Abstract

This thesis is centrally concerned with difference and its place in ethical theory, particularly as it is influenced by the continental tradition. It takes ethical theory — and philosophy more generally — not to be a reflection of the world but a constructed, and therefore ideologically invested, system of meaning. Because philosophy is a form of representation with a world-making function, the political impetus of this thesis is to interrogate the frameworks through which ethical theory is currently being asserted, and the meanings which they both enable and constrain.

To this end, I begin by mapping the trajectory of the turn to ethics in literary theory in order to examine how “recognition” is gaining considerable currency in debates about the structures of relation between the subject and its surroundings. Locating recognition as part of the legacy of Hegel, I question the ways in which this system theorises the relation to alterity. I take Judith Butler’s work to be exemplary of the recognition-paradigm in ethical theory, and critically examine the impact of this framework on the model of alterity she proposes. I then look to the work of Emmanuel Levinas, whose ethics of absolute alterity at first would appear to move beyond this problem of recognition that haunts poststructuralist discourse. However, I do not find in Levinas’ work a viable alternative to Hegelian recognition. These philosophers, I argue, offer a version of difference which limits its conceptual potential as alterity. For this reason my thesis focuses in detail on the philosophy of difference proposed by Gilles Deleuze.

In Deleuze’s work I find an alternative to the recognition-based ethics that has become so prevalent in contemporary critical theory. I trace his rejection of Hegel through his early works on the history of philosophy, and claim that his differential method of reading enables him to develop his own ontology. While I examine Deleuze’s revision of Plato, Spinoza, Kant, Nietzsche and Bergson, I am particularly interested in the potential that his revision of Leibniz’s work has for ethical theory. This concern permeates the last three chapters of my thesis, which focus on Difference and Repetition. My interest is in the metaphysical primacy which Deleuze affords to both difference and the differential relation. I claim that because Deleuze’s notion of difference is premised on a fundamental relationality, his ontology is foundationally differential. My final chapter specifies the difference between Deleuze and Hegel as something which emerges through their differing interpretations of differential calculus. Although this interpretive divergence is concerned with things that are minuscule in scale, it is important because it determines their respective theorisations of ontology. My concluding chapter argues that the difference between Deleuze and Hegel enables the coopting of Deleuze’s work to theorise the ethical relation of the subject to alterity and thereby situate ethics beyond recognition.
Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in any university of other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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Signed

Hannah Stark
19 November 2010
Acknowledgements

There are numerous people who have made the writing of this thesis possible.

I would like to thank Mandy Treagus, my primary supervisor, who took a risk with this project and gave me the space to develop my own ideas. I would also like to thank her for being so calm at the moments at which I was “beside myself”, and for convincing me to keep going when submission seemed a very distant prospect. I am greatly indebted to Ken Ruthven, who supervised this thesis in his retirement. I would like to thank him for seeming to believe in this project (and in me) before I did, for changing the way that I write (forever), and for an excellent piece of advice: just do good work and let the rest take care of itself. I would also like to acknowledge Amanda Nettelbeck, who supervised my Honours thesis, and who has shown an interest in my academic progress.

I would like to recognise the research and travel funding I have received from the University of Adelaide. Thanks go out to two friends who provided me with accommodation for conference and research travel and whose moral support has been invaluable: Roanna McClelland in London and Melanie O’Grady in Sydney.

Thanks are due to several of my fellow postgraduates at the University of Adelaide. In particular, I would like to thank Michelle Phillipov and Jon Dale, both of whom have actively created opportunities for me, and also Keryl Howie, who was an affirming and energetic influence in the final stages of the writing process. I would like to acknowledge Tim Laurie at the University of Sydney, whose seemingly endless capacity to discuss Deleuze has pushed me to extend my own thinking.

I feel enormous gratitude to Jessica Murrell, without whom this thesis would not have been completed. Jess has been the first and last reader of all the work I have produced over the last five years, and her input has been so invaluable that she may be doomed to this role for life. I would also like to thank her for the generosity of her friendship.

I am indebted, of course, to my family (particularly my father Jeff Stark) who have shown such good humour and resilience during a difficult five years.

And a special thanks to Anne Romeo, who created the conditions under which this work was possible.
Introduction

“...epistemology is not innocent.”

— Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus (53)

Increased interest in ethics, described in this thesis as the ethical “turn”, has become apparent in contemporary critical theory, philosophy, and literary theory.¹ Evidently, ethical theory is emerging as a theoretical paradigm which offers us a representation of our world, creating a space in which this world can be speculatively re-imagined. However, as with other forms of representation, ethical theory also has a world-making function. It is because of its ability to both reflect and construct the world that ethical theory must be subject to rigorous evaluation and critique.

In this thesis, I am not interested in suggesting what ethics is but rather in examining some of the ways in which ethical theory is being asserted in contemporary critical theory. In this sense my own critical practice is necessarily epistemological. However, the subject with which I am concerned is ontology: the ways in which being is imagined and the consequences of this for ethics. Epistemology and ontology can never simply be separated as they are particularly sticky terms. Writing from the discipline of English, I am acutely aware of the impossibility of accessing being without the mediation of language or the knowledges with which it is

¹ This “turn” is conventionally dated from the controversy surrounding Paul de Man’s apparent support of National Socialism in 1987 and Jacques Derrida’s insistence that justice be exempt from deconstruction (1992, 15). The increasing importance of ethics in Humanities scholarship, and particularly in literary criticism, is evident, for example in the inclusion of Harpham’s entry on this matter in the 1995 updated edition of Lentricchia and McLaughlin’s Critical Terms for Literary Study, the first edition of which was published in 1990. This will be addressed in greater detail in the first chapter of this thesis.
interrogated and constructed. It is for this reason that I reject a notion of ontology which can be separated from epistemology and focus instead on what Judith Butler describes as “social ontology” (2009, 19), a notion of being necessarily mediated through, and shaped by, epistemology. This is an idea of being which separates it from the “natural” and renders it with complexity as something which is fashioned by discourse, altered by technology, implicated in power, and constantly re-articulated: a radically constructivist notion of being.

The mutual imbrication of ontology and epistemology means that while ontology is always already mediated, it also calls constantly for its own epistemological re-articulation. Being is excessive; it will always be more than epistemology can “know”. The inability of epistemology to act as a container for being in any totalising fashion forces the constant production and interrogation of knowledge. Elizabeth Grosz, who is interested in the ethical capacity of ontology itself, describes ethics as a “debt” to ontology (Grosz et al. 2000, n.p.), which not only gives ontology primacy but also suggests that ethics can be conceived as a way of negotiating being. In this thesis I claim that the debt to ontology belongs to epistemology and that this is perhaps an impossible debt to finalise but one which is constantly re-encountered. In particular, I am interested in how this debt functions in relation to difference. If difference can be seen to have an ontological status, then ethics is implicated in how it is epistemologically negotiated. My concern, then, is with how emerging ethical theories enable and constrain a particular notion of difference. Ethics, I argue, needs to be seen as a form of knowledge production which has an impact on the ways in which being can be understood.
Consequently, this thesis begins with an introductory chapter which grounds my claims about the increased interest in ethics in recent scholarship. In this chapter I make three argumentative moves. First, in order to situate the importance of interrogating ethical scholarship, I briefly examine its increasing prevalence in literary theory. Rather than situating the ethical turn at any definable moment in intellectual history, I claim that there is an ethical imperative to poststructuralism itself. Secondly, I examine the emergence of a particularly Hegelian model of ethical theory in which the relation of the subject to its surroundings is theorised as a form of recognition. As my interest is with contemporary uses of this theory, rather than with Hegel’s work itself, I critically examine the work of Judith Butler as exemplary of the ways in which this theory is being mobilised more generally. Recognition, I claim, has a significant impact on the way that subjectivity, difference, and ethics can be imagined.\(^2\) In response to what I find problematic about Hegelian recognition and its place in the contemporary articulations of ethics, namely, the way in which it is possible to theorise alterity within its structures, the question that occupies this thesis develops: what possibilities are there for ethics beyond recognition? This is a question which interrogates not just ethics but also the nexus at which subjectivity and intersubjectivity operate and how the subject’s relation to difference can be theorised. In this respect this thesis can, in part, be seen as offering a rejoinder to Oliver’s specific question: ““[c]an we conceive of the intersubjectivity of the subject

\(^2\) The prevalence of recognition in contemporary critical theory is addressed by Kelly Oliver in *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (2001). This thesis operates as a response to Oliver in many ways, in that it takes up her questions about the impact that recognition has on how subjectivity can be theorised. It builds on Oliver’s initial investigation in two ways. First, it examines the impact of recognition on ethical theory specifically, and secondly, it offers, in the work of Gilles Deleuze, an alternative possibility for theorising intersubjectivity in such a way that recognition is no longer a requirement. Claims about the increasing prevalence of recognition are also supported by Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth (2003), and Paul Ricoeur (2005).
without relying on the Hegelian warring struggle for recognition that dominates contemporary theory?” (2001, 6). One of the ways in which this question has been answered is through the work of Emmanuel Levinas, to whom Oliver herself turns. In the third section of this first chapter I critically examine Levinas’ philosophy of absolute alterity. However, I remain unconvinced as to the potential for Levinas’ work to move beyond the requirement of recognition. It is because of the limitations to the ways in which difference can be theorised (evident in the work of the philosophers addressed in this first chapter) that I turn for the remainder of the thesis to the work of Deleuze.

While Deleuze could be described as the great thinker of difference, he cannot be positioned as a philosopher who has either engaged systematically in work on ethics or produced writing in which ethics is the primary concern. Despite this, and following Ronald Bogue’s insistence that “there is a sense in which the ethical permeates all [Deleuze’s] work” (2007, 3), my imperative in this thesis is to examine how we can read Deleuze’s work as offering something to ethical theory. I assert that his work, particularly in *Difference and Repetition*, in which he explicitly critiques Hegel, is a useful resource for examining how ethical theory might function beyond recognition. In *Negotiations* Deleuze explains that he values ethics over morality because morality is a transcendent set of rules which constrain ways of living (1990b, 100). In this way he makes a connection between ethics and immanence, and challenges the accusation, as directed at both Spinoza and Nietzsche, that without transcendent universals there can only be ethical relativism (Smith 2007b, 67). Examining Deleuze’s work as a resource for ethics is particularly important because
of his sustained philosophical commitment to immanence. In this capacity, he provides a model for the way in which ethics might function in the absence of transcendent entities (such as God or the subject) and offers an ethics which can operate in the theoretical terrain which poststructuralism determines.

I begin my analysis of Deleuze in my second chapter, “Lineage”, with the claim that he is an important reader of the history of philosophy and that it is through his “differential” reading practice that he is able to develop his own ontology. In this chapter I trace Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza in both Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza and Spinoza: Practical Philosophy, Nietzsche, in Nietzsche and Philosophy, and Bergson, in Bergsonism and in his early article ‘Bergson’s Conception of Difference’, with a particular focus on how he utilises their work in order to situate a philosophical lineage in which Hegel can be ignored. Deleuze mobilises these three philosophers in order to theorise a notion of being which is purely positive and in which negation is not primary and constitutive, but only ever derivative. This has a fundamental impact on the way in which he is able to theorise difference.

In my third chapter, “Ontology”, I examine Deleuze’s work on difference as extrapolated in Difference and Repetition, in which it is difference not identity which has metaphysical primacy. I structure this central chapter on ontology to reflect the

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3 Immanence is an enduring interest for Deleuze but can be seen to develop particularly out of his work on Spinoza (1988b; 1992). The concept of immanence is perhaps at its most developed in his late publications such as What is Philosophy? in which he and Guattari discuss the “plane of immanence” (1994, 35–60), and also in his final work ‘Immanence: A Life’ (2005).
4 The suggestion that Deleuze’s reading style is “differential” has been advanced by Graham Jones and Jon Roffe (2009b, 3–4).
5 While in Nietzsche and Philosophy and Bergsonism Deleuze is explicitly critical of Hegel, in Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza his critique is implicit. In this text, the last of the three to be published in France, Deleuze demonstrates his disdain for Hegel by not acknowledging him.
particularity of the logic of Deleuze’s argument in *Difference and Repetition*, moving from his analysis of both Hegel and Leibniz’s theorisations of difference, through his critique of the Image of thought, to his work on the manifestation of difference through individuation. In many ways the second and third chapters bleed into each other in that Chapter Two is as much about the development of an ontology of difference and repetition as it is about lineage; Chapter Three continues the focus on Deleuze’s differential reading method, particularly as it pertains to Kant and Leibniz, in the development of this ontology. The most marked difference between Deleuze’s work on the history of philosophy and *Difference and Repetition* is that in the latter he is outlining his own philosophical commitments (Deleuze 1994, xv), many of which will remain throughout his subsequent work. I structure the second and third chapters in this way in order to account for the historical trajectory of Deleuze’s work but also to illustrate how he develops the ontology that is expressed in *Difference and Repetition*. To begin this thesis from Deleuze’s ontology (rather than from the ways that his work can be read as ethical) is to acknowledge, as Levi Bryant does, that “Deleuze’s ethics and politics follow — rightly — from his ontology, not the reverse” (2008, x). Deleuze’s ontology is the most significant aspect of his philosophy for this thesis because it determines the conditions which must be accommodated by an ethics drawn from his work.

The fourth chapter of this thesis, “Subjectivity”, is concerned with the possibility of a functional “subject”, able to withstand the ontology of difference and repetition that Deleuze proposes. The rejection of the conventional Image of thought, which he

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6 *Difference and Repetition* has a formal structure in which the first chapter corresponds to the fourth as the second does to the fifth. Chapter three is a pivot point in the text.

7 This sets him fundamentally at odds with Levinas for whom ethics is first philosophy.
proposes in *Difference and Repetition*, takes thought out of the subject and places it in a world of differential problems. This means that thought cannot be evidence of the being of the subject as it has been figured in Cartesian Humanism. Despite this, there is an important residue of subjectivity that remains in Deleuze’s work and which is critically under-examined. I do not suggest, therefore, that subjectivity is absent from Deleuze’s work; rather I show how he refuses it the metaphysical primacy which would afford it a transcendent role. In this chapter I trace the trajectory of Deleuze’s work which engages explicitly with subjectivity through his book on Hume, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, his book on Foucault, *Foucault*, and his work on Leibniz in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*. This provides the context in which I place Deleuze’s references to subjectivity in *Difference and Repetition*, in which he examines how subjectivity is always the effect of other processes. In this chapter I claim that despite Deleuze’s abstract rendering of a form of subjectivity at odds with liberal individualism, this does not mean that his subject is incapable of political action or engagement. I illustrate this through an examination of how this subject is embodied and is theorised to be both networked with other bodies and with its own environment. This enables a different understanding of politics, I claim in the final section of this chapter, a politics of difference founded on actions rather than identities.

In the final chapter of this thesis, “Ethics”, I examine how Deleuze’s ontology is foundationally premised on a notion of relationality. In Deleuze’s work, I suggest, the interaction of differences with each other enables a relational structure which engenders the production of further difference. This means that difference is
positioned (paradoxically) as the essential commonality between all things. In this chapter I situate Deleuze’s interpretation of differential calculus at odds with Hegel’s and I locate this as foundational to the irreconcilability of their notions of how it is that difference manifests itself. Why both these thinkers would turn to differential calculus in order to theorise being could be attributed to what Henry Somers-Hall suggests differential calculus offers: “the possibility, and also […] the necessity, of a new way of thinking about the fundamental logical principles we use to describe the world” (2010, 555). It is because of the radical notion of relationality on which Deleuze’s work is founded, and through which he realises his separation from Hegel, that I claim he is able to offer a version of ethics which operates beyond the necessity of recognition. The differential relation which Deleuze theorises is, therefore, not only the ontological condition with which his ethics must contend but is also the structure which makes ethics possible in his work.

I then turn to what Deleuze’s ethics of relationality might mean for subjectivity, which I examine through his critique of the self/Other relation, perhaps one of the most critically contested aspects of his work. I develop my argument about the potential for Deleuze’s work to offer an ethics beyond Hegelian recognition through my reading of his work on the otherwise Other, which, I argue, gives the relation to others ethical valence. I support my claims through an analysis of the place of the Other as it is developed in Deleuze’s criticism of Sartre, his work on Michel Tournier’s Friday published as an the appendix to The Logic of Sense and the concluding passages of the fifth chapter of Difference and Repetition, ‘Asymmetrical

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8 In the interest of maintaining consistency I will use Other throughout this thesis to designate the theoretical term. Quotations will be replicated as written in the original text.
Synthesis of the Sensible’. In the final paragraph of this fifth chapter of *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze makes a connection between his critique of the structural relation of the self and the Other, and love. The capacity for love to exist in the world, as it is theorised by Deleuze, is something which Dorothea Olkowski is critical of in *The Universal (in the Realm of the Sensible)*, in which she offers an evaluation of the viability of Deleuze’s ontology of difference and repetition. In the last section of my final chapter I counter Olkowski’s claims through examining how although love is not a dominant theme in Deleuze’s work, it is significant because he returns to it repeatedly. Love is, I claim, an illustration of how relationality might function in Deleuze’s work, what this might mean for subjectivity, and how this may be useful for theorising the possibilities for ethics beyond recognition.
Chapter One: The Turn to Ethics

After the ethical turn it is imperative to question the frameworks on which ethical theory is asserting itself and what is assumed by these frameworks. In this introductory chapter I explore this in three ways. First, I examine the turn to ethics in relation to poststructuralist theory. I begin with the rise of ethics in literary criticism, which I trace from a series of events in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In many ways it is appropriate that this thesis, which is primarily concerned with the work of a philosopher, begins with claims about literary studies because it speaks to my own disciplinary background. However, this starting point also attests to my larger concern with textuality and reading. In turning to philosophy, my interest is not in finding a true or accurate representation of the world, but rather in how texts (philosophical or otherwise) are constructed systems of meaning and, as such, are not neutral but need to be interrogated for the ideological assumptions which support them. It is because philosophy, as representation, is not a mute reflection of the world but also has a world-making function that this interrogation is so important.

