for-us, nor in-itself. And if this is so, then we are dealing with the thought of a problematic, positive unity of Being with which Hegel begins both PS and SL, and which turns out to be internally negative. Hegel's model of Absolute Knowing can be defended against Schellingian objections, then, firstly because these objections misconstrue it, and secondly because it can itself account for the structure of the foundationalist position behind these objections, showing it to be illusory or self-cancelling. In the next chapter, we will examine Hegel's Doctrine of the Concept, in order to see how it realises his goal, to formulate an antifoundationalist philosophy.

## Chapter Seven

### Hegel's Concept as an Antifoundational Principle

#### *i) Introduction*

Contrasting with the view that is commonly taken of the relationship between Deleuze and Hegel, namely, that they are thinkers whose visions of the task of philosophy are incommensurable, the previous four chapters have laid out a thematic territory common to both. A central feature of this territory is the idea that transcendental illusions native to reason are the sources of all philosophical misdirection. This idea, resulting from Kant's Copernican Revolution, replaces the Cartesian notion of error (DR 195/150), just as Kant's notion of *Darstellung* undercuts Descartes' representationalist theory of truth. Both Deleuze and Hegel take Kant to task, however, for failing to adequately understand the nature of transcendental illusion. For these thinkers, illusions arise from unquestioned presuppositions about the nature and destiny of thought. These presuppositions force philosophy to produce a foundationalist model of thought, exemplified by the models of critical thinking that dominated the Enlightenment. Enlightenment thinking, in attempting to establish a rigorous distinction between justifiable knowledge and mere belief, was forced to fight a rearguard action against the very scepticism it had itself deployed. The possibility of such a distinction was seen to depend upon the possibility of proving that there is *a priori* synthetic knowledge, which, as we saw in Chapter Two, was undermined successively by Kant, Fichte, and, above all, by Schelling, despite their intentions.

I have tried to show that the trauma of reason, a philosophical crisis of meaning that is the result of the Enlightenment obsession with foundations, can be said to be an important point of orientation for both Hegel and Deleuze. Both attempt to construct models of philosophy that will enable the presuppositions of foundationalism to be accounted for and criticised. Both also affirm that the only adequate, non-circular

account of these presuppositions will be an ontological one, which focuses on the meaning of the Absolute as the 'object' specific to philosophy. Hegel and Deleuze see transcendental illusion as rooted, not in accidental determinations of consciousness, but in being itself. For Deleuze, as for Bergson, illusion is the product of virtual tendencies within being that are actualised as differences of degree and which thus distort the nature of being, which is to be different in kind from itself. For Hegel, illusion is rooted in the negativity of being, and its immanent determination as immediacy, and as mediated immediacy or Essence.

We still need to consider that determination which Hegel considers an adequate expression of the Absolute, which will require us to examine the Doctrine of the Concept in SL. In Chapters Three and Four, we traced Deleuze's development of an image of philosophy that affirmed the lack of incorrigible foundations as a positive state of affairs. We need to consider now the fulfilment of Hegel's own antifoundationalist ontology in SL. I aim in this chapter to examine Deleuze's Schellingian denunciation of Hegel's 'hidden' foundationalism, and to show how Hegel can be read against this interpretation, concentrating further upon the critique of the idea of a substantial, transcendent foundation that is developed in SL. In this way, the antifoundationalism of Hegel's ontology will be brought out, and allowed to stand alongside Deleuze's. In the next, concluding chapter, their respective versions of antifoundationalism will be critically examined in relation to each other.

## *ii) Deleuze's Critique of the Immanence of the Pure Concept*

Many of Deleuze's criticisms of Hegel share their orientation with those advanced by Schelling. Both Deleuze and Schelling accuse Hegel of not acknowledging that the Absolute is incommensurable with thought. As we have seen, they argue for this incommensurability in different ways and with different intentions. Nevertheless, both affirm that philosophy cannot construct a presuppositionless, absolute system. For

Deleuze, as for many post-war French thinkers, the ideal of an absolute, self-grounding and thus self-enclosed philosophical system is a primary target. As we saw, Schelling first undermined this ideal from within, by arguing that philosophy has to presuppose, as the ultimate condition of real determination, a 'higher' Absolute that cannot in principle be comprehended within thought. This means that there can be no *a priori* conceptual system capable of containing the Absolute. Schelling thus exposed the basic assumption of foundationalist philosophy, i.e., that the Absolute is identical with reason, as an ungrounded and unprovable subjective conviction. Deleuze's attempt to account for the origins of this belief follows Schelling's general line of thinking by, after Bergson, determining foundationalism (Platonism) as a transcendental illusion that expresses certain virtual tendencies within being. He argues that foundationalism always has to presuppose a transcendent subjectivity that knows the unity of reason and Absolute, i.e., an act of 'knowing before knowing'. This presupposition is what Schelling makes explicit as an act of faith.

Deleuze's determination of the Absolute, the movement of Absolute Difference, is an attempt to think the higher Absolute without allowing it to be determined in relation to experience. As we saw in the previous chapter, the ambivalence of Schelling's higher Absolute can be understood with reference to Hegel's deconstruction of ground-relations in SL. We saw that the Absolute had to be posited as the transcendent, substantial ground of determination. But this meant that an illegitimate resemblance had to be posited between Absolute and relative, with the determinations of the relative being presupposed as inherent in the Absolute as its necessary inner determinations. Hence Schelling does not solve the Kantian problem of assuming that certain definitions of the meaning of experience are universally true of all experience, an assumption that, for Deleuze, betrays the deeper assumption of a transcendent subjectivity, a common sense, a shared context in which the universal horizon of meaning is always already established. Deleuze's response is to disavow the notion of a common sense implied by the Platonic image of

thought, in the hope of avoiding the presupposition of a transcendent 'knowing before knowing', which forces foundationalist thought to move in a circle. Instead, he attends to the minimal presupposition of philosophy considered as a *practice* of thinking, which for him is the internal difference of thought from itself. This, for Deleuze, is the inner limit of thought, which cannot be comprehended by a concept. It is thought's transcendental object, that which is its by right, because it is its own limit, its own contingent being. Deleuze thus takes up Schelling's project of determining the Absolute-in-itself without positing it as internally resembling presupposed structures of experience. For Deleuze, all conceptual thinking, that is, thinking that sees the identity of the concept as the measure of genuine knowledge, must presuppose the movement of the internal difference of thought from itself, as a minimal condition of any activity of thinking. As this movement is incomprehensible for conceptual thought, Deleuze concurs with Schelling that the Absolute is encountered initially by philosophy as the contingent being of thought itself. As with Schelling, this contingency is an irreducible ontological presupposition that is forever impossible for foundationalist thought to comprehend, even though the tendencies that bring thought into existence are absolutely immanent within thought.

Deleuze's criticisms of Hegel centre on the idea that the Hegelian system aims to be a total, closed ontological system, including both logic and *Realphilosophie*. In this, he follows his teacher Jean Hyppolite in taking seriously Hegel's claims about the ontological import of Absolute Knowing. For Deleuze, then, Hegel is a Platonist or foundationalist, who presupposes the existence of the privileged perspective of a transcendent subject, a *theoros*. Deleuze reads SL as purporting to deduce the inner articulations of Being, which will form an *a priori* logical grammar of the Absolute, and will thus constitute the condition of all actual determination. The fact that our conscious experience of the world is structured as it is will thus be grounded in the nature of Being, which is accessible to pure thought. The system will thus have a fixed horizon of meaning or common sense within which we can think Being, that of the self-relation of

the Concept, or self-thinking thought. Any talk of Being that defines it as infinitely other than thought, or incommensurable with itself, posits it illegitimately as really existing beyond this horizon of meaning. Thus far, Deleuze concurs with Schelling's reading of SL as a negative philosophy that identifies the inner meaning of an absolute unity with the conceptual unity of thought, and supposedly grounds itself by returning immanently through the analysis of this unity to the point where it began, having unfolded its whole content. To assume that this content comprises anything more than merely possible determinations of Being is, for Deleuze and for Schelling, to posit an illusory unity of being and thought.

In an early review of Hyppolite's *Logique et existence*, Deleuze points out that Hegel determines the absolute horizon and meaning of experience by proposing that Absolute Knowing is not knowledge of things-in-themselves beyond the veil of appearance. Instead, it is simply knowledge of the internal logical grammar of the familiar meaning of our experience (A 458). Deleuze thus agrees with Schelling and Marx that Hegel's analysis of the Concept of pure Being reverses an actual relation between consciousness and its real, material conditions. This analysis analyses nothing but our presuppositions about the meaning of our own experience, a procedure that can only reveal the internal structure of these presupposed meanings, rather than accounting for their existence. Hegel determines this structure through the self-relation of the Concept, which for Deleuze is a relation that embodies in Hegel's thought the foundationalist assumption of a transcendent subjectivity. Deleuze suggests that Hegel's fundamental assumption, that the minimal meaning of Being is as simple, indeterminate and so on, is simply a philosophical reflection of an empirical image of Being (DR 169/129) that posits it as identical with the pure Concept. The real source of interest, for Deleuze, is thus how to explain the genesis of these presuppositions, which he attempts to do by leaving behind the interiority of the self-thinking Concept.

Deleuze then, like Schelling, argues that Hegel simply assumes that Being is, like reflexive self-consciousness, related to itself negatively. This means that the inner determinations of Being arise through its inconsistency with itself, i.e., through the logical operation of contradiction. For Deleuze, this determination of difference as contradiction is the highest degree of difference that is thinkable for representational consciousness. It thus remains a difference of degree determined in relation to a presupposed identity (rather than an absolute difference, a difference of kind), for it represents a unity that is itself only insofar as it differs from all it is not, a negative unity. The Absolute, for Hegel, is that which expresses the contradictory nature of all phenomena, the fact that, in relation to consciousness, any appearance is both itself and something else and the negative unity of the two. Hegel thus remains tied to Kant's transcendental Ideal of the complete determination of a self-identical individual in relation to the totality of other individuals (DR 65/45). The realisation of this Ideal would mean that the real, internal relations between phenomena would have been fully determined. Such an Ideal would therefore be a transcendent substance, for which all phenomenal relations would be aspects of its internal relation to itself. This goal of full determination is, according to Deleuze, meant to be fulfilled by the Doctrine of the Concept, where the Concept becomes the Absolute Idea, the transcendent 'ground' and substance of all difference (DR 61-2/42). But this whole image of philosophy is based on contradiction, an empirical image of difference that is reflected into the Absolute by the *ethos* of thought known as Hegelian Science.

This absolutisation of a self-contradictory unity is further reflected in the aspect of Hegel's philosophy that is most repugnant to Deleuze, namely his treatment of history. Deleuze reads this treatment as proposing that the hidden motor of history, namely the inner logical grammar of Being, is gradually revealed through the historical process as the becoming-self-conscious through philosophy of Absolute Spirit. In other words, the Hegelian horizon of meaning, the common sense behind Absolute Knowing, is our

historical knowledge of previous systems of philosophy. The Absolute is thus analytically determined in thought as a set of possibilities that are nothing but a reflection of a particular domain of historical experience. For Deleuze, Hegel sees history as determined by a single transcendent problem: how to disclose the implicit content of Being for us through thinking and thus render the Absolute self-conscious and thus fully reconciled to itself in a supreme Science. As in Schelling's *Philosophy of Identity*, history would be conceived of as the unfolding of a merely possible first creation that is derived in its totality from the pure concept of the Absolute. If the Absolute is a self-contradictory unity, then its determinations must be thought as subsisting eternally within it in the same manner as the determinations of Schelling's ideal universe. History is thus the external appearance of the Absolute, its becoming for-itself, 'a continual progress that is at the same time a "regress into the ground"',<sup>1</sup> a gradual realisation of the internal possibilities of a transcendent substance through its autonomous self-limitation.

For Deleuze, Hegelian onto-logic thus claims to be the condition of all determination, but can only do this by assuming that its immanent, supposedly presuppositionless examination of the category of Being *really* delineates the contours of actuality. The opposition between thought and being is, from Hegel's point of view, only an illusory one, as the ground of the opposition, the negative self-relation of the Concept, remains transcendent to all determinations of thought and being as their foundation, thus securing their resemblance or inner unity. Deleuze agrees with Bergson that Hegel's philosophical *ethos* 'believes itself to be reunited with the real when it compensates for the inadequacy of a concept that is too broad or too general by invoking the opposite concept (B 38/44). Hegel's assumption of the transcendence of the Concept preserves, in philosophical consciousness, the interiority of representational consciousness, for even

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<sup>1</sup> Balke, 1998, p. 24, quoting SL, I, 70/71.



the largest difference posited in Hegelian thought, that between the immediate beginning and the end result of the System, is internal to the Concept itself.<sup>2</sup>

*iii) Hegel, Deleuze and Kantian Self-Consciousness*

As we have seen, Deleuze's central objection against Hegel is similar to Schelling's, i.e., that Hegel can only presuppose that his analysis of the concept of simple Being is a real deduction of the necessary determinations of Being. Deleuze adds to this Schellingian objection the observation that the reason for this predicament is Hegel's foundationalist assumption that the essential meaning of philosophy is tied to the transcendence of thought. Hegel cannot, for Deleuze, what Lessing called the 'broad, ugly ditch' between the hypothetical determination of the Absolute and its real determination (DR 254 fn/325-6 n. 15).

This question of this distinction between hypothetical and absolute knowledge will now be addressed. Our first step will be to return briefly to the similarities and differences between Deleuze and Hegel's respective accounts of reflexive subjectivity. Both accounts, I want to suggest, are intimately related to the ambiguous Kantian account of self-consciousness I first introduced in Chapter Five. Kant affirms, against the rationalist tradition, that the validity of representations of pure reason can only be subjective or hypothetical, for only the syntheses of the Understanding carried out upon the intuited manifold can possess objective validity. This epistemological distinction between pure thought and thought as related to intuition is problematised, however, by Kant himself. As noted in Chapter Five, Kant holds that there is an immediate form of self-consciousness that is embodied in an 'indeterminate empirical intuition' given to 'thought in general' (CPuR B422-3). The epistemological status of this intuition is ambiguous, given that it represents neither a noumenon nor a phenomenon. It is an undeniable, though indeterminate, feeling of existence associated with consciousness,

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 26.

rather than Descartes' fully determinate intellectual intuition of a thinking thing. For Deleuze, Kant's insistence that this intuition is only determinable under the form of time is the genuinely critical moment of his philosophy. The thought 'I' marks the feeling of existence itself rather than representing anything substantial that is known through or in the feeling, such as a soul. Any determinate content of the I, including the proposition 'I exist thinking' is only given as an appearance constituted for inner sense under the form of time (CPuR B430). Thus my appearance to myself cannot be identified with whatever it is that the feeling denoted by 'I' refers to, the entity that thinks. The connection between the feeling marked 'I' and the determination of thinking is thus unrepresentable, unless we presuppose that the thing that thinks is a spontaneous, foundational subject, which is continuous with the phenomenal subject that is determined for itself in self-consciousness.

This Kantian notion of a unified transcendental subject is, for Deleuze, simply a presupposition, a retrospective positing of the unity of the passive, determinate empirical subject as its own condition, in an eminent form. The identity of the phenomenal ego and that to which the indeterminate feeling of existence is understood to refer is purely hypothetical. Hence Deleuze reads Kant as assuming that the identity of passive subject and subject in-itself, the thing that thinks, is given to us, when in fact it is not and is in fact impossible to establish. Deleuze constructs an alternative account of subjectivity, however, based on the idea that the 'thing that thinks' is a dispersed plurality of differences, or the movement of Absolute Difference itself insofar as it is actualised as a system of mental faculties rooted in the body of an individual. Deleuze uses Rimbaud's proposition 'I is another' to express this fundamental 'crack' in the subject that constitutes for him Kant's discovery of the transcendental. As we saw in Chapter Four, the constitutive role of a purely determinable, problematic element is filled by *Gefühl* in Fichte's account of subjectivity, and by the 'dark will' in Schelling's middle-period accounts of the Absolute. In all three cases, a relation is established between a basic

intuition of existence and a problematic, internally differentiated element, prior to any actual, stable determination of this existence for-us. Deleuze affirms the priority of this relation by proposing that Absolute Difference is the being of the sensible (DR 80'56-7. 182/139-40).<sup>3</sup> This goes for the feeling of existence associated with consciousness as much as for sensibility *per se*.

Hegel too, however, affirms the Kantian difference between transcendental subjectivity and the phenomenal subject, and even goes so far as to show in PS that the proposition, 'I' is an Other, represents a necessary determination of Spirit, given certain intersubjective relations. 'I is another' describes accurately the structure of consciousness in the sections of PS on the world of Self-Alienated Spirit or Pure Culture, in which the subject's earlier loss of certainty as to its transcendence of the world (in the Self-Consciousness chapter) becomes explicit. The subject finds that its 'true *original nature* and substance is Spirit as the alienation of natural being' (PS 348/298 §489, modified). What 'I am' here is not the certainty of myself as my own foundation, but the difference in nature of what I am for myself (finite consciousness) and what I posit myself as being in truth (the in-itself, natural being, the supposedly substantial, essential or transcendent 'thing that thinks'). Spirit alienated from its own being is an intersubjectively determined consciousness that repeats the earlier dynamic of Scepticism: it repels itself from itself, or is only aware of its difference from itself.

This subject is, as a determination of Spirit, doubly decentred. Firstly, it has come to understand itself as Spirit in general, that is, as a relation to self that is this relation only through its relation to other subjects. Secondly, it is aware of itself as a movement of negativity without a substantial natural foundation, and this movement itself will eventually be re-cognised as identical with Substance. This latter identity of Subject and Substance is not simply posited as given, unlike the Kantian identity of passive subject and determining subject. Instead, the free activity, the 'thing that thinks'

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<sup>3</sup> See also Baugh, 1993, p. 18.

which is re-cognised at the end of the PS as the unity of Subject and Substance is Absolute Negativity, the actuality of self-consciousness which has developed out of the simple beginning of the PS. There is no longer a substantial 'thing' posited behind the activity of determination; in fact, the absoluteness of this negativity consists in its being both subject and object, and neither. It thus represents a complete loss of any dimension of givenness, positivity or substantiality, and constitutes the overcoming of the rigidity of representational consciousness only because of this lack of an in-itself dimension. Deleuze's reading of Absolute Negativity as the embodiment of the transcendence or substantiality of the Concept, which will eventually become the ultimate transcendent ground, the Absolute Idea, is at odds with this result.

The PS thus overcomes the transcendental illusion represented by the refusal of natural consciousness to see beyond the fixity of the distinction between subject and object. As we saw in Chapter Six, this empirically appearing illusion is, as in Deleuze's analysis, ontologically rooted. However, for Hegel it is rooted in ontological structures analysed in the Logic of Essence, which appear in historically concrete forms. Absolute Negativity is, in addition, not only the truth of self-consciousness. As noted in Chapter Six, it is the truth of the beginning of PS, the indeterminate being of Sense-Certainty. This being, which, as I argued in Chapter Five, must be identified with the ambiguous yet undeniable feeling of existence Kant refers to in the B edition of CPuR, is itself neither subject nor object. This being is not the certainty of my existence as a substantial self, but a bare feeling that comes eventually to be marked for me as 'I', and thus becomes the illusion of a substantial or transcendent self. This latter representation 'I am' is made possible by intersubjective recognition, but this is not all; it is also made possible by the structure of Being itself, that is, Absolute Negativity. This is the result of PS. The *Bildung* of the subject is not a process whereby it rediscovers its substantiality on the other side of its difference from itself. In fact, the resulting actuality of self-consciousness is the absolute loss of any dimension of substantiality. The Unconditioned

is not an actual, empirical self-consciousness posited illegitimately as its own condition. Instead, PS ends with the *actuality* of self-consciousness in Hegel's sense of *Wirklichkeit*: through the educative experience of its own difference from itself, self-consciousness comes to know this difference as its own condition and truth.

Deleuze, as we have seen, insists like Schelling that the dialectical *Aufhebung* of simple Being requires the assumption that thought is identical with the substantial or in-itself aspect of Being. If one disregards this assumption, then the absolute, undeniable thesis, the feeling of existence, cannot be mediated through antithesis and synthesis, it is not taken up or 'does not follow' (DR 74/52). However, Deleuze makes this point by, again like Schelling, relying on a somewhat crude reading of the dialectic of immediacy in PS and SL. In order to grasp the relation between the beginning and end of PS, for example, we must attend to the specific relation between the initial indeterminate Being and the two opposed terms that emerge from it. These two simple unities, opposed as objective and subjective or as thesis and antithesis, are not themselves opposed to the initial indeterminate Being. Each of these unities is unsuccessfully posited in turn as the foundation of the other, before any further distinction between subjective and objective is posited. However, their relation to the initial, indeterminate Being is problematic: that both terms *happen* to 'emerge out of pure being [*aus dem reinen Sein [...] herausfallen*]' constitutes the 'crucial diversity' in Sense-Certainty (PS 80/59 §92, modified). The movement of emergence here does not subsequently become known as the activity of a substantial, self-positing subject, as was Fichte's goal. Instead, this movement, and the simple unity from which it begins, is known at the end of the PS as Absolute Negativity, an unconditioned that remains unstatable in terms representational consciousness (being attached to simple positivity, substantiality and transcendence) would understand, requiring instead a *logical* (philosophical) exposition.

In the PS, simple indeterminate *Being* is re-cognised in the assertion of *Existence* in self-consciousness ('I am') before eventually becoming recognised as the *Actuality*

that is Absolute Negativity. Deleuze's assertion that Hegel's beginning with Being, whether in natural or philosophical consciousness, is not presuppositionless, because it assumes the identity of being-for-us ('sensible, concrete, empirical being', DR 169/129) and being-in-itself, is mistaken. Hegel does not begin with concrete being, but with problematic being, the ambiguous Kantian feeling of existence that Deleuze himself affirms in his account of the transcendental difference at the heart of thought. Here, there are no distinctions between subject and object, phenomenon and noumenon, or hypothetical and categorical. Hegel's account of Absolute Knowing does not purport to describe what the determinate, positive unity of thought and being-in-itself must be like. Instead, it is knowledge of what the unity of thought and being must be if the difference between being-for-us and being-in-itself can even be presented in consciousness. In this way, Absolute Knowing undercuts the foundationalist model of knowledge and its aporia, for it is not knowledge of a foundation, but of the simplest possible *beginning* of thought.

*iv) Immanent 'Ungrounding' and the Immanent Concept*

Both Hegel and Deleuze employ accounts of self-consciousness in order to undermine the foundationalist image of thought, in such a way that the unquestioned presuppositions of foundationalism are brought to light. For both thinkers, the problem with foundationalism is that it tries to account for the possibility of determination with the aid of a transcendent foundation. This proves to be a self-destructive orientation, as Schelling shows, for foundationalism can only presuppose what it sets out to prove, i.e., that knowledge of the real through reason alone is possible. Deleuze accuses Hegel too of being a foundationalist, for assuming that the Concept is identical with the putative substantial or in-itself dimension of Being. But as we have seen, this is not an accurate

account of Hegel's Absolute Knowing.<sup>4</sup> Absolute Knowing is knowledge of the structure of the immanent, negative movement of consciousness, in which there is no possible determinate distinction between thought and being. It is thus the result of the collapse of any possible distinction between for-us and in-itself.

I now want to show how Hegel develops an ontology in SL that accounts for determination without referring it to a transcendent ground posited as internally resembling that which it grounds. This will entail a further examination, following the previous chapter, of Hegel's deconstruction of foundationalism in the Doctrine of Essence, before we pass on to the Concept. This examination will show how the Concept comprehends an absolute difference that results in stable determination.

Our survey will take in the categories of Existence, the Absolute and Actuality, before moving on to that of the Concept itself. My argument here is that the irreducibility of the categories of Existence, Actuality and Concept to that of Ground demonstrates that Hegel leaves behind foundationalism and all illusory methods of explanation from grounds. His account of the relation between Possibility, Contingency and Necessity demonstrates that Hegel's ontology does not presuppose a transcendent identity preposited under the form of possibility or eminent identity. Finally, the Concept itself is explicated as a self-determining principle whose activity is not one of grounding in the foundationalist sense, and in which is realised Hegel's critique of the notion of a transcendent and substantial Absolute. The relation between thought and being for Hegel,

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<sup>4</sup> Given the way in which Deleuze reads philosophical texts strategically for his own purposes (a good example being his reliance on a Kojévian reading of the PS in NP), it would perhaps be mistaken to reproach him for interpretative 'errors'. His critiques of figures within the tradition could be understood as deliberate and creative exercises in misdirection, driven by a sensation of philosophical oppression, and the need, acknowledged in his accounts of the process in which images of thought are transformed, to mark the difference between such negative 'mediators' and those he found more conducive to creative thinking.

as we shall see, is not an internal relation secured by the transcendence of the Concept *qua* Ground, for the Concept cannot be understood through this illusory category.

As we saw in Chapter Four, Deleuze's ontology presents the relation between the transcendental or virtual, and the empirical or actual, in terms of Absolute Difference or their mutual incommensurability. The virtual is in-itself different in kind from itself, and becomes for-itself in actuality by externalising itself. Like Bergsonian duration, the virtual tends both to 'relax' itself through actual differences of degree in extension, and to remain immanent or implicated within differences of degree as Absolute Difference. In this way, the relation between virtual tendencies and their actual expression is external and contingent, unlike the necessary and internal relation that is posited in Schelling's *Philosophy of Identity* as existing between the substantial unconditioned and the conditioned. This externality, for Deleuze, gives real, creative explanatory power to philosophy. As we shall see, Hegel's own account of the ontological principle of determination refuses all transcendence to this principle, describing it in terms of internal difference and externalisation, rather than ascribing to it substantiality and a transcendent self-relation through which it becomes determinate by limiting itself.

We begin in the *Doctrine of Essence* where we left off in the previous chapter, with Ground. The determination of Ground is characterised by a relation of two terms in which their mutual exclusivity is necessary or *essential*, i.e., they are internally related to each other as external to each other. The instability of this determination, which is apparent to thinking that goes beyond the stubborn insistence on the fixity of ground and grounded, results from this mutual relation of 'shining-into-other'. As we saw in Chapter Six, any Ground can only be a Ground if it presupposes an other that it grounds. Ground thus includes within its logical structure the unity of itself and its Grounded, and their distinction. This distinction is the Form (SL II, 86-7/449-50) of the Ground, and the unity becomes determined as the specific determination of the Ground, its Content. Given a specific Ground, its relation to its Grounded is in the first instance a case of *Formal*



Grounding, in which the inner unity of the two, their common Content, is posited in a doubled form (SL II 97-8/457-8). An example of this logical relation mentioned by Hegel is the notion of attractive force in physics, where a phenomenon is explained by reference to a ground that is simply the particular phenomenon posited *as existing* under the form of universality or abstract possibility (SL II, 98-9/458-9). Hegel is thus directly criticising the type of explanation of determination that Deleuze accuses him of giving, where the actual is assumed to pre-exist its actualisation as a possible, internal determination of a transcendent unconditioned.<sup>5</sup> For Hegel, this type of explanation is illusory because the logical structure of Ground is not self-consistent. This lack of consistency is the result of a failure to *comprehend* adequately the structure of Absolute Negativity, for Formal Ground is a determination which still requires that an external term, the Content, is presupposed as given to thought, which then inscribes a merely formal or accidental distinction within it.

The instability of Ground and Grounded is repeated in Formal Ground, with the Formal distinction presupposing the unity of Content rather than being genuinely identical with it. The result is an attempt to think the unity of Form and Content anew. Real Ground is the result, where the distinction of Form is internal to Content itself, such that Ground and Grounded are external to each other, not solely because of their Form, but due to their Content. However, the insufficiency of Formal Ground, which was due to the inessentiality of the Formal distinction, is now matched by the excessive externality of the Real distinction which is internal to Content (SL II, 103-5/462-3). That is to say, if we simply posit the ground of a phenomenon in another phenomenon external to it that we simply *associate* with it, there is no ground of unity between the two except in the merely subjective judgement through which we link them. In this way, it becomes impossible to say what it is in the phenomena themselves that constitutes a grounding relation. Any phenomenon could be adduced as a ground of any other (SL II,

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<sup>5</sup> On Deleuze's critique of this type of explanation, see Chapter Four above, pp. 123-4

106-7/465). Here, the unity of the two Contents is presupposed rather than posited, and again, no explanation is produced.<sup>6</sup>

The overcoming of the inconsistencies associated with Ground really begins with the determination of Existence (SL II. 125/481). With Existence, there is no longer a grounding relation between a term and its essential substrate (*Grundlage*) (EL §123 Zus.).<sup>7</sup> Ground relies on the *given* externality of two terms, which, for representational consciousness, implies both spatial and temporal externality. However, the logical structure of Existence is not that of ground and consequent, but implies the totality of *Conditions* that have to exist for one existent to be the Ground of another. A Condition is precisely what has to be present in order for there to be a relation of grounding, an immediacy which is simply present, rather than being posited by the Ground. The determination of Condition thus acknowledges the insufficiency of Ground, which is that, given two phenomena, it is impossible to explain the necessary determination of one by the other simply by considering the phenomena themselves. The necessary relation of grounding requires certain contingent Conditions in order to exist. The necessary connection between the movement of one Humean billiard ball and that of another requires a whole totality of Conditions to be established, which are unified in or related to just *this* ground-relation: a level surface, the absence of strong draughts, and so on. The determination of Condition marks the comprehension of this fact, in which the presupposition of Ground is determined as immediately other, as an *Etwas* (SL II. 113/469). Yet, as has been the case in the Logic of Essence from External Reflection onward, this external relation to a Condition cannot be understood without relating it to the internal self-relation of Essence, which in this case is that of Ground.

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<sup>6</sup> On the insufficiencies of Formal and Real Ground, see also Mure, 1984, p. 108, Taylor, 1975, pp. 263-4 and McTaggart, 1910, pp. 120-2.

<sup>7</sup> See also Mure, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

A Condition is a Condition, and not just something immediate without further content. because it is related to a Ground and a Grounded, yet the Ground relation only exists under certain Conditions. Each side is both immediately itself *and* mediated with respect to the other, or is a posited Contradiction (SL II, 114-5/471-2). Given that Grounding and of Conditioning are each both itself and its other, they are identical, collapsing into a negative unity (SL II, 116-8/472-4), i.e., the active Emergence (*Hervorgang*) of an Existent Fact (SL II, 119/474). An Existent contains or implies both Ground and Condition, but as internal moments of its own Form or Show (*Schein*) (SL II, 118-19/474). The overcoming of the mutual externality of Ground and Condition does not, however, imply that Existence is realised in a sole Existent, a theological, transcendent unity that acts as a Ground of the relation between conditioned Grounds and grounded Conditions. Existence is the immediacy, the Being, of all actual empirical things when we consider them as relational, as inseparable from other things. And the important point to bear in mind is that the Existence of any thing cannot solely be explained by finite grounding relationships that only exist under certain specific Conditions. Existence is not a further determination of Ground, but the overcoming of its supposed self-subsistence.

Why is this? The external Conditions of a thing are its own Form, a logical/ontological structure that allow certain temporally and spatially determinate grounding relations between it and other Existents to be discerned from the perspective of a finite consciousness. The determination of Existence means that the idea of an absolute Ground without Conditions is illusory. Each Existent implies a totality of Conditions without which it would not exist. But it is this totality of external Conditions that brings something into Existence, and *not Ground*. In this way, Ground appears as an illusory determination of the Absolute, one that embodies the structure of representational consciousness and finite reason. The real explanation for the Existence of something must refer to Conditions, and the element of necessity here lies in the fact

that they must be just *this* something's Conditions. The contingency of any given thing is not, then, an effect of our finite understanding, as was the case with Kant, for whom knowledge of the true necessity of any given object (its complete determination) could only be a regulative goal for finite consciousness. Infinite knowledge, for Kant, involved the unending linking of judgements of experience that connect objects to each other, within networks inscribed by reflective judgement. However, Hegel's deduction of the determination of Existence shows that the contingency of any thing, its externality to the totality of its conditions, is not due to the inadequacy of our faculty of knowledge, but is a necessary determination of Being itself. For Hegel, there is, *pace* Deleuze, no Ideal of complete determination in genuine philosophy. The Ideal is a construct produced by finite consciousness. Such an Ideal, posited as the regulative goal of theoretical knowledge with regard to any particular thing, is itself finite. This is because it fails to comprehend the irreducible contingency of any given thing, representing instead the unity of the thing-in-itself in relation to the individual phenomenal object, as the substantial, transcendent unity of appearance. This would, in Schelling's philosophy, become the real Absolute Identity, *qua* Ground of all determination, defined as a *Sollen* for reason.

For Hegel, the totality of conditions of an Existent is a totality only because all Existents *transcend* their conditions as negatively self-related terms. Every Existent is the Condition of other Existents, and as such is equally immediate, or external to them. In other words, the basis for thinking all Existence is, according to Hegel, externality, rather than an essential, internal, and necessary relation between empirical reality and a transcendent Substance.<sup>8</sup> Each Existent is grounded in relation to other Existents, but

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<sup>8</sup> Taylor (*op. cit.*, p. 289) makes this point, yet his discussion of the 'inner unity' of the effectivity of the Concept is shot through with ambiguities regarding the mode of this effectivity: is the Concept still an 'underlying reality' (p. 262, p. 279 fn. 1) or is there nothing behind Show (p. 262)?

only from the incomplete and illusory perspective of a finite consciousness, which projects the unity of these relations as a regulative Idea. From a properly philosophical perspective, the problem is to understand in what way the *ungroundedness* of an Existent is a necessary element of its Being.

By undermining the notion of Ground, Hegel also distances himself from the illusory distinction of real and possible that Deleuze criticises, as we shall see now in relation to the determinations of the Absolute and of Actuality. If the idea that all Existents are necessarily Grounded is illusory, then so is the idea that the difference between Essence and Existence is one between a possible determination and the same determination with reality 'added' to it. This illusory difference determines, for example, Schelling's account of the relation between the first creation and the Absolute's real self-differentiation. For Hegel, however, Essence *is* Existence. This speculative proposition expresses the total 'emptying' or turning-inside-out (*Entäußerung*) of Essence into Existence (SL II, 128/483). The idea of internal relation has, by deconstructing itself, shown its truth to be Existence, the unity that implies a totality of external relations in its own self-relation. The Conditions of an Existent are not possibilities abstracted from reality, but other real empirical Existents, and a given Existent is not only conditioned by these Existents, but also transcends its relations with them, for they are *its* Conditions.

As elements of the Existent's relation to itself, its Conditions are its Appearance, its *Erscheinung* or real Show. The difference between *Erscheinung* and *Schein* consists in the stability of the Conditions. The Conditions have been shown to be, not merely vanishing products of a self-related and thus self-negating Essence, but Existences, immediate terms whose determination has resulted from the deconstruction of the idea of a transcendent Essence. There are thus two totalities here, that of Existents and that of Conditions, or in other words, that of the Existents considered as immediate, and that of their external mediation. One seems to be the Ground of the other, but this repeats the

unstable ground-relation in a new form. The result is the collapse of these totalities into a negative unity, i.e., Being determined as the Absolute.

The Absolute here means at first the sublation of Reflection through itself (SL II, 187-9/530-1). In this way, it is similar to the Absolute as Schelling understood it: the necessary foundation of any reflexive distinction, arrived at through reflexive reason's affirmation of its own inability to act as foundation. The determinations of Essence up to this point in the SL have been comprehended here as partial attempts to grasp the Existent and its totality of Conditions. The relation between the totality of Existents and that of Conditioning relations has collapsed into the unity of the Absolute, which again has an appearance of transcendent Ground about it. The Absolute grasped as this positive, indifferent unity is the end of Reflection and is opposed to it, in the same way as Matter became opposed to Form earlier in SL (SL II, 89-90/451-2): 'there is nothing in the finite which could preserve for it a distinction against the Absolute' (SL II, 190/532). This is also, for Hegel, the prime characteristic of Spinoza's Absolute (SL II, 197/538).

This Absolute-as-Ground, however, is only relative to the process of reflection, the 'negative exposition [*Auslegung*] of the Absolute', that sublates itself in it (SL II, 189-91/532-3). If we understand the Absolute not only as the vanishing of the two totalities, but also as the truth of Being or of immediacy as such, then the exposition of the Absolute through Reflection is in fact the positive exposition of the positive, pure immediacy of the Absolute itself. In this way, Being is comprehended *as* the Absolute, that is, as related only to itself, not as passing over into another because of its own instability, nor as shining-into-another, but rather as *manifesting itself* as Existents and their Conditions. What does this mean? We saw in Chapter Two that Schelling's Absolute, as reflexively or negatively expounded, was the Absolute of purely negative philosophy, whose merely hypothetical determinations, the 'first creation', had to be sublated in order to pass over to the affirmation of the Absolute as a rational *Ungrund*.

The positive exposition of the Absolute lay, for Schelling, outside the Absolute itself, relying upon an unthinkable positing of difference in the Absolute that, as the works of his middle period showed, had to be thought as equiprimordial with the unified Absolute.

Schelling's problem is that the Absolute, in its substantial, grounding role, that is, as transcendent to all its modes of expression, including reason, has been abstracted from these modes, its own content, which then have to be thought as somehow migrating into it through a primordial dissonance. That determination rather than indeterminate identity exists is, as noted in the previous chapter, an 'incomprehensible happening' (PS 543/471 §780). For Hegel, however, that the Absolute is related, not only to Essence and Reflection, but to Being, means that the real content of the positive, immediate, abstract Absolute is its own ontological content or its developed logical structure, that is, the *fact* that it manifests itself in a totality of Existences related to a totality of Conditions (SL II, 194/536). Therefore the real content of Being comprehended as the Absolute is not an abstractly conceived predicate or positive content, attached to the Absolute as to a pure substance. No such predicate could be finally justified against the opposed predicate that it reflexively implies, as is the case with Absolute-as-freedom against Absolute-as-necessity, or as subject against object. Schelling's definition of the Absolute as transcending all predicates acknowledges this. For Hegel then, the content of the Absolute is, in fact, the internal negativity of Being, the very fact that it manifests itself as different from itself. This renders the result of the PS more comprehensible in logical terms, for Absolute Knowing there arose as consciousness of the whole process of natural consciousness's identity with and difference from itself, beginning with the simple immediacy of Being. The determination of the Absolute shows that the process of becoming external to itself and only thus becoming identical with itself, or Absolute Negativity, is the logical content of immediate Being itself.

The developed unity of the second Absolute with itself is the truth of its Being. It is Being and its inherent instability, the ceaseless transitions of the Logic of Being and

the circular shining-into-other of Essence, comprehended. As such, it is not just Absolute, a unity 'absolved' of reflexive difference, but Actuality, a unity that includes within it, as moments of *its* self-relation, both the totality of mutually-external Existents and their Conditions. In this way, it contains more than the determination of Existence. Pure Being is comprehended, then, as *implicitly* Actuality. Actuality explicates and expresses the meaning of Being, whereas Being cannot even explicate its own meaning, for its sense is inseparable from Nothing. Being is revealed, not as a transcendent substance posited outside thought, but as the process of internal difference, 'the activity of self-development' through which immediacy becomes Actuality, grasped abstractly or subjectively as a positive unity (EL §124 Zus.).

The internal dissonance of Being and its resulting return to immediacy in Actuality is thus implied, for Hegel, by the internal structure of immediacy itself, in so far as it is thought through. As a logical structure, the Absolute is its own reflexive exposition as determinate Existences and their determinate Conditioning relations. As posited *outside* thought, outside all reflexive relation, as an *alogical* ontological identity, it is posited by the Understanding as removed from any determinate relation with the reflexively determined realm of experience that is sublated in it. But this relation cannot be denied: it turns out, as we saw in Chapter Six, to be the mutual implication of Presupposing and Positing Reflection. Indeed, it resurfaces in the problem of circularity that afflicts Schelling's Absolute, where the Absolute as alogical unity has to be posited as a ground that *resembles* the realm of experience even though it is also posited as utterly transcending it, as utterly *not* resembling it. In this result, the transcendent Absolute turns out to possess only illusory being. Schelling's foundationalist project can only be rescued by explaining the real, substantial genesis of determinate relations via a genuinely non-rational Absolute, Absolute Difference, the Absolute that incarnates immanence in the form of an externality that nevertheless 'insists' or 'persists' (to use



Deleuze's terminology) in its products. This, as we saw in Chapters Two and Four, proves in fact to be the undoing of foundationalism.

So, to recap: in trying to think something as determinate through its simple Being (which refers not to concrete, empirical Being, but to Kant's 'indeterminate empirical intuition'), we find that we have to think its content, not as substantially or metaphysically Grounded, but as a *logical process* of determination in which its simple immediacy *Exists* in relation to other Existents. And these Existents are related to it *as* its Conditions only because of their real externality. This process is Actuality, which is subsequently grasped as its positive, immediate unity, that is, pure or abstract Possibility. For Hegel, what for Kant were still only modal categories, that is, relations not between objects (as was the case with substantiality and causality) but between objects and the subject's faculties of knowing, are determinations of Actuality itself. Possibility is not the truth of Actuality, however. Hegel does not here revert to a conception of the Substantial whole of Existents and Conditioning relations as a possible unity that pre-exists empirical Actuality. Possibility *does* mean such a unity, without real distinction, but as such it is abstract and illusory. As an abstract, transcendent identity, it is an unstable determination of reflection, and implies both its own difference and the development of an opposition. If we state that A is a pure or logical possibility, we simply state that no contradiction is involved in thinking it. But to hold to pure possibility in this way is to ignore the *impossibility* of A, the opposed state, which is equally implied by the conception of A. Given the merely possible, there is no real necessity in believing it to be any more real than its impossibility (SL II, 202-4/543-4).<sup>9</sup>

In relation to an Actuality, this means that, although it is related to other Existents as its Conditions, it is also immediate, an Existent unity that transcends its Conditions. Hence it can just as well *not* exist. The Existence of an Actuality, then, is not Grounded by the internal unity of a substantial whole, but can be or not be, and is thus

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<sup>9</sup> Houlgate, 1995, p. 39.

*necessarily*, or as a result of its own content, Contingent: 'necessity is initially nothing but the necessity of contingency'.<sup>10</sup> It is a contingent fact that A rather than something else is Actual, but the fact that A is either impossible or possible, and is thus *really*, and not just merely, possible, is Grounded in other Actualities. Nevertheless, Actuality is more than both abstract *and* real Possibility. Possibility is a determination of Actuality rather than the other way around, and 'points to another, to actuality in which it augments and completes [*sich ergänzt*] itself' (SL II, 203/543, modified). Real Possibility thus externalises itself in Actuality.

Actuality always includes Contingency, whereas pure Possibility seeks to exclude it and is thus illusory. That an Actuality exists implies a totality of Conditions, the assembling of which is not guaranteed by the internal *telos* of some substantial whole, but is Contingent. What is Actual is thus Contingent, for there is no transcendent Ground or timeless reservoir of Possibility that pre-exists it and guarantees its production. Possibility implies nothing but the potential of the Actual as it (the Actual) is assembled according to the logical relationships of Conditioning in which it exists. The Actual is potentially other Actualities, but what these shall be when they emerge into Existence is Contingent. Real possibility, then, does not transcend 'the whole set [*das Ganze*] of conditions, a dispersed actuality which is not reflected into itself [...]' (SL II, 209/547).

Real Necessity is not internal to a transcendent principle, but is instead the working-out of Existing relations between Actualities that are, in another aspect, themselves determinants of real Possibilities. (SL II, 210-11/548-9). This reinforces the conclusion that the idea of a 'first creation' is a transcendental illusion of the Understanding, which, as the static, abstract unity of all possible determinations of actuality, assumes the existence of a positive Substance, a transcendent thing-in-itself. Actuality is determined then, not by metaphysical Grounds, but by the Necessary

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

manifestation of the potentiality of those Actualities that really, Contingently exist. Real Necessity thus presupposes Contingency.

Looking back, we see that the Being of the given has been determined as its own onto-logical process of becoming, i.e., its becoming *in* thought and *as* thought, but also in and as *actuality*. In this process, it is determined as an Actuality, that is, a self-related Existent that includes in this self-relation its mediation by other Existents, its Conditions. This self-relation, its unity as an Actuality, is necessarily Contingent, but Contingency here expresses the chance assembly of its Conditions as the Conditions of just *this* Actuality. However, when these Conditions *are* assembled, then the Actuality of which they are the Conditions emerges Necessarily into Existence. Real Necessity, the unity of a set of Conditions as expressed in their resultant Actuality, is thus inseparable from their own Contingent Existence. It cannot be understood as transcending it in any way, as pre-existing it as the inner determination of a Substance. The unity of Real Necessity and Contingency is Absolute Necessity, the movement of Being to Actuality itself, its unity with itself grasped once again as resulting from its internal dissonance or Absolute Negativity. Being is, in Actuality or in thought, constantly destroying itself and yet maintaining itself in this destruction. It is constantly external to itself or Contingent, and yet is in this very externality always identical with itself, for it is also the manifesting of Real Necessity, the appearing of Actuality out of the potential of what is already Actual. In this way, Being *qua* Absolute Necessity is shown to be 'simple immediacy that is absolute negativity' (SL II, 215/552).

In Being *qua* Absolute Negativity, finite things emerge out of the productive, active side of Actuality (Real Possibility) as immediate, Contingent Existents. Yet they are thus the self-externality of Being, its excess over itself, and so their Existence is inseparable from negativity. This internal dissonance is their own productive activity, and so they become external to themselves in turn, disintegrating as their potentialities

complete themselves by emerging as other Actualities.<sup>11</sup> The relation between Absolute Necessity and Actuality is not therefore a relation between a transcendent Ground that produces, according to its internal *telos*, actual determinations out of the totality of its possible determinations via an operation of limitation. Their relation expresses not internal limitation, but a) the self-externalisation of Actualities through their internal, Absolute Negativity, b) the emergence of their potential as other Actualities, and c) the self-transcendence and self-augmentation of Being through them.<sup>12</sup>

We now turn to the Doctrine of the Concept, in which the self-determining aspect of Actuality becomes fully manifest. As I noted earlier, the way in which Ground is structured as 'shining-into-other' began to be undermined with Existence, which 'contains the [ground] within itself, and the ground does not remain behind existence' (EL §123 Zus.). The determinations of Substance and Causality are the final incarnations of the Ground-structure within the Logic of Essence, and their overcoming constitutes the final sublation of the residual elements of this structure within Being understood as Actuality. In the final determination of Essence, that of Reciprocity, the relation between two Substances determined as Cause and Effect, the last manifestation of the implicitly temporal and spatial Ground-relation, collapses. In Reciprocity, the Cause and the Effect are shown to be indistinguishable from each other (and thus indeterminate), as each is necessarily both Cause and Effect of the other (SL II, 237-8/569-70). The same thing occurred, as we saw in Chapter Six, and for similar reasons, with respect to Ground and Grounded. A third term, a negative unity, is thus implied, which determines itself in both Substances, a 'context' (*Zusammenhang*) for their respective processes of change.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 46-7.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Hegel's remarks on theories of emanation, regarding their lack of 'reflection-into-self' (SL II, 198/539) or self-related negativity, i.e., Absolute Negativity.

<sup>13</sup> Schick, 1994, p. 180.

This negative unity of the two Substances is the sublation of their Substantiality. Substance is Absolute Necessity grasped abstractly as a positive, self-mediated unity, 'being that is because it is' (SL II, 219/555), recalling Spinoza's definition of Substance. In Reciprocity, however, the internal, causal relation between Substances that appears to constitute the metaphysical Essence of Actuality is shown to be illusory, a subjective attempt to maintain the independence of both which does not acknowledge their mutual shining-into-each-other and their negative unity (SL II, 252/582). Absolute Necessity, the logical movement through which Being determines itself as its Actuality, thus turns out to be, in truth, this unity or third, which Hegel calls the Concept. As in the relation between Form and Essence, where both terms lose their independence, becoming 'moments of a single activity — the determining dynamic of *forming*',<sup>14</sup> the Substances become moments of the Concept, a 'comprehensive dynamic activity'.<sup>15</sup>

The recursivity of the logical movement of SL that began to become explicit with Essence, in which Being was explicitly *included* as one of its moments, is now realised. All foregoing moments are moments of the Concept, just as, from the perspective of Actuality, the moments leading from Being through Existence and Condition are elements of its appearing. The movement that begins with Being and whose unity is expressed by Absolute Necessity is therefore itself the self-externalisation of the Concept. Actuality and its appearing are equally moments of the Concept, of thought which knows itself as thought, that is, not as immediate Being, nor as posited outside itself as Essence or as Ground, but as the unity that comprehends all the determinations of immediacy and of relation. All attempts to sustain difference and determination through some internal relation of Grounding have proven inadequate and self-cancelling, and thus illusory. Categories such as Existence and Actuality, on the other hand, have a higher status in relation to the Concept, for they foreshadow its non-

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<sup>14</sup> Burbidge, 1981, p. 87.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

foundational nature, in which the unity and internal difference of Being are comprehended as moments of one negative unity. However, only the Concept itself, along with its subsequent determinations, will prove truly adequate to sustain difference.

We saw that Absolute Necessity was the inner logical movement of the Actual, which deployed itself through both Contingency and Real Necessity. Nevertheless, this movement moves *through* the Actual; it occurs *in* it, because of the negativity, the positedness or relation-to-other within the Actual which constitutes Real Possibility. Hence the Actual *suffers* Absolute Necessity without comprehending it. The significance of the Concept is that it transcends the movement of Absolute Necessity, in that it includes it as a moment of itself, through which it develops or attains to itself. Absolute Necessity is primarily the immanent development of SL itself. The inner negativity of the finite, its incessant arising and perishing, is thought in the Concept as its own moment. The characteristic of the finite, as it is thought in the determination of Opposition, for example, is to be both itself and its other at the same time: the positive is both positive and negative, and vice versa. In this way, it excludes itself from itself and collapses. The negativity of the finite thus expresses the way in which Being both exceeds and lacks itself at the same time when it is embodied in finite determinations, whether these are immediately self-related (Being) or related to themselves through an other (Essence). Neither Being nor Essence are stable in relation to themselves, and this instability is also their self-externalisation, as when, for example, Essence passes into Existence.

The Concept, on the other hand, has a stable self-relation. This is not, however, because it knows itself as Essence, Ground or Substance, subsisting beyond the flux of Illusory Being, Reflection, or Accidents as a thing-in-itself. On the contrary, such foundations are, as we have repeatedly seen, transcendental illusions. As transcendent and thus illusory, Ground 'lacks a content that is determinate in and for itself; and consequently it does not act of itself and bring forth' (EL §121 Zus.). As previously noted, this is true of Schelling's Absolute, which requires that a difference somehow

arise in it in order to explain determination. But the Concept has a content as part of its self-relation, namely Absolute Negativity, which has been thought as the internal movement of the finite in the determination of Absolute Necessity. Hence the Concept develops *itself* through the internal movement of the finite determinations. This development occurs through its becoming-external to itself in both the abstractly positive determinations of Being, and in those of Essence in which it finds itself expelled out from its abstract unity. It subsequently passes on to determinations in which it determines itself as Actuality, that is, as stable (self-related), but perishing, self-externality. In this way, the movement of the finite is within the Concept, and through it, thought comes to determine itself as Concept. Just as simple Being was the abstract presupposition or beginning of the PS whose meaning for natural consciousness was explicated in the movement that became Absolute Knowing, Being in SL is explicated by the Concept, which comprehends Being, the beginning, as itself posited in an abstract, externalised form. Being is, in effect, the self-determining activity of the Concept — which is comprehended ever more concretely throughout the Logics of Essence and the Concept — grasped in its most abstract form, the pure unity of the activity of self-development (EL §124 Zus.).

The Concept that has left behind Substance will thus come to comprehend itself as the activity of presupposing itself, not as given, as positive, beyond all its accidental determinations, but rather as posited external to itself. The Concept is not, then, a knowing that retroactively presupposes itself in its own ground, that is, in the foundationalist sense that Schelling, Deleuze and Hegel all denounced in one way or another. It does not presuppose that the in-itself, ground or condition resembles that of which it is the foundation. On the contrary, the logical genesis of the Concept always presupposes itself as determined through such illusory forms of foundationalist relation (as Presupposing and Positing Reflection, as Opposition, as Ground and Grounded), and also presupposes itself as the gradual overcoming of illusion, through Existence.

Actuality and Absolute Necessity. It presupposes itself as posited as the implicit activity of self-determination (the purely affirmative determination of Being), which explicates itself with fully immanent, Absolute Necessity, and then explicates this internal negativity as *its own*, in the determination of Concept.

Hence Logic is not, for Hegel, *self-grounding*. The self-grounding system as developed by Fichte and Schelling is in fact the highest contradiction that foundationalist method can express. It involves a thinking that presupposes itself as *given*, as abstract Substance, and which then tries to deny its own negativity, its own reflexivity or difference from itself, in order to become, finally, abstract Substance. For Hegel, only the Concept and its determinations express the truth of philosophical thinking, because they express, not a self-grounding thought, but an actively *self-determining* and thus autonomous one.

However, the Logic of the Concept is not a final resting-place. Hegel envisaged it as the gateway into the *Realphilosophie*, the philosophy of Nature and of Spirit. The reasons for this will hopefully become clearer as we examine the nature of the Concept a little closer, for they concern again the meaning of the Concept as the activity of thinking or being that is determined by being internally different in nature from itself. The Concept, as the unity of positing Essence and posited Being, is first of all Universal, the negative unity of all its determinations and that which is determined in them (SL II, 274/601). But as such, it remains infected with Absolute Negativity, and so presupposes itself, the result of the movement of the SL, as posited in its various determinations. It is not only the unity that comprehends the movement of the SL; it is this movement itself. It is thus determinate as the Particular Concept, the '*shining outwards* [*Scheinen nach außen*]' (SL II, 281/606) of the Universal. This 'shining' is, as in Essence, only illusory. The illusory fixity of the Particular Concept is that of the Understanding (SL II, 285-6/610-11), in which the Universal appears as the Ground of the Particular. This subjective perspective on the Concept deconstructs itself, as the Ground-relation did in



the Logic of Essence. In relation to the Ground, the Grounded is a vanishing term that returns into its Ground, or an Accident of a Substance, and similarly the abstract Particular vanishes into the Universal (SL II, 296/618). Hegel's point here is that, in order to sustain real difference, the relation between a substantial Universal and its Particulars is not enough.<sup>16</sup> The transcendent Universal of traditional realism is thus as powerless to sustain difference as is a metaphysical Substance, such as Schelling's Absolute Identity.

However, the Particular is also inwardly determinate, as well as determinate over against the Concept in its *Schein* as a Grounded. This is because it is identical with the Concept. As we saw with respect to Actuality, the externalisation of potentiality through Contingency is itself identical with Absolute Necessity, the logical movement of Absolute Negativity. The negativity of Actuality entails its movement outwards into real externality, but it remains Actual in this externality, rather than simply dissipating. Likewise, the Particular Concept is still Universal, and thus a negative unity with itself, constituted through mediation and thus unlike Ground or Substance, for example, which are illusory negative unities posited as outside all mediation. As inwardly determinate and thus external to itself, the Particular Concept, with its illusory reference to what is outside the Concept, is itself immanently the Singular Concept, which has a *real* reference outwards.<sup>17</sup>

The Singular Concept is vitally important, because it marks the point where the Concept begins to move outward beyond itself, discovering that explicitly real mediation, mediation with that which is *really* outside it, is its own immanent meaning. It is, firstly, the positing of the unity of Universal and Particular, the emergence of the dimension of Universality (Absolute Negativity), within the Particular. The Concept thus

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Winfield, 1998, p. 11.

<sup>17</sup> See the Introduction to the English translation of EL, pp. xix-xx, on some reasons for preferring 'the Singular' to 'the Individual' for translating Hegel's *das Einzelne*.

returns to unity with itself, a real unity constituted through mediation rather than an illusory one, posited in opposition to all mediation. However, a paradoxical result occurs. Singularity is 'not only the return of the Concept into itself, but immediately its loss' (SL II, 299/621). The Concept, as we shall see, marks the point of development for philosophical consciousness that is simultaneously its 'highest maturity', and where 'its downfall begins' (SL II, 287/611). This downfall will be the passage from Logic to Nature, in which the Concept externalises itself as absolutely different from itself.

With the Singular Concept, the Concept has determined *itself* as a totality. This means that each moment, Universal, Particular and Singular is immediately identical with all the others, or presupposes itself as posited in and through them. Each is Universal, or simple negativity; each is Particular, or posited as an illusory determination in relation to a Ground (the Concept determined illusorily as Ground), and each is Singular, a real externalisation of the Concept *qua* activity of thinking in which the Concept is identical with itself. In turn, looking back, all the determinations that make up the SL, having been comprehended now as determinations of the Concept, are themselves each of these three aspects and their unity. That all otherness is therefore simply a determination of the Concept as a self-enclosed totality (and is thus merely *apparent* otherness) seems hard to deny at this point. If this is so, then the suspicion that the Concept is an expression of a dogmatic image of thought must resurface. But when we turn back to the Singular Concept, we find Hegel describing it as the realisation of the unity of Universality and Particular, but only in so far as it is the 'posited separation [*Abscheidung*]' (SL II, 300/622) of the Concept from itself. Whereas Particularity implies only an illusory reference beyond the Universality of the Concept, Singularity implies that something is really 'pointed out [*monstriert wird*]' (SL II, 300/622), distinguished in Actuality. This is not an illusory relation of self-exclusion or self-repulsion, as was encountered in the Logic of Essence before the emergence of Existence as the *Entäußerung* of Essence.

Singularity is thus the final term in the totality of the pure Concept, and also this totality's transcendence of itself towards that which is absolutely external to thought. As such, it recalls the *Entäußerung* of Essence that we saw realised in Existence, the Absolute, and in Actuality. Looking back once more over the progress of SL, it becomes apparent that, in order to sustain difference, the immediacy of the given has to be thought as Universality (its Being), then as Particularised, in terms of Quality, Quantity, and the self-relations that result from the collapse of Essence, such as Existence and Actuality. But it is only really differentiated when it is thought in terms of the Concept, which is absolutely external to itself and *only thus* identical with itself. Hence the immanence of the self-determining activity of thought only remains immanent to itself by being absolutely external to itself. It is not simply *opposed* to itself, for here there is no Essence that excludes itself from itself in a relation of Opposition.

And in this way, the immediate is only fully differentiated when it is the Singular Concept. As Universal, or simply immediate, and Particular, or mediated by others, its self-relation is still illusory. In these determinations, it is still under the domination of the subjective Understanding, which views the given as Identical, Grounded, or Substantial, i.e., as posited outside all mediation, as not including mediation in its self-relation. Only when its relation-to-self is secured by a relation of absolute exteriority is this illusory aspect removed. Schelling and Deleuze maintain that the immediacy of the given is only real outside the Concept, and that all reflection of this immediacy is thus illusory (Schelling), or that this immediacy is real because the being of the sensible is Absolute Difference and thus outside the Concept, (Deleuze, DR 80/56-7, 182/139-40).<sup>18</sup> The implication is that any attempt to define immediacy as self-related is to be enslaved by a transcendental illusion that dominates Difference. But this does not take into account the determination of the Concept, according to SL. It is the activity of thought or being that is activity, rather than Substance, only insofar as it realises its absolute difference from

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<sup>18</sup> See also Baugh, 1993, p. 18.

itself. Its self-relation is thus comprehended as a dimension of its irreducible internal difference, its Absolute Negativity.

This is emphatically demonstrated by the passage from SL into the Philosophy of Nature, which has perhaps been the most controversial aspect of Hegel's ontology. Like other *a priori* philosophies of nature, including Schelling's, Hegel's has been often dismissed as the product of rationalism gone mad. But recent interpreters of German Idealism have sought to rescue *Naturphilosophie*, by showing that it is not necessarily dogmatic or hubristic.<sup>19</sup> The crucial question is whether *Naturphilosophie* must necessarily be an attempt to determine nature as it must be in-itself. As we saw in Chapter Two, Schelling's early *Naturphilosophie* proposed instead to determine nature in relation to our experience, in order to show what nature must be like in order that we should have representations of objects outside us. Hegel rejects both options. Whether we ask what nature must be like in-itself, or for-us, we are working with a foundationalist image of philosophy. From the perspective of Hegel's Absolute Knowing, the question has to be whether or not the immanent determination of the absolute unity of thought and being as the self-determining Concept also requires that the Concept determine itself as Nature, as that which is genuinely other than thought. If this is the case, then a philosophy of nature has to determine what is entailed in such a determination, which embodies the self-transcendence of self-determining thought.

As William Maker has pointed out, the transition from onto-logic to *Naturphilosophie* cannot mean that Nature is a) posited by thought, so that Nature is not itself ontologically real, or b) that Nature has all along been determining thought.<sup>20</sup> Both these options remain illusory, foundationalist determinations of the Absolute. This is, again, because they imply the structure of Positing and Presupposing Reflection without

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<sup>19</sup> In addition, Deleuze and Guattari's last intended project was the construction of a *Naturphilosophie*.

<sup>20</sup> Maker, 1998, pp. 8, 13-14.

comprehending it. Nature cannot be absolutely posited by thought as an immediacy outside it, for if the Concept did this, it would simply be an unstable Positing Reflection. This instability is caused by its failure to acknowledge its necessary presupposition, an immediacy that would have to be given to it so that it can posit another such immediacy relative to the first. Nor could Nature simply be presupposed by thought, for it would have to be presupposed in a determinate form abstracted from accepted data, and therefore would have been just as much posited as presupposed.<sup>21</sup> Both these options would simply posit a resemblance between thought and nature, whose absoluteness could only be assumed.

These options may be incoherent, but this alone does not mean that an alternative is possible. The question is whether or not Hegel's immanent determination of the absolute unity of being and thought as the self-determining Concept will immanently determine itself further as absolutely other to itself, as the idea of Nature. As argued above, the Concept is that which is itself only through dividing itself utterly from itself. Its negativity is thus comprehended as constitutive of its self-relation. Even the Absolute Idea, the final determination of the Concept, is constituted as identical with itself through its internal negativity, or is in unity with itself only insofar as it loses its unity with itself. The negative unity of thought and being includes Absolute Negativity, or is just as much the utter lack of relation between thought and being.<sup>22</sup> And the Concept is explicitly determined as this internally dissonant unity. So, if the Concept is that which only determines or realises itself through its utter difference from itself, then it must transcend itself towards the immanent determination of a genuine other. If this other is to be genuinely other, then it must be determined through the Concept, for it cannot be *assumed* to be other because of some merely given determination, as then the circle of Positing and Presupposing Reflection would arise again. So it must be determined

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> Miller, 1998, p. 441.

through the Concept, but it must be thus determined as absolutely unlike the Concept. As Maker notes, *Naturphilosophie* implies the ‘radical *nonidentity*’ of thought and nature: ‘thought and nature do not even resemble one another’.<sup>23</sup>

The thought of Nature that arises immanently from the Concept is thus one of radical externality, a mode of determination that is not self-determination, given that this characterises the Concept. Nevertheless, it is still fully determinate, for it is an expression of the absolute unity of being and thought, rather than being determined in relation to something accepted as given. Nature is simply *being-outside-itself*, being which is always immediately other to itself, yet which subsists as such being, rather than losing its determinateness because of its sheer immediacy, as did the determinations of pure Being. *Naturphilosophie* for Hegel has then to take up the task of immanently determining this mode of determination, which is utterly different to that of thought, but which is still capable of being determined in thought, given that the very idea of this mode only arises through the self-determination of the Concept.

#### v) *Concluding Summary*

Deleuze’s image of Hegel’s thought has thus been shown to be illusory on four related key points: i) the meaning of the self-relation of the Concept, ii) the character of the Concept as ‘self-grounding’, iii) the reality of the Concept as a ‘totality’, and iv) the consequent inability of the Concept to think real difference. To end this chapter, I will reassess these four points in light of the foregoing.

- i) For Deleuze, the Concept internally resembles the phenomenal subject, for it, like Kant’s notion of a spontaneous Self, simply reflects the presupposition that the conditions must resemble the conditioned, and is thus a transcendental illusion. However, as we have seen, the

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<sup>23</sup> Maker, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

Concept does not resemble the phenomenal subject. In fact, as we saw earlier, the PS shows how Kant's spontaneous Self is an illusory posit that derives from a crisis within consciousness. At the end of the PS, Absolute Negativity, it is true, retains the character of a ground or conditioned, but only from the perspective of the natural consciousness that views it as an abyss, similar to Schelling's Absolute, into which its own determinations disappear. From the perspective of philosophical consciousness, which takes it up as identical with the ambiguous Being presented in the beginning of PS, this opposition does not exist. And further, it is shown to be an illusory or non-Actual difference. Hegel notes that Kant's transcendental unity of apperception is a genuinely speculative moment of his thought. But as we saw in the previous chapter, Hegel means here Kant's definition of apperception as neither phenomenal or noumenal. Only by bearing this definition in mind will we understand what it means for apperception to be *activity*, rather than appearance or substance. For Hegel, the 'thing which thinks' is not a thing, but a non-foundational activity, the 'existent Concept' (SL II, 253-4/583-4). It is a mode of determining (self-determination) that the finite subject cannot possess, and which in fact explicates the utter ontological decentring of the finite subject in the Doctrine of Essence.

- ii) The Concept does not presuppose itself in the form of a transcendent Substance which is somehow determinately given to thought, and which secures the inner meaning of thought and of being as one unity. For Deleuze, Hegel saw the absoluteness of the Concept as deriving from the fact that it expressed the contradictory nature of all phenomenal appearance. In this way, it supposedly can adequately express Kant's transcendental Ideal of complete determination, in whose

realisation the real relations between phenomena would be comprehended. Such an Ideal would be a substance for which all phenomenal relations would be aspects of its internal relation to itself. However, this means that Deleuze has assimilated the Concept to the self-grounding *foundationalist* systems of Fichte and Schelling. Both of these presuppose that the Absolute can be given through a superior intuition as a substantial or transcendent foundation, which must then be deduced as a full ground by a method that, beginning from the absolute Substance, eventually returns into it. But this method means that thought has to both presuppose and disavow its own negativity (the difference between Substance and finite reflection cannot be crossed; only subjectively cancelled by an act of faith). The Concept, on the other hand, presupposes itself in its beginning, but as posited by itself as external to itself. That is, the difference between beginning and end arises, in light of the survey of its own development taken by the Concept at the end, from the negativity comprehended by the Concept as the implicit determination of the beginning.

iii) The Concept is thus not a totality in the metaphysical sense, i.e., an internally differentiated Substance. As the transitions from Essence to Existence, from Universal to Particular Concept, and from Absolute Idea to Nature demonstrate, the Concept determines itself as a totality only in the moment when it exceeds itself as totality. Existence is irreducible to Essence, and becomes a dispersed set of Conditions, which from a subjective standpoint, 'ought to' return to unity (SL II, 209/547). The Singular Concept is the moment in which the internal relation of the Universal Concept becomes realised or posited, only insofar as it is utterly divided from itself. Nature is that which is determined through



the self-determining Concept as being utterly other than the Concept. The Concept is thus not in principle a closed system, but a system with the power to transcend itself, to lose itself, and only thus to be itself.

iv) Difference is, in relation to the Concept, ungrounded. It is not Opposition or Contradiction, for both of these presuppose a Ground. It is still, however, a dimension of the Concept itself, rather than being simply given to thought in some determination or other. The Concept is thus shown to be that which requires its own *Actual* and absolute difference from itself in order to be fully itself. This is shown by the transition to the idea of Nature, in which the Concept determines itself as that which cannot and does not resemble thought, yet is still determinate in and for itself as a unique mode of determination, rather than being a simple indeterminate negative of thought. The Concept maintains itself in 'destruction', but this can never be given in advance as an assurance. It can only be shown by experience itself. The negativity of thought, its perpetual lack of pure, transcendent Substance, expresses itself in doubts about thought's power of self-determination, by feeding the desire for experience. This is the only way thought can in fact attain to its own reality, by finding itself in that which is absolutely outside it. Difference is internal to thought as *activity*, but this is not the same as saying that Difference is internal to thought as *Substance*.

## Chapter Eight

### Conclusion: Hegel and Deleuze — A Critical Assessment

#### *i) Introduction*

The trauma of reason, as we have seen, is a dilemma that arises because of certain presuppositions that define a specific 'image' or orientation of philosophy. Both Hegel and Deleuze take this view. They also affirm that, if the crisis of meaning implied by the trauma is not to paralyse philosophical thought, this image has to be criticised as an illusory representation of philosophy, and overcome by a new, antifoundational model of philosophy that conceives of the immanence of thought in a way that adequately explains the production of determination, externality, or otherness. In the last three chapters, I have defended Hegel's version of antifoundationalism against objections raised by various thinkers, including Deleuze, all of which share their orientation with Schelling's critique of Hegel. To conclude, I want to bring the antifoundationalist positions of Deleuze and Hegel as I have presented them here together in a brief critical dialogue, in order to sketch the advantages and disadvantages of their respective positions.

The Deleuzean solution to the double-bind presented by the trauma of reason can be summed up by Gregory Bateson's term, 'counteractualisation'. This involves an explicit acknowledgement of the force of the dilemma, which in Deleuze's terms implies an encounter on the part of a foundationalist practice of thought with its own internal limit, the infinite difference of thought from its own being, which foundationalist thought cannot think. This experience itself becomes in Deleuze's thought the means to reinvigorate philosophy. It forces the recognition of a real internal difference, but thus presents thought with a problem that is immanent to this undeniable limit: the task of how to create a stable thinking *of* this difference that remains immanent to it. Thought is thus provoked to change its image of itself, becoming a practice that *creates* knowledge

of the real, rather than hoping to discover it as given through contemplation or reflection. In this way, the crisis of meaning is not resolved, but remains as the basis or non-foundational foundation of new creation, through which philosophy gives sense to itself by selecting mediators and analysing the virtual tendencies of actual phenomena. To reiterate, the justification for this new image of thought is, for Deleuze, immanent to the trauma itself, for the inability of foundationalist thought to think its infinite difference from itself is not accidental. It results from an encounter with the transcendental object of thought, that which belongs to thought by right, a minimal presupposition that all actual practices of thought must, for Deleuze, acknowledge.

Hegel's solution, Absolute Knowing, is not really a resolution of the crisis either, given that it recognises this tendency of nihilism as inherent in representational consciousness itself. For Hegel, philosophy cannot organise itself around the fantasy of dissolving the internal divisions of consciousness. For him, philosophy has to re-cognise how self-consciousness is determined, both intersubjectively and ontologically. In this way, philosophy is the immanent determination of the being of self-consciousness, which is being that is neither phenomenal nor noumenal. The Concept provides the 'context' in which the trauma of reason can be re-cognised as arising out of transcendental illusion. And this context is neither presupposed nor simply posited, but a self-determining unity that is constantly moving beyond itself through its own internal difference from itself.

The failure of foundationalism to buttress the autonomy of reason is thus confronted by both thinkers. Both critique the very idea of an incorrigible, transcendent foundation for the constraints that it places on thought. Foundationalism, as we saw in Chapter Three, presupposes above all the existence of a transcendent subject in some form, which functions as a 'knowing before knowing' and gives philosophy a secure place to begin. This became explicit in the thought of Fichte and Schelling, where this subject is a subject of faith: knowledge is explicitly posited as 'grounded' in an unjustifiable conviction in the identity of reason and the Absolute. Here, the goals of

Enlightenment, which were set solely in relation to human reason, are placed beyond the reach of reason. The attainment of Enlightenment in the sense of secure knowledge of the distinction between dogmatism and genuinely self-critical philosophy is made impossible, due to the image through which 'self-criticism' is understood.

ii) *Deleuze and Hegelian 'Reconciliation'*

As we saw in Chapters Three and Four, Deleuze reconceives the goal of Enlightenment as the attainment of a specific practical attitude in thinking, which, like the rationalist Enlightenment, demands a re-education of the subject. This education is not conducted, however, through a regulated method that functions within the interpretative horizon of a common sense, but by forcing thought to undergo encounters with practices both philosophical and non-philosophical that drive it to think its immanent or internal limit. We have seen in the previous chapter how Deleuze's readings of Hegel often present a distorted image of his philosophy. There remains, however, a dimension of Deleuze's critique of Hegel that can, I think, be separated off from the 'Schellingian' criticisms addressed in the last chapter. This aspect has to do with the very immanence of negativity in Hegel's philosophy, and the theme of reconciliation between thought and being that it implies.

Deleuze's critique of reconciliation is inseparable from his model of education, and his account of the subject of this education. As we have seen, he accounts for self-consciousness as a *pathos* of the faculty of thought, which is determined by the work of the movement of difference that acts upon and through it. There thus persists a 'crack' at the heart of the subject, an immediate difference that cannot be overcome, and which therefore remains as an immanent otherness within thought. We learn to think, as we learn to do anything else, by taking on habits that both give an orientation to our activity and constrain it: "learning" always takes place in and through the unconscious, thereby establishing the bond of a profound complicity between thought and nature' (DR 214/165). Hence the re-education of thought demands a critique of unquestioned habits.

which can only be based on an acknowledgement and affirmation of the 'crack' in the subject. This means that what has to be rejected in order to re-educate thought is the idea of a method. Method, for Deleuze, always only regulates the faculties of the mind within the boundaries of common sense in order to achieve a result that is essentially predetermined, i.e., knowledge that transcends the empirical content of experience. Kant's critical method, for example, reflects presuppositions about experience that imply a common sense, such as the idea that Newtonian science and Christian morality are universal determinations of conscious experience. The knowledge it achieves is knowledge of transcendental apperception, of the formal conditions of possibility for these determinations, but this, for Deleuze, simply hypostasises the formal unity of consciousness, and determines its categories in relation to these presuppositions about experience.

Method, then, is the means to a predetermined end whose value is related to a common sense. The value and validity of the end (transcendent knowledge) is thus simply presupposed. Deleuzian 'learning' or 'training' (*dressage*), on the other hand, is an end-in-itself. This means that it is not relative to a presupposed common sense, a transcendent subject or 'knowing before knowing'. Instead, it functions through the affirmation of Deleuze's 'higher' Absolute, the minimal presupposition of thought, the difference that traverses the entire subject and prevents it from really coinciding with itself. Learning thus occurs *through* us, and is not 'ours' in the sense of possession established by Kant's unity of apperception in relation to the content of consciousness. Kant, for Deleuze, shows in his account of the 'crack' that we do not autonomously orient ourselves in thought as subjects whose essence transcends the practical exigencies of our life. Thinking is not something that takes time; instead, 'time takes thought' (DR 216/166). Elsewhere, Deleuze notes that '[t]here is no more a method for learning than there is a method for finding treasures, but a violent training, a culture or *paideia* which affects the entire individual' (DR 215/165), and that '[t]hought never thinks alone and by itself' (NP 123/108).

Deleuzian learning is, therefore, a matter of becoming equal to the difference of thought from itself, a process that requires encounters with 'mediators' (*intercesseurs*). In this way, Enlightenment understood as the autonomy of philosophy, is for Deleuze an attitude that is only established by becoming equal to movements of difference that traverse the body of the thinker, and this cannot be realised by the individual alone. As a response to double-binds such as the trauma of reason, Deleuze's model of education thus disavows the Kantian, self-conscious aspect of the double-bind, the awareness that it is a product of *my* actuality (the rules out of which it is generated are, as in Kant's account of the categories, an aspect of *my* self-consciousness), and that it thus determines in turn *my* actuality as a thinking being in the present. In this way, Deleuze implicitly acknowledges Adorno's observation that the transcendental dimension of subjectivity (the Kantian unity of *my* consciousness) is a posited reflection of the powerlessness of the subject. The trauma of reason, for example, subjects thought to domination on the basis of a presupposed image of philosophy, one which implies the now-familiar transcendence of the subject for whom everything that is thought is an object of unobscured observation. The subject that presupposes itself to be transcendent thus has no resources to deal with the trauma of reason. It experiences itself therein as infinitely separated from its essence, and this is accompanied by affects that it cannot accommodate, as it undergoes a crisis of meaning. Deleuze accuses dogmatic images of thought of narcissism, and solipsism in the sense of a lack of belief in 'the world' (ECC 87-8). The transcendent unity of thought with being is a presupposition that simply gives one 'a reason to inflate [one's] own ego' (ECC 58), as is the crisis that results when this assumption is revealed for what it is. Learning works against such tendencies, by affirming directly that which exceeds thought, precisely through being immanent in it (Absolute Difference).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On the overcoming of banality, or the negative aspect of thought's difference from itself, and the reinvigoration of 'belief in the world', see Toole, 1993. esp. pp. 239-42.

Learning in Deleuze is thus firstly learning about the reality of double-binds, i.e., about the internal limits of accepted practices, and affirming these limits as internal, rather than as external limits imposed by accident on a *theoros* who, in principle, remains united with its essence. Secondly, it is learning about the singular, local interventions that may be carried out in thinking in order to free it from traps. In both cases, for Deleuze, learning is knowledge. But it is absolute knowledge, which for Deleuze means practical knowledge, the inculcation of habits that create unforeseen and novel responses to situations. Absolute knowledge is thus synonymous with training, with the accumulation of augmentation of 'good habits' and the active forgetting of bad ones.

In this light, we can read Deleuze's critique of Hegel as a critique of Hegelian education, and thus of the PS above all (DR 215/166). I would suggest that, for Deleuze, Hegel still sees education as a matter of method, in the sense that the goal of PS is foreseen in its beginning — even if we understand this beginning, not in terms of a positive unity of thought and being-in-itself, but as the kind of immediate consciousness of being that Kant refers to as an 'indeterminate empirical intuition'. Absolute Knowing is nothing but the *reconciliation* of self-consciousness with its being, with its own dividedness. Even if Hegel deconstructs all oppositions between subject and object, including that between possibility and actuality, he still assumes, for Deleuze, that the problematic being of self-consciousness is identical with the negatively self-related character of reason.

Hegel claims to have overcome the internal divisions of consciousness, including those within Schellingian self-consciousness, between faith and foundationalist reason or between absolute and relative, that give rise to the trauma of reason. But this would be, from Deleuze's point of view, an incomplete overcoming. The historically determinate presuppositions of representational consciousness may have been deconstructed, but the result of this, the idea that self-consciousness is the movement of Absolute Negativity, does not enact the full *renversement* of

foundationalism. It comprehends the movement of self-consciousness in terms of its internal dividedness, but because this movement is observable, or *my* internal negativity, it implies once again a *theoros* who recognises the drama of the PS as her own. This in turn implies a common sense, a horizon of meaning in which the drama will be enacted, which is represented by the negative unity of the Concept. The nihilistic tendencies of representational consciousness are not thereby overcome, only internalised. It conserves the present by baptising it as 'my' actuality (NP 185-6/161).

Hence, in order to understand how Deleuze does more than simply accuse Hegel of a foundationalist conflation of hypothetical with absolute determination, I think we need to emphasise that he has criticised Hegelian education as a process of 'learning to live with' nihilism. This conserves the past as the underlying necessity of the present, by trying to show that the way to overcome the present is to grasp the history of a common sense (of the Concept) as one's own actuality. In Nietzschean terms, Hegelian education is a vast project of remembering the development of the Concept as 'my wound'. It is a titanic effort to bear the present by affirming one's own complicity in it (the dividedness of consciousness is *my* dividedness), and is thus the partial, reactive affirmation of Nietzsche's ass or camel (NP 207-9/180-2). This is the only 'absolution' achieved by Hegel's Absolute, according to Deleuze (DR 61/42), an absolution in which the internal differences of self-consciousness from itself (the shapes of consciousness in PS) vanish into that which supposedly transcends them, the inner, negative identity of the Subject as their Whole. The self-transcendence of this whole at the end of PS is thus illusory. There are no open totalities in Hegel, for Deleuze. Each moment of self-transcendence — at the end of PS, at the end of the Doctrine of Essence, at the end of SL in the transition to Nature — is simply a reaffirmation of the transcendent, negative unity of the Subject, which grounds 'the evanescence and production of difference' (DR 62/42). The immanence of the Subject is thus a relative immanence, which presupposes the negative unity of the Subject/Concept as its common sense. Hegelian 'Enlightenment' can only



be an acquiescence in the present that cannot respond creatively to the divisions or blockages that it encounters, but can only relate them to the unified, negatively self-differing Subject of which none can be an adequate representation, and thus deconstruct them.<sup>2</sup> Adorno's observation about transcendental subjectivity is thus confirmed, for Deleuze, by Hegelian Absolute Knowing, which he denounces as a refinement of nihilism that retains unquestioned subjective and 'objective' practical presuppositions.

### *iii) Hegel contra Deleuze: Absolute Difference and Experience*

This Deleuzean critique of Hegel's image of thought as 'reconciliation' goes further than those criticisms we examined in the previous chapter. It claims that Hegel's philosophy is epistemologically (and politically) suspect, not just because it confuses a negative, hypothetical mode of determination with an absolute one, but because it determines the Absolute as negative difference. Although Hegel acknowledges that the Absolute is internally different from itself, he still assumes that the process of differentiation here can be observed, and thus presupposes a transcendent subject capable of being a *theoros*. For Deleuze, the negative character of Hegelian difference arises precisely through its being difference posited *for* a self-identical subject that *possesses* negativity as a kind of transcendent essence upon which it can reflect. This difference is not a truly internal, immediate difference, as it remains related to a subject that posits itself as the transcendent measure of difference, i.e., as absolute. Difference and determination arise, for Hegel, from a process of mediation. Difference arises from self-relation, but this relation is itself mediated by other-relation. Deleuze, on the other hand, argues that, unless differentiation is understood as immediate or absolute, it will be always posited as occurring within or for a transcendent subjectivity, a common sense, which repeats once again the foundationalist error. The epistemological

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<sup>2</sup> See Bogue, 1989, p. 159, on this reactive character of deconstruction from a Deleuzean point of view. On the limitations of a conciliatory model of thought, see Ansell-Pearson, 1999, pp. 207-8.

assumptions of Hegel's thought reveal a foundationalist *ethos* that, as always for Deleuze, is driven by a moral and political imperative, namely the reconciliation of conflicts even at the expense of nihilism. It is thus an obfuscating philosophical shell for an essentially political project: the suppression of real difference. Deleuze envisions Hegelian autonomy as self-imposed complete subordination to the Absolute Idea, which, as the System reveals, is perfectly incarnated in the form of the State. Reconciliation, in reality, means a narcissistic deconstruction of antinomies immanent in experience that is perfectly commensurable with political domination.

The centrality of reconciliation as a theme in Hegel's thought is clear. However, the exact meaning of this term is as ambiguous as any other supposedly final definition of his thought. Hegel uses it, for example, in EL with reference to Absolute Knowing, not to phenomenology, when he states that the goal of philosophy is the reconciliation of *self-determining thought* 'with the reason that is [*mit der seienden Vernunft*], or actuality' (EL §6). Reconciliation has, then, to be understood in the first place, I would argue, with reference to Hegel's onto-logic, and the determinations of Possibility and Actuality. Reconciliation here is not simply the phenomenological result of a negative unity into which all shapes of consciousness vanish. This, as we saw in Chapters Five and Six, is only the result of PS from the viewpoint of representational consciousness. Another view of this result is possible, as we have seen, in which the structure of Being itself is comprehended, after the possibility of a distinction between hypothetical and absolute thinking has been undermined.

The fact that Being is immanently determined in SL as the self-determining Concept does not immediately imply anything about Hegel's evaluation of political actuality. Without going into the much-debated details of Hegel's politics, I want to argue now that, in the light of Hegel's (in)famous proposition that the actual and the rational are identical (PR 24/20), and in relation to the onto-logical determination of Actuality, that Deleuze's interpretation of 'reconciliation' is mistaken. Further, the

relation between thought and actuality that emerges in Hegel allows some criticisms of Deleuze's view of the heteronomy and autonomy of philosophy to be advanced.

In Hegel's view, the actual is not that which is simply accepted as given in experience. Actuality in SL emerges out of a long, complex dialectic in which the immediacy of experience is deconstructed. It has for its content the relations between existents and their existent conditions, which are not relations internal to their terms. Instead, they are external. This means that Actuality is not thought of in terms of metaphysical notions of grounding or causality, but in terms of thinking or being that determines itself through self-externalisation. Actuality is thus a dimension of the Concept, and is rational, whereas immediacy is abstract and irrational, i.e., indeterminate and uncomprehended. Empirical reality, for Hegel, whether conceived of as natural or social, must therefore be conceived in terms of Being, Existence and Actuality. It will include within it elements that are relatively abstract and others that are relatively concrete. But if that which is genuinely Absolute for Hegel is self-determination, as embodied in the Concept, then there is, as we saw in the last chapter, a real difference between the Concept and being determined as Nature (or as Spirit). Although the Concept is self-determining, it is relatively abstract. The Absolute Idea in SL is not known as containing within it, as a substantial unity, all the determinations of reality under the form of possibility. It is the negative unity of the Theoretical and Practical Ideas, or the *abstract* unity of thought and actuality in general.<sup>3</sup> The Concept may be absolute in the sense that it is a self-determining *activity* (rather than a Substance), but it is also not-absolute, in that it is not fully concrete as this activity.

It is thus internally negative, with the result that it passes over into Nature and eventually Spirit. This process yields the Hegelian System, but at the same time, this is the system *in thought*. The political Actuality detailed in PR, for example, is not identical with either the Prussia of Hegel's time, modern totalitarianism, or liberal

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<sup>3</sup> Rose, 1980, p. 186-7.

democracy. If this is the case, then the immanent necessity of the Concept can be expressed as 'reconciliation', but this has a specific meaning. Reconciliation means, I would argue, that thought becomes acquainted with the immanent determinations of the self-determining Concept, with the historical Actuality of its own present, and with the identity and difference of the two. Philosophy has to reconcile itself with the identity of thought and reality *and* their difference. This means that there is a kind of *Sollen* in Hegelian thought, without which it would risk becoming purely acquiescent. This *Sollen* lies in the re-cognition of the difference between the Concept and reality, which implies the abstractness and irrationality of reality, and which demands real action in the present. However, the determination of this *Sollen*, of what 'ought-to-be', is not based on a foundational, abstract presupposition, which makes Hegel different from Fichte and Schelling. Instead, it is grounded in a re-cognition of the rational elements of the real or its Actuality, those elements that accord with the immanent determinations of the Concept.

Actuality is, as Hegel notes, a dispersed set of conditions that '*ought* to return into itself' (SL II, 209/547, my emphasis). Hence the *Sollen* is an immanently necessary consequence of Hegel's ontology. If the re-cognition of the real in relation to Reason implies knowledge of the conditions of Actuality, then it always implies a perspective on the real and its conditions taken by consciousness. The totality of conditions, being 'dispersed' cannot be known *as* a totality. To imagine that this could be the case would be to posit an abstract, subjective regulative Ideal. It is a consequence of the nature of Being, for Hegel, that existents imply an element of contingency, rather than being an effect of the internal limitations of our mental faculties. Hence the re-cognition of the Actual on which the *Sollen* is based is inevitably partial, for it will be a process conducted as a negotiation between a historically determinate consciousness and its awareness of the real social relations between it and other subjects. So the attempt to make self-determination an Actual feature of political reality is both required by the

Concept and problematised by it, for the re-cognition of the Actual elements in this reality is made possible by the Concept, but also has its reach restricted.

From the practical side, the re-cognition of the Actuality of the present implies a determination of the Practical Idea, the *Sollen*, in relation to what can be re-cognised as the Real Possibilities of the Actual. Again, this orientation of action will be negotiated, just as the re-cognition of the conditions of the present is negotiated. And if it too is a partial re-cognition, then the outcome of any practical action is unforeseen.<sup>4</sup> In this way, Hegelian 'education' does not end with the negative unity at the end of PS, or with the completion of a System. It is an immanent consequence of the nature of the Concept that its concrete meaning should be negotiated by real subjects who determine and are determined by real political structures. The Absolute Idea is not absolute because it is determined at the end of SL: it is absolute because it is concretised a) through real processes of negotiation, in which possibilities for action are determined both in relation to the immanent determinations of the Concept and in relation to existing political structures, and b) in practical activity, which intervenes in the Actual. The ceaseless determination of the Absolute is thus a task for existing, finite consciousnesses, and this is a direct consequence of the nature of the Concept itself. Hegelian education is thus inconceivable without real activity 'in the world', and there is no guarantee that its outcome will be successful, for a subject's re-cognition of its Actuality will always be partial and limited.

This education is also Absolute Knowing. It can only be conducted once the internal structure of Being has been cognised. Hence the transition between PS and SL is a real advance, for it makes possible the theoretical and practical orientation toward the present that I have sketched above. Hegel's philosophy does not, I would suggest, simply capitulate to the present. And if the education of consciousness does not end even

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<sup>4</sup> Certain currents within Marxism reflect this strand of Hegelian thought. See e.g., Debray, 1975, pp. 45-6.

with the System, then there is no transcendent subjectivity embodied in the Concept. The Concept is indeed a kind of common sense. in that it is a 'context'<sup>5</sup> in which meaning is determined. But this context is without any foundational determination. 'Negativity' cannot be regarded as transcendent or foundational, as it cannot be stated or represented in a finite proposition. It is not hypostasised, for it is graspable only as process, not as attribute or predicate. The Concept is not, therefore, a transcendent subjectivity, because its self-determination occurs through its internal negativity, and not because it is a positively determinate Ground. It does not possess a transcendent perspective on its own being or on external being. It is at once the result of the deconstruction of the antinomies of representational consciousness, and the reconstruction, through its immanent self-determination, of an ontology that demands that finite theoretical and practical perspectives on the real be developed that can acknowledge the meaning of Actuality. The supposed transcendence of Absolute Knowing is, viewed from the broader perspective on the System I have sketched above, an illusion. The articulation of the System and its relation to the real does not determine a presupposed transcendent subject. Rather, it determines the context in which the relation of an intrinsically divided finite subject to the real (Being, Nature and Spirit) must be understood.

This sketch of the relation between onto-logic, System and empirical reality suggests a direct critical response to Deleuze, regarding his model of absolute immanence. Absolute Difference is, for Deleuze, the absolute presupposition of thought, the expression of the otherness that is immanent within thought and which is its genetic condition precisely because it prevents it from coinciding with itself. The tracing of the tendencies that constitute this difference is, as in Bergson, the work of a superior intuition, with which thought becomes identical when it is forced to encounter its difference from itself. This is reminiscent, once again, of Schelling's position. However, it results from affirming that which Schelling cannot truly affirm, that the being of

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<sup>5</sup> Schick, 1994, p. 180.

thought is its difference from itself. Once thought has encountered this internal limit, its transcendental object, it is capable of altering its image of itself, and affirming that the sole problem of philosophy is the creation of concepts.

The requirement of a new image of thought based on the minimal presupposition of the difference of thought from itself is, for Deleuze, immanent to certain experiences of this difference as the internal limit of thought. It is not therefore a transcendent requirement that reflects Platonic assumptions about the unity and difference of thought and being. I have suggested that the trauma of reason is one example of this experience, which is encountered by foundationalist thought as a crisis. Deleuze does not argue that Absolute Difference can be known by a superior intuition that is simply other than thought. This intuition is in fact a higher power of thought itself, which thought can attain by undergoing certain encounters. The experience of crisis is vital for this power, for it subverts settled habits of thought that become sedimented in response to the exigencies of living. A crucial element of Deleuze's position is thus the acknowledgement of a real double-bind, which, as I argued in Chapter Three, is a double-bind because it depends on certain rules that create a dilemma. Deleuzian ontology refers these rules back to objective conditions, practices external to thought that nevertheless become immanent in it, training it to function in certain ways. But there are rules, nonetheless, of which we can become conscious. This conscious recognition of constraining rules actually creates the dilemma. As with the trauma of reason, we become conscious that, because of the way the game is set up, once we have made certain moves, we can go no further. Once it can no longer be played, the 'game' loses its value or meaning.

It is in relation to this experience that Deleuze sets up the requirement for a new image of thought. He does not, then, try to think the opposite of Platonism, which would be a dogmatic relativism. Instead, he tries to think the *inverse* of Platonism, where unity is an effect of difference rather than the other way around, and where all virtual and actual relations are external relations. Schelling's positing of a 'higher' Absolute is, as I

argued in Chapters Two and Four, an unsuccessful attempt to realise a similar account of the Absolute, in which there is no internal resemblance between condition and conditioned. When such a resemblance is posited, the result is a relative identity, which can *only* be posited by thought and cannot be known. The need for an unconditioned ground of knowledge, i.e., a 'higher' Absolute that is still a ground of knowledge, is determined in relation to experience. It has to be a unity of all determinations, for only then will it be unconditioned, but it has to still be a predominantly rational unity in order to be a ground of knowledge. Schelling is defeated by these two criteria.

Deleuze, however, appears more successful in thinking the 'higher' Absolute, determined without resemblance to that which it conditions. However, the move towards Absolute Difference in thought is, as I have argued, inseparable from a certain kind of experience, where thought becomes conscious of its difference from itself. Deleuze argues that, to escape the trap with which this experience threatens thought, this difference cannot be understood as mediated by a prior identity. It must be affirmed as immediate, which makes thought incommensurable with itself. By thus inverting Platonism, Deleuze believes he has avoided simply positing the Absolute in resemblance to that which it conditions. But the initial impetus here is not from the 'higher power' of thought, but from the *experiences* of a foundationalist or representational consciousness, as with Schelling.

We saw in Chapter Six that Schelling's conception of the Absolute as a pure presupposition failed to acknowledge the dimension of positing it implies. The Absolute could not be determined as Absolute or unconditioned except in relation to experience, which meant that it was inevitably posited as resembling that which it was meant to be the condition of. The positing of this Absolute was guided by a foundationalist image of thought, with transcendent knowledge as its goal. With Deleuze, however, a different image of thought guides us. The incomprehensible or immediate difference of consciousness from itself, as embodied in Kant's account of the 'cracked' subject, is to be posited as absolute. By simply inverting the procedure through which the Absolute is



determined, however, Deleuze fails to recognise that his version of the unconditioned is also just as much conditioned by the experience that gives rise to the requirement for it. The difference of consciousness from itself gives us a different image of thought, and Deleuze, in my opinion, works out with utter consistency what the epistemological and ontological implications of this image are. However, this consistency is in relation to a determination of representational consciousness. The procedure of *renversement* involves a recognition of the actuality of consciousness (its determination by certain rules that constitute a subjective practice of thinking) that cannot itself be recognised, because Deleuze, in his zeal to overturn transcendence and return effectivity to philosophy, posits the immediate difference of consciousness from itself as its immanent 'foundation'. Hegel, on the other hand, deals with the relation between representational consciousness and philosophical consciousness in a way that allows the relation between the former and the latter to be acknowledged and understood immanently, as well as enabling the immanence of the Absolute in finite consciousness to be comprehended. Deleuze effectively hypostasises the experience of crisis that is immanent to consciousness, without fully acknowledging the role of self-consciousness (knowledge of the 'rules of the game') in constituting this crisis.

### *iii) Concluding Remarks*

I would suggest that the Deleuzean Absolute tends to fetishize the experience of abstract difference in the same way that foundationalism tends to fetishize identity. The operation of *renversement* is rather too hasty in its refusal of identity and mediation, for it does not recognise that even the positing of an Absolute that is utterly unconditioned, utterly unlike what it conditions, is still a positing that presupposes a self-conscious determination of experience. In fact, Deleuze's Absolute must, I think, be judged as the product of an illusory practice of thinking, one that remains tied to an image of the Absolute as Substance, utterly removed from negativity and mediation.

The epistemological issue concerning whether difference must be thought as positively immediate or as mediated turns, I believe, on the crucial antifoundationalist question of the relation between the positing through which the conditions of difference are established and what in experience determines this positing. I have suggested in this Conclusion that Deleuze's version of this positing cannot comprehend its own determination. I have also suggested that Hegel's conception of the relation between relative and Absolute can do this more successfully, because it recognises the aspect of identity in representational consciousness as well as its internal difference. Because it does this, with the result that the unity of self-consciousness is the decentred unity of Absolute Negativity, it is immanent to experience in a way that Deleuze's new image of thought is not. Consequently, Hegel advances a version of antifoundationalism that I believe emphatically demands consideration today

Nevertheless, it is also necessary to recognise that the issue of the acknowledgement of the determination of thought demands further examination, beyond the scope of this investigation. For instance, the question of Hegel's relationship to sophisticated materialist accounts of social relations, such as the later Marx's dialectical materialism, or the libidinal materialism of Deleuze and Guattari in the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, could be addressed, in order to determine just what dimensions of social reality 'acknowledgement' should refer to, and in what it should consist. The relationship between the two latter positions would itself be interesting from this point of view. But such concerns would take us beyond the limits of this enquiry, which has focused upon philosophy's 'image of thought', and into political and social theory proper.

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