Escaping the Dialectic
Kantian Echoes in Derrida and Merleau-Ponty

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1. Introduction

When Henri Bergson writes about the German "pantheists," he argues that figures such as G.W.F. Hegel fall into error by confusing our representations of things with the things themselves.[1] For Bergson, Hegel's philosophy begins with a translation of an intuitive relation to the world into conceptual terms, together with a forgetting of this translation. He writes, "The method is analogous in the two cases [of empiricism and German pantheism]: it consists in reasoning on the *elements* of the translation as though they were parts of the original."[2] This criticism of Hegel is a theme within the French tradition. We find this same refrain in Jean-Paul Sartre's claim of an "ontological optimism" in Hegel's belief that we can reconcile different consciousnesses into a unity of recognition, a claim that Sartre sees as illegitimately involving a God's-eye view of the world.[3] For example, in a discussion of Søren Kierkegaard's escape from the dialectic, Sartre writes:

> *Knowledge* cannot register this obscure and inflexible *movement* by which scattered determinations are elevated to the status of being and are gathered together into a tension which confers on them not a signification but a synthetic meaning.[4]

Here, we find the claim that Hegel's methodology conflates conceptual signification and a nonconceptual synthesis of sense. Once again, Hegel conflates the representation of existence with existence itself. In effect, Sartre accuses Hegel of illegitimately transposing this preconceptual relationship to the world into conceptual terms. We find

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the rejection of Hegel on these grounds continuing into the work of the poststructuralists. Gilles Deleuze, for instance, writes that Hegel "creates movement, even the movement of the infinite, but because he creates it with words and representations . . . nothing follows."[5] The "generalized anti-Hegelianism" that Deleuze sees as the atmosphere of his own time, then, has its roots deep in the beginnings of the French tradition (DR xix). Nonetheless, the dangers of escaping Hegel must also be recognized. Hegel's dialectic tends to take moments of escape as provisional, destined to be reincorporated into a more adequate totality. Perhaps Michel Foucault best sums up the dangers that we find in the dialectic, and the challenge of escaping from Hegel:

> But truly to escape Hegel involves an exact appreciation of the price we have to pay to detach ourselves from him. It assumes that we are aware of the extent to which Hegel, insidiously perhaps, is close to us; it implies a knowledge, in that which permits us to think against Hegel, of that which remains Hegelian. We have to determine the extent to which our anti-Hegelianism is possibly one of his tricks directed against us, at the end of which he stands, motionless, waiting for us.[6]

In this paper, I want to argue that in addition to this flight from Hegel, there is a positive project that spans much of the twentieth-century French tradition: a return to Immanuel Kant as an answer to these Hegelian limitations and as a means of opening up projects that Hegel's totalizing view of representation would make impossible. There is much in Kant's thought that influences the development of the French tradition, and one can note the presence of a nonconceptual moment at the heart of his thought. Kant explicitly argues that space and time have a structure that differs in kind from that of our categorial determinations.[7] Here, however, I want to focus on another aspect of Kant's philosophy, namely the Transcendental Dialectic. In this section of the first *Critique*—the bulk of the *Critique* itself—Kant addresses the illusion that ensues when rationalism and empiricism take our representations for things in themselves. He writes: "The realist, in the transcendental signification, makes these modifications of our sensibility into things subsisting in themselves, and hence makes mere representations into things in themselves" (CPR A491/B519). In Kant's claim about transcendental realism, with its distinction between things in themselves and our representations of them, we can find a predecessor of Bergson's claim that philosophers take the translation of the thing for the thing itself.[8] As we shall see, French philosophy will differ from Kant by having this "translation" operate within the realm of phenomena and between two different modes of determination, rather than between the determinate and indeterminate. It is this

reconfiguration that will allow these Kantian structures to mount a challenge to Hegel. The Transcendental Dialectic draws out the consequences of the conflation between representations and things-in-themselves—a conflation that Kant discovers in the first *Critique* through the various antinomies, paralogisms, and illusions that this conflation leads us into. I will argue here that it is this critical insight that forms the basis for much of the response to Hegel that we find in French philosophy. This reliance on the Transcendental Dialectic is pervasive in the French tradition and binds it together. We find aspects of this dialectic in Bergson, in the work of the phenomenologists, and throughout the post-structuralist tradition.

Hegel himself is writing after Kant, and so the response of French philosophy cannot simply be one of reiterating the Kantian position. As Hegel puts it, "Nowadays we have gone beyond the Kantian philosophy, and everyone wants to go further. There are two ways of going further, however: one can go forward or backward."[9] For Hegel, going forward entails the rejection of the distinction between the thing-in-itself and appearance:

> Even the objectivity of thinking in Kant's sense is itself again only subjective in its form, because, according to Kant, thoughts, although they are universal and necessary determinations, are still only our thoughts, and are cut off from what the thing is in-itself by an impassable gulf.[10]

In rejecting this distinction, Hegel undercuts the basis for the Kantian claim that we conflate representations with things-in-themselves. While Kant "remained burdened with the object . . . [that he] had avoided and . . . [was] left with the residue of a thing-in-itself, an infinite obstacle, as a beyond," Hegel institutes what Deleuze will call "infinite representation" (see DR 28–69).[11] If Hegel's claim were to be successful here, then the Kantian riposte to Hegel would have been impossible. What allows French philosophers to move beyond Hegel with Kant's thought is a new account of determination. For Kant, all determination is categorial (CPR B143)—it all involves representations—, so the only alternative to categorial determination is the indeterminate. French philosophy argues that in addition to representations, there are determinate phenomena that are nonrepresentational: for example, for Maurice Merleau-Ponty, perception has sense that cannot adequately be expressed in a judgment, and for Jacques Derrida, *différance* emerges as a moment that makes possible our categorial determinations.[12]

I want to begin by setting out, informally, some of the characteristics of Kant's account of contradiction in the first *Critique*, and then say a little about why Hegel thinks Kant's account goes wrong here. Kant's claim is that reason naturally develops contradictions, but while Hegel

believes that these contradictions are a sign that the world can only be understood through the categories of contradiction, Kant takes them to show that a categorial understanding of the world is only a partial understanding of the world at best. Contradictions emerge when we assume that experience can be totally captured by the categories. I will then consider Merleau-Ponty's and Derrida's accounts of how Kant's thought has been taken up to overturn several of the key claims of Hegel's thought.

For Kant, then, the key opposition is between our representations, which characterize appearances in time, and the noumenal, which falls outside of it. For Merleau-Ponty and Derrida, the opposition is between our representations of temporal phenomena and a nonrepresentational relationship to processes in time. This allows the French tradition to see these antinomies of reason as opening out onto another view of the world. It also allows these authors to take up one of the key insights of Hegel, namely that the concept of the indeterminate second world is empty, without having to reduce everything to judgment.[13] In both Merleau-Ponty and Derrida, we find that the introduction of Kant's notion of transcendental illusion provides a way of moving beyond our everyday categories without falling into Hegel's position. I have not talked about other examples but I would argue that we can find this same approach throughout the French tradition—for example, in the work of Sartre, Deleuze, and Bergson.

2. Kant on Contradiction

For Kant, the history of philosophy presents a series of contrary philosophical positions on a range of topics, each of which seems to be justified. Kant's diagnosis of the intractable nature of debates, such as whether the world has a beginning in time, or whether we have free will or are determined by the causal laws of the universe, is that they arise ultimately from the limitations of reason itself (CPR A491–7/B519–25). One of the many revolutionary claims that Kant makes here is that reason does not fall into error because of the interference of another mental faculty; it goes wrong precisely when it is not operating in relation to other faculties. We can contrast Kant's position here with René Descartes' claim that so long as we reason clearly, we will avoid falling into error. In the *Meditations*, for instance, Descartes breaks with classical skeptical approaches by positioning reason itself as the instigator and arbiter of the method of doubt.[14] Here, then, skepticism allows Descartes to clear the space for his inquiry into metaphysics, on the basis that a "deduction or pure inference of one thing from another can never be performed wrongly by

an intellect which is in the least degree rational."[15] Descartes' method here leads to an obvious question, namely if reason does not go wrong, where does error come from, particularly given that we are created by a benevolent God? Descartes' solution to this problem is to situate error in the interrelation between the faculties. In the *Meditations*, this is played out through the mismatch between the will, which has no concern for truth, and the narrower domain of reason itself. Here, then, error occurs because our thought exceeds the domain in which it can be legitimately employed.[16] Similarly, in the *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, Descartes writes, "While it is the intellect alone that is capable of knowledge [*scientia*], it can be helped or hindered by three other faculties, *viz.* imagination, sense-perception, and memory."[17] Kant's response to Descartes prefigures the kind of hermeneutics of suspicion that dominates continental thought in the twentieth century. His approach is to develop a *reductio ad absurdum* of such a position, showing that reason necessarily falls into error when operating on its own. According to Kant, the reason for this is that thinking is *discursive*—it relates itself to a manifold, in our case to space and time (CPR B145–6). Given Kant's claim that space and time are simply ways in which objects are given to us, we run into difficulties when we try to think about objects apart from their presentation in space and time, or by assuming that the way in which objects are given in space and time is the way they actually are in themselves.

We can see an example of how reason goes wrong when it is operating without reference to other faculties in the question of whether the world has a beginning in time. The key issue for Kant is the concept of "world," by which he means the totality of conditions for a given event (CPR A416–21/B444–9). Kant claims that the concept of world appears to be a purely empirical concept since it simply specifies what makes a given object possible, and it turns out to be merely pseudoempirical since the totality of conditions for any event exceed that which can be given in experience (CPR A517–23/B545–51). This confusion rests on an error: we can always trace back any given event to a prior event—we can think of a cause in space and time—but we cannot think *all* of the conditions of a given event; doing so would take us beyond what could be given in experience. For Kant, the task of reason is to tie together our understanding of the world, and thus to move from effects to causes; however, reason falls into error when it presupposes the cosmological principle that all causes exist and are accessible, or when it assumes that "when the conditioned is given, then so is the whole series of conditions subordinated one to the other, which is itself unconditioned, also given (i.e., contained in the object and its connection)" (CPR A307–8/B364). In effect, we confuse the fact

that we can always move from a given representation to its cause with the claim that the sequence of causes in its totality is given. Here, then, we make the mistake of assuming that we are dealing with things-in-themselves, rather than forms of representation.

The antinomy itself arises from the confusion of the task of reason with the presumed givenness of the unconditioned. The question of whether the world has a beginning in space and time relates, for instance, to reason's goal of finding the unconditioned for the conditioned, in the sense that the present moment is conditioned by the series of past moments, so reason attempts to think the beginning of the world as a whole. Contradiction emerges since there are two ways to specify this unconditioned, which Kant terms the dogmatic and empiricist interpretations of the world. We can consider the unconditioned to be a first term of the series, which would operate as an intelligible beginning (dogmatism), or, on the other hand, we can conceive of the totality of conditions taken together as the unconditioned (empiricism) (CPR A466–71/B494–9). For Kant, either of these claims can be proved by a *reductio ad absurdum* from the other.

On Kant's account, therefore, reason has been led into contradiction not through any interference by bodily causes, as Descartes holds, but by reason's own activity. Kant claims that what makes systematic knowledge possible is, in fact, the presence of an illusion. His procedure here is twofold. On the one hand, he shows how this illusion is generated. On the other hand, he shows how reason succumbs to this illusion, and how it is possible for reason to function without falling into error. Dealing with the first claim, if we return to the question of the world, we can see that the concept of world emerges through the desire of reason to understand empirical phenomena as a totality. The regression from conditioned to conditions was therefore "*given* to us *as a problem*" for reason (CPR A498/B526). The need to draw the fragmented cognitions of the understanding together to generate knowledge is a legitimate goal of reason. Kant argues, however, that if this goal is to be achieved, reason needs to make a further assumption. Namely, that in order to complete this task, reason supposes, on a subjective level, that totalities such as the world can *actually* be given. In other words, reason can always seek the condition, or cause, for any event, but what makes this project possible is the idea that all conditions are actually given. This notion that all conditions are actually given is the notion of a world. In this sense, the transcendental illusion is unavoidable. As Kant writes:

> [This is] an *illusion* that cannot be avoided at all, just as little as we can avoid it that the sea appears higher in the middle than at the shores, since we see the former through higher rays of light

> than the latter, or even better, just as little as the astronomer can prevent the rising moon from appearing larger to him, even when he is not deceived by this illusion. (CPR A297/B354)

The point to note here is that the idea of a totality is a condition for the possibility of a system of knowledge, and the necessity of this condition makes it appear as if such a totality could be given, but the mere presence of the illusion does not have to lead us into error.

How do we solve these antinomies? Here, Kant plays on a distinction that is generated between the thing-in-itself and appearance. These antinomies emerge in transcendental realist philosophy because of the kind of mistake that Bergson highlights: we take translations of the original as elements of the original. In this vein, the transcendental realist holds that the totality of conditions *are* available, which entails that our conclusion is unconditioned, leading in turn to what Kant calls an analytical opposition (CPR A504/B532). Here, then, the transcendental realist falls into error by taking what are translations into space and time for things-in-themselves. For the transcendental idealist, however, the unconditioned cannot be reached through the regressive application of the categories of the understanding, as these apply only to appearance rather than to things-in-themselves. While the categories can give us the empirical conditions for an event, as they represent the conditions for the possibility of experience, they cannot be applied to that which cannot be experienced, the in-itself. This means that the kind of totality for which the empiricist or dogmatist is looking is simply unobtainable, as the sequence, no matter how far it is traced back, will remain conditioned (CPR A77–84/B102–16). Once again, therefore, the attempt to represent a totality has resulted in a contradiction.

How does the introduction of the thing-in-itself allow us to resolve the antinomy? By recognizing that between the two categorizations of the universe as either finite or infinite in magnitude, a third possibility exists (CPR A504–8/B532–6): the noumenal, falling outside of the constraints of the categories of magnitude, is neither finite nor infinite.[18] Finitude and infinitude are therefore considered by Kant as simple contraries, which means that no contradiction results in the denial of both. Kant calls this kind of opposition dialectical:

> If two mutually opposed judgments presuppose an inadmissible condition, then despite their conflict (which is, however, not a real contradiction) both of them collapse, because the condition collapses under which alone either of them would be valid. (CPR A503/B531)

For Kant, then, contradictions emerge through the use of reason by itself—that is, they emerge from an attempt to push categorial thought beyond its proper bounds. The key claim here, then, is that

these contradictions are problematic, but also that they offer a proof for transcendental idealism. It is only when we recognize that there is an element that falls outside of the categories of reason, and hence that categorial thought is limited, that we can move beyond these transcendental illusions. This, for Kant, leads to the distinction between phenomena and noumena (CPR A497–508/B525–36).

3. Hegel

For Hegel, the antinomies "more than anything else, brought about the downfall of previous metaphysics and can be regarded as the main transition into more recent philosophy since they, in particular, helped to produce the conviction of the nullity of the categories of finitude in regard to their content" (SL 190R). This already presents us with a distinction between Kant's approach and Hegel's. Kant does not think that the categories themselves are problematic; rather, the difficulty is the extension of the categories beyond the field of experience. For Hegel, it is the categories in their finitude that are problematic, and this points us toward his ultimate rejection of Kant's formulation of the phenomenal-noumenal distinction. In Hegel's reading, the antinomies are not solved by pointing us beyond the world but rather are sublated by reason to generate categories that are more adequate to the nature of the world. The fact that contradiction is at the heart of the Hegelian method means that "as many antinomies could be constructed as there are Notions," instead of the number of antinomies being limited by a subset of categories (SL 191R). For Hegel, the antinomies that we encounter in thought show the internal inconsistency of our conceptual framework; reason resolves these inconsistencies by re-forming the contradiction into a new set of categories that more adequately portray the world (see SL 187–201).

Hegel's claim, then, is that philosophy proceeds by allowing the implications of our initial categories to develop themselves, rather than imposing an external method on them. This understanding of thinking as dialectical movement is what Hegel calls "infinite thought."[19] In the case of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, this involves showing that the conception of the object in consciousness shows itself to be inadequate under scrutiny, and hence develops into a more adequate form of categories. Thus, the *Phenomenology* begins with the categories of sense certainty and the pure recognition that consciousness is confronted with something that is without any further qualifications. Hegel's dialectic aims to show that this mode of the categories of consciousness for understanding the object overturns itself. Thus, what appear to be the most particular categories, "this," "here," and "now," are shown in

fact to be the most universal. Hegel writes, "When I say: 'a single thing,' I am really saying what it is from a wholly universal point of view, for everything is a single thing; and likewise 'this thing' is anything you like" (PS §110). However, what is most important for our purposes here is the result that the object cannot be distinguished from its method, and hence from its development. This means that, in contrast to the proofs of geometry, we cannot understand the result of a dialectical proof prior to working through the process of the proof (PS §47). As such, the meaning of our terms is constituted during the dialectical process itself. Following from this, the fact that the meaning of our categories is inseparable from the process by which they develop, along with the fact that new categories emerge through uncovering the contradictions in prior categories, implies that the categories of thought contain within themselves opposing or opposed determinations:

> It is the process which begets and traverses its own moments, and this whole movement constitutes what is positive [in it] and its truth. This truth therefore includes the negative also, what would be called the false, if it could be regarded as something from which one might abstract. (PS §47)

Hegel's approach to the antinomies is therefore to show that they represent the emergence of infinite thought, as reason provides a genetic deduction of the categories through exposing the one-sidedness of each of them. Rather than seeing them as highlighting the need for a noumenal moment, Hegel will instead argue that it is only by removing this one-sidedness of these determinations that we can find any resolution to the antinomies. Hegel, therefore, berates Kant for an "excessive tenderness for the world," which is "never and nowhere without contradiction" (SL 237–8R). He attempts to support this claim by showing how the first antinomy naturally dovetails with the dialectical movement itself, provided one does not, as Kant does, replace the final moment of reconciliation of the determinations with their suspension within subjective reason. Hegel's account explains why the categories are the way they are (something that is left unexplained by Kant), and, in a way, Hegel returns us to something like a pre-Kantian metaphysics. Rather than positing a moment outside of our representations to resolve contradictions, Hegel presents a view where reason demonstrates that the world itself is made up of a unity of contrary representations. This collapses the distinction between noumenal and phenomenal. Ultimately, when we reach Absolute Knowing, our categories of reason are shown to be adequate to objects in themselves, a claim that Kant's introduction of the antinomies was supposed to disprove. For Hegel, our representations are only translations insofar as our understanding of the world is abstract, and this provisional nature falls away once

reason becomes truly adequate to its object (SL 439–45). The result of this is that, for Hegel, once reason has reached the conclusion of its dialectical unfolding, our categories are no longer simply translations: "What is rational is actual and what is actual is rational."[20] Hegel ultimately develops a realism, albeit one that comes intellectually as well as historically after Kant.

4. French Philosophy

Hegel's approach dominated the nineteenth century because it presented a powerful vision of how the world is, but also because Hegel was able to show a weakness in the Kantian position. Insofar as the Kantian notion of the noumenal was empty of content, it seemed to have no explanatory power, and leaves us with a skepticism regarding the way things are in themselves. As such, the move from Kant's formal idealism to what Hegel calls absolute idealism is in part motivated by the excision of the noumenal. Hegel's conception of the world as constituted in terms of contradiction is also tied with the move toward an organicist conception of the world. Just as a contradiction involves opposed determinations held together in an identity, so, too, can we see life as involving structures that both differ from each other yet are united by their role in the organism itself. What I will argue is that twentieth-century French philosophy returned to Kant as a way of escaping the influence of Hegel. What made this possible in each case in which it occurred was the introduction of a more positive characterization of the noumenal that placed it back within the world as an element that was not able to be reduced to the determinations of reflection.

While, for Hegel, contradiction led to the emergence of further conceptual determinations, French philosophy operates by seeing antinomies as showing the limits of conceptual thought. However, for French thinkers, this does not lead to an empty conception of the noumenon as it does for Kant, but instead opens up onto a field that is noncategorial, yet still positively determined. As I will show in what follows, this leads to a very different kind of post-Kantianism. While, for Kant, the antinomies operate between the phenomenal world and the noumenal realm, for French philosophy, this movement is instead something that operates within the phenomenal realm itself. This position thus takes Hegel's rejection of the noumenal as a ground for the phenomenal, while avoiding the reduction of phenomenality to representation. We could talk here about the notion of transcendental illusion in relation to a number of views expressed by thinkers in the French tradition, such as Bergson's work on the spatialization of time, Sartre's account of prereflective consciousness, or Foucault's account

of power. However, I want to focus on two thinkers as case studies: Merleau-Ponty and Derrida.[21] In the following section, I will address the way in which Merleau-Ponty develops his own reading of the antinomies. Then, I turn to Derrida's account of *différance* and show how Derrida takes up themes from the Transcendental Dialectic to expose the limitations of Hegel's own position.

5. Merleau-Ponty

Let us begin with Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty's primary claim is that the structure of perception is ultimately different from the structure of categorial thought, but that we typically suffer from an illusion whereby we understand the structure of perception in terms of the structure of the objects that we take to cause the perception itself (POP 15). As with Kant, we fall into a necessary error by pushing our representations of the world too far. We take the structure of experience to be the same as the objective world. As Merleau-Ponty puts it:

> The meaning which I ultimately discover is not of the conceptual order. If it were a concept, the question would be how I can recognize it in the sense data, and it would be necessary for me to interpose between the concept and the sense data certain intermediaries, and then other intermediaries between these intermediaries, and so on. It is necessary that meaning and signs, the form and matter of perception, be related from the beginning and that, as we say, the matter of perception be "pregnant with its form." (POP 15)

Merleau-Ponty's positive project is an exploration of how we come to find ourselves in a world that is meaningful and, in order to clear the space for this project, he shows that regardless of the apparent differences in traditional approaches, they all share a key assumption that prevents them from giving an account of the origin of this sense or meaning. Merleau-Ponty calls these traditional approaches empiricism and intellectualism, and takes David Hume and Descartes as respective exemplars of these two approaches.[22] Both authors combine perceptual atomism with an account of how atoms are connected together into a whole. For Hume, all our ideas either derive directly from impressions or derive indirectly by being formed as a complex combination of simple impressions.[23] Such simple elements thus provide a foundation for the sense that we attribute to the world: if an idea cannot be traced back to its constituent sensations, then we can take it to be meaningless. Hume takes the interplay of a small number of principles of association to give rise to the complex ideas that we find in consciousness, just as Isaac Newton argued that the complexity of the physical world could be understood through causal interactions governed by a small number of

universal laws.[24] The world therefore becomes meaningful through the associations between various simple impressions that together form complex unities. For Descartes, relations of judgment, rather than causal relations of association, hold ideas together.[25] Judgment here operates to make experience meaningful by tying together similar ideas. Already in Merleau-Ponty's reading of these approaches, we have an account that resonates with Kant's. We have the notion that the two traditional accounts of the world, which see categorial thought as unlimited in scope, rest on a shared assumption. Just as Kant showed that rationalism and empiricism collapsed into each other, Merleau-Ponty will show that the same is true for intellectualism and empiricism.

Beginning with empiricism, Merleau-Ponty questions its account of resemblance: when one object leads us to recall a second object, it cannot simply be the case that some resemblance has led us to move from one to the other. Merleau-Ponty notes that everything is like everything else in some way, and unlike everything else in another (see PP 13–27). What Humean association lacks is an account of how one particular resemblance is picked out as the relevant resemblance in a given case (or, to prefigure a claim that we will encounter when we turn to Derrida, how we distinguish essential resemblances from accidental ones). As such, the presence of one idea cannot lead to a second idea being brought to mind. On the Humean model, it is impossible for us to explain why *this particular* impression or memory was called to mind by another impression. Rather, what allows us to associate one particular object with another is that we view an object under a particular aspect (or, in Merleau-Ponty's language, according to a "synopsis [that] makes possible the contiguity and the resemblance among them" [PP 18])—i.e., we view an object as *already* having a certain sense or meaning. It is because we see the object under a particular aspect that we make the particular associations that we do. As such, meaning, in the sense of taking a perspective on the world and with it drawing out an aspect of the world as salient, precedes and makes possible association, rather than the other way around. Similarly, intellectualism, which holds that perception is understood in terms of judgment, does not explain the sense of perception. It seems to be the case that there is a difference between perceiving something and holding something to be the case: "Judgment aims at knowing something valid for me. . . . It takes sensing, on the contrary, to be the giving of oneself over to appearance without seeking to possess it or to know its truth" (PP 35–6). This intuition has implications for the intellectualist view that perception itself is judging. If we take the example of an optical illusion, we find ourselves in a situation where our perception and our judgment are not in accordance with each other.

A set of lines that we know to be parallel may in fact be perceived as converging or diverging. For the intellectualist, since perception is a form of judgment, such an illusion involves us holding contradictory beliefs, but this seems to be a misrepresentation of the dissonance we experience in these cases.[26]

Merleau-Ponty diagnoses the failures of both traditions as ultimately emerging from what he calls the "experience error": "We immediately assume that what we know to exist among things is also in our consciousness of them" (PP 5). It is this claim that leads to the perceptual atomism present in both traditions. In assuming that there is merely a difference of degree between the structure of perception and the structure of the objects of perception, both the empiricist and intellectualist are led to attribute the characteristics of unity and determinacy that they attribute to objects to the nature of perception itself. Merleau-Ponty writes, "Through optics and geometry we construct the fragment of the world whose image can, at any moment, form upon our retina" (PP 6). His claim here is not that empiricism and intellectualism necessarily hold that we have access to the world of objects but that this world provides the norms through which we evaluate and understand the structure of perception. Here, then, Merleau-Ponty is echoing Kant's key claim that both empiricism and rationalism are ultimately two different forms of transcendental realism. Kant's own claim is that these different forms confuse appearances with things-in-themselves and thus combine a (transcendental) realism about the existence of space and time with the possibility of an (empirical) idealism, since it is impossible on this assumption to show that our internal representations correspond with objects within space and time (CPR A490–1/B518–9). As Henry E. Allison argues, at the heart of transcendental realism is a "theocentric" conception of cognition where human cognition of objects differs in degree from how objects would be seen from a God's-eye view.[27] We have already seen that Kant argues that reason falls into error when it operates without relation to other faculties, and in contrast to the transcendental realist, his claim is that human cognition is discursive. This means that it takes space and time as intuitions rather than things-in-themselves, and since intuition has a different mode of organization than judgment, human cognition involves a difference in kind from the direct cognition that God would have, rather than simply being an inadequate form of it. Similarly, Merleau-Ponty notes that in empiricism and intellectualism, phenomena such as depth are understood in terms of a "*pensée de survol*" of the world, which takes our perspectival relation to the world as an inessential feature of it.[28] Empiricism and intellectualism are both unable to account for our lived experience of perspective because they attempt and fail to

reconstitute it from a similarly objective God's-eye view set of spatial relations in which depth and breadth are interchangeable. In Merleau-Ponty's words, "For God, who is everywhere, breadth is immediately equivalent to depth. Intellectualism and empiricism do not give us an account of a human experience of the world; they say of human experience what God might think of the world" (PP 266–7).

Here, then, we can see strong parallels between Kant's and Merleau-Ponty's approaches to clearing the space for their own philosophical positions. Both see traditional philosophical approaches as illicitly presupposing access to the object outside of experience, with Kant arguing that such an object can only be thought rather than known, and Merleau-Ponty denying the coherence of an object outside of the perspectival framework. In this regard, it is worth noting that Merleau-Ponty explicitly adopts something similar to what Kant calls the indirect proof of the "transcendental ideality of appearances" (CPR A506/B534). Kant argues that the antinomies to empiricism and rationalism can only be resolved by moving to a transcendental idealist understanding of the world. For Merleau-Ponty, this takes the form of showing that neither the empiricist nor intellectualist variants of objective thought, which he describes, echoing Kant's antinomies, as "thesis and antithesis," are able to coherently formulate accounts of various aspects of our experience such as our relations to our bodies and to others; ultimately, as we have seen, they are unable to account for the possibility of a meaningful world (PP 28, 181).[29] Merleau-Ponty's argument, then, will be that the antinomies of intellectualism and empiricism can only be resolved by introducing a different structure, namely that of perception understood in its own terms, as prior to our conceptual thought (POP 18–9). Objective thought is unable to understand perception as meaningful, since it can only understand the connections between perceptions in causal (thesis) or juridical (antithesis) terms, and each of these interpretations proves incoherent. Merleau-Ponty's solution is therefore to reject the implicit assumption of objective thought and recognize the primacy of perception. As Merleau-Ponty writes:

> One of Kant's discoveries, whose consequences we have not yet fully grasped, is that all our experience of the world is throughout a tissue of concepts which lead to irreducible contradictions if we attempt to take them in an absolute sense or transfer them into pure being, and that they nevertheless found the structure of all our phenomena, of everything which is for us. It would take too long to show (and besides it is well known) that Kantian philosophy itself failed to utilize this principle fully and that both its investigation of experience and its critique of dogmatism remained incomplete. (POP 18–9)[30]

Why is Kant unable to utilize this principle fully? Because, ultimately, Kant accepts that the only way something can be determined is in terms of the categories. As such, his alternative to determination is the pure indeterminacy of the noumenal. For Merleau-Ponty, what we find when categorial determination fails is not indeterminacy but rather a different model of determination. This is the notion of perception as not being structured in the atomistic manner but instead through the interplay of a figure and a background in a field of perspectival depth. Antinomy here discloses a positive way of understanding determination—one that escapes reason, but that does not simply open onto the empty thing-in-itself. In this way, rather than having an interplay between the phenomenal and noumenal realms, we have an interplay between the representational and nonrepresentational *within* the phenomenal realm.

6. Derrida

In "Plato's Pharmacy," Derrida explores Plato's claim that writing is of little service to mankind since it can only remind us of what we already know rather than teach us something novel.[31] Plato's argument here bears a striking similarity to arguments made by the eponymous character in his dialogue *Meno*, which purports to show the impossibility of learning. Also known as Meno's paradox, Socrates responds to it in this way:

> Do you realize what a debater's argument you are bringing up, that a man cannot search either for what he knows or for what he does not know? He cannot search for what he knows—since he knows it, there is no need to search—nor for what he does not know, for he does not know what to look for.[32]

Here, we find an immediate connection to Merleau-Ponty, since solving this paradox is at the heart of his motivation for developing a logic of perception that differs in kind from that of judgment and is constitutive of the field of reflection.[33] He argues that Meno's paradox arises from empiricism and intellectualism covering over this prereflective constitution of sense. For empiricism, thinking is understood in causal terms, and this obscures the need for an account of sense. For intellectualism, sense is explained by an internal connection between the data of experience, insofar as what is presented to us is constituted by judgment. This means, however, that insofar as what is presented to us is constituted by us, it is already known to us. "What intellectualism lacks," writes Merleau-Ponty, "is the contingency of the opportunities for thought" (PP 30). In the first case, meaning is entirely beyond us, and in the second, meaning is always already

present to us. As Merleau-Ponty puts it:

> Consciousness is too poor in the first case, and too rich in the second for any phenomena to be able to *solicit* it. Empiricism does not see that we need to know what we are looking for, otherwise we would not go looking for it; intellectualism does not see that we need to be ignorant of what we are looking for, or again we would not go looking for it. (PP 30)

For Merleau-Ponty, then, philosophy begins with a project that emerges once the antinomies of these categorial approaches are brought to light, and we return to a noncategorial account of perception. Derrida's account of *différance* develops a similar response to this problematic, arguing that beneath our categorial ways of relating to the world, we find a noncategorial basis:

> And if one got to thinking that something like the *pharmakon*—or writing—far from being governed by these oppositions, opens up their very possibility without letting itself be comprehended by them; if one got to thinking that it can only be out of something like writing—or the *pharmakon*—that the strange difference between inside and outside can spring; if, consequently, one got to thinking that writing as a *pharmakon* cannot simply be assigned a site within what it situates, cannot be subsumed under concepts whose contours it draws, leaves only its ghost to a logic that can only seek to govern it insofar as logic arises from it—one would then have to *bend* [*plier*] into strange contortions what could no longer even simply be called logic or discourse.[34]

For Derrida, the organisation of *différance* differs in kind from the structures of judgment. Rather than the combinatory logic of judgment, we find *différance* operating according to a logic of dissociation, where concepts represent provisional coagulations of an underlying transcendental field. As he puts it, deconstruction operates "according to lines of force and forces of rupture that are localizable in the discourse to be deconstructed."[35] Derrida notes that *différance* "derives from no category of being" and hence is outside the structures of judgment; it cannot be understood in terms of negative theology (D 6). *Différance* is not to be understood as some kind of beyond to the world, but rather as the operation of generating the differential nexus within which names gain significance. Thus, the unnameability of *différance* comes, in a sense, from its closeness rather than its distance from us:

> This unnameable is not an ineffable Being which no name could approach: God, for example. This unnameable is the play which makes possible nominal effects, the relatively unitary and atomic structures that are called names, the chains of substitutions of names in which, for example, the nominal effect *différance* is itself *enmeshed*. (D 26–7)

In this case, then, we once again have a gap opening, not between the world and a beyond, but within the world itself—between *différance* and presence, or categorial thought.

This brief discussion of Derrida's non-concept of *différance* should make clear that these connections with Merleau-Ponty all point to a similar response to Hegel, and I want to turn now to the way in which Derrida takes up Kant to formulate this response. In his essay, "The Pit and the Pyramid: Introduction to Hegel's Semiology," Derrida sets out his account of Hegel's own understanding of the relationship between speech and language.[36] As with Plato, we shall see that while Hegel accords a place to writing, this is only on the basis of writing being subordinated to speech, and only on the basis of writing being understood as phonetic writing. As Hegel himself puts it in his discussion of writing in the *Philosophy of Mind*:

> While on the subject of spoken language (which is the original language), we can also mention, but here only in passing, *written language*; this is merely a further development within the *particular* province of language which enlists the help of an externally practical activity. Written language proceeds to the field of immediate spatial intuition, in which it takes and produces signs.[37]

If we turn to the final moment in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, Absolute Knowing, we can see that reflexivity and self-presence are at the heart of Hegel's equation of substance and subject.[38] This will involve a privileging of the kind of writing that will preserve this equation. Derrida notes that Hegel's theory of the sign occurs in his discussion of psychology, "the science of spirit determining itself in itself as a subject for itself" (PPH 75). Hegel displays an ambivalence toward the notion of the sign, but Derrida argues that the sign plays a central role in Hegel's metaphysics (PPH 83). For Hegel, the voice, in its use of signs, unites nature and spirit, since the voice uses natural sounds, but the natural existence of these signs is sublated for them to be given the significance of meaning that is found in spirit (PM §459). In other words, the voice, in organizing sound into language, demonstrates the commensurability of reason and nature. For Hegel, the voice also brings the inner world into alignment with the outer through expression in language: "Sound articulating itself further for determinate representations, *speech*, and its system, *language*, give to sensations, intuitions, representations a second, higher reality than their immediate one, in general an existence that carries weight in the *realm of representation*" (PM §459). Language therefore allows consciousness to be present to itself and is the way in which consciousness integrates itself into a community by allowing itself to become determinate, and thus enter the sphere of reason. We can note, too, that once this criterion of presence has

been accepted, writing will naturally take on a subordinate role as a moment at once removd from the proper presence of speech. Given the *Phenomenology*'s narrative span of the history of spirit, writing will be essential in transmitting the voice beyond the individual's death, but only on the condition that it has the same structure as the voice itself does it take on the form of phonetic writing (see PPH 95). Writing therefore is understood as structurally analogous to speech, but also as subordinate to it (PPH 95–6). In this manner, writing, as the noncategorial ground for the categories of speech, is covered over by Hegel's dialectic.

The problem emerges with languages that do not appear to have this structure of relating speech and writing, namely nonphonetic languages such as Ancient Egyptian and Chinese. Hegel's claim is that "alphabetic writing is in and for itself the more intelligent form" (PM §459R), and that "the Eastern form must therefore be excluded from the History of Philosophy. . . . Philosophy proper commences in the West."[39] This distinction between two kinds of language is essential for Hegel, since it allows him to preserve the connection between the voice and writing in the philosophical tradition, while excluding those nonphonetic forms of writing that would disrupt the close connection between the voice and its transcription. The difficulty with this approach is that while there may be a *de facto* connection between philosophy and phonetics, Hegel posits a necessary connection between philosophy and phonetic writing (PPH 95–6). Derrida makes two sets of claims against Hegel here. First, Derrida argues that the notion of a phonetic language is simply a "teleological ideal" for Hegel, given the absence of actual languages of this kind (PPH 95). While Hegel takes the nonphonetic aspects of language to be accidental, Derrida argues that they represent "the example of an essential law that irreducibly limits the achievements of the teleological ideal" (PPH 96). Second, Derrida argues that despite Hegel's attempts to show that there is an inherent problem with nonphonetic language, his account in fact shows a series of nondialectical contradictions in Hegel's own relationship to such languages (PPH 96–7).

The transcendental ideal emerges from Kant's discussion of transcendental ideas. Transcendental ideas are regulative principles that go beyond what can be given in experience but which provide a focal point around which we can organise experience. In bringing in the notion of an ideal here, Derrida is arguing that Hegel illegitimately presupposes an ideal of language that makes possible, but cannot be explained by, his dialectical method. While ideas are general concepts, the ideal is a particular that is entirely determined by the idea (CPR A568/B596). Kant gives the following analogy of a transcendental ideal:

> Virtue, and with it human wisdom in its entire purity, are ideas. But the sage (of the Stoics) is an ideal, i.e., a human being who exists merely in thoughts, but who is fully congruent with the idea of wisdom. Just as the idea gives the rule, so the ideal in such a case serves as the original image for the thoroughgoing determination of the copy. (CPR A569/B597)

The ideal is essentially normative and allows us to put to practical use the ideas of wisdom and purity. The ideal of the Stoic sage gives us a model against which to judge conduct. Thus, it provides reason with "a concept of that which is entirely complete in its kind, in order to assess and measure the degree and the defects of what is incomplete" (CPR A570/B598). In effect, the transcendental ideal therefore institutes a distinction between the essential and the accidental by giving us an archetype that allows us to determine an object as an imperfect copy of it. It is by bringing an object into relation with this archetype that we can qualify the object as lacking certain properties, rather than simply having different properties.

Understanding Hegel's philosophy of language as governed by an ideal means that Derrida sees it as operating according to a principle not given in experience or through the immanent development of our concepts. Thus, rather than operating through an immanent method, Hegel's account of language would presuppose a transcendent theory of language that governs the way in which the empirical is synthesized. We can relate this to the question of resemblance that we discovered in Merleau-Ponty's thought. Merleau-Ponty notes the inability of a system of judgment to determine which resemblances we take to be essential and which are accidental (PP 13–27). We can see here that, on Derrida's account, the constitution of these categories, which involve *différance*, is covered over for Hegel by the introduction of an ideal that is a presupposition that falls outside the system itself, and is the result of what Derrida calls a moment of radical freedom that cannot be explained within the domain of the dialectic itself. As such, the essence of writing is constituted as its phonetic elements, and those features that do not conform to the phonetic structures would be merely accidental. In discussing Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's efforts to develop his *characteristica universalis*, a universal language of science based on a set of rationalized principles inspired by Chinese characters, Hegel even recognizes in passing the essential role of nonphonetic language in a range of western disciplines:

> Leibniz's practical mind (*Verstand*) misled him to exaggerate the advantages which a completely written language, formed on the hieroglyphic method (*and hieroglyphics are used even where there is alphabetic writing, as in our signs for numbers, the planets, the*

> *chemical elements*, etc.), would have as a universal language for the intercourse of nations and especially of scholars.[40]

Whereas for Kant, the transcendental ideal provides a framework for unifying and expanding our empirical knowledge, and so gives sense to a set of acknowledged empirical facts, for Hegel, the transcendental ideal instead functions as a way of instituting a distinction between essential and accidental facts, thus allowing us to disavow portions of our empirical knowledge. This pre-dialectical process thus allows the formation of an account of language conducive to Hegel's dialectical analysis. As such, the privileging of a form of writing that can be subordinated to speech in a simple manner is a presupposition of Hegel's method, rather than a result of it.[41]

Second, in Hegel's reading of nonphonetic language, Derrida argues that Hegel finds himself embroiled in a series of contradictions that are fundamentally nondialectical, and that emerge from Hegel adopting something like a Freudian "kettle logic," whereby a number of mutually incompatible disavowals are presented that point to a deeper motivation for the rejection (PPH 104). For instance, in analyzing the Chinese script, Hegel argues that Chinese is a precursor of the kinds of logical systems that Leibniz envisages, which would allow for meaning to emerge simply through the grammatical structure of the words themselves.[42] As such, Hegel characterizes Chinese as operating as a purely formal language of abstraction, and hence as divorced from spirit. He also criticizes Chinese for lacking a properly formulated grammar (PM §459R). Similarly, while Hegel praises German for its polysemic nature, which makes it conducive to dialectical inversions, he criticizes Chinese for the same trait (ibid.). Contradictions such as these lead Derrida to argue that Hegel's criticisms of nonphonetic writing are not based on an immanent analysis of these languages themselves, but on the need to protect a certain relation between speech and writing. Hegel writes:

> The nature of . . . [the Chinese] Written Language is at the outset a great hindrance to the development of the sciences. . . . They have, as is well known, beside a Spoken Language, a *Written Language*; which does not express, as ours does, individual sounds—does not present the spoken words to the eye, but represents the ideas themselves by signs. This appears at first sight a great advantage, and has gained the suffrages of many great men—among others, of Leibniz. In reality, it is anything but such.[43]

As such, for Derrida, "speculative dialectics permits itself to be separated neither from logos nor, simultaneously, from the logos which never thinks or presents itself except in its historical complicity with the voice and phonetic writing" (PPH 104). In effect, therefore, the logos

of the voice becomes the logos of dialectics itself. When we realize the contradictory nature of the privileging of one term within an opposition such as speech and writing, we are not led to a more adequate conceptual form, but rather to the rejection of the implicit presupposition of the form of logos itself. As such, there is no *Aufhebung* to a higher concept for Derrida, but rather a recognition that what makes the conceptual oppositions possible is itself of a radically different nature from that which it makes possible. It is what Derrida calls the "quasi-concept" of *différance* that makes possible the kind of conceptual operations that characterize presence.[44]

Derrida writes that the "general strategy of deconstruction. . . . is to avoid both simply *neutralizing* the binary oppositions of metaphysics and simply *residing* within the closed field of these oppositions, thereby confirming it."[45] In order to meet these goals, deconstruction operates in two phases: we have the reversal of the hierarchy itself, and Derrida's account here has acknowledged affinities with Hegel, since the latter, too, has a method that operates by showing the mutual dependence of opposites. As such, deconstruction maintains "relations of profound affinity with Hegelian discourse (such as it must be read)" (D 14). Nonetheless, Derrida rejects the second moment of the Hegelian dialectics whereby these opposed terms are reunited in a higher form, since, as Derrida's second criterion of deconstruction makes clear, such a unity, and the dialectic of negation, would continue to operate within the framework of opposition:

> I fear, precisely, that the category of "negation" reintroduces the Hegelian logic of the *Aufhebung*. It has happened that I have spoken of nonpresence, in effect, but by this I was designating less a negated presence, than "something" (nothing, indeed, in the form of presence) that deviates from the opposition presence/absence (negated presence), with all that this opposition implies.[46]

Derrida here argues for "a kind of infinitesimal and radical displacement" of Hegelian discourse (D 14). Ultimately, Derrida argues, much as Merleau-Ponty does, that the opposition between terms opens out onto a moment that falls outside of the oppositions themselves and in fact is generative of them. For Merleau-Ponty, the moment is perception, while for Derrida it is *différance*. In this sense, Derrida is closer to Kant than to Hegel, with the discovery of an antinomy showing that an implicit assumption, in this case, the hegemony of presence, has been in play within the metaphysical system.

7. Conclusions

We can see, then, how Kant provides the basis for a riposte against

Hegelianism. For Kant, antinomies emerge through a transcendental illusion that our representations of the world are not translations, to use Bergson's term, but are in direct contact with things themselves.[47] Hegel is able to surpass the Kantian model of antinomy, but only on the basis that Kant takes the noumenal to be essentially lacking any determinations, and it is here that the French tradition, in turn, finds a way to surpass Hegel. Merleau-Ponty and Derrida exemplify this movement, with the recognition that these antinomies point to a moment *within* the field of experience; but this moment itself falls *outside* representation. Here, then, there is a reconfiguration, rather than reiteration, of Kant's thought. It is in this movement beyond the categorial that French philosophy discovers many of its most vital themes. We find, for instance, the preoccupation with temporality, whether in the existential temporality of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty or in the temporally constituted subject of Bergson and Deleuze. Similarly, we find an exploration of a sense that makes possible our categorial judgments—a moment that sees deconstruction beyond its skeptical surface—and an ethics that recognizes the singularities and contingencies of our existence outside of the categories of representation.

NOTES

1. Henri Bergson, "An Introduction to Metaphysics," in *The Creative Mind*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1946), p. 206.

2. Ibid.

3. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Pocket Books, 1966), p. 328.

4. Jean-Paul Sartre, "Kierkegaard: The Singular Universal," in *Between Existentialism and Marxism*, trans. John Matthews (London: Verso, 2008), p. 146.

5. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Athlone, 1994), p. 52; henceforth DR, followed by page number.

6. Michel Foucault, "The Discourse on Language," trans. Rupert Swyer, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the "Discourse on Language,"* trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972), p. 235.

7. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A19–49/B33–73, A137–47/B176–87; henceforth CPR, followed by page number of the A and B edition. Both Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty recognize the importance of this "nonconceptual moment" in Kant's thought, but both

of them hold that this distinction remains subordinated to categorial modes of thought, with the understanding seen as actively imposing structure on the passive givens of intuition (see DR 85–99; and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Primacy of Perception," trans. James M. Edie et al., in *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, ed. James M. Edie [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964], pp. 12–27; henceforth POP, followed by page number). Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty instead develop notions of organization that do not presuppose a sharp distinction between active subject and passive material.

8. See Bergson, *The Creative Mind,* p. 206.

9. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic with the Zusätze*, vol. 1 of *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*, trans. and ed. T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, and H.S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), §41.

10. Ibid.

11. G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (New York: Humanity Books, 1969), p. 51; henceforth SL, followed by page number and, where necessary, R for *Remark*. On Hegel's rejection of immediacy, see Stephen Houlgate, "Hegel's Critique of Foundationalism in the 'Doctrine of Essence,'" *Hegel Bulletin* 20:1–2 (1999), pp. 18–34. Béatrice Longuenesse provides a particularly clear analysis of Hegel's response to Kant's distinction between concepts and intuitions (see Béatrice Longuenesse, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*, trans. Nicole J. Simek [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007], pp. 85–109).

12. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 454–7; henceforth PP, followed by page number; and Jacques Derrida, "Différance," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 1–27; henceforth D, followed by page number.

13. For Hegel's discussion of the emptiness of the "inverted world," see G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), §§157–71; henceforth PS, followed by section number.

14. René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in vol. 2 of *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes,* trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 12–5.

15. See René Descartes, *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, in vol. 1 of *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 12.

16. See Descartes, *Meditations*, pp. 37–43.

17. See Descartes, *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, p. 32; *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, ed. Artur Buchenau (Leipzig: Dürrschen Buchhandlung, 1907), p. 25.

18. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze uses the same principle that Kant uses for the noumenal to argue for his own intensive account of the differential calculus that escapes from the alternative of finite and infinite interpretations of the calculus. In the background of Deleuze's account is the more general claim that we need to avoid both finite and infinite accounts of representation by seeking another model that does not operate in terms of representation at all. In the following passage, Deleuze notes that Kant is close to this realization, but fails to reach it because he sees difference from representation in terms of indeterminacy: "The antinomy of the finite and the infinite emerges precisely when Kant feels himself obliged, by virtue of the special nature of cosmology, to pour into representation the content corresponding to the Idea of the world. The antinomy is resolved, according to him, when, on the one hand, he discovers within representation an element irreducible to either infinity or finitude (regress); and when, on the other, he adds to this element the pure thought of another element which differs in kind from representation (*noumena*). However, to the extent that this pure thought remains undetermined—or is not determined as differential—representation, for its part, is not really overcome, any more than the propositions of consciousness which constitute the substance and the details of the antinomies. In a different manner, modern mathematics also leaves us in a state of antinomy, since the strict finite interpretation that it gives of the calculus nevertheless presupposes an axiom of infinity in the set theoretical foundation, even though this axiom finds no illustration in calculus" (DR 178).

19. Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, §28.

20. G.W.F. Hegel, preface to *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H.B. Nisbet, ed. Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 20.

21. For accounts of how these French thinkers viewed the relationship between Kant and Hegel, see Henry Somers-Hall, *Judgement and Sense in Modern French Philosophy: A New Reading of Six Thinkers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

22. For a more detailed discussion of the differences between and different forms of empiricism and intellectualism, see Taylor Carman, "Between Empiricism and Intellectualism," in *Merleau-Ponty: Key Concepts*, ed. Rosalyn Diprose and Jack Reynolds (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 44–56.

23. See David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 1–7.

24. Ibid. See also Isaac Newton, *The Principia: Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, trans. I. Bernard Cohen and Anne Whitman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 382–400.

25. Descartes, *Meditations*, pp. 16–23.

26. These claims give only an indication of Merleau-Ponty's arguments here. For a more detailed exposition, see Komarine Romdenh-Romluc, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Merleau-Ponty and* Phenomenology of

Perception (London: Routledge, 2011); and M.C. Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

27. Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*, 2nd rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 27–34.

28. For Merleau-Ponty's use of "*pensée de survol*," which means something like a "thinking that looks from above," see Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1964), p. 102.

29. Here, Merleau-Ponty differs in one respect from Kant: for Kant, the thesis and antithesis are considered to be consistent in their own terms while contradicting the other position. For Merleau-Ponty, however, the thesis and antithesis are each shown to be inconsistent in their own terms. For both thinkers, nonetheless, it is only by recognizing that the thesis and antithesis do not exhaust the range of possibilities that we are able to escape from the antinomy.

30. Recognizing that Merleau-Ponty employs something analogous to Kant's indirect proof of transcendental idealism allows us to resolve the difficulty that Sebastian Gardner identifies in his account of Merleau-Ponty: that his work presupposes a transcendental idealist position (see Sebastian Gardner, "Merleau-Ponty's Transcendental Theory of Perception," in *The Transcendental Turn*, ed. Sebastian Gardner and Matthew Grist [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015], p. 306).

31. See Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy," in *Dissemination*, trans. and ed. Barbara Johnson (London: Athlone, 1981), pp. 61–172.

32. See Plato, *Meno*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 80E.

33. For a more detailed account of the connection between Merleau-Ponty's thought and Meno's paradox, see Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*, pp. 1–6, 34–6.

34. Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy," p. 103; "La pharmacie de Platon," in *La Dissémination* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972), p. 118.

35. Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 82.

36. See Jacques Derrida, "The Pit and the Pyramid: Introduction to Hegel's Semiology," in *Margins of Philosophy*, pp. 69–108; henceforth PPH, followed by page number.

37. See G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, pt. 3 of *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. William Wallace, Arnold V. Miller, and Michael J. Inwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), §459R; henceforth PM, followed by section number and, where necessary, R for *Remark*.

38. On the equation of substance and subject, Hegel writes: "These are the moments of which the reconciliation of Spirit with its own consciousness proper is composed; by themselves they are single and separate, and it is solely their spiritual unity that constitutes the power of this reconciliation.

The last of these moments is, however, necessarily this unity itself and, as is evident, it binds them all into itself" (PS §793).

39. See G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 1, trans. E.S. Haldane (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 99; cited in Derrida, "The Pit and the Pyramid" (PPH 101).

40. See G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, pt. 3 of *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. William Wallace and Arnold V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), §459; cited in PPH 96; Derrida's emphasis. See also G.W.F. Hegel, *Die Philosophie des Geistes Mit den mündlichen Zusätzen*, pt. 3 of *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, vol. 10 of *Werke*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), p. 273.

41. In this regard, Derrida can be understood as re-inverting Hegel's own account of Kant's transcendental ideas. As Julie E. Maybee argues, the self-driving nature of reason can largely be derived from Kant's notion of the transcendental idea (Julie E. Maybee, "Hegel's Dialectics," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [Winter 2020 edition], ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/hegel-dialectics/ [accessed February 8, 2025]). While Kant sees the transcendental realist use of transcendental ideas as resulting in contradiction, Hegel sees these contradictions as proof that contradiction itself is an objective feature of the world. Derrida instead argues that Hegelian reason is not in fact self-driving but relies on a preexisting transcendental to begin its development. To this extent, Derrida sees Hegel himself as taking an idea that allows reason to systematize experience, and phonetic language, as something actually given.

42. G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (Ontario: Batoche Books, 2001), p. 152.

43. Ibid.; cited in Derrida, "The Pit and the Pyramid" (PPH 103).

44. For his discussion of the quasi-concept, see Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), pp. 118–9. Paul Patton also takes up this notion and notes its proximity to Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of philosophical concepts (see Paul Patton, *Deleuze and the Political* [London: Routledge, 2000], pp. 15–6). Rodolphe Gasché deals extensively with this notion of the quasi-concept in "Deconstructive Methodology" and "A System beyond Being," chaps. 8 and 9, respectively, of *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 121–76, 177–251. Derrida argues that while *différance* is not a concept, it produces "conceptual effects" (see Derrida, *Positions*, p. 40).

45. See Derrida, *Positions*, p. 41. Catherine H. Zuckert argues that Derrida's project can be seen as "bring[ing] metaphysics to closure by showing its limits" (see Catherine H. Zuckert, *Postmodern Platos: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Gadamer, Strauss, Derrida* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996], p. 261). I take this closure not to involve the rejection of thinking in terms of judgment but rather the incorporation into this thinking of the recognition that its genesis is in a transcendental field that differs in

kind from it (rather than a finite synthetic or infinite analytic subject that operates according to analogous structures).

46. Derrida, *Positions*, p. 95.

47. See Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 31.