Secondly, I position the rise of Hegelian recognition as a result of the ethical turn. In examining this type of theory, my interest is in how difference is enabled and constrained. I offer an analysis of Judith Butler’s reading of Hegel in *Subjects of Desire* and her subsequent work on a post-Hegelian ethics of recognition, as an illustration of what I find problematic about recognition: namely, that it allows only a limited concept of alterity and grounds both subjectivity and intersubjectivity in negativity. Thirdly, I examine Levinas’ ethics. This speaks back to the two earlier sections of this chapter in that the turn to Levinas is indexical of increasing academic interest in ethics and also because it may appear, at first, that he offers a solution to
the problem of recognition which I identify, in that he writes of the ethical relation to absolute alterity. I argue, however, that Levinas’ work is an inadequate response to the problem of recognition not only because it may not sufficiently realise its proposed distance from Hegelian recognition, but also, and in a way that I find deeply concerning, because it positions ethics as “first philosophy” (1979, 304). In locating ethics as pre-discursive, Levinas ultimately situates his ethical system beyond critique in a way that is antithetical to my larger concern with the necessity of a constant interrogation of the paradigms which structure philosophical systems.

**Ethics and Poststructuralism**

In 1990 Martha Nussbaum, whose own work pioneers the renewed marriage of literary studies and moral philosophy, claimed that although it was a “rich and wonderful time in moral philosophy” — perhaps the most significant since the time of John Stuart Mill — there was an absence of ethical work in literary theory (1990, 169–70). In the last twenty years, however, her call to literary theory has been more than answered and there has been an outpouring of work on ethics. The turn to ethics, which Alain Badiou positions as the “the major ‘philosophical’ tendency of the day” (2001, 3), has been particularly evident in literary criticism.9 Rather than suggesting, as Robert Eaglestone does, that literary studies is the discipline which is the most influenced by theory (1996, n.p.), and ethics has been most prevalent in this discipline for this reason, I maintain that literary criticism and philosophy have a

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9 This claim is supported by scholars such as Harpham (1995, 400), Rainsford and Woods (1999b, 3), and Parker (1999, 152).
long standing relationship of mutual influence.\textsuperscript{10} This is evident in the torsion between the philosophical interest in literature and narrative, of which Nussbaum’s work is exemplary, and claims about the ethics of reading, or of criticism itself, in, for example, Derek Attridge’s work (2009, 23). The turn to ethics manifests not only in claims about the ethical status of criticism but also in the rise of trauma studies, the imperative to frame feminist, postcolonial and other political discourses of oppression in terms of ethical dilemmas and conduct, and the increasing critical interest in the figure of the O/other.\textsuperscript{11} Following the linguistic turn, this academic fashion, which has been described by Steven Connor as a shift from “textuality” to “ethicality” (1996, 25), is a particularly contested trajectory in intellectual history. Whether it is a backlash to poststructuralism or its development remains a contentious question.

The turn to ethics is generally dated from two significant events. Firstly, there was the controversy of the posthumous discovery of Paul de Man’s pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic wartime journalism in 1987 by student Ortwin de Graef, which was only to

\textsuperscript{10} The terminology in which this debate is predominantly couched names poststructuralism T/theory (Moi 2006, 1735). This is because Theory is the term used in the North American University system to designate poststructuralism and this is where deconstruction particularly, and poststructuralism more generally, was debated and evaluated by Anglophone critics. In this light, although poststructuralism emerged in France in the 1960s, Schad claims that it “peaked in Yale in the 1970s and 1980s” (2003, ix). This tension is important to this thesis because although it examines the French context for the emergence of Deleuze’s work, it can only speak to my own situatedness in an Australian English department which is influenced by Anglo-American trends. This is not to say that Australia, with its geographic distance from the United States and Britain as well as Europe, has not been an interesting case in the uptake of continental philosophy, particularly in feminist theory as Christine Battersby has suggested (2000). Rather, this is to suggest that my own work on continental philosophy is doubly filtered, firstly by translation into English, and secondly, by my disciplinary situation.

\textsuperscript{11} Both John Guillory and Chantal Mouffe describe the ethical turn as a turn away from the political (Guillory 2000, 29; Mouffe 2000, 85). Mouffe suggests that this is perhaps a result of “the lack of any credible political alternative to the current dominance of neoliberalism” (2000, 86). This reframing is particularly evident in feminist criticism, for example, which has seen a shift from the political to the ethical in the emergence of eco-feminism, feminist bio-ethics, and an interest in a feminist ethics of care.
deepen as more of his pre-American life was uncovered (Lehman 1991). This occurred against the backdrop of the Academy’s attempt to come to terms with Heidegger’s own commitment to National Socialism which was on the agenda due to the French publication of Victor Farias’s *Heidegger and Nazism* in 1987 (translated into English in 1989). This text renewed speculation about the relationship between Heidegger’s anti-humanist philosophy and his politics more generally. The impact of the de Man controversy cannot be underestimated; Harpham goes so far as to claim that on the day of this discovery “the nature of literary theory changed” (1995, 389). This was to have a significant impact on Jacques Derrida. Paul de Man has been credited with importing deconstruction to America and was responsible for Derrida’s time at Yale. Lehman writes of Derrida’s anguish at the disgrace of his friend and insists that while Derrida called for calm in the wake of the controversy, he also insisted that the war journalism documents be made public as quickly as possible (1991, 211–12). Because of the relationship between Derrida and de Man, and particularly their shared theoretical concerns, the accusations addressed at de Man can also be seen to tarnish Derrida’s own work (although to a much lesser extent) and deconstruction more generally. This leads to the second significant event which is credited with prompting the ethical turn: Derrida’s claim that while law is “essentially deconstructible” (1992, 14), justice, “outside or beyond law, is not deconstructible” (1992, 14) which was made at the “Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice” colloquium in October of 1989. I will be cautious with this statement which is not as simple as this quotation might indicate. It is not that

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12 De Man’s own war journalism was published as *Wartime Journalism, 1940–42* (1989). Samuel Moyn locates the need to come to terms with Heidegger’s politics as central to the development of many significant thinkers who has studied under him. As well as Levinas, Moyn positions Hans-Georg Gadamer, Karl Löwith, Herbert Marcuse, Hans Jonas, Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss as “Heidegger’s children” in an echo of Richard Wolin’s 2001 book of this title (2005, 8–9).
Derrida is claiming that it is problematic to deconstruct justice because of the impact that this will have on humanity; rather, he is articulating what is arguably a grander claim: that “[d]econstruction is justice” (1992, 15; emphasis mine).

The ethical turn is sometimes positioned as a reactionary response to the theoretical complexity of poststructuralism and its anti-humanist agenda. Vitriolic criticism of poststructuralism can be seen in the work of academics such as Geoffrey Elton who has described theory as the “intellectual equivalent of crack” and the “cancerous radiation that comes from the forehead of Derrida and Foucault” (1991, 41). In 1982 Paul de Man asked, “what is it about literary theory that is so threatening that it provokes such strong resistances and attacks?” (1982, 11). Evidently the resistance to theory was prior to either the Paul de Man controversy or the increasing interest in ethics. As such, the ethical turn should not be viewed as a pivot point in intellectual history, and to trace it to a single event (or two) ignores the ethical currents already present in poststructuralism which predate it, as well as the constant criticism with which it has been accompanied. Eskin writes that

> what may have felt or seemed like a turn at the time appears, from the vantage point of the present, more like a noticeable turbulence in the path of modern intellectual history than a (radical) veering off from hitherto accepted intellectual practices implied in the notion of ‘turn’. (2004, 558)

He positions this “turn” not as a progression in ideas but as the revival of an earlier interest in moral philosophy (2004, 562). The ethics of poststructuralism, as a critical paradigm, are a key site of discussion in this debate.

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13 Attitudes such as this persist in the “Higher Education” pages of The Australian as can be seen in Eduardo De La Fuente’s recent and problematic diatribe against postmodern and poststructuralist theory in the Humanities and Social Sciences in “Vampires Latch on to Learning” (2010, n.p.).
If the turn to ethics signalled “a retreat to a critical environment undisturbed by poststructuralism”, then, as Rainsford and Woods claim, it would be less interesting (1999b, 3). Poststructuralism can be seen to have had its own ethical agenda, one which is intimately tied to theory. Nowhere is this more evident than in claims, such as Derrida’s statement about justice, that critical practices are themselves ethical. This can be seen as an extension of the critical agenda of much poststructuralist thought: to “problematise” residual Enlightenment ideals through a rejection of the grand narratives of Western civilisation and also of universal, humanist models which appeal to authenticity and stability.⑯ Reading for what is “unheard” (Davis 2004, 161) in texts has been an enormously fruitful task for minority positions which can utilise poststructuralism’s displacement of the certainties of meaning as a way to envisage their own position as a product of a system of meaning which is not universal or innate. The inbuilt meta-theoretical imperative in poststructuralist theory, to theorise the theorist and theory itself, can be seen to offer an ethically self-reflexive, rather than impartial, critical viewpoint. As such, “[e]thics”, Eaglestone, claims, “has always been a central concern of poststructuralist thought” (1996, n.p.). Lawrence Buell locates evidence of this in Foucault’s work on the care of the self, in Derrida’s claims about the ethics of deconstruction (which I have already alluded to), and the increasing prominence of Levinas in literary and ethical work (2000, 2). This can be dated from the 1960s, Beverly R. Voloshin insists, augmenting the list of scholars provided by Buell with Irigaray’s work on sexual difference (1998, 69). In shifting to the French context, the ethical impetus of these scholars can be situated differently. In his book From Revolution to Ethics, Julian Bourg details the

⑯ For a characterisation of poststructuralism as a discourse which “problematises”, see Catherine Belsey (1994, 16).
emergence of poststructuralist interest in ethics in relation to the events of May '68. This is supported by Jean-Philippe Deranty et al., who, in their recent examination of contemporary French thought, describe May '68 as both a “political rupture” and also a “paradigmatic” one (2007b, 2). Bourg maps the intellectual consequences of this rupture, arguing that after May '68 ethics became the “preferred term” or “lens” through which the dilemmas of modern life were intellectually examined (2007, 5). It is therefore problematic to position emerging work on ethics as a “dialectical response to post-structuralist theory” (Parker 1994, 4) and I would instead locate it as part of the development and influence of poststructuralism itself. These sites of contest over the value of poststructuralism attest to the persistent legacy of its high-theory form, which continues to shift and mutate through these debates, affecting the ways that it can be mapped and understood.

It is precisely because there has been a turn to ethics that ethical theory needs to be interrogated. This is even more important in those cases when ethical theory positions itself on the moral high-ground, particularly in its guises of trauma studies (in its less sophisticated forms), work based in religious systems, or any study that purports to offer a more enlightened theoretical paradigm. There is no intellectual position that should be beyond critical intervention. Nothing should be exempt from deconstruction simply because, if we cannot deconstruct “justice” then, K. K. Ruthven claims, “what is to prevent us from claiming that both God and Man likewise survive the deconstruction of discourses about them, which are respectively theology and humanism?” (2006, n.p.).
My interest in this thesis is in the ethical question of difference, a problem which can be seen as important to poststructuralist thought in general. More specifically, I am interested in the particularity of the form of difference assumed in specific enactments of ethical theory. Before turning to Deleuze’s extensive work on difference, I offer a particular trajectory which has emerged in contemporary work on ethics in (and influenced by) the continental tradition. In the following section I examine how Hegelian recognition is coopted in contemporary critical theory, particularly in discussions of the relation between the subject’s “identity” and what it finds to be different or exterior to itself. This will be integral to my discussion of Deleuze in that his work is premised on a rejection of Hegelian philosophy and the priority which it affords recognition.

**Hegelian Recognition**

In critical theory, recognition is gaining considerable currency in debates about the structures of relation between the subject and its surroundings. As such, it is unsurprising that it has become significant to discussions of both politics and ethics. Locating recognition as part of the legacy of Hegel, my interest in this thesis is in how this concept has come to enable a particular notion of difference, which I argue may not be adequate to relationality, specifically when this relationality is positioned as a space for ethics. In this way, I want to separate the politics of difference from the question of recognition; as my thesis will investigate in Chapter Four, identity politics, or even more sophisticated versions of recognition-based systems, may not be required for political action or ethical engagement. In this section I examine contemporary Hegelian philosophy through the work of Judith Butler. I utilise her
work at length, rather than Hegel’s own, because my interest is in how Hegel’s work is functioning in its contemporary versions. I take Butler as exemplary of this recognition-paradigm because of the great sophistication of her reading of Hegel, and also because of the current influence of her work. I examine Butler at length because it is my contention that her work articulates what is problematic about an ethics based on Hegelian recognition.

The concept of recognition can be traced through Western philosophy and as such it cannot be seen as an exclusively Hegelian concern. Paul Ricoeur’s *The Course of Recognition* attests to this as it outlines the way in which recognition functions in the philosophies of Kant and Bergson before arriving at a discussion of Hegelian recognition (2005). Hegel can be seen to have developed his own concept of recognition in dialogue with the work of others. This is emphasised in Robert Williams’ *Hegel’s Ethics of Recognition* which positions Hegel’s work in concert with that of Fichte and Schelling, as part of a specific philosophical trajectory of the conceptual life of recognition (1997). Despite this, I am interested in the prevalence of a particularly Hegelian strain of recognition which Ricoeur claims is “in full flower today” (2005, 17). Nancy Fraser’s view also supports my claims about the increasing use of the term recognition in critical theory. “Recognition theory”, she writes, is “currently undergoing a renaissance” (2003, 10).15

15 In addition to the work of Butler, Ricoeur, and Nancy Fraser, work on Hegelian recognition is also evident in, for example, Jean-Luc Nancy (2002), Axel Honneth (1996), Charles Taylor (1994), and Robert Williams (1997). Recognition is also functioning in a more latent form in discourses surrounding the recognition of oppressed minority groups and of speaking-positions in identity politics.
The concept of recognition is developed throughout Hegel’s philosophy but I will focus here largely on *Phenomenology of Spirit* because of its importance to Butler’s work (examined at length below) and also because it is the subject of Kojève’s *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (1969) which has been influential in how Hegel is understood today. One of the implications of Hegel’s notion of recognition is that the subject is always and necessarily in community. Nancy Fraser attributes to Hegelian origins the notion of recognition as a marker of intersubjectivity, and in this way she positions it as at odds with liberal individualism. Recognition implies “that social relations are prior to individuals and intersubjectivity is prior to subjectivity” (Fraser, Nancy 2003, 10). This reveals the multiple levels at which recognition operates. It is at once the ability to recognise the self as a subject, the conferring of recognition on others, and recognition or legitimation from the State. Hegel’s subject achieves recognition partly by finding itself reflected in the world and partly through being recognised by others. Ultimately this subject finds a reflection of itself by recognising that the other is not only similarly struggling for self-consciousness but is also a desiring being. “Self-consciousness”, he writes, “exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for an other; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged” (1977, 111). Recognition is therefore positioned as central to the very possibility of existence as a subject.

Although Hegel writes of the master/slave struggle, in his works this is not the definitive structure for recognition but rather is only its deficient form. Hegel develops a more reciprocal notion of recognition in his publications subsequent to

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16 Robert Williams argues that it is not that the concept of recognition changes significantly throughout Hegel’s oeuvre but that it is the context in which he uses the term that is different in his later work (1997, 2).
Phenomenology, and this is central to the specificity of his ethics. Stephen Houlgate highlights the fact that in this later work freedom is recognised in communities in which reciprocal recognition occurs. This is because “concrete human freedom is inseparable from recognition. We demand that our freedom be recognized as our right, and we need the respect of others if our freedom is to be more than a dream” (Houlgate 2003, 9). Despite this important element of Hegel’s concept of recognition, my interest is not in drawing a system of ethics from Hegel’s philosophy but in the development of a specifically French strain of Hegelianism. It is this trajectory which I claim is becoming influential in larger debates about the ethical relation to difference rather than specific explications of Hegel’s own ethics such as can be found in Robert Williams’ work.17

The resurgence of interest in Hegel in France is attributed by Descombes to both a renewed interest in Marxism and to Kojève’s lecture series on Hegel from 1933–9 (1980, 9–10). These lectures have had such a significant influence on French thought not only because they were attended by thinkers who were to become extremely important in the second half of the century (Raymond Aron, Georges Bataille, Alexandre Koyré, Pierre Klossowski, Jacques Lacan, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Eric Weil, Raymond Queneau [Descombes 1980, 10 n.1; Gutting 2001, 110]) but also because Kojève reformulated an anthropological version of Hegel’s work which made it extremely engaging (Descombes 1980, 27). This is no mean feat; after all, reading Hegel has been described, by one recent Hegelian commentator, as “the intellectual equivalent of chewing gravel” (Beiser 2005, 1). The focus of Kojève’s

17 Another notable example of this is Robert B. Pippin’s work on recognition in Hegel’s Practical Philosophy in which he claims that Hegel develops the concept of recognition to allow for the realisation of freedom (2008, 183).
interpretation was on the master/slave dialectic, the role of desire in negation, and the struggle for recognition, which he described as a “fight to the death” (1969, 7).\footnote{For the ways in which Kojève’s reading alters Hegel’s work see Houlgate (2003), and Robert Williams (1997). This is significant for the concept of recognition in that for Hegel genuine recognition is mutual, while for Kojève the master/slave dialectic is rendered as a war-like struggle (Houlgate 2003, 17–8). The emphasis on negation can also be seen to have had significant influence, evident in the work of Honneth (1996), Ricoeur (2005), Nancy (2002), and many of Butler’s publications addressed below.}

What is important to this thesis is not the specific differences between Kojève and Hegel, or even recuperating a version of Hegel’s philosophy not contaminated by subsequent interpretations, but rather, how Hegel’s work persists in a contemporary form of Hegelianism. I therefore concur with the position of Nancy that “we read Hegel or we think him such as he has already been reread or rethought up to us, such as he has already been played out in thought” (2002, 7). It matters little for this thesis whether or not Kojève “seriously distorts” Hegel (Houlgate 2003, 13), but what is important to acknowledge is that after Kojève, Hegelian recognition is a significantly different concept.

The legacy of Kojève’s reading of Hegel, or the “French reading”, is evident in the work of the philosophers considered in this thesis, particularly Deleuze, but also Levinas and Butler. Butler is, however, an interesting case because although she is unquestionably influenced by Kojève’s reading, evident in both the focus on negation which she claims is central to all her work (2004, 198) and in the violence of the intersubjective relation which Oliver diagnoses in \textit{Excitable Speech} and \textit{The Psychic life of Power} (2001), she also rescues Hegel from Kojève’s reading, which, she insists, positions Hegel as “championing the ‘subject’”, by means of “a metaphysics of closure or presence, that excludes difference and is, according to his
Butler offers a generous and deeply nuanced reading of Hegel and one which is worthy of our attention because, in her writings on ethics and politics in the last decade, she makes productive use of this Hegelian foundation.

Butler can be described as foundationally concerned with Hegel, in that her first monograph examines the twentieth-century French reception of his work. I argue that this engagement scaffolds her political project which she acknowledges revolves around a set of concerns prompted by Hegel’s legacy (1999b, xiv). In the preface to the re-released edition of *Subjects of Desire* in 1999, Butler defends Hegelian subjectivity, writing that the question to which she returns in her work is: “[w]hat is the relation between desire and recognition, and how is it that the constitution of the subject entails a radical and constitutive relation to alterity?” (1999b, xiv). Butler’s rendering of this model of subjectivity is complex because it envisages the Hegelian subject as the product of a historical trajectory that was initiated by Hegel but has been perpetuated subsequently by his interpreters, and to which she contributes her own complex reading.

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19 I am not claiming that Hegel is the only influence on Butler’s work or that she is in any way exclusively a Hegelian scholar. Certainly Derrida, Foucault, Lacan, increasingly Levinas, and to an extent Nietzsche and Spinoza are also important influences; however, Hegel does have a privileged place in her work and has proved central to the framing of her political and ethical concerns.

20 The influence on Butler of Kojève, Hyppolite and Sartre are particularly significant because their treatment of Hegel was the subject of her doctoral thesis, which she later revised and extended for publication as *Subjects of Desire*. 
Butler’s subject is etymologically “ec-static”: it is outside of, or beside, itself. In *Subjects of Desire*, Butler finds this notion of the subject in Hegel’s work through rendering desire as ecstasy because it motivates the subject to pursue what it lacks, which is, of necessity, outside of itself. Driven into interactions with others and with its environment, this subject’s identity is mediated by the reflexivity that being-outside-of-itself allows, and it can find itself only in this state. Butler acknowledges the paradoxical nature of Hegel’s subject, which is isolated in its pursuit of an autonomous self-consciousness while also and necessarily discovering its identity through relating to others (1999b, 40). She describes this subject’s interactions with its surroundings as a double process of assimilation and projection. As a result, Hegel’s subject internalises otherness while simultaneously externalising itself (Butler 1999b, 42). Consequently, the porous boundary between what the subject is and what it is not drives it into a constant state of becoming in which it will always remain incomplete.

Because, in a Hegelian sense, recognition is the regulatory matrix which structures the relation of the subject to its surroundings, Butler positions it as the very condition for the subject’s existence. She writes that for Hegel, desire is “always the desire-for-reflection, the pursuit of identity in what appears to be different” (1999b, 7). She describes this subject as simultaneously discovering its identity and finding its metaphysical place in the world, which, by reflecting the subject back to itself,

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21 Lloyd argues that Butler is able to render Hegel’s subject as “ecstatic” only because her deliberately partial reading of *Phenomenology of Spirit* refuses the metaphysical closure achieved by the unity of subject and substance (2007, 15).

22 Butler aligns this desire for recognition with Spinoza’s *conatus*. To persist in one’s own being, she argues, is to be recognised. An unrecognisable being lacks possibility, and only possible beings are capable of persistence. To not meet the normative requirements for recognition is therefore to be negated in a literal sense (2004, 31).
implies the existence of an “ontological relatedness” (1999b, 8) between them. It is because this subject continuously internalises difference that Butler writes of it as the aggregate of everything it encounters (1999b, 6).

For Butler, however, the role of the negative is such that it prevents the subject from arriving at a state of absolute knowledge of the world. She follows Kojève and Hyppolite in their reading of Hegel’s subject, which refuses it the internal harmony that would allow it to achieve unity with the world by finding identity in difference.23 It is because she thinks such unity impossible that she regards the Hegelian subject as a conflicted site — split between the metaphysical closure signalled by the satisfaction of desire, and the necessary openness of this system indicated by the labour of the negative (1999b, 13). The negative is what renders Butler’s subject ecstatic, marking an opening between the self and the world and forcing the subject into constitutive relational engagement against what it is not. The notion of interior and exterior is made problematic here as can be seen in Hegel’s Phenomenology: for although initially it may appear that the negative is what is external to the subject because it is excluded, it is actually internal to the subject because of its constitutive function (1977, 21). Situated on the cusp of differing from itself, this subject is kept fundamentally unsatisfied. Condemned by the negative to engage in the endless process of becoming undone, the subject is motivated to pursue the conditions of its own re-making. Although it desires recognition in order to be constituted and

23 Butler attributes the French interest in Hegel during the 1930s and 1940s to a desire to find new life in the concept of negation after the first world war, and the eventual outbreak of another. “The negative”, she writes, is also human freedom, human desire, the possibility to create anew; the nothingness to which human life had been consigned was thus at once the possibility of its renewal […] The negative showed itself in Hegelian terms not merely as death, but as a sustained possibility of becoming. (1999b, 62; emphasis in original)
confirmed as a subject, Butler explains, it is actually the act of recognition which alters the subject (2005, 28).

Mediated through Hegel, Butler’s notion of becoming is generated through negation, which ensures that everything is constituted in opposition to what it is not. This subject-in-process can never return to how it was prior to a particular interaction with difference because the experience of alterity disrupts its coherence. As a result, it changes fundamentally and irreversibly. Butler argues that at the point of engagement the subject does not simply turn difference into identity, but rather realises — at the very moment its identity would cohere — that it cannot return to its prior state. The foundational moment of identity thus entails self-loss, and reveals the “subject that cannot remain bounded in the face of the world” (Butler 1999b, xv). Lloyd describes Butler’s dialectic as “non-synthetic”, because it refuses dialectic synthesis. This dialectic can therefore be seen as a constant conflict without the possibility of resolution into identity through the overcoming of difference. For Butler, Lloyd concludes, this is how difference is prioritised over identity (2007, 19).24

Butler’s early interest in the relationship between recognition and community is evident in Subjects of Desire, although this book can be described as more philosophical than political or ethical. Because existence is confirmed by the “acknowledging look of the Other”, she writes, “[t]rue subjectivities come to flourish only in communities that provide for reciprocal recognition” (1999b, 58). In

24 Butler’s positioning in critical and political theory as central to the politics of difference, as well as her foundational role in queer theory, can be seen to support a reading of the vitality of her concepts of difference and identity.
prioritising the foundational nature of intersubjectivity for the constitution of the subject, Butler highlights our essential dependence on others. In *Frames of War*, she explains that this is because the Hegelian process of relation ensures that “the subject that I am is bound to the subject I am not” (2009, 43). This foundational binding not only underpins her theory of how subjectivity relates to alterity but also foreshadows her later political focus on intersubjectivity as a locus of ethical engagement. In driving the subject into relation with others, it is its unfinished nature which can be seen to mark the conditions under which it is in community.

Butler gives our binding to others ontological priority. Contextualised with Nancy’s claim in relation to Hegelian subjectivity that “I am unbound of myself” (2002, 37), this focus suggests that ecstatic undoing occurs precisely in the binding of ourselves to others. Constituted by our ties to each other, ontologically “the forming and un-forming of such bonds is prior to any question of the subject and is, in fact, the social and affective condition of subjectivity” (2009, 182–83). This is why Butler speaks only of the “*social* ontology of the subject” (2009, 147; emphasis mine). It is not only to suggest that particular connections form and un-form us, but rather that the mere possibility of our connection to others (which does not presume an actual encounter) is central to our sense of self and our existence as a subject. This relational structure is beyond individual choice: there is no possibility of existing without the impingement of others on our lives. As a result, although a particular “you” may be lost, the possibility of an “indexical you” remains, and it is this you
“without whom I cannot be” (2009, 44). It is not surprising, then, that from this Hegelian foundation, Butler’s more recent work has turned to ethical concerns.\textsuperscript{25}

The ecstatic nature of the subject is examined in Butler’s more recent work, particularly in ‘Beside Oneself’, in which she utilises grief to illustrate how intersubjectivity is undeniable. In its connection to others, Butler’s subject always vacillates between “loss and ecstasy” (2005, 28). Implicit in her examination of grief is the differential treatment of a grievable life. Returning to the notion of ecstasy, Butler theorises the relational structures which both constitute and undo identity.\textsuperscript{26}

As an ecstatic state, loss is transformative. The grief that follows the rupture caused by loss demonstrates both the undoing of the subject and that fundamental reliance on others which continues from infancy. The experience of grief lays bare the ways in which we are enmeshed in relational structures that are centrally important to our sense of self. Grief also implies the prior ecstatic relations that structure desire and love. “Let’s face it,” Butler insists, “[w]e’re undone by each other. And if we’re not, we’re missing something. If this seems so clearly the case with grief, it is only because it was already the case with desire” (2004, 19). This is an explicitly political statement not only because she is theorising loss in relation to AIDS deaths and American politics post-9/11, but also because this reveals something about our ties to others, the kinds of community that such ties constitute, and the ethical responsibility they imply.

\textsuperscript{25} The turn to ethics in Butler’s work can be noticed subsequent to the hesitations she professes to have with ethics in her paper ‘Ethical Ambivalence’ (2000a).

\textsuperscript{26} The “ecstatic” nature of subjectivity is evident in Butler’s rejection of the autonomous subject. This was central to her work in the 1990s, as for her the subject has never possessed an interior agency but has always found itself in the external structures of language, discourse and power, which it then internalises. To describe this as a “return” is to highlight her re-adoption of her earlier terminology.
Butler insists that this intersubjective embodied sociality is “fundamental” (2004, 22). The political motivation in her more recent work on recognition is traceable, notably, in *Bodies that Matter*, in which she asks why some bodies are assumed to be more important than others. This question is part of a broad Hegelian agenda as its concern is: who is protected by recognition, and who comes to occupy the position of negativity by being designated unrecognisable? Examining the embodied nature of recognition is her supplement to Hegelian subjectivity because, as she concedes, there is little mention of embodiment in Hegel’s work except as the container of consciousness (1997b, 34). As the site where we are exposed to one another, the body is important for experiences of pleasure and pain but also for recognition, and the policing and challenging of norms. As the location of corporeal normalisation and resistance, the body also registers failures in both. The pre-text of Butler’s contention in ‘Beside Oneself’, that the body comes into being through sociality, is her argument in *Bodies that Matter*: the body is never prior to discourse or society (1993). In being embodied, the subject is always “given over” (2005, 101) to the other in a way that it cannot choose or control.

Embodiment is evidence of a common corporeal vulnerability in Butler’s more recent work, as can be seen in her repeated evocation of the precariousness of life. Vulnerability is a political tool because it enables us to understand our implication in the lives of others who are similarly embodied and exposed. To envisage the world in this way appeals to our proximity to others and disrupts the subject’s sovereignty. This view is commensurate with Nancy’s notion of the “trembling subject”: “I
cannot stop trembling before the other, and even further, at being in myself the
trembling that the other stirs up” (2002, 45). Nancy’s reading of the Hegelian subject
evokes that precariousness of our relations which frames Butler’s discussion of the

Focusing on community, Butler asks how the act of recognition in our intersubjective
relations creates and polices the categorical distinction between the human and the
less-than-human. The Hegelian tradition, she concludes, ignores the fact that the
category of the human is an exclusionary mechanism for conferring humanness on
some while depriving others of its status (2004, 2). Her epistemological critique of
Hegel is central to her ethics and an ongoing concern in her work. This is evident in
her discussion of how the politics of inclusion structures our concepts of both
“woman” (1995) and “universality” (2000b). Heavily influenced by Foucault, she
theorises recognition as a site of power through which the regulatory operation of
norms enables such categories to be produced and undone. To be possible in this
context is to be recognisable, which means that existence is subject to pre-existent
norms. This subject is therefore constituted as human by external norms, which by
putting it outside of itself, reminds us of its ecstatic nature. What this means, Butler
suggests, is that we negotiate the human at moments of ecstasy (2004, 32–33).

Butler’s ethical project is to expand those “grids of intelligibility” which designate
the recognisably human. “What might it mean,” she asks, “to feel the surety of one’s
epistemological and ontological anchor go, but to be willing, in the name of the
human, to allow the human to become something other than what it is traditionally
assumed to be?” (2004, 35). This is the hope in Butler’s use of recognition and the point at which our relations with others become ethical. Far from resulting in “reductive relativism” (Butler 2004, 37), it would involve revitalising the category of the human through constant critique. Central to her political project is the fundamental unknowability of what might constitute the human. In ‘Restaging the Universal’ she describes the gap between a conceptual category and its actualisation as its “futural promise” (2000b, 32). In *Frames of War*, Butler examines how being is always in excess of the frame, and in her work this is often represented as failure (2009, 9).27 The complexity of epistemology’s failure to contain ontology in a totalising way, coupled with our inability to access ontology except through social and political framing, contributes to the contingency of identity which Butler prioritises.

Developing this idea in *Giving an Account of Oneself*, Butler argues that we should accept the fact that the other is as contingent as the self. This text examines the structure of address when the subject is called by another to account for itself.28 A fundamental opacity of the subject is revealed at such moments because contingencies of memory and narrative prevent it from giving a totalising account. What Butler sees herself formulating is a post-Hegelian notion of recognition. While she acknowledges that the subject in Hegelian recognition is not opaque, she argues for the unknowability of both ourselves and others as the ethical component of

27 Butler also contextualises this with her work on gender. She comments, “gender is always a failure. Everyone fails. And it is a very good thing that we fail” (Zajdermann 2006).
28 This continues Butler’s earlier examination of the structures of address in *Excitable Speech* (1997a) which draws on Althusser’s notion of interpellation and the speech-act theory of J. L. Austin. *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005) is preoccupied with the structure of address as an ethical site. I have not addressed the place of recognition in *Excitable Speech* because it is discussed at length in Oliver (2001, 62–69).
recognition. In Butler’s ethics, the subject’s recognition of its own contingency is something that it should credit the other with. For an incoherent subject to require the other to maintain a coherent self-identity is a form of ethical violence (2005, 41–42).

In Butler’s formulation, an ethical relation to the other acknowledges the “epistemic limits” (2005, 43) which govern that relation, making the structure of recognition more flexible. This is because the world the subject knows is not pre-given; instead, it is brought into being through the act of engagement. “We do not remain the same,” Butler writes, “and neither do our cognitive categories, as we enter into a knowing encounter with the world. Both the knowing subject and the world are undone and redone by the act of knowledge” (2000b, 20). Our epistemological structuring of the world has a constitutive influence on its manifestation through both conformity and resistance. Ethics, for Butler, as the negotiation of recognition, is therefore fundamentally linked to the modes of subjectivity which are possible.

For Butler, then, the subject does not contain an internal ethical core. Instead the ethical site is at the limits of intelligibility, at the point where we negotiate with what is outside our frames of knowledge. Here the subject encounters those alterities which, displacing it from itself, make it ecstatic. It is for this reason that Butler’s example of grief is apt; it demonstrates the rupture of subjective boundaries by an affective experience which not only cracks the subject open, but also reveals that this subject was always already brittle. These states — grief, rage, desire — reveal the tenuous nature of the epistemological structuring of recognition. It is because the subject is undone by the relationship to alterity that Butler suggests there is a space
where the categories of human and inhuman are negotiated. This is, therefore, the site of “our chance of becoming human” (2005, 136). Butler’s ethical imperative is to redefine recognition as fundamentally unsatisfiable and therefore open to alterity.

It could be said that the great strength of Butler’s work is her rendering of intimacy, of how we are inextricably embedded in, and constituted by, our relations to others. As part of the legacy of Hegel’s thought, this work may well prove useful to both political philosophy and people involved in political struggles. When pushed to the speculative limits of the philosophical, however, it does not enable alterity to function in its most abstract and foreign forms. This is because she does not move beyond the imperative of recognition which structures not only her work on ethics but also her concept of subjectivity. The framework of recognition determines a relation between the subject and the Other, rendering it as a specific form of sense-making. Because the Butlerian subject comes into being through social norms, the form that it will take reflects already existing frameworks. Consequently, its possibility for agency and resistance is to be found within these structures, never outside them. The subversive repetition of a norm enables the subject to challenge its stability. But such transformative resistance is wholly dependent on a sense-making relation to already existing (although socially contingent) categories of being. As Kathy Dow Magnus explains, “[t]he specific frame of reference within which recognition takes place may be questioned, but even then, the framework determines the kinds and forms of questions that may be raised” (2006, 97). If this is the case, then Butler’s work invites various questions. What does social recognition mean for alterity? When social relations are processed through the matrix of recognition, what
violence is done not only to the Other but also to the subject? How does this assume a specific subject capable of granting recognition to the Other, and an Other who both requires and desires that recognition be granted? What rationality does the structure of recognition assume? And, ultimately, what is the conceptual cost of Hegelian recognition? It is my contention that Butler’s work provides an illustration of a more general problem in ethical theory which utilises the recognition-paradigm, and therefore my critique of her work has broader relevance than simply providing a close reading.

The Hegelian system of recognition enables and constrains a certain relation to difference. Grosz is extremely critical of recognition and of Butler’s reliance on this concept.29 “In spite of its place in the rhetoric of radical politics since Hegel”, she writes, “recognition is the force of conservatism, the tying of the new and the never-conceived to that which is already cognized” (2001, 103). Her claim here alludes to the most significant problem with recognition: that it requires that things which are fundamentally strange, which we do not and cannot have knowledge of, be subjected to already existing systems of meaning and value. The problem with this, as Nancy reminds us, is that thought is “the separation of things and the ordeal of this separation” (2002, 13). The epistemological structure of thought categorises and hierarchises being so that it is reduced to systems which pre-date the particular encounter. Badiou, like Grosz, is deeply critical of recognition: “[t]he truth is that, in the context of a system of thought that is both a-religious and genuinely contemporary with the truths of our time, the whole ethical predication based upon

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29 See for example Grosz (2002).
The stakes are high in this debate for imaginings of community. Nancy Fraser and Honneth claim that recognition has been “recently resuscitated” as a tool to “conceptualize today’s struggles over identity and difference” (2003, 1). Recognition has of course proved extremely useful for these debates and for theorisations of intersubjectivity. The use-value of recognition is that it provides a way to think about community so that recognition itself becomes the source of the “social bond” (Lash and Featherstone 2001, 14; emphasis in original). In this context recognition can be seen to imply that there is a commonality through difference because of the requirement of reciprocal recognition in order to exist (Parker 1999, 159). This can be seen to have gained significance in relation to the identity politics of the 1980s and 1990s. These political movements are, however, complicit with regimes of visibility, so that recognition becomes coded as that which is visible and articulable and what is beyond recognition is coded as invisible. In this system, difference, contradiction, and incoherence are at risk of erasure. On this point, Oliver cautions that in order to “avoid injustice”, we are required to “continually and vigilantly reinterpret how and why we see what we see and how and why we look for what we do” (2001, 168).

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30 This is important to ethical questions about the relationship between recognition and representation. It is the “non-representable” which needs to be central to the ethical turn in aesthetics, Jacques Rancière insists (2007, 38). This is equally important to ethical questions about literature, which have often focused on the necessary limitations of representation and representational strategies. Discussions about the representation of such horrors as the Holocaust make this particularly evident.

31 I will examine the place of identity politics in these debates in greater detail in Chapter Four.

32 For further discussion of how visibility functions in French thought see Martin Jay (1994).
Recognition has important implications for theorising subjectivity, because, as Oliver comments, “theories of identity and subjectivity based on recognition are implicit if not explicit in almost all types of contemporary theory” (2001, 4). The recourse to the subject and the human in contemporary ethical work, and specifically in Butler’s project, requires interrogation.33 The turn to ethics, and with it the rise of interest in alterity and such humanistic terms as “friendship, hospitality, responsibility, care, and love” (2004, 685), is problematic, Rey Chow asserts, because what is emphasised in “so many forms of mea culpa, self-analysis, self-reflexivity, and self-admonition”, is “the self, the subject, the centre, and the origin that is the West” (2004, 685). Examining the kind of subjectivity that is supported in different ways of theorising ethics is important because it is related to the ways in which intersubjectivity, otherness, and difference are imagined. Attridge alludes to the impact that recognition has on the figure of the Other. He states that “insofar as I apprehend the already existing other, it is not other: I recognize the familiar contours of a human being, which is to say I accommodate him or her to my existing schemata” (1999, 24). This returns us to Oliver’s question about our capacity to imagine intersubjectivity outside of the Hegelian recognition-paradigm (2001, 6). Answering this question is central to thinking through both the insidiousness of Hegelian models of subjectivity and also the ethics which these models permit.

33 Interest in the human is evident in the Humanities in Australia in a general sense. This is demonstrated in two recent conferences: AULLA’s 35th Congress in February 2009 which was themed ‘The Human and the Humanities in Literature, Language and Culture’ and Australian National University’s ‘The Limits of the Human: Philosophical, Historical and Ecological Perspectives’, held in September of the same year. Whether the notion of the human was affirmed or discredited at these conferences is less important to this thesis (although it is, of course, significant) than the fact that the “human” is being debated.
This is not to say that recognition is inherently destructive of difference but it serves the purpose of reminding us that, in certain kinds of philosophy, recognition has assumed a place which requires questioning. In this vein, Levi Bryant asserts, “[i]f recognition is to be placed in question, it is because of its tendency to naturalize or essentialize itself, rather than through any insidious moral machinations” (2008, 223). Although exactly how ethical theory, and philosophy more generally, is complicit with the “naturalisation” of recognition is beyond the scope of this thesis, it remains to be investigated more thoroughly in critical theory, if only to examine what this has cost critical theories of difference. As part of my agenda to be critical of what philosophical discourses enable and constrain, I ask: what is it that the dominance of recognition obscures? What other possibilities are there for thinking and enacting the relation to alterity?

At this point I turn to the work of Emmanuel Levinas, whose ethics of absolute alterity at first would appear to move beyond this problem of recognition that haunts poststructuralist discourse. The increased prominence of recognition, which I have positioned as a result of a growing interest in ethics in the Humanities, is something which subsists as a point of tension in much critical theory. This is evident in the work of Butler, whom I take as exemplary of a larger critical dilemma, and in whose work the problem of recognition is never fully or satisfactorily resolved. Butler’s increasing interest in Levinas, which can be traced from her article on ‘Ethical Ambivalence’ (2000a), provides evidence of this claim. In her work there is a critical instability enacted through the use of both a post-Hegelian notion of recognition and Levinas’ ethics of the face-to-face relation. Butler is not the only scholar who has
turned to Levinas in an attempt to resolve ethical problems. This is also evident in
Oliver’s *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* in which, with obvious debt to Levinas, she
claims that our ethical imperative needs to be “response-ability”. She continues,
“[w]e are obligated to respond to what is beyond our comprehension, beyond
recognition, because ethics is possible only beyond recognition” (2001, 106). In the
next section I look at what Levinas’ work offers ethical theory and speculate as to
how successfully it resolves the problem of recognition.

**Levinas and the Ethics of Absolute Alterity**

Levinas occupies an interesting place in the history of twentieth-century continental
philosophy. The turn to Levinas in the last two decades can be seen as indexical of
the ethical turn in critical theory. Although Levinas published his thesis in 1930 and
continued to be published until his death in 1995 (and posthumously), Simon
Critchley details how critical interest in his work has emerged most markedly since
the 1980s. He attributes the renewed interest in ethics, politics, democracy, law,
religion and phenomenology, from the 1980s onward, as the conditions for the
intensification of this interest (2002, 2–3). It is not surprising that Levinas’ work
would draw attention from theorists working on ethics since he has been described as
the “most dogged thinker of ethics in the recent French tradition” (May 1997, 131).
The perceived importance of Levinas’ work can also be credited to the particularity
of his ethical concern with the subject’s relationship with difference as absolute
alterity. This can be contextualised with the late twentieth-century interest, both
inside and outside the Academy, in difference and its political implications. After poststructuralism’s demolition of the universal humanist subject as a vehicle for ethical action, which would prevent ethics from being located in an assumed interior repository of subjectivity, one of the prerogatives of the ethical turn has been to position ethical engagement “outside” of the subject. Peter Baker locates the work of Levinas as exemplary in this respect, claiming that the ethical turn is itself a turn outward to the Other, a turn to intersubjectivity (1995, x). In the context of interest in the O/other in post-war thought, Levinas’ development of an ethics which gives the Other absolute priority is an appealing critical position. In this light, Moyn writes that Levinas’ theory of the Other “has had the most far-reaching ramifications for contemporary thinking and, even more, for contemporary vocabulary” (2005, 3).

The influence of Levinas is difficult to measure. Simon Critchley, arguably the most thorough commentator on the positioning of Levinas’ work in critical theory, claims that he has

become an obligatory reference point in theoretical discussions across a whole range of disciplines: philosophy, theology, Jewish studies, aesthetics and art theory, social and political theory, international relations theory, pedagogy, psychotherapy and counselling, and nursing and medical practice. (2002, 5)

In critical theory, this is evident in the work of Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, Jean-Luc Nancy, Paul Gilroy, Homi Bhabha, Zygmunt Bauman, and Judith Butler (to name just a few of the more esteemed examples). The importance with which his work is regarded is also evident in the calibre of his critics who include Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray, Slavoj Žižek, Alain Badiou and Richard Rorty.

34 Attridge cautions that he would not position Levinas’ ethics as one of difference because the “demands of the other are far greater than the demands of the merely different” (2009, 19). Although this may be true, I think that in general terms Levinas, like Deleuze, Derrida, Irigaray, Lyotard, and many of their other contemporaries, engaged continuously with the problematic of difference.
Although determining this influence in its specificity is beyond the scope of this thesis, I will take the torsion between his work and Derrida’s as an exemplary illustration of a more general movement in intellectual history.

The textual relationship between Levinas and Derrida is complex. Derrida’s important essay on ‘Violence and Metaphysics’ was a major and early intervention into Levinas’ work and was, according to Critchley, the only extended analysis of Levinas to be published in either French or English in the 1960s (1999, 11). This criticism, which centred mostly on *Totality and Infinity*, was to influence what is regarded as Levinas’ second major philosophical contribution, *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*. Critchley writes that the “turn to Levinas was motivated by the question of whether deconstruction, in its Derridian or De Manian versions, had any ethical status” (2002, 4). Ironically, perhaps, this turn is nowhere more apparent than in Derrida’s work itself. After exempting justice from deconstruction in 1989, the turn to ethics in his own writings foregrounds Levinasian themes such as an interest in the absolute Other and his concern with “hospitality” (1999, 21). This is an important example because much of Levinas’ influence is mediated by Derrida’s own use and critique of his ideas.

Levinas positions ethics, or what he sometimes refers to as morality, not as an aspect of philosophy but as “first philosophy” (1979, 304) and in this way he dislodges a traditional notion of metaphysics from its place in philosophical hierarchy. This enables Levinas to offer ethics not as philosophy but as its “grounding” (Eaglestone 35 Derrida describes *Totality and Infinity* itself as an “immense treatise of hospitality” (1999, 21; emphasis in original)
1997, 137). Levinas extrapolates metaphysics from ethics, rather than the reverse, and offers a concept of ethical metaphysics. In order to cement the bond between ethics and metaphysics, he separates metaphysics from ontology. Levinas defines “ontology” traditionally as the *comprehension* of being (Critchley 2002, 11).

Because Levinas’ central interest is in a form of difference beyond what it is possible to know, ontology, as he defines it, must be reposed as a secondary concern as it can limit this difference because of its epistemological nature. Levinas is critical of ontology because he insists that it totalises being and as such reduces all difference to part of the same whole (1979, 43). His work enacts the separation and hierarchisation of ethics and ontology because “preexisting the plane of ontology is the ethical plane” (1979, 201). For Levinas, it is what is exterior to this perceived “totality” that he calls the Other.

Levinas’ ethics are based on the face-to-face encounter with this Other. Moyn maps the development of this theory against European trauma from genocide and war; as such it can be seen as a reaction to its historical moment (2005).36 The response that Levinas’ work articulates, Eaglestone suggests, does nothing less than “reshape philosophy after the Holocaust” (1997, 6). It is also important to consider Levinas’ personal disillusionment at Heidegger’s political actions. Moyn claims that the shift in Levinas’ attitude is evident between his time as a student in Freiburg from the late 1920s, during which he described Heidegger as the “greatest philosopher in the world” (qtd in Moyn 2005, 2), to his abandonment of his book on Heidegger’s ontology in 1933.37 In this light, it is not surprising that Levinas rejects the notion of

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36 On this point see also Butler (2005, 92–94).
37 It may also be significant that Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany in this year.
the encounter with the Other as a relation between subject and object. Because the Other is beyond my comprehension it cannot simply be considered as an object which is offered to me (1979, 194). This is not an encounter with a knowable or definable entity but a meeting with absolute alterity (as distinct from relative alterity).

Because the Other is the “absolutely other” (Levinas 1979, 49) it is described as infinity. This indicates that it is necessarily in excess of the possibility of knowledge and cannot be reduced to the same or to part of the whole. The Other is an interruption to “totality” because it reminds me that there is an outside, or beyond, to knowledge. For this reason, the encounter with the Other is an experience of transcendence, which Levinas describes as an everyday experience of infinity (1979, 25). In Levinas’ encounter with the Other, which he describes as “metaphysics itself” (1979, 52), it is its face which calls one to a fundamental and undeniable responsibility, preceding everything including being itself. “The other”, he writes, “becomes my neighbour precisely through the way the face summons me, calls for me, begs for me, and in so doing recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question” (1989, 83). The Other designates an absolute openness or vulnerability, described by Levinas as “nudity”, which is simultaneously the temptation to murder and the ethical command not to murder (1979, 199). The ethical imperative not to kill the Other is something which we reaffirm in every encounter.

Because Levinas’ philosophy does not begin from the “world” or “being”, but rather from a human encounter with the Other, he is theorising a fundamental sociality in
which the responsibility to the Other is primary. This can be seen as a theory of a primary human vulnerability and dependency which positions us as inextricably embedded in the lives of Others in a way that Butler describes as beyond choice (2005, 101). By “arousing my goodness” (1979, 200), Levinas writes of this responsibility to the Other as the condition of freedom. He describes this non-violent ethics as “peace” (1979, 203).

The relation to the Other which Levinas inscribes can be seen to be beyond recognition because the Other is the infinite and therefore cannot be totalised in epistemological systems. In this way, Levinas endeavours to offer a notion of difference which is not reducible to a version of the same. It is worth examining what Diane Perpich calls Levinas’ “explicit” (2008, 186–87) break with the Hegelian dialectic relation and its emphasis on negation.\(^\text{38}\) Levinas insists that, in the Phenomenology of Spirit, Hegel’s “difference is not a difference; the I, as other, is not an ‘other’” (1979, 37). Robert Williams summarises how Levinas accuses Hegel of susceptibility to the holism or totality that he attributes to the Western tradition more generally.\(^\text{39}\) He reviews the different positions, writing:

\begin{quote}
Hegel believes that reciprocal recognition is the telos of intersubjective and social relationships. Levinas believes, on the contrary, that if asymmetry is transcended, the resulting reciprocity implies a coequality that in turn implies that self and other are levelled and totalized. When totalized, the other is denied, or reduced to the same; the other is neutralized by ontological universality and totality. (1997, 409–10)
\end{quote}

\(^\text{38}\) Derrida asserts that it is precisely in his explicit rejection of Hegel that Levinas is in fact closest to him (1978, 99). Because Derrida claims that this is a condition which Levinas shares with all other anti-Hegelians it can be assumed that he is implying that to resist Hegel is to confirm the Hegelian dialectic.

\(^\text{39}\) Robert Williams is ultimately critical of Levinas’ criticism of Hegel (1997, 411) and finds in Hegel’s work adequate resources for theorising ethics.
The accusation that Hegel reduces the Other to the same is obviously not unprecedented. The ethics of the Other which Levinas proposes is fundamentally different from Hegel’s dialectic because it positions relation-to-the-Other as both asymmetrical and nonreciprocal. Identity is not established through dialectical opposition because if this were so “it would already be a part of the totality encompassing the same and the other” (Levinas 1979, 38). Within *Totality and Infinity*, it is the Other, not the self, which is essential to the possibility of ethics, and this is a preontological connection. Levinas writes that the “surpassing of phenomenal or inward existence does not consist in receiving the recognition of the Other, but in offering him one’s being. To be oneself is to express oneself, that is, already to serve the Other” (1979, 183). I therefore exist *for* the Other; subjectivity is itself a “being-*for*-the other” (Perpich 2008, 1; emphasis in original). Levinas explains that the Other *is* the very possibility of morality (1989, 83). This is antithetical to Hegel’s dialectical relation, in which negation of the Other enables the constitution of the self. Levinas offers instead a relation which is non-violent and in which the negative is afforded no constitutive power; rather, the relation to the Other “has a positive structure: ethical” (1979, 197).

Several critics have raised significant objections to Levinas’ ethics. Badiou, whose critique I agree with more than his own philosophical work, is hesitant about the form that the Other takes in Levinas’ work. He writes that the Other, for Levinas, “always resembles me too much for the hypothesis of an originary exposure to his alterity to be *necessarily* true” (2001, 22; emphasis in original). In this light, how far from the theories of recognition does this get us? Is the meeting with the Other in
Levinas’ work a true engagement with alterity or merely a meeting with a form of familiar difference? Even if it is accepted that the face is something beyond representation, or if it is positioned as a “place holder” (Butler 2005, x), this still contains the Other in its positioning in a system, and as such necessarily curtails difference. I question whether there is a latent form of recognition in operation, because Levinas requires us to interpret the call of the Other as an ethical command (even if we do not have to recognise the Other’s specificity per se). We also have to recognise, in each encounter, the same message or plea, that we not commit murder. The question remains: how can we theorise a notion of alterity that is truly foreign and does not fall back on prior systems of meaning and value?

In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas examines the problem of philosophy’s adequacy to being. This is, in part, a response to Derrida’s criticism in ‘Violence and Metaphysics’ that the mediation of being though words and concepts is violent (1978). Levinas’ ethics, therefore, presented as words on pages in books, is necessarily inadequate to the ethical relation to which he appeals. In *Otherwise than Being* Levinas elaborates on the distinction between the saying and the said to which he alludes in the opening of *Totality and Infinity* (1979, 30). Levinas defines the “saying” as the preontological ethical address, and the “said” as the philosophical description of that address (1998, 5–6). Levinas’ problem here can be articulated as follows: how do we express our relations to others without their representation being a betrayal? “Language”, he writes, “permits us to utter, be it by betrayal, this outside

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40 The “saying” is both a verbal and non-verbal mode of address. It can be seen as the responsibility to respond. The “said” is necessarily concerned with verbal language. Critchley explains that the “content of my words, their identifiable meaning, is the Said, while the Saying consists in the fact that these words are being addressed to an interlocutor” (1999, 7).
of being, this ex-ception to being, as though being’s other were an event of being” (1998, 6; emphasis in original). Levinas proposes that the betrayal which ontological language requires can be minimised if the said is unsaid. This is not so much a linguistic retraction as a deconstructive move in which the saying acts as a disruption of the said, or as something which constantly undoes it (1998, 7).\(^{41}\) This move has been described as Levinas’ “linguistic turn” (Eaglestone 1997, 141).

Levinas’ rendering of both subjectivity and otherness does not escape the representational issues which he writes of in Otherwise than Being. It is notable that one of the most positive and useful aspects of Levinas’ work may be his move beyond traditional and masculinist models of autonomous subjectivity. Perpich writes that Levinas’ subject also resists the “virility of modern Western subjects” (2008, 157) by positioning the ethical relation as one based on a certain passivity. In Levinas’ work the subject is formed in preontological intersubjective connections, over which it can exercise no mastery. Its connections to other people are primary and constitutive, and it is for this reason that his work has been useful to feminists like Butler, Diprose and Oliver.\(^{42}\) However, this is not to say that his representations of women are unproblematic. It would be very easy to mount a systematic critique of the representation of non-male and non-western Others in his work.\(^{43}\) Garry Gutting suggests that, despite this, poststructuralists were “uneasy” with the centrality which he affords subjectivity (2001, 363). The particular form taken by this subject is also problematic, because it is still invested in a paradigm which gives precedence to a

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\(^{41}\) The overall paradox of Levinas’ work is that his only philosophical medium is the said.

\(^{42}\) See Butler (2005) and (2009), Diprose (2002), and Oliver (2001).

\(^{43}\) See for example Sikka (2001), who in the end reclaims the political use-value of recognition, and Žižek (2006).
model of subjectivity which is entirely tainted with what can be described as a “discredited humanism” (Perpich 2008, 4). The ethical relation in Levinas’ work is limited to the human: it ignores the necessity of ethical relation to the non-human, particularly to the environment and to animal-others.44

The responsibility for the Other on which Levinas’ work is premised, and which has held such interest for subsequent scholars, must also be interrogated. This work can be situated as part of rising academic interest in religion, which is being afforded increased critical space outside of specifically named departments of theology or religious studies. While originally academics trained in poststructuralism hesitated with the religious extent of Levinas’ ethics (Gutting 2001, 363), the uptake of this aspect of his work is, in part, evidence of a “religious turn” in the Humanities.45 For Ruthven, the turn to both ethics and religion has gone hand in hand. “There is increasing evidence that the revival of ethical criticism a decade ago”, he writes, “was the first stage in a calculated move to cleanse English studies of cultural materialism and replace it with religion” (2006, n.p.). The extent of its religious nature is not a problem for Levinas’ work per se; what remains problematic is the extraction and reappropriation of his concepts by other scholars as if this religious tone did not matter. This is particularly evident in the uptake of Levinas’ concept of responsibility, which is the term that Derrida suggests Levinas has awakened in us (1999, 3). For Ruthven the term “responsibility” designates a slippage from the philosophical notion of “respect” into religious discourse (2006, n.p.). This is

44 Perpich is working on the use of Levinas’ philosophy for an environmental ethics (2008, particularly Chapter Five).
45 This can also be seen in the deconstruction of Christianity from Giorgio Agamben and Jean-Luc Nancy, both influential theorists of community, and the renewed interest in themes such as the “sacred” and the “divine”.
problematic because it is occurring without either enough acknowledgement of its religious nature or sufficient discussion of the implications of installing religiously loaded terms in our critical vocabulary. Levinas’ claim to have kept his religious and philosophical works separate (qtd in Kearney 1995, 184) may not be sustainable in light of both his thematic concerns and the specificity of his vocabulary. Would it be possible to examine Levinas’ work in a more secular way? Badiou does not think so. He writes:

In Levinas’s enterprise, the ethical dominance of the Other over the theoretical ontology of the same is entirely bound up with a religious axiom; to believe that we can separate what Levinas’s thought unites is to betray the intimate movement of this thought, its subjective rigour. In truth, Levinas has no philosophy – not even philosophy as the ‘servant’ of theology. Rather, this is philosophy (in the Greek sense of the word) annulled by theology, itself no longer a theology (the terminology is still to Greek, and presumes proximity to the divine via the identity and predicates of God) but, precisely, an ethics. (2001, 22–23; emphasis in original)

My main concern with Levinas, however, is with his location of ethics as preontological. The first problem with this is that while situating ontology as the comprehension of being, Levinas locates ethics as something prior to comprehension, cognition and representation. This means that it is a “primordial relationship” (May 1997, 137) and is immune to the influence of epistemological critique. Todd May writes: “[i]f ethics is either prediscursive or transcendent to cognition, then the content of our linguistic practices can never reach it; they can never make it a subject or discussion and debate” (1997, 147). Not only does this situate ethical conduct beyond critique, a problematic place for it to reside, but, more alarmingly, it does not allow an understanding of ethics as a system of meaning which we construct. It also ignores cultural relativity and the ethical potential in differing material practices. To say that ethical conduct is innate is not only
philosophically suspect but dangerous, because it gives a constructed system of meaning a status that puts it beyond subsequent challenges.

In this thesis I am interested in the possibility of an ethical relationship to difference as difference itself. I want to investigate the prospect of inscribing this relation without falling back on the Hegelian dialectic and the constitutive power which it affords negation. Because he attempts to offer an ethical relation at odds with Hegel’s system, it might at first appear that Levinas’ ethics would be suitable for this task. However, I have reservations about the limited nature of the form of difference engaged with by Levinas. I am also apprehensive about the use-value of his work for ethical theory, because of the specificity of his rendering of subjectivity and otherness, his use of religious vocabulary, and his positioning of his own ethical system as something which is preontological and prediscursive. I think that in this historical moment, with the rise of religious fundamentalism, it is imperative to ground ethics in secular discourse. After poststructuralism, this ethics cannot reside in the humanist subject with its residual Enlightenment tendencies, but must be adequate to a mode of subjectivity which is radically constructivist. Ethics must also be extended beyond the human, not only because (as Butler reminds us) the human itself is a regulatory category, but also because the subject is embedded in connections not only with other humans, but also to place and context, and to the others that occupy spaces in that environment. Ethics cannot ignore the “gift” of poststructuralism, that meaning is something which we ourselves create.\(^{46}\) Our systems of meaning and value are not static but instead perpetually subject to

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\(^{46}\) I use the term “gift” here in the Derridian sense in which it creates an obligation to the recipient.
challenge and change. If we can see ethics as one system of meaning amongst many (rather than positioning it beyond discourse), then we have the potential to construct an ethics which can be more adequate to the contemporary environment. This is a radically utopian view of ethics.

I am proposing that the work of Deleuze offers an alternative trajectory for ethical theory. Because I am not interested here in proposing a theoretical answer which could operate as a “catch all” for ethical dilemmas, I am not suggesting Deleuze’s work as a solution. Rather, I am interested in it as something which is problematic and differential in the Deleuzian sense. This thesis, then, does not seek to compare Levinas’ ethics with Deleuze’s ethics, or for that matter Deleuze’s with Butler’s. Instead, it offers Deleuze as an alternative to the dominant frameworks through which ethics is currently being discussed. James Williams compares Deleuze’s work with Levinas’ and finds in them many similarities, including the ethical encounter, the figure of the face, the positioning of the Other as beyond knowledge, and the centrality of expression. However, the differences between these philosophers, he concludes, are “profound” (2005, 41). These differences, I propose, demonstrate what Deleuze offers ethical theory: his work functions in the absence of religious discourse. He proposes a radical model of ethics which is not limited to the subject or the human. He offers an ethics which does not compromise with transcendence, but which articulates itself in immanence. He renders difference as a presence rather than as an absence. But most importantly, Deleuze’s ethics begin necessarily from ontology: it is both how we work with the given, and how we become adequate to it.
In the following chapter, I trace Deleuze’s construction of his own philosophical lineage, which provides him with the tools to move beyond Hegel. Through this early work on the history of philosophy he develops his differential system of reading and arrives at his own philosophy, in which difference, rather than identity, has metaphysical primacy. The next chapter will provide the foundation for the subsequent discussions of ontology, subjectivity and ethics in which I will examine the potential for an ethical theory beyond recognition.
Chapter Two: Lineage

I want to position Deleuze not only as an original philosopher, but also as an important reader of the history of philosophy. It is for this reason that I begin with Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza, Nietzsche and Bergson, and then examine, in the next chapter, his own ontology as extrapolated in *Difference and Repetition*. In many ways these two chapters work in dialogue: each could be said to engage equally “lineage” and “ontology”. In their recent book, Jones and Roffe suggest that:

> Deleuze’s thought is one which unfolds internal to an examination of the thought of others. The breadth and depth of the engagements that constitute this method remain an object of serious scholarship, and it is possible that we are just now beginning to come to grips with the strata of Deleuze’s own set of investments and interests. In other words, Deleuze’s method is primarily a *method of reading*. (2009b, 3–4; emphasis in original)

The method of reading which Deleuze deploys can be described as differential. His version of the philosophical concepts of others differ markedly from the original material, and he articulates his own concepts through a process of differentiation from the work of those he reads (Jones and Roffe 2009b, 4). It is for this reason that I focus on Deleuze’s version of the philosophers he engages with rather than the original texts, or how Deleuze differs from these texts. In privileging the open-endedness of meaning, these studies of Spinoza, Nietzsche and Bergson (which predate the high-point of poststructuralism) can themselves be seen as examples of proto-poststructuralism. In their thematic concern, they can also be contextualised

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47 Jones and Roffe are critical of the orthodoxy surrounding Deleuze. This includes the “toolbox” approach to his work, in which concepts are appropriated and misunderstood; the over-emphasis placed on *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* to the neglect of other publications; and what they consider to be an over-valuing of the influence of Spinoza and Nietzsche (2009b, 2–3).

48 John Sellars describes this as an “encounter” between the work of the original philosopher and Deleuze’s own ideas, which alters the original (2007, 556). He draws attention, however, to the fact that there is no possibility of an unmediated reading, because all readings are necessarily particular to the reader (2007, 557–8).
within a broader poststructuralist interest in the politics of difference, which Gutting locates as a characteristic of all French poststructuralist work (2001, 318).

Deleuze’s construction of his own philosophical lineage can be seen as an act of resistance to what Sellars describes as the “‘official’ history of philosophy” (2007, 554). In *Dialogues*, Deleuze comments on the repressive nature of the institutionalised history of philosophy. He writes: “[a]n image of thought called philosophy has been formed historically and it effectively stops people from thinking” (2002, 13). Resistance to sanctioned modes of thinking is integral to the conceptualisation of thought, which Deleuze will work towards in *Difference and Repetition* and which will be addressed in Chapter Three of this thesis.

Deleuze’s work on the history of philosophy is exemplary of a larger motivation in his overall project. Both his challenge to a canonised notion of the history of philosophy and his political project in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* coalesce on the question of how paradigmatic ways of thinking inherited from the history of Western metaphysics have limited our possibilities for thought and action.⁴⁹ Examining the turn to ethics in French intellectual life after 1968, Bourg pays particular attention to Deleuze’s critiques of Spinoza and Nietzsche, in which he discovers the germination of that “vexed ethicality” (2007, 145) which pervades *Anti-Oedipus*. The epistemological imperative in Deleuze’s ethics was evidently prior to his collaboration with Félix Guattari. Although Deleuze’s ethics are tied to the concept of ontology, there is evidence of an epistemological imperative to his ethics as well,

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⁴⁹ For a discussion of how the history of philosophy should be held to account for the limitations it has placed on our ability to think about, receive, and enact difference see May’s *Reconsidering Difference* (1997).
and this is typified by his work on the history of philosophy. For Deleuze, part of the ethical task is the struggle over the concepts we take for granted in an historical period. In this way he questions the relationship between what is known about knowledge and what is known about being, and asks: what is the correspondence between the ways in which we think and the ways that these enable us to live?

To position Deleuze’s reading of the history of philosophy as a political act is therefore commensurate with Foucault’s influential introduction to *Anti-Oedipus*, which he posits as a book of ethics (2005, xiii), because Deleuze regards thinking as an ethical act. I want to read Deleuze’s work on the history of philosophy as the germination of his imperative to track down what Foucault describes as “the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior” (2005, xiii). In this sense, fascism is a correlate for the “dogmatic, orthodox, or moral image” of thought (Deleuze 1994, 131) against which Deleuze struggles.

Deleuze’s engagement with the work of others is not limited to his named monographs on historical figures but continues throughout his entire body of work.

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50 This is clearly evident in Deleuze’s work on difference in the 1960s, but can be seen also in his work with Guattari, particularly in *Anti-Oedipus*, where desire, madness and the oedipal family are challenged, and later in *A Thousand Plateaus* in the critique of arbourescent thought.

51 Bogue suggests that the very concept of thought in Deleuze’s work is ethical. He elaborates: “there is a sense in which all of Deleuze’s work is concerned with ethics, in that ethical principles inform his basic conception of thought and what it means to think” (2007, 7). Ian Buchanan is critical of Peter Hallward’s *Out of This World*, one of the important assessments of Deleuze’s philosophy, on precisely these grounds. Hallward’s claim that Deleuze’s thought lacks political impetus cannot be sustained, Buchanan claims, because for Deleuze thought itself is political action (2009, 224 n.14). This opens up questions about whether the ultimate ethical act, in Deleuze’s philosophy, is the creation of the plane of immanence of thought which he and Guattari propose in *What is Philosophy?* (1994, 35–44).

52 Through the work of Spinoza and Wilhelm Reich, Deleuze and Guattari trace the question: why have the masses not only come to accept servitude but to actually desire it? They write: “the masses were not innocent dupes; at a certain point, under a certain set of conditions, they wanted fascism, and it is this perversion of the desire of the masses that needs to be accounted for” (2005, 29; emphasis in original).
However, before doing philosophy “on his own behalf” (Patton 1994b, xi) in *Difference and Repetition*, which was published in French in 1968, Deleuze had a particularly intensive period of publishing on the history of philosophy in the late fifties and early sixties. Looking back to Deleuze’s texts from this period is important, because they provide the foundation of his thinking about difference and its repetition, to which his ethics is intimately tied. In his extensive reading of both canonical and non-canonical philosophers, Deleuze is establishing the context in which to place his own thought.

The concept of lineage is becoming an increasingly contested aspect of the study of Deleuze. Jones and Roffe claim, controversially, that the significance of Spinoza and Nietzsche for Deleuze’s work has been overestimated, and not the least by Deleuze himself (2009b, 3). While I would agree with this on a general level, I emphasise Deleuze’s work on these philosophers in this chapter precisely because this is the way in which his work has been canonised. This is perhaps due to the fact that Deleuze devoted two monographs to the study of Spinoza and one to the study of Nietzsche. I take Michael Hardt’s book, *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy*, as a particularly influential resource for the interpretation of Deleuze’s historical texts. This text was published in 1993, and therefore pre-dates the explosion of work on Deleuze in the late nineties and the last decade. It also pre-dates the translation into English of many of Deleuze’s texts (most significantly,

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53 Deleuze himself positions *Difference and Repetition*, which can be seen as the culmination of his ideas in the 1960s, as foundational to all his later work (1994, xv).

54 See for example Hardt (1993) and May (2005).
*Difference and Repetition*, which was published in English in 1994. The tendency of this book to politicise Deleuze’s ontology is becoming less fashionable with the emerging focus on Deleuze the metaphysician (Jones and Roffe 2009b, 6). It can be interpreted as Hardt’s way of establishing a dialogue with the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, published in English in 1983 and 1987 respectively, rather than with *Difference and Repetition*, which is my concern here. I would argue that Deleuze’s work on Spinoza, Nietzsche and Bergson, as examined in Hardt’s monograph, is still significant to the understanding of *Difference and Repetition*. This is because, in pre-dating this text, they provide a trajectory for the development of Deleuze’s ideas (particularly those concerning ontology) which enable him to move beyond Hegel.

Tom Conley locates Deleuze’s work on Hegel in a context of post-war French thought. He writes:

A truism of French intellectual history states that for national and philosophical reasons every postwar thinker, from Jean Hyppolite to Jacques Derrida, must contend with Hegel. Deleuze had resisted the totalizing effects of the dialectic by aligning himself at once with Cartesian and left-wing political traditions. He made moves that showed how, by way of Spinoza, a more complex, fragmented, and prismatic philosophy antedated Hegel and could not be supplanted by systematic dialectics. (1993, xiii)

Hardt insists that in the alternative historical trajectory, which he traces through Western Metaphysics, Deleuze finds allies in his campaign against Hegel (1993, xi). Hardt’s work is important because he attempts to establish coherence between Deleuze’s writings on Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Bergson in the effacement of Hegel from his philosophy. These philosophers provide the basis for Deleuze’s own radical

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55 Hardt is of course utilising both English language and French language material in this volume; however, his text engages with the emerging Anglophone field of Deleuze studies.
notion of difference. Ultimately, Deleuze’s problem with Hegel is that he gives negativity a foundational role in ontology. Deleuze’s work is not simply an opposition to the dialectic, because this would confirm a dialectical model; rather, as Hardt writes, “Deleuze’s strategy of developing a total opposition to the dialectic is accompanied by another strategy: to move away from the dialectic, to forget the dialectic” (1993, 53). Deleuze’s critique of Hegel is developed through his work on Spinoza, Nietzsche and Bergson, to which I will now turn.

Spinoza

The influence of Spinoza on Deleuze’s work cannot be underestimated. Deleuze, who wrote the historical component of his doctoral thesis on the idea of expression in Spinoza’s philosophy, has a significant scholarly relationship with Spinoza. In What is Philosophy? Deleuze and Guattari describe him as both the “prince” and “Christ” of philosophers (1994, 48, 60). As with all the philosophers’ work that Deleuze mines, his reading and use of Spinoza, although accurate and insightful, is partial and idiosyncratic, prompting Badiou to state that the Spinoza Deleuze offers is for him an “unrecognizable creature” (2000, 1). Pierre Macherey, who describes Deleuze’s Spinoza as “different rather than familiar” (1996, 148), suggests that this is because Deleuze refuses to examine Spinoza as an object of study, but instead attempts to

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56 Bourg contextualises Deleuze’s 1968 work on Spinoza with what he describes as a general interest in the work of Spinoza at the time. He cites as evidence the emergence of a “Spinoza circle” led by Louis Althusser in the late 1960s, and significant publications by Martial Guéroult (Spinoza. Vol 1. Dieu, published in 1968) and Alexandre Matheron (Individu et Communauté chez Spinoza, published in 1969) (2007, 146). In the “Translator’s Forward” to The Fold, however, Tom Conley positions Deleuze’s work on specific philosophers as out of sync with the intellectual fashions of the time. He suggests that Deleuze wrote on Spinoza (and Bergson) “at a time when intellectuals collectively cried for a ‘return’ to Freud” (1993, xiii). This indicates the contested status of Deleuze’s lineage and influence in Deleuze studies.
recreate his work. Macherey writes: “[r]ather than rethinking him, in a way Deleuze sets out to think Spinoza, or to think ‘in’ Spinoza” (1998, 119). This is reflected in Deleuze’s stated intention to take Spinoza “by way of the middle” (1988b, 122).

Stylistically, Deleuze’s writings on Spinoza are markedly different from his work on other philosophers. Because of the hope he placed in Spinoza’s work, his interpretive imperative could be described as optimistic, offering resolution and coherence at points where it may be absent. In this sense, Robert Piercy suggests, Deleuze is truer to some of Spinoza’s concepts than Spinoza is himself. He writes: “[p]erhaps, then, Deleuze is not just a Spinozist. Perhaps he is a more thorough-going Spinozist than Spinoza” (1996, 281). Despite the resolutions which Piercy claims that Deleuze incorporates into Spinoza’s philosophy, Hardt describes the style of *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* as “ragged” and as a “set of working notes” (1993, 56). The contrast that exists between Deleuze’s works on Spinoza and the rest of his publications can be seen most markedly by comparing it with *Difference and Repetition* (the other half of his doctoral work) in which the prose is extremely polished and the formal logic almost over determined. These interpretations of Deleuze cohere in the suggestion of Deleuze’s admiration for Spinoza and the significance of this thinker’s position in his alternative canon of Western philosophers. Equally important is the fact that Deleuze’s work on Spinoza is an aspect of the development of his own philosophical ideas: reading it in this light may be more productive than examining the accuracy of Deleuze’s interpretation. In this respect, then, I would agree with Macherey’s claim that Deleuze amplifies, rather than misinterprets, Spinoza’s work (1996, 149).
Deleuze specifically positions Spinoza as “Postcartesian” (1992, 325) rather than anti-Cartesian because he articulates immanence against Cartesian hierarchy. Spinoza’s philosophy is premised on the rejection of governing and grounding principles, and as such rejects the Cartesian positioning of “Being outside nature, in a subject which thinks it and a God who creates it” (1992, 227). The rejection of transcendence in favour of immanence was to become the most significant aspect of Spinoza’s work for Deleuze, because it informs his own non-dualistic philosophy of difference.

Deleuze writes about Spinoza as a naturalist, and situates him (along with Leibniz) as offering an alternative philosophical tradition. He writes: “Spinoza belongs to a great tradition: the practical task of philosophy consists of denouncing all myths, all mystifications, all ‘superstitions’, whatever their origin. I believe that this tradition always involves a naturalist philosophy” (1992, 270). This positioning is affirmed by Keith Ansell-Pearson, for example, who examines Deleuze’s “naturalist” project as an aspect of his emphasis on experimentation, because it allows for an understanding of the world which is constantly changing and evolving. Ansell-Pearson also situates Spinoza alongside Leibniz, in that both of them work toward this new naturalism but do so “without falling back into a pagan vision of the world which would simply produce a new and blind idolatry of nature” (1999, 13). This must be taken into account when examining Spinoza’s notion of substance in a Deleuzian context.
In many ways Deleuze strengthens Spinoza’s notion of immanence by amalgamating it with the concept of univocity found in the work of the medieval philosopher Duns Scotus. Hardt insists that Deleuze writes of Spinoza as the philosopher that takes univocity the furthest, even though this concept is drawn from somewhere else (1993, 66). It could be said that Spinoza’s immanence actually strengthens Scotus’ univocity, because he raises it to the absolute and rejects the residual separation of the divine that Hardt suggests remains in Scotus’ formulation (1993, 66). This is why Deleuze describes Scotus’ being as neutral (1992, 166). For Spinoza, however, expression is the affirmation of immanence, and because for him there is no God who is external to nature, he elevates univocity to its highest potential. Deleuze writes: “[w]ith Spinoza, univocal being ceases to be neutralised and becomes expressive; it becomes a truly expressive and affirmative proposition” (1994, 40). Univocity is, however, still an aspect of immanence, Daniel W. Smith writes, because “univocity is the position of immanence pushed to its most extreme point” (2003, 55). As such, this can be seen as part of the amplification of Spinoza that Macherey describes in Deleuze’s writing (1996, 149).

Univocity is premised on the idea of a singular substance that underlies all difference. It therefore exists in the tension between the one and the multiple, an

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57 Simon Duffy explains that in establishing this lineage, Spinoza reformulates Scotus rather than becoming a “Scotist” (2006b, 6). He suggests that Deleuze does this in order to present Spinoza as “Anticartesian” (2006b, 5), reading Deleuze against his own positioning of himself as “Postcartesian” (1992, 325).
element of Deleuze’s philosophy that is extensively critiqued by Badiou. For Spinoza this is illustrated in his articulation of a God who is immanent and therefore absolute: there is no distinction between God and the world, and he positions God and nature as the same substance. This equivalence is a double-exchange, referred to by Deleuze as a “double univocity” (1992, 103), because Spinoza’s God is caught in a process of mutual-creation with the world. Deleuze writes: “it is in immanence that univocity finds its distinctly Spinozist formulation: God is said to be the cause of all things in the very sense (eo sensu) that he is said to be cause of himself” (1992, 67; emphasis in original). Although Spinoza was excommunicated for this formulation of God, Hardt describes it as attributing to God the status of infinity. “The divine”, Hardt writes, “is absolutely expressed; nothing is hidden; there is neither reserve nor excess” (1993, 64).

The place of univocity is of central importance in Deleuze’s work because of its contribution to his formulation of difference. In Spinoza’s work it is through the expression of substance that difference within immanence is guaranteed. Deleuze

58 Badiou’s critique of Deleuze is important because he has been positioned as the contemporary philosopher that most resembles Deleuze (Barker 2002, 111) in that they are both concerned with theorising multiplicity. Badiou is critical of Deleuze’s appeal to univocity as simultaneously singular and a multiplicity of difference. The difference between these two thinkers on this point comes down to their differing definition of a multiplicity, and Badiou acknowledges that their respective appeal to multiplicity is vastly different if not irreconcilable (2000, 46). The root of this difference is that Deleuze insists on a vital multiplicity (as in the tradition of Leibniz), while Badiou describes it mathematically (as in the tradition of Descartes) (Burchill 2000, x) as “the ontological structure which composes/presents, or counts, any set of multiple elements” (Barker 2002, 125). So for Badiou a multiplicity is quantitative rather than qualitative. Badiou summarises his position on multiplicity in opposition to Deleuze’s univocity: “the One is not, there are only actual multiplicities and the ground is void” (2000, 53). For Deleuze, multiplicity emerges out of and returns to the One, while for Badiou it refuses this univocity (it refuses the one) (Kaufman 2004, 653) as the radical “multiple of multiples” (Barker 2002, 126). Badiou may be correct, then, in suggesting that his own work is irreconcilable with Deleuze’s. In this light I would question the use-value of his critique of Deleuze, and suggest that his book Deleuze: The Clamor of Being may say more about his own philosophy than Deleuze’s.

59 Moira Gatens suggests that this is not the Judeo-Christian God but “the creative and entirely immanent power of active nature” (2000, 60). Deleuze acknowledges a development in the trajectory of Spinoza’s work from the Short Treatise to the Ethics, where in the former God and nature are equivocal, whereas in the latter God and substance are given this status (1988b, 110).
connects expression with immanence when he writes: “[i]mmanence is the very vertigo of philosophy, and is inseparable from the concept of expression” (1992, 180). He emphasises that in Spinoza’s work on the expression of substance it is important to examine the tension between the idea of the univocity of substance and the production of finite modes or specific differences. He writes that what interests him most in Spinoza’s work is “seeing in substance a plane of immanence in which finite modes operate” (qtd in Joughin 1992, 11; emphasis in original). This will be a guiding point of investigation in Deleuze’s work on individuation in *Difference and Repetition*. It is important to trace the difference contained in univocity within this Spinozan understanding of the world because of the appeal that is made to absolute states, or to a single substance. Hardt reminds us of the particularity of Spinoza’s substance, writing that “infinite does not mean indefinite; the infinite substance is not indeterminate” (1993, 60). Deleuze holds (according to Miguel De Beistegui) that it is through the expression of substance that Spinoza achieves absolute immanence (2005, 91).

Deleuze signals the centrality of the concept of expression to his reading and use of Spinoza in the title of his major work on that philosopher. Macherey identifies expressionism as the “unthought” element of Spinoza’s work, which remains unremarked but is constitutive of the whole of his philosophy (1996, 145). In effect, rather than examining Spinoza’s work for authoritative meaning, Deleuze offers instead “that which, without being attached once and for all to only one of its points in a definitive way, justifies the possibility of everything stated in that discourse, and
Thus spreads out on or radiates at the surface of Spinoza’s entire text” (Macherey 1998, 122).

For Spinoza, expression is an inherent property of substance (Deleuze 1992, 28). He theorises that substance is caught in a process of explication, involvement and complication. These concepts can be described both etymologically and figuratively in terms of folding, unfolding and re-folding (Deleuze 1992, 15–18). This is an important metaphor because it contains the idea that substance modulates instead of producing new substances. Grosz reminds us that “[f]inite things are not substances but are modifications or affections of the one substance, modes or specifications of substance” (1994, 10). Difference within univocity is facilitated by explication, which unfolds a univocal substance so that it can express itself as a multiplicity. Reciprocally, involvement reveals univocity in difference through re-folding, which enables us to perceive as a unity a multiplicity of substances with infinite differences (Deleuze 1992, 16). The effect of this process is that substance is made complex. Spinoza writes of the relationship between God and the world in these terms; God explicates the world, which in turn involves God, revealing the complication of this univocal structure (Deleuze 1992, 48). Deleuze is adamant that, far from taking away a being’s own power or suggesting a religious determinism, Spinoza’s insistence on immanence advocates the opposite: that beings participate in God’s power as points of explication (1992, 227). Univocal substance is continually expressing itself without a pattern or relation to an original: matter thus becomes different endlessly, rendering temporary the momentary congealing of the already given into stable categories. Unity is therefore forever immanent in difference. Deleuze writes:
The really (formally) distinct attributes are affirmed of an absolutely singular substance which possesses them all and enjoys a fortiori the properties of self-causality, infinity and necessary existence [...] The formal-real distinction of the attributes does not contradict the absolute ontological unity of substance; on the contrary, it constitutes that unity. (1988b, 109)

The version of Spinozan substance which Deleuze offers implicitly rejects the structural place of Hegel’s negation by defining ontology without recourse to the negative. Deleuze writes that for Spinoza “negation is nothing, because absolutely nothing ever lacks anything” (1988b, 96). To arrive at this plenitude Deleuze describes Spinoza’s notion of substance as beginning from infinity. In the Ethics, Spinoza defines substance as “that which is in itself, and is conceived through itself: in other words, that of which a conception can be formed independently of any other conception” (2000, 1). This infinite substance is singular and requires nothing external for its causality and definition. Spinoza’s substance is expressed as finite difference via attributes and modes (1992, 28). Difference is manifest through a process by which substance explicates itself in its attributes, which simultaneously involve substance; the attributes are then explained in the modes, which in turn imply the attributes (Deleuze 1988b, 68). At the level of the modes, the expression of substance is a process of the interaction of affections in relations which compose and decompose each other (Deleuze 1988b, 48). This is a process of individuation without negation, in which the mode is affirmed in its duration (Deleuze 1988b, 77).

What is significant about this distinction is that the separation of substance,

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60 Duffy suggests that the criticism that Deleuze renders Spinoza in an unrecognisable way (as Badiou claims [2000, 1]), is a result of Deleuze’s critique of Hegel. This is because this critique places Spinoza in the alternative philosophical context of Leibniz and Scotus rather than offering the more familiar “Hegelian and Cartesian Spinoza” (2004a, 58).

61 Spinoza thinks of substance not as natural matter but as everything: it is a totality. His notion of infinity correspondingly is not a numerical notion but rather a concept of the absolute.

62 For Deleuze modes are affections (1988b, 48).
attributes, and modes, through which Spinoza explains the world, is only a formal division: it does not mean that they have a different ontological status (May 2004, 68). What is being expressed is the essence of infinite substance, and consequently it would make no sense for anything to be defined by an external cause. Deleuze describes this as a logic of distinction which is composed of “coessential positives and coexistent affirmations” (1988b, 95). Substance is therefore imbued with self-causality, and is not different from anything else; it is different in and of itself. Because Spinozan substance reserves nothing and has no outside, differences can never be measured numerically, hierarchically, or in relation to an exterior.

Spinoza proposes a triadic structure between what expresses, the act of expressing, and what is expressed. It is important to acknowledge that he regards no term in this aggregate as existing independently of the others. Consequently what is expressed has no existence outside of the expression (Deleuze 1992, 42). Spinoza’s expression is a pure expression. As such it does not require the mediation of signs: occurring regardless, it is the affirmation of substance and the innate principle of the manifestation of the world. Expression can therefore be seen as a form of “naturing” or world-making (Macherey 1998, 123). “The logic of expression that Deleuze finds in Spinoza”, Macherey writes, “is a logic of univocity, where things are thought in their being, since the act of thinking something is the same act that produces it, by

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63 Todd May explains:

Beings are the intensities and singularities expressed by Being. They are intensities and singularities that can be ‘named beings’, which is to say that they are phenomenologically accessible. However, they are not themselves ontologically salient. What is ontologically salient is Being itself, which lies beneath these beings and within which these beings constitute formal but not real distinctions among themselves. (2004, 69; emphasis in original)

64 This foreshadows Deleuze’s later work (in both Difference and Repetition and What is Philosophy?), on a form of non-representational thought which does not privilege the thinking subject.
which it comes to be” (1996, 146). It is in this sense that Spinoza’s philosophy can be called practical; it works against transcendence, and attempts to address the world beyond the limits of language and representation.

Deleuze reads the expression he finds in Spinoza as an affirmative task. He writes:

Against Descartes, Spinoza posits the equality of all forms of being, and the univocity of reality that follows from this equality. The philosophy of immanence appears from all viewpoints as the theory of unitary Being, equal Being, common and univocal Being. It seeks the conditions of a genuine affirmation, condemning all approaches that take away from Being its full positivity, that is, its formal community. (1992, 167)

The affirmation of the full positivity of Being is associated with a philosophy of “life”, a concept that occupies a poignant place in Deleuze’s writing as the subject of his final piece of work. For Deleuze, Spinoza becomes a prophet of “life”. He writes: “[t]here is, then, a philosophy of ‘life’ in Spinoza; it consists precisely in denouncing all that separates us from life, all these transcendent values that are turned against life” (1988b, 26). This idea of “life” that Deleuze finds in Spinoza is described by Hardt as power, which is the “essential pillar” of Deleuze’s reading of the expression of being in the *Ethics* because a thing’s being is its power to exist and produce (1993, 59). Spinoza positions existence itself as a form of power (Deleuze 1992, 88). He describes this as *conatus*, which Deleuze defines as a tendency “to maintain and affirm existence” (1988b, 99). This is the driving force of the processes of expression that Spinoza writes of. The relationship between Deleuze’s work on Spinoza and his work on Nietzsche is important to this thesis because in *Difference and Repetition* he synthesises ideas he finds in their work in order to outline the specificity of his concept of repetition (as the repetition of difference). In the following section I will outline Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. 
Nietzsche

The thematic links between Nietzsche’s work and the development of Deleuze’s ideas are undeniable. May goes so far as to claim that Deleuze “can be read as a straightforward disciple of Nietzsche” (2005, 58). This is reflected in Hardt’s assertion in the introduction to *Nietzsche and Philosophy* that, unlike Deleuze’s work on Spinoza, his book on Nietzsche in this text is exemplary of his other philosophical studies. Deleuze, he writes,

is indeed true to Nietzsche’s thought, perhaps even more so than Nietzsche himself was. He *selects*—he wills to return, one might say—those elements of Nietzsche’s work which are most true to Nietzsche’s thought. This is really the model that Deleuze proposes for reading the history of philosophy. (2006, xiii; emphasis in original)

Bogue reminds us that Deleuze’s work on Nietzsche has had a significant impact on Nietzsche studies. He justifies this assertion by suggesting that *Nietzsche and Philosophy* was the first scholarly book in France to treat Nietzsche as a “systematically coherent philosopher” (1989, 15), because it focused on Nietzsche as a philosophically situated and engaged thinker.

As in Deleuze’s work on Spinoza, the move beyond Hegel in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* is concomitant with the development of his own concept of difference. Bogue claims that Nietzsche appealed to Deleuze because he offered an alternative to the Hegelianism which had such dominance in France in the 1940s and 1950s, and consequently he positions Nietzsche as Deleuze’s most important influence (1989, 2). Michael Roth contextualises this with a more general turn from the influence of Hegel to Nietzsche, which he describes as a shift in the dominant “philosophical authority” in France at the time (1988, 190). Hegel scholars, such as Houlgate, have suggested that Deleuze’s criticism of Hegel is actually “blinded largely by
Nietzsche” (1998a, 2). Deleuze was adamant that because there is “no possible compromise between Hegel and Nietzsche” (2006, 195), they should be polarised.

Nietzsche’s affirmation of difference is rooted in his concept of the world as a composition of competing forces which are not goal-oriented but engaged in ensuring their own expansion. This world-view makes Nietzsche’s work a form of anti-humanism. Nietzsche categorises these constantly shifting hierarchical forces as active and reactive (Deleuze 2006, 40). Consequently, the world should be thought in terms of shifting hierarchies and alignments, rather than of subject and object. Stable entities, such as the subject, are only the momentary congealing of these forces. In Deleuze’s later work, particularly Anti-Oedipus, the centrality of Nietzsche’s conceptualisation of forces is evident in his theoretical development of a form of pre-personal desire without negativity, which he positions as pure positivity rather than lack.

Nietzsche’s will to power is the “differential element” of force in relational alignments in both space and time (Deleuze 2006, 7). Bogue describes it as a principle of the relation of forces, which is never separable from the forces in a particular interaction. As such, it is inappropriate to think of it in an “abstract sense” (1989, 22). What is prioritised in the relation between specific forces within an alignment is the capacity for affect (Deleuze 2006, 62). Butler is critical of the place of affect in Deleuze’s philosophy because of its indebtedness to Nietzsche’s concept of force. She writes:

Although Deleuze’s critique of the Hegelian subject places him within the postmodern effort to describe a decentred affectivity, his appeal to Nietzsche’s theory of forces suggests that he understands this decentred
experience as an ontological rather than a culturally conditioned historical experience. (1999, 214–15)

Butler raises an important aspect of the will to power: it is ontological, because it is directly implicated in ways of being. And she is also correct in suggesting that in this text Deleuze ignores the cultural pressures which determine the dominant mode of subjectivity in a particular historical moment. However, this is only the case if the will to power is considered abstractly, because particular forces themselves are never a-historical. The experience of a subject (whether centred or de-centred) is not important for this idea of affect as manifested in Nietzsche and Deleuze. What is important is the mutual impact that forces have on one another.

Following Nietzsche in describing Hegel’s dialectic as a form of slave morality (2006, 10), Deleuze writes:

Three ideas define [Hegel’s] dialectic: the idea of a power of the negative as a theoretical principle manifested in opposition and contradiction; the idea that suffering and sadness have value, the valorisation of the ‘sad passions’, as a practical principle manifested in splitting and tearing apart; the idea of positivity as a theoretical and practical product of negation itself. (2006, 195)

Deleuze’s rejection of this dialectic is rooted in his understanding of Nietzschean force. In a personification of the will to power, he asks both what the will “wants”, and what the dialectician “wants”. The will wills nothing but its own difference, because this is what it finds joyous. The dialectic cannot will difference because it is not active and affirmative but an exhausted force: it can only ever operate in a reactive fashion. Consequently, it makes this negative its essence (Deleuze 2006, 9).

For Deleuze, however, affirmation is primary and negation merely derivative.

65 Deleuze and Guattari’s Capitalism and Schizophrenia is an example of the length Deleuze goes to in later publications in order to historicise subjectivity.
The will to power contributes to ensuring constant flux so that the world can be thought of only in a state of metamorphosis. Bogue explains that our language system, with its separation of nouns and verbs, separates the doer from the deed and contributes to a notion that being is static (1989, 28). For Nietzsche the world is never one of being but only one of becoming (Deleuze 2006, 23). Becoming is constant state and is therefore non-teleological. Deleuze cites Nietzsche’s position that if becoming had a beginning or end it would have already ended. He finds proof of this in the constant passing of the present into the past which Nietzsche calls “the infinity of past time” (2006, 47). Because of this incessant imperative to become other and interact differently, there is no possibility of forces reaching a state of equilibrium.

Deleuze insists that becoming is never deterministic because of the centrality which he allows chance. He utilises Nietzsche’s example of the dicethrow as the affirmation of chance: it is the affirmation not of the result of the dice from a particular throw but also and simultaneously of all the other combinations that were possible in that particular throw, and in all subsequent throws (Deleuze 2006, 26). Good players, Deleuze writes, can lose only if they do not affirm chance and its necessity: “[t]he true dicethrow necessarily produces the winning number” (2006, 26).

66 Olkowski has been critical of the idea that Deleuze offers a way beyond determinism, suggesting that his work, and the concept of the plane of immanence more specifically, is more accurately “deterministic chaos” (2007, 218). In her review of Grosz’s The Nick of Time and Time Travels, Olkowski expands on this notion by examining open systems (also referred to as nonequilibrium thermodynamics or dynamical systems) in which organisms increase in complexity because of their openness to matter and energy (2006, 213). “[T]he so-called chaotic processes under which systems break down or new forms emerge are not exactly random”, she argues. “The rules governing chaotic behaviour do not change, thus the system remains deterministic, while the rules governing complex behaviour, emergent properties, are unknown but nevertheless operative” (2006, 213). In the context of Deleuze’s philosophy, it is important to note that the idea of chance which Deleuze draws from Nietzsche’s dice throw is not the affirmation of chaos. There are, after all, six different sides to a dice: these limit to a finite set of possibilities the combinations which can eventuate.
May examines this to highlight the role of the necessity of chance in the game. He writes:

The dice are thrown. This is the eternal return. The dice are always thrown, at every moment, at every instant. The future is always with us, here and now, just as the past is. A pair of dice, loaded with the multiplicity that is duration, is thrown. The dice fall back. They show a combination. There you have it. Those are the numbers. That is your throw. You may get another, but it will not erase the combination that faces you. That combination will always have happened, and will always be part of your score. The past is always a part of every present. (2005, 64)

The eternal return is a concept which Deleuze re-works in order to guarantee the proliferation of difference through chance. Badiou suggests that most of Deleuze’s work is devoted to repeatedly examining the eternal return (2000, 67). In Nietzsche’s work the eternal return has been much criticised, Grosz points out, describing it as “his most unpalatable and intriguing hypothesis” (2004, 136). Deleuze’s drastic revision of the eternal return as the return of difference is one of the structuring principles of Difference and Repetition, and as such its importance to his overall body of work cannot be underestimated. In Nietzsche and Philosophy, Deleuze details two aspects of the eternal return: first, cosmological and physical, and second, ethical and selective. He describes the former aspect as speculative and the latter as practical (2006, 68). Because Nietzsche attributes ontological priority to becoming, Deleuze positions it as the foundation of the eternal return. As such, the eternal return cannot be a cycle in which the same returns eternally: it can only ever be the return of the difference that eventuates through the process of becoming. He writes: “[r]eturn is the being of that which becomes. Return is the being of becoming itself, the being which is affirmed in becoming” (2006, 24; emphasis in original). Deleuze acknowledges that there are moments where Nietzsche writes of the eternal return as
a cycle, but this is only because he is dramatising a Zarathustra who has been made sick precisely by this cycle. The convalescent Zarathustra, on the other hand, understands that the eternal return is the return of difference (Deleuze 2005, 89–90). Because the eternal return enables difference in all its new and unrecognisable forms, it is not engaged in repeating or consolidating identities. Deleuze writes:

indeed, we fail to understand the eternal return if we make it a consequence or an application of identity. We fail to understand the eternal return if we do not oppose it to identity in a particular way. The eternal return is not the permanence of the same, the equilibrium state or the resting place of the identical. It is not the ‘same’ or the ‘one’ which comes back in the eternal return but return is itself the one which ought to belong to diversity and to that which differs. (2006, 46)

Deleuze further explains that the eternal return is not, in this sense, a mechanism (2006, 49); it can be thought of rather as a form of vitalism.

Deleuze also argues that the eternal return is ethical because it is selective, and that this is fundamental to the determination of being without negation in his ontology. He writes: “the eternal return is being and being is selection” (2006, 71). What is crucial to this selection is the place that Nietzsche affords affirmation. Deleuze draws from Nietzsche the notion that affirmation is a constitutive force connected to actualisation and therefore part of this ontology of selection. In this way, things are brought into being because they are selected and affirmed. The reason why negation is not a foundational category in Deleuze is that there is nothing outside of what is selected: what is outside selection can have no existence because it is not selected. Bogue suggests that because of the role it plays in the eternal return, affirmation is a physical doctrine of joyful practice (1989, 27). ⁶⁷ The principle of selection in

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⁶⁷ Although the negative is present in Nietzsche and Philosophy, it is never primary and constitutive, but only ever derivative.
Nietzsche’s terminology, is that only becoming active has being: becoming reactive has no being (Deleuze 2006, 72). Affirmation, as the process by which things are selected and actualised, can never affirm a reactive force. Deleuze explains the reason for this:

The eternal return should be compared to a wheel whose movement is endowed with a centrifugal force that drives out everything negative. Because Being is affirmed of becoming, it expels all that contradicts affirmation, all the forms of nihilism and of reaction: bad conscience, resentment … we will see them only once. (2005, 89)

If the eternal return is an active structure through which things are constituted in their difference, then the way in which this occurs is not determined, but is instead experimental. The eternal return is a process that requires participation, which is itself an act of affirmation. Bogue explains that through participating in becoming it is possible to recognise that everything else is engaged in this process. Such participation actively affirms that the world’s being is becoming (1989, 29). What this suggests, according to Hardt, is that in Nietzsche being is something that is willed rather than given: consequently the ethics to will being are primary and exist prior to ontology (1993, 49).

Deleuze’s most direct formulation of the ethics of the eternal return is evident when he writes: “[a]s an ethical thought the eternal return is the new formulation of the practical synthesis: whatever you will, will it in such a way that you also will its eternal return” (2006, 68; emphasis in original). This implies a level of commitment which Deleuze insists is not the same as responsibility. “To affirm”, he writes,

*is not to take responsibility for, to take on the burden of what is, but to release, to set free what lives. To affirm is to unburden: not to load life with the weight of higher values but to create new values which are those of life, which make life light and active.* (2006, 185; emphasis in original)
Because there is no choice about participating in the propulsion of becoming, the ethics of selection is of primary importance. Grosz suggests, however, that there is an element of passivity in this formulation of the eternal return, because the will is always future-directed and as such the eternal return is submission to the forward motion of time (2004, 150). What this reinforces is the fundamental inevitability of becoming different.

Deleuze finds that Nietzsche affirms a purely positive concept of difference (2006, 9–10). In reading Nietzsche’s eternal return as the affirmation of this difference, he finds a guarantee of the primacy of difference. He draws on this to articulate a mode of difference beyond the reach of Hegel’s dialectic. What Deleuze arrives at through Nietzsche is a concept of difference as multiplicity. This is his alternative to Hegel’s dialectic, which Hardt summarises as follows:

Deleuze’s primary charge against dialectical thinking is that, despite its claims, dialectic mystifies and destroys difference and is thus incapable of recognizing multiplicities. The dialectic pushed all differences to the extreme of contradiction so that it can subsume them back into a unity. Real differences, according to Deleuze, are more subtle and nuanced than dialectical oppositions, and they do not rely on any negative foundation. (2006, xi)

In Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche, difference is the primary constitutive element which actualises the world through affirmation. Deleuze insists that the affirmation of multiplicity is speculative, the practice of which is finding joy in diversity (2006, 197). He writes: “Nietzsche’s practical teaching is that difference is happy; that multiplicity, becoming and chance are adequate objects of joy by themselves and that only joy returns” (2006, 190). The temporal notion being that the eternal return suggests is something which is also developed in Deleuze’s work on Bergson and it is this which I will examine in the next section.
Bergson

Mark Hansen argues that, by including Bergson in his alternative philosophical lineage, Deleuze wanted to readdress the “almost total neglect of Bergson as a philosopher” (2000, para. 1).68 Recently renewed interest in Bergson, who was extremely popular in the early twentieth century, has been attributed “largely” to Deleuze’s work (Atkinson 2009, 237). Hardt identifies two phases in Deleuze’s study of Bergson: the first, in the mid 1950s, of which Deleuze’s article on ‘Bergson’s Conception of Difference’ is the outcome, and the second in the mid 1960s, which gave rise to the publication of Bergsonism (1993, 2).69 The significance of the former publication is that it highlights the centrality of Bergson’s concept of difference to Deleuze’s reading of his work, which is evident not only in the title of the article but also in his claim that “[t]he notion of difference must throw a certain light on Bergson’s philosophy, but inversely, Bergsonism must bring the greatest contribution to a philosophy of difference” (2000a, 42). This is very important because, as Grosz points out, “Deleuzian difference is Bergsonian” (2005a, 5; emphasis in original).

Calling this difference the “dynamic of being” (1993, 2), Hardt positions it as ontological. Deleuze writes: “Bergsonism is a philosophy of difference, and of difference’s realisation: there we find difference in itself, and it realises itself as novelty” (2000a, 62).

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68 Hansen notes that this engagement with Bergson, particularly his Creative Evolution, has an over-determining effect on Deleuze’s use of biological theory, which becomes particularly important for the final chapter of Difference and Repetition (2000, para. 1). Deleuze draws from Bergson the concept of the virtual, which will occupy much of his thought, and because of this Hansen suggests that Deleuze’s interest in biology is at odds with biologists’ focus on “processes of actualization” (2000, para. 1). Hansen locates this more broadly as a difference between the approaches of science and philosophy (2000, para. 2).

69 Hardt traces “Bergson’s conception of difference” (first published in 1956 as “La Conception de la Difference chez Bergson” in Les Études Bergsoniennes) to Deleuze’s presentation to the “Association des amies de Bergson” in May 1954 (1993, 2). It is also important to acknowledge that Nietzsche and Philosophy was published in 1962, between these two works on Bergson. This explains the cross-contamination between Deleuze’s readings of both Bergson and Nietzsche.
In Bergson’s work, Deleuze finds a formulation of difference which is incommensurable with a Hegelian model, because Bergson asserts that difference is temporal and therefore dynamic. Hardt highlights the significance of the 1956 article as a rare example of a direct attack on Hegel by Deleuze (1993, 9). This position becomes more refined in *Bergsonism*, where Deleuze examines “proximate enemies” (Plato and finalism, and Mechanism), instead of offering a direct critique of Hegel which, by positioning the relation as oppositional, would confirm Hegel’s dialectic (Hardt 1993, 4). Because Hegelian difference is a way of spatialising it by examining the opposition of identities which exist in the present, Deleuze must reject it, because he is looking for a way to theorise how things not only differ from each other but also from themselves over time (May 2005, 54). The essential contrast between Hegel and Deleuze is in the positioning of difference. For Hegel the relation to difference is one of exteriority, while for Bergson difference is an interior property.

“To think internal difference as such, as pure internal difference,” Deleuze writes, “to reach the pure concept of difference, to raise difference to the absolute, such is the direction of Bergson’s effort” (2000a, 49).

Bergson’s critique of Hegel’s dialectic hinges on his analysis of the place of the negative in the determination of difference. As with Deleuze’s work on Spinoza and Nietzsche, what will be important is that difference manifests itself in the refusal of external causation. For Bergson the negative is irrelevant to the determination of being, because things differ from themselves immediately, and therefore do not require the mediation of an external cause. Hardt summarises this position as
follows: “[b]eing differs with itself immediately, internally. It does not look outside itself for an other or a force of mediation because its difference rises from its very core” (1993, 14). Bergson’s notion of difference is described by Deleuze as “more profound” (2000a, 53) than the type of difference which could be accommodated by Hegel’s system. Inevitably, Deleuze observes, Bergsonian difference loses its complexity when placed in Hegel’s dialectical structure. This is because his oppositional structure requires things to be generalised through the process which artificially polarises them, and in such a way that the intricacies of difference are eclipsed (1991a, 44). This typifies Deleuze’s attitude to Hegel’s dialectic. “[W]hat use is a dialectic”, he asks, “that believes itself to be reunited with the real when it compensates for the inadequacy of a concept that is too broad or too general by invoking the opposite concept, which is no less broad and general?” (1991a, 44).

Bergson favours difference in kind over difference in degree.70 Difference in degree is quantitative, which renders it measurable in terms of more or less (Deleuze 1991a, 20). Bergson examines this as a spatial way of conceiving of difference (Deleuze 1991a, 31). Deleuze describes how, for Bergson, this way of thinking about difference relies on the negative (1991a, 18), and is therefore a false solution to a false problem. Bergson insists that we need to create our own problems rather than look for solutions to problems which already exist (Deleuze 1991a, 15). Deleuze writes: “we have to struggle not against simple mistakes (false solutions), but against something more profound: an illusion that carries us along, or in which we are immersed, inseparable from our condition” (1991a, 20). For Bergson there are two

70 Difference in kind is also translated as difference in nature in English-language commentaries. I have followed Tomlinson and Habberjam’s translation in Bergsonism (1991a).
types of false problem: the first confuses the “more” and the “less”, and the second poses the question badly (Deleuze 1991a, 17). These two types of false problem coalesce in their treatment of composite differences. For Bergson the world is made up of composites and, if we analyse their different elements in terms of how they differ numerically (“more” or “less”), we disregard those differences in kind that make up the composite and have stated the problem badly. “This is the Bergsonian leitmotif”, he writes: “[p]eople have seen only differences in degree where there are differences in kind” (1991a, 23). In asking us to see differences in kind (Deleuze 1991a, 23), difference can be envisaged not only temporally rather than spatially but also as a difference which is both continuous and imbued with internal difference, so that it differs from itself perpetually. Bergson calls this difference “qualitative” because it cannot be reduced to numerical distinctions (Deleuze 1991a, 38).

Although Deleuze calls Bergson’s duration the “environment” of differences in kind (1991a, 32), this does not suggest that duration is spatial. In his 1956 article Deleuze insists that duration is itself the process by which things differ, not from each other but from their prior state (2000a, 48). Listing the two main characteristics of duration as continuity and heterogeneity (1991a, 37), Deleuze implies the expression of both singularity and multiplicity over time. Duration is what Bergson uses as evidence for difference in kind. Deleuze cites Bergson’s description of waiting for sugar to dissolve in a glass of water. Thought of in terms of difference in degree, sugar in this situation can be examined in relation to its difference from anything else. However, this process is over reliant on negativity because it defines things in terms of what they are not. Considered temporally, on the other hand, when sugar dissolves in
water it differs not only from everything else but also from itself, because its former structure has changed (Deleuze 1991a, 31–32). This has broader significance.

Deleuze insists, because it indicates that,

my own duration, such as I live it in the impatience of waiting, for example, serves to reveal other durations that beat to other rhythms, that differ in kind from mine. Duration is always the location and the environment of differences in kind; it is even their totality and multiplicity. There are no differences in kind except in duration — while space is nothing other than the location, the environment, that totality of differences in degree. (1991a, 32)

Duration is therefore a virtual multiplicity of individual durations which co-exist.

From this temporal notion Deleuze asks us to reconceptualise space. He writes that “[s]pace itself will need to be based in things, in relations between things and between durations” (1991a, 49). Grosz, who positions the universe as composed of open systems (2004, 199), insists that if we think of duration as continuous change then it needs to be thought as interpenetrating (2004, 175). Duration can therefore be envisaged as a relational concept, even though this relationality is not premised on the Hegelian dialectic, because it allows for this change to arise both through the relation and reaction of things which manifest an internal difference. The relationality of difference is something to which I will return in Chapter Five.

Bergson theorises the movement of life through duration as the \(\text{\textit{\'{e}lan vital}}\), which for him has a mystical resonance. Deleuze, however, examines the \(\text{\textit{\'{e}lan vital}}\) as a concept which is much more closely aligned with notions of process and evolution, and argues that the \(\text{\textit{\'{e}lan vital}}\) is life’s way of both stating and solving problems (1991a, 16). The \(\text{\textit{\'{e}lan vital}}\) has been described as similar to Nietzsche’s will to power, because it is an internal force which propels the self-proliferation of life
The élan vital is connected to the process by which things manifest themselves (Deleuze 1991a, 94). In this way the élan vital is the animation of being.

The concept of the virtual, which is so important to Deleuze’s work, is also something which is drawn from Bergson. Following Bergson’s rejection of the distinction between possible and real, which he describes as a “false notion, the source of false problems” (1991a, 98), he favours the distinction between virtual and actual. This refusal is based on the limitation of the possible, because when it is positioned opposite to the real it is conceptually identical with it, and lacks only reality. The relationship between the possible and the real is figured by Deleuze as one of resemblance and limitation (1991a, 97). He represents it in this way because while the movement between the possible and the real is one of realisation, it is the realisation of what already exists in the possible not the creation of the new (Deleuze 1991a, 98). The binary structure of possible/real excludes the possibility of the kind of difference that Bergson values, because it relies on pre-established possibilities and privileges identity. In Difference and Repetition, in which this conceptual shift will be extremely important, Deleuze writes:

Every time we pose the question in terms of possible and real, we are forced to conceive of existence as a brute eruption, a pure act or leap which always occurs behind our backs and is subject to a law of all or nothing. What difference can there be between the existent and the non-existent if the non-existent is already possible, already included in the concept and having all the characteristics that the concept confers upon it

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71 Grosz also acknowledges that there is no evidence that Bergson ever read Nietzsche (2004, 156).
72 Hardt points out that a more accurate translation of actuel is “contemporary” rather than “actual” (1993, 16), which has a significant bearing on its meaning. Grosz reminds us that these are not binary pairs, because Deleuze deliberately refuses negation and contradiction (2005b, 228 n. 12). Deleuze insists that although Bergson appears to favour many binaries, dualism is “only a moment, which must lead to the re-formation of monism” (1991a, 29).
73 Grosz draws from Bergson a more conflicted definition of the possible in which it is both more and less than the real. See for example (1999b, 26), and (2001, 129).
as a possibility? [...] Difference can no longer be anything but the negative
determined by the concept: either the limitation imposed by possibles
upon each other in order to be realised, or the opposition of the possible to
the reality of the real. (1994, 211)

Unlike the virtual (which provides an origin for the actual) the real does not emerge
from the possible, because the possible is projected backward after the real is
realised. Deleuze writes: “it is not the real that resembles the possible, it is the
possible that resembles the real, because it has been abstracted from the real once
made, arbitrarily extracted from the real like a sterile double” (1991a, 98). The
limitation of the possible is this dependence on the real.

Bergson’s alternative distinction to the possible/real is the virtual/actual. Deleuze
acclaims Bergson’s notion of the virtual as “its highest degree” (1991a, 43). In
*Bergsonism*, Deleuze’s definition of the virtual is in reference to Proust in that it is,
he quotes, “‘real without being actual, ideal without being abstract’” (1991a, 96).
The movement of the virtual to the actual privileges difference and creation (Deleuze
1991a, 97). Constantin Boundas points out that the actual is not a reproduction of the
virtual, because the virtual “is something which, without being or resembling an
actual x, has nonetheless the capacity to bring about x, without (in being actualized)
ever coming to coincide or to identify itself with, or to be depleted and exhausted in
the x” (2006b, 5). The virtual is significant in Deleuze’s work because it allows him
a theoretical flexibility which, according to Jeffrey Bell, enables him to move beyond
the notion of matter as static or concrete (2006a, 408). Deleuze draws from Bergson
a way of theorising the dynamism of matter.
There is a tendency within Western thought, Claire Colebrook writes, to privilege the actual over the virtual by assuming that the actual world contains all its future possibilities in the virtual (2002, 96). This implies that the virtual, conceived as the future, is already in existence or contained in the actual, as the possible is in the real, like a kind of dormant seed waiting for the right conditions to stimulate its emergence. This would require the virtual to be a stable totality, thereby preventing its movement and transformation. It also implies that the actual is more real than the virtual, an idea that Deleuze refuses by insisting that both the actual and the virtual are real (1991a, 96). The separation of the virtual from the actual suggests a duality that is not altogether accurate, because both are permanently imbricated in one another, caught in a process of constant interaction and mutual formation.74

The virtual promotes the becoming of actual beings, while itself being also caught in the process of becoming. In Bergsonism the virtual is actualised by the process of differentiation. Deleuze writes: “the characteristic of virtuality is to exist in such a way that it is actualized by being differentiated and is forced to differentiate itself, to create its lines of differentiation in order to be actualised” (1991a, 97). For Deleuze the virtual enables the unpredictable becoming of the actual, because each virtual is constantly “emitting yet others, with which they are in turn surrounded and which go on in turn to react upon the actual” (Deleuze and Parnet 2002, 148). Boundas explains why this virtual/actual structure is significant: “[b]ecoming, instead of being a linear process from one actual to another, should rather be conceived as the movement from an actual state of affairs, through a dynamic field of virtual/real

74 James Williams cautions that the virtual and the actual are nevertheless causally independent (2003, 166).
tendencies, to the actualisation of this field in a new state of affairs” (2006b, 5). In this way the relationship between the virtual and the actual can be thought of as a circuit (Deleuze and Parnet 2002, 151). The actual, then, does not define the limits of the virtual, because the actual form of an object does not indicate its potential either to become otherwise or to alter the virtual (Marks 2006, 14). Boundas writes: “actualisation is pregnant with all the differences that that never-before-actualised virtual is capable of precipitating at any (and all) time(s)” (2005b, 192). Brian Massumi supports this assertion, describing the virtual as a “pool of potential” from which actualisations are drawn and to which unactualised potentials are returned (1996, 66). The virtual which is not actualised is not negated: instead, it accompanies the actual, so that it persists even in its latent elements (Deleuze 1991a, 95). Deleuze insists that if we examine only actualised things and ignore the process by which they come to have actuality then we see only differences in degree (1991a, 101). Perpetually involved in this process of becoming, the virtual is what promotes that eternal return of difference which is so important in Deleuze’s work.

This process of difference has an ontological status in Deleuze’s reading of Bergson in Bergsonism. The becoming which is driven by the élan vital is theorised by Deleuze as an essentially creative process (1991a, 101), and this is important for his focus on life as a philosophical concept (2005). The fact that the connection of life and difference was present in Deleuze’s work as early as 1956 is further evidence of the ontological priority of difference. “Life,” he writes, “is the process of

75 Hardt suggests that this imperative arose in between Deleuze’s 1956 publication of an article on Bergson and the publication of Bergsonism in 1966. This ontological resonance can therefore be seen as a distinctive element of Bergsonism. Hardt writes that, in Bergsonism, “Deleuze feels the pressure to bring the ontological to the social and the ethical” (1993, 22).
difference” (2000a, 50). Although Deleuze does not examine the ethical potential of Bergson in this text, he asks us to examine ontology as something dynamic, and this idea of constant metamorphoses is the reason why his work demands an ethical framework which does not rely on the autonomous and static subject. In this way, the permanent flux of different/ciation can be considered the condition of ontology.

Being is not a stable state, but rather constantly becoming different. And this drives further difference.76

Deleuze’s work on Spinoza, Nietzsche and Bergson was synthesised in *Difference and Repetition*. This lineage is important because he borrowed from these thinkers concepts he made his own. This is evident in his historical studies. From Spinoza he takes the univocity of being as infinite difference, from Nietzsche the affirmation of this difference, and from Bergson its temporality. Difference is rendered both inevitable and generative by synthesising Spinoza and Nietzsche in order to theorise the eternal return as the return of difference. This is the basis of Deleuze’s idea of repetition. Integral to this notion of difference and its repetition is the univocity of being, which expresses itself always and everywhere in the same voice. Deleuze identifies three moments in the philosophical development of univocity: Duns Scotus, Spinoza and Nietzsche (1994, 39–41). According to his reading of these philosophers, they supplement each other until univocity is conceptually realised. Deleuze writes: “[t]here has only ever been one ontological proposition: Being is univocal. There has only ever been one ontology, that of Duns Scotus, which gave being a single voice” (1994, 35). Nevertheless, he supplemented Duns Scotus’

76 The specificity of the process of different/ciation will be addressed in the section on Individuation in Chapter Three.
neutral being with the affirmation of being that he finds in Spinoza. Deleuze critiques Spinoza, however, for having hierarchised substance and its modifications in modal expressions, because the latter emerge from substance, and as such are dependent on it (1994, 40). He enhances Spinoza by insisting that univocity is achieved through that eternal return which posits univocal being as becoming. “[E]ternal return”, Deleuze writes, “is the univocity of being, the effective realisation of that univocity” (1994, 41). This is not to think of eternal return in a circular or cyclical way but rather, Foucault explains, to realise that “things return on the straight and narrow, by way of a straight and labyrinthine line” (1970, 1). Difference is the only voice in which being is expressed. For Deleuze, it is difference and not identity which is primary (1994, 40). The metaphysical primacy which Deleuze accords difference will be addressed in the next chapter, which examines the ontology he develops in *Difference and Repetition*. Deleuze’s ontology is significant because it provides the conditions with which any ethics drawn from his work must contend.
Chapter Three: Ontology

Deleuze’s ontology is based on his concept of difference, which is so radical that it is worth spending time explicating its particularity. The key to understanding this concept, and perhaps Deleuze’s work in general, is his 1968 text, *Difference and Repetition*, because this is the work in which Deleuze began to outline his own philosophical position (1994, xv). *Difference and Repetition* has had less attention than many of Deleuze’s other texts — particularly his collaborative work — in Anglophone Deleuze studies.\(^77\) There are several reasons for this, among which are its relatively late translation into English in 1994, and the difficulty of the text. As Bryant puts it:

> the only reason so much emphasis is placed on these other texts [Deleuze’s history of philosophy books] has been due to the great difficulty of the texts Deleuze wrote explicating his own philosophy. In a curious manner, this has given rise to a tendency to transform Deleuze into his histories rather than to see how Deleuze departs from these histories. (2008, 222)

Continuing to explore the ways in which Deleuze’s thought diverges from the work of those whom he reads, in this chapter I consider in particular his interest in Leibniz and Kant. The structure of this chapter reflects the organisation of Deleuze’s extremely complex work on difference in *Difference and Repetition*, moving from his initial critique of Hegel and Leibniz through his challenge to the Image of thought before, in the final section, arriving at his proposal for individuation which can be seen to offer a synthesis of the preceding two sections.

In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze works on demonstrating the existence of difference outside of the ways it is captured in “identity, opposition, analogy and

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\(^77\) This is, however, rapidly changing.
resemblance” (1994, 29). To conceive of difference solely in terms of these categories is to ignore a deeper level of difference which particularly interests him. Beneath such limited framings of difference, Deleuze argues, lies “a swarm of differences, a pluralism of free, wild or untamed differences; a properly differential and original space and time” (1994, 50). The goal of a philosophy of difference, he writes, is to “rescue difference from its maledictory state” (1994, 29) and to reveal the underlying field of differential relations. What is significant to this thesis is that in *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze is challenging the metaphysical place of recognition through offering a system in which being manifests itself without negation, in which thought relies on an encounter with alterity, and in which the emergence of the new is inevitable. This has a significant impact on the way that difference can be theorised and consequently, in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze struggles with the conventional philosophical legacy of the concept of difference in order to reformulate it more adequately.

**The Infinitely Large and the Infinitely Small**

Hegel and Leibniz are important figures in *Difference and Repetition* because Deleuze polarises their notions of difference: he positions Hegel’s difference as infinitely large and Leibniz’s as infinitely small. Finding both these expressions of the infinite problematic, he builds his own concept of difference on a specific critique of these philosophers.78 When appealing to the infinite, Deleuze insists, it is

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78 In the first chapter of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze is also critical of the concept of difference as articulated by Aristotle and Plato, and bookends his discussion of Hegel and Leibniz with an analysis of the respective work on difference of these ancient philosophers. He not only criticises Aristotle for conceiving of difference in terms of categorisation and hierarchisation, but also juxtaposes Aristotle’s appeal to contradiction with Hegel’s (1994, 30–35). He goes on to critique Plato for envisaging difference in terms of derivation from an original (1994, 59–64, 66–68).
inconsequential whether this is done in terms of Hegel’s dialectic or Leibniz’s differential calculus, because the attribute the same power to the limit (which is always approached but can never be reached) (1994, 43). In his summary of *Difference and Repetition*, James Williams acknowledges that the philosophies of Hegel and Leibniz make identity problematic precisely because the infinite is unreachable. Although this would appear to be commensurable with Deleuze’s own refusal of identity as a primary principle, as well as his repudiation of representation, he criticises both Hegel and Leibniz for not giving enough emphasis to the foundational role of difference (Williams, James 2003, 70).

Deleuze’s analysis of Hegel in the first chapter of *Difference and Repetition* can be seen as the realisation of his work on the history of philosophy, which systematically demonstrates that there is another philosophy of difference whose legacy operates counter to the Hegelian dialectic. Deleuze argues that Hegel conceived of difference as infinitely large by figuring it dialectically as contradiction, which positions it at its absolute maximum (1994, 44). Quoting from *Science of Logic*, on which his criticism of Hegel in *Difference and Repetition* is principally based, he writes: “[d]ifference as such is already *implicitly* contradiction [...] receiving in contradiction the negativity which is the indwelling pulsation of self-movement and spontaneous activity” (Hegel, G. W 1989, 442; qtd in Deleuze 1994, 44; emphasis Deleuze’s). For Deleuze, a model of difference which exists always at the (infinitely large) limit of contradiction and enables self-constitution through negation is a “logical monster” in the service of identity (1994, 49). The process of negation as formulated in Hegel’s dialectic determines that things always contain what they are
not as part of their essence (Deleuze 1994, 45–46). Although this structure allows for endless encounters with difference, they are always aimed squarely at the horizon of identity (which can never be reached). “Hegel’s circle is not the eternal return”, Deleuze writes, but “only the infinite circulation of the identical by means of negativity” (1994, 50).

While Deleuze treats Hegel vitriolically throughout his published work, the tone of his writings on Leibniz is quite different. Žižek has commented that Deleuze’s relationship to Hegel was unlike his relationship to other figures in the philosophical canon, for although Deleuze had considerable misgivings about Plato, Kant and Descartes, he engaged with their work in a way that tried to manipulate it for his own ends. Deleuze found Hegel, however, unredeemable (Žižek 2004, 46). Although Deleuze positions the models of difference proposed by both Hegel and Leibniz as problematic, Leibniz’s thought appeared more advantageous because it avoids theorising difference as contradiction (1994, 51). Deleuze devoted a book-length study to Leibniz’s philosophy, The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque, which was published twenty years after Difference and Repetition; he also ends Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza with a chapter on the concept of expression in Leibniz and Spinoza.

Deleuze’s valuing of Leibniz over Hegel can perhaps be attributed to the connections he perceived between Leibniz and Spinoza. His title, The Fold, evokes the relationship between Leibnizian folding and the expression of Spinozan substance, in so far as matter exists in both as a process of folding, unfolding, and re-folding but
without reference to an original or unfolded state.\textsuperscript{79} In this way, folding and unfolding are not in opposition. Deleuze writes:

Folding-unfolding no longer simply means tension-release, contraction-dilation, but enveloping-developing, involution-evolution. The organism is defined by its ability to fold its own parts and to unfold them, not to infinity, but to a degree of development assigned to each species. Thus an organism is enveloped by organisms, one within another (interlocking of germinal matter), like Russian dolls [...] The simplest way of stating the point is by saying that to unfold is to increase, to grow; whereas to fold is to diminish, to reduce, ‘to withdraw into the recesses of a world’ [Deleuze here quotes from Leibniz’ s letter to Antonie Arnauld, April 1687]. (1993, 8–9)

Deleuze defends Leibniz’s relevance for contemporary philosophy in this respect when, in the last line of \textit{The Fold} he declares: “but we all remain Leibnizan because what always matters is folding, unfolding, refolding” (1993, 137). James Williams traces the trajectory between Deleuze’s work on Spinoza, \textit{Difference and Repetition} and \textit{The Fold} when he writes: “[i]t is as if he felt that the difficult concept of expression from \textit{Difference and Repetition} and \textit{Spinoza and the Problem of Expression} would benefit from a re-working in the context of the concept of the baroque fold” (2003, 208).\textsuperscript{80} Duffy examines the relation of Leibinizian mathematics to Spinozan ontology in order to suggest that Spinoza’s positioning as counter to the Hegelian dialectic has an impact on the positioning of Leibniz as part of the alternative lineage of philosophy which Deleuze proposes (2006a, 305–6).

I will be examining Deleuze’s work on Leibniz in \textit{Difference and Repetition} in relation to \textit{The Fold}, even though the latter text emerges late in Deleuze’s work. I provide an extended discussion of \textit{The Fold} because Deleuze offers a clear explication there of some of the basic concepts he draws from Leibniz, which are not

\textsuperscript{79} Deleuze employs the example of origami, where the original material, the paper, remains the same even though it is folded and unfolded into different shapes (1993, 6).

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Spinoza and the Problem of Expression} is an alternate title for \textit{Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza}. 

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made clear in the more partial rendering of Leibniz’s work in *Difference and Repetition*. This is commensurate with James Williams’ argument that *The Fold* is the text in which Deleuze “deepens” the metaphysics offered in *Difference and Repetition*, and does so more dramatically than in any other text published after 1968 (2003, 208). Keith Robinson acknowledges that Deleuze’s reading of Leibniