Introduction

At the heart of this enquiry is the question of what it means to think, and how this question has been answered within the French tradition. This book addresses the question of what unifies the French philosophical tradition across the twentieth century by exploring these two questions. Kant claimed that the structure of experience mirrored the categories of thought because the cognitive faculties of the subject played a constitutive role in structuring experience. As such, the structure of thought for Kant is fundamentally tied to the nature of metaphysics. In developing his account of what thinking entailed, Kant took judgement, the attribution of a predicate to a subject, to be the paradigm act of thinking. Throughout the nineteenth century, efforts to move beyond Kant's model of thinking as judgement centred on the attempt to augment that model. For instance, Hegel saw Kant's account of judgement as an essentially fixed form of the true nature of thinking, and therefore developed a more processual account of thinking. His account still ultimately operates by putting judgement into motion, however, rather than rejecting the model of thinking as judgement itself. Conversely, philosophers such as Schelling who do not understand thinking solely in terms of judging often retreat into an indeterminate mysticism, thus retaining the idea that anything positive that can be said about thought must take judgement as a model.

The twentieth-century French tradition can be characterised in contrast by an attempt to replace, rather than augment, judgement as the paradigm case of thinking. This can be seen in the effort to develop an account of perception and cognition as perspectival rather than object-centred which we find in the phenomenological work of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, and Bergson's rejection of accounts of thinking which take their central metaphor from space. In both cases, the subject-predicate account is considered an abstraction from the inherently contextual and temporal nature of thinking. Foucault's methodology can also be seen as his own rejection of classical models of thought. In particular, he claims that what he calls the

'juridico-discursive' understanding of the world can only explain the determination of objects, rather than their constitution. Consequently, he develops an alternative non-object-centred logic to that of the early phenomenologists. Deleuze and Derrida's attempts to formulate a new concept, or quasi-concept, of difference derive directly from the limitations they see in Kant's account of thought in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. That is, it is by understanding how something is determined without relying on negation that they develop a new way of understanding difference, and with it, thought. All of these projects share a concern to provide an alternative model of cognition, and thereby to overcome the limitations of the Kantian project. When viewed from this perspective, it becomes clear that each of these philosophers is in a dialogue with the others, and that the French tradition can be seen as a unified attempt to maintain the radicality of the transcendental project while moving away from its account of the nature of thinking.

By bringing these different accounts into relation with each other, this work develops a novel genealogy of twentieth-century French thought. It also investigates French philosophy as a coherent research project analysing problems that are central to the philosophical tradition, and allows the re-evaluation of French thought as a rich and rigorous philosophical movement. I focus on the problem of how one understands thinking, and hence we will evaluate some more general claims about the nature of thought, and formulate and assess the arguments which support the move away from models of thought as judgement and their broader implications. While in this work the focus is very much on the model of thinking and what this account of thinking tells us about the nature of the world, such concerns have implications beyond the purely theoretical, and we can see that these alternative models bring with them the kinds of radical changes to how we orientate ourselves in the world introduced by the existentialists and the post-structuralists.

This is not the first work to deal with the development of French philosophy. The majority of these organise the development of French thought chronologically, rather than around a problem (see, for example, Gutting 2001, Schrift 2006, or Descombes 1980). While these approaches are vitally important for a full understanding of the connections between French philosophers, they are inevitably less able to present the problem-centred approach found in this work. Mullarkey (2006) does relate a series of thinkers in the French tradition by looking at their various philosophical claims. In particular, Mullarkey argues that the second half of the twentieth century is dominated in the French tradition by attempts to develop a non-reductive account of the

nature of life while avoiding the category of transcendence. This is certainly an important theme in the second half of the twentieth century: a focus on immanence emphasises the rupture between the pre-war and post-war periods, as it breaks with phenomenology's concern with the transcendence of intentionality, and hence prevents us from using the resources of the phenomenological tradition to clarify and explicate later thought. Lawlor (2011) provides an account of early French philosophy that has an awareness of their role in founding later French philosophy, focusing on the notion that French philosophy is governed by the desire to reverse Plato, but as the title suggests, it does not draw out these implications, and concludes with Foucault's early work. McCumber (2014) develops an account of continental philosophy more generally on the basis of its incorporation of time. While this is an important theme, McCumber does not distinguish between the seemingly incongruent modes of history and becoming, risking the possibility of resting the unity of the discipline on an equivocation.

Presenting a different vision of the interrelation of philosophies does not entail rejecting the interpretation offered by others, just as the contours of the constellations of the same stars do not falsify other potential constellations. Difference here does not therefore necessarily entail negation. As such, by seeing the tradition as centred on freedom, the reversal of Plato, and immanence and transcendence, each enriches our understanding of French philosophy. We can perhaps here take up Bergson's example of the concept of colour, which is not formed by the removal of what is particular about each colour, but by passing each colour through a converging lens to constitute a light which contains them all. We should note that every interpretation similarly is only partial, since traditions always incorporate heterodox figures and radical divergences. The reading in this work does not account, for instance, for a figure such as Léon Brunschvicg, against whom many of the phenomenologists reacted, and who explicitly affirms the place of judgement (and other examples could be given), or Jean-Luc Nancy's greater proximity to Hegel than those we encounter in this work. Nonetheless, the six figures presented in this work present a broad range of approaches present within the French tradition, and together show why the concepts of thought, sense, and judgement form such a pervasive and vital problem.

There are a number of interrelated claims that I derive from this reading of the French tradition. First, as we have noted, there is the rejection of the claim that thinking is judging. As we will see in Chapter 1, this assumption is at the heart of the German idealist tradition, where determination in

general is understood in terms of predication. Where judgement does not hold, as in Hölderlin's conception of being, for instance, we have an absence of determination, and where we move beyond the normal model of the understanding, as in Hegel's work, we do so through the augmentation of predicative structures to cover over its limitations. Bergson's recognition of a difference between the representation of time and the way time is actually lived opens the way to this rejection of the paradigm of thinking as judging, and this interplay of thinking and the representation of thinking as judging, with a difference in kind between the two, will be a theme amongst all of the philosophers we consider. For Sartre, this will be through a distinction between knowledge and consciousness that leaves philosophy open to paralogism. For Merleau-Ponty, this is through the conflation of perspective with the representation of perspective. For each of the post-war thinkers, Derrida, Foucault, and Deleuze, we similarly find that the nature of thinking, whether characterised by *différance*, power, or intensity, is overwritten by the structures of judgement which differ in kind from thinking itself.

Together with this movement away from judgement comes a recognition of the centrality of Hegel, but Hegel as the founder of a model of thinking to be avoided. We find therefore the recognition of the pressing need to develop a non-dialectical model of thought. Hence, the 'generalised anti-Hegelianism' that Deleuze recognises in 1968 extends back from Bergson's claim that one cannot reconstitute the concrete from abstract elements, through Sartre's criticism of Hegel's 'optimism' to Merleau-Ponty's rejection of Hegel's account of indeterminacy. We find it in Derrida's claim, echoing Sartre, that the Hegelian *Aufhebung* is a false resolution, and Foucault's move to understanding the transitions between historical epochs in terms of contingency rather than dialectical necessity.

This attempt to move away from Hegel is intertwined with another shared trait amongst all of the philosophers we will look at: the return to Kant in order to find an alternative model to the dialectic. We can recognise two important aspects of this. First, a number of the philosophers we will look at take up Kant's distinction between concepts and intuitions, noting that here Kant introduces a difference in kind between the two forms of organisation that will be instrumental for their own attempts to develop a novel account of thinking. While for Kant this difference in kind is understood in terms of an active faculty of understanding and a passive faculty of intuition, figures such as Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze will disrupt the active–passive distinction in order to see in perception, or beneath perception, a novel mode of synthesis that does not rely on

judgement. Second, throughout the tradition, we find a return from Hegel's speculative dialectic to Kant's transcendental dialectic. Here, instead of seeing the antinomies that appear within representation showing the presence of contradiction in the world, and the need to augment our account of judging to encompass contradiction, they point to the necessity of recognising an element that falls outside of representation. Thus, we will find throughout the work explored in this volume recourse to Kantian notions such as paralogisms, transcendental ideas, and illusions. It is this Kantian claim that reason naturally falls into illusions when operating on its own that allows these thinkers to explain how it is that thinking should not be equated with judging, but how it is that this equation has traditionally been made. I will argue that this notion of transcendental illusion is extended throughout the French tradition to argue that Kant himself falls into error when he fails to distinguish the way in which we represent thinking from thinking itself.

Finally, in rejecting judgement, we have the introduction of a new model of thinking. In essence, the French tradition considered in this volume can be seen as attempting to discover a new way of understanding organisation that does not rely on judgement, or notions such as subjects or predicates. This model of thinking has a number of characteristics running through the tradition. First, this logic tends to be a logic of sense that seeks to explain how we encounter a world that is meaningful. We will find that all six of the philosophers we will be dealing with present arguments to show that sense cannot be grounded in judgement for the reason that everything resembles everything else to some degree, and hence once we are dealing with the discrete elements that make up a judgement, it is impossible to distinguish meaningful and coincidental relations. As such, we need an account of the constitution of the elements of judgement that a model of thinking as judging presupposes as simply given. Rather than the logic of association that we find in, for instance, empiricism, this logic will be responsible for constituting a field of elements with relationships of sense. It will operate within a field that is itself not atomic in structure. The relationship between thinking and its representation in terms of judgement will thus be one that involves a transposition between elements that differ in kind. We can see these relationships played out between Bergson's two multiplicities, Merleau-Ponty's account of perception and objective thought, and, to take one more example, Foucault's account of power, and its constitution of a domain of discourse. In each of these cases, therefore, we have a movement beyond what would be possible for Kant through the recognition that we do not simply have to have indeterminacy

outside of representation, but that there could be a model of organisation that differs in kind from it.

I.1 Outline

We will be looking at six French philosophers over the course of this volume, and while the sequence of presentation is chronological, the aim will be to explore the way each of the philosophers we are considering develops their philosophy in relation to a set of concerns shared by them all. By focusing on a shared problematic, we will be able to mitigate a common problem, particularly in the continental tradition, of different philosophers developing their own technical vocabularies within which to present their ideas, or more seriously, the shifts in meaning of the same terms between different philosophers. By focusing on their arguments and shared problems, I also hope to mitigate the common desire of philosophers to emphasise their differences from their contemporaries and immediate predecessors and instead to demonstrate lines of continuity within the tradition. The aim will be to reconstruct each philosopher's philosophical position on the basis of their accounts of the nature of thought, and to see how their accounts can be read as responses to problems emerging from the German idealist tradition. For this reason, the first chapter will present an overview of the place of judgement in Kant's thought and that of his successors.

The opening chapter looks at the role of judgement in Kant's *First Critique*, focusing on the way in which the legislative function of the understanding is central to transcendental idealism. I will go on to show how Kant associates determination with judgement, and how this association is maintained in Hölderlin and Schelling's efforts to resolve certain aporias in the Kantian system, with being understood as indeterminate because it differs from the world of judgement. I conclude by showing how Hegel resolves difficulties presented by Hölderlin's distinction between judgement and being by seeing judgement as an abstraction from a richer process of reason. As such, I demonstrate the centrality of judgement in the German idealist tradition.

In Chapter 2, I introduce Bergson's claim that thinking has a processual character that distinguishes it from judging. I analyse Bergson's claim in *Time and Free Will* that the structure of our mental lives is different in kind from the way we understand the external world. I show how Bergson's later work develops an account of the interrelations of durational thinking and judging. Drawing on Bergson's early untranslated lectures on Kant, I show

how Bergson pinpoints a lacuna in Kant's account of the imagination, and attempts to argue that it is only by understanding thinking as operating through a process of dissociation, rather than the synthetic association of Kant's model of the imagination, that we can understand the emergence of a meaningful world.

The third chapter explores Sartre's account of thinking, focusing on his relatively neglected early work on the imagination. I take up Sartre's largely unacknowledged debt to Bergson, showing that despite Sartre's move to phenomenology, his account of the difference between imagining and perceiving relies on Bergson's logic of multiplicities. I argue that this influence carries on into *Being and Nothingness* where Sartre's account of the situation as the process that makes judgement possible relies on a pre-juridical moment that inverts Bergson's account of free will while remaining true to the categories underlying it. I analyse Sartre's account of why we falsely understand consciousness as juridical, which reworks Kant's own arguments in the paralogisms before showing how his account of consciousness ultimately fails to provide the positive account of the constitution of a situation that he requires.

Chapter 4 develops Merleau-Ponty's perspectival account of experience. I show how Merleau-Ponty's claim that perception has a different structure to what he calls 'objective thought' can be derived from his interpretation of Kant's paradox of symmetrical objects. I look at how this difference in structure leads to Merleau-Ponty's distinctive accounts of perspectival depth and orientation in space, before returning to Kant to show how Merleau-Ponty's account of perception as having a figure-background structure leads to substantial divergences from Kant's account of the constitution of the object (in doing so, I reconstruct a sustained argument against Kant's transcendental deduction from fragmentary comments throughout Merleau-Ponty's work). I also show that the model of determination developed by Merleau-Ponty, while relying on context, differs significantly from Hegel's account of determination, and supplements deficiencies in Sartre's account.

Chapter 5 explores Derrida's analysis of the problem of judgement through an extended exploration of Derrida's analysis of presence and *différance*. I analyse three of Derrida's readings of other philosophers: Plato, Hegel, and Husserl, with the aim of showing how in each case Derrida believes that the priority of presence (and hence judgement) rests on a transcendental idea that exceeds the given. I argue that despite Derrida's apparent hostility to the phenomenological tradition, his work is indebted to Sartre, and echoes Bergson's analysis of resemblance.

Chapter 6 turns to Michel Foucault, looking at both his early archaeological work and his introduction of power in the later genealogical writings. I focus on how his early work examines the rules which precede and make possible judgements. We will see that Foucault derives the term and method of archaeology from Kant's own work, though Foucault develops his own non-juridical logic of it. I then show how this attempt to understand thinking as different from judging carries on into Foucault's later genealogical work with his notion of biopower as an attempt to provide an alternative model of power to what we find in the juridico-discursive model that he argues typifies traditional understandings of it.

Our final chapter begins by returning to Hölderlin's account of the relationship between being and judgement. I argue that central to Deleuze's philosophy is the introduction of an account of determination that operates differently from the subject-predicate determination discovered in judgement. The chapter draws on Chapter 4's account of depth to show how Deleuze takes up then expands Merleau-Ponty's account of our perspectival relationship to the world. It further develops Kant's notions of transcendental illusion to show why we tend to misunderstand the nature of thinking and the transcendental ideas to illuminate Deleuze's account of how thinking produces sense prior to the introduction of judging.

Concluding Remarks

We have now come to the end of our exploration of sense and judgement in the French tradition. We have seen that throughout the French tradition, there has been a preoccupation with developing an account of thinking that moves away from judgement. All of the philosophers we have examined develop this account within the context of an ambivalent relationship with Kant's thought. In Kant, they find the paradigm thinker of judgement, for whom metaphysics is itself a form of logic. Nonetheless, in Kant they find a thinker for whom the limitations of his account of thinking are matched by a nuanced account of how reason itself conflates the conditions for the representation of the object with the conditions of the object itself. Kant therefore inaugurates the movement of German idealism, whilst at the same time pointing to how his own legacy can be overcome.

For Kant, we fall into difficulties when we apply reason beyond its normal bounds. Reason, whose task is to make sense of the individual claims of the understanding, takes as a focal point the idea of a total systematic view of the world whereby we could situate the claim we are considering. Transcendental realism emerges when we combine this claim with the working of the understanding, which 'represents things *as they are*, without considering whether and how we can obtain knowledge of them' (Kant 1929: A498/B526). Once we accept this assumption of the understanding, however, we effectively remove any distinction between the thing in itself and its presentation. Since everything now takes place on one plane, we assume the totality of the conditions of the object are also in principle available to us. We now have no way to make a distinction between the task of reason to trace back conditioned phenomena to their conditions and the actual givenness of those conditions, and so when we encounter a contradiction within representation, it is 'analytical' (Kant 1929: A504/B532) and hence insoluble. This is in effect the root of what Kant calls the 'indirect proof of the transcendental ideality of appearances' (1929: A506/B534), since it is only once we recognise a distinction between representations and things as they are in themselves that

we are able to resolve this dilemma: 'If two opposed judgements presuppose an inadmissible condition, then in spite of their opposition, which does not amount to an opposition strictly so-called, both fall to the ground, inasmuch as the condition, under which either of them alone is maintained, itself falls' (Kant 1929: A503/B531). As such, we might recognise that rather than assuming the world is either finite or infinite in magnitude, in fact the world as it is in itself is such that the categories of magnitude do not apply to it, and hence both disjuncts are false (Kant 1929: A503–4/B531–2).

If, by some temporal paradox, the *Critique of Pure Reason* had appeared after Hegel's *Science of Logic*, such an argument may have been seen as a response to Hegel's own account of contradiction. In what appears to be a firmly transcendental realist position, Hegel argues that the systematicity of reason is something that can be given. As such, he is forced to accept the antinomies that Kant presents. His solution to this is to expand his logic to include contradiction, claiming that 'as many antinomies could be constructed as there are Notions' (Hegel 1989: 191). It is thus 'spirit which is so strong that it can endure contradiction' (Hegel 1989: 237–8). We have seen this approach clearly in Hegel's attempt to show that such contrary categories as finitude and infinitude in fact imply each other. Kant's own argument on this point is weakened by the fact that he assumes that all determination occurs in terms of judgement. We are thus left with an opposition between a determinate field of representations and a pure indeterminacy, which is of course open to the kind of arguments Hegel deploys against both Kant and figures such as Hölderlin and Schelling who come after him.

In this regard, the French response to the post-Kantian tradition we have explored in this book can be seen as a return to Kant, and an augmentation of Kant. In rejecting the equivocation of determination and judgement, we open the possibility of the contrary determinations of judgement falling away to reveal an entirely different model of determination. To give a few examples, we see this in Bergson's *Time and Free Will*, where the contradictions between free will and determinism lead both models to fall away and reveal the nature of time as duration. We also see it in Merleau-Ponty's use of antinomy to simultaneously show the limitations of empiricism and intellectualism. It is particularly clear in the case of Derrida, who, insofar as he is dialectical, seems much closer to the transcendental dialectic than the speculative dialectic of Hegel, the contradictions we find in experience leading not to a higher synthesis, but to the recognition that the plane of presence is necessarily incomplete. Finally, Deleuze's opposition of determination by judgement and the

pure undifferentiated abyss captures the dilemma of German idealism itself. In each of these cases, then, we find the reinstatement of Kantian arguments through the introduction of a non-representational model of thought. Of course, such an approach requires a rejection of Kant's model of thinking, and this occurs through a radicalisation of the Kantian dialectic itself. Thus, we find Bergson in his lectures on Kant telling us that Kant's mistake is to confuse duration with the representation of duration. Sartre will argue that consciousness is conflated with knowledge of consciousness, Merleau-Ponty that perceptions are conflated with representations of perceptions, Derrida that origins are conflated with representations of origins, Foucault that power is conflated with the representation of power, and Deleuze that thinking is conflated with the representation of thinking. In each case, we find a criticism of Kant of having himself in effect fallen for a paralogism where the representation of thinking is taken for thinking itself. Hence, that which cannot be represented and is nothing for the representation of thinking is seen as indeterminate.

We can note furthermore that the accounts of thinking we have looked at share the twofold structure of Kant's own account of transcendental illusion. On the one hand, they explain why judgement is taken to be the model of thinking, and on the other, they give reasons for the rejection of the representation of thinking in favour of their account of thinking. Invariably, this therefore involves an account of how the representation of thinking has its genesis in thinking itself. Given judgement's nature as involving the synthesis of atomic elements, an account of the genesis of judgement will almost inevitably involve the genesis of these atoms from a non-atomic field, in order to avoid circularity. This leads to the kind of dissociative logic we have seen throughout this work. We can further note, given the inability of judgement to explain the genesis of sense, that this pre-representational logic will itself be a logic of sense.

We have also seen that while we can and should recognise the influence of the 'three H's', Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger, on the development of French philosophy, a focus on these figures occludes some of the most important development in the French tradition, which could equally be characterised as the attempt to develop a new logic of multiplicities. As such, we need to recognise that despite the explicit influence of Bergson on Sartre and Merleau-Ponty waning, for instance, the influence of many of Bergson's central intuitions are so embedded in their thought as to pass without comment. We can further note that shifting the ground to the interrelation of thinking

and judging allows us to bring these thinkers into closer proximity than they have hitherto been seen. We can, for instance, see Sartre as more than a poor critic of Heidegger. Instead he is a philosopher who attempts to introduce a logic of multiplicities into phenomenology. We have noted that it is only late in his career that Derrida admitted his debts to Sartre, but we could also note that neither of the two traits Derrida attributed to presence, a logic of opposition and a search for pure origins, can be attributed to either Bergson or Merleau-Ponty, for both of whom, whether through the essential openness of the organism or the inherently contextual nature of determination, no pure origin is possible. Similarly, Foucault's assimilation of Merleau-Ponty to the empirical-transcendental doublet is rendered problematic by Merleau-Ponty's claim that perception precedes both the transcendental subject and the empirical object. We equally cannot claim that Deleuze's move to an asymmetrical synthesis of intensity is in itself justified against Merleau-Ponty's synthesis of transition. The question of the relation of thinking to its representation therefore gives coherence to the tradition, and shows how each of these projects can be seen as emerging from a shared problem that is still of central importance to us today.

As such, our response to the aporias that emerge from equating thinking with judging remains open. This work has provided a novel framework for understanding and evaluating the responses of these different accounts of the transcendental illusion of judgement, and bringing them into dialogue with each other. Naturally, a number of questions are left unanswered, and here we have merely cleared the ground for further projects by drawing out the importance of the interrelation of thinking and judging. In particular, we are left with the question of what an ethics would be for a thought that operates on the basis of an incommensurability between sense and judgement. Here I would like to suggest that the great precursor to the kind of explorations we have seen in this volume is Kierkegaard. When Merleau-Ponty lays out his account of objective thought as the reduction of the world to representation, he attributes this discovery to Kierkegaard (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 74). While we may say that Nietzsche is a key figure for those writing after the 1960s, Kierkegaard's influence is plain from the ethics of ambiguity of the existentialists to the theatre of repetition post-structuralists. Kierkegaard's claim, for instance, that Hegel's *Logic* presupposes the movement of thought without being able to explain it on the plane of the *Logic* itself (Kierkegaard 1980: 81) prefigures the kind of transcendental account of thinking we have seen from Bergson's theory of duration through to Deleuze's account of the image of thought. Kierkegaard's description of the *Logic* as an 'introverted openness' (1980:

81) describes the sense of a logic that is public but only on the basis of a characterisation of judgement that eliminates the possibility of a genuine encounter with the outside. Such an exploration of what a Kierkegaardian ethics, bolstered by the sophisticated arguments we have examined in this work concerning the relations of sense and judgement, would look like will have to wait for a future work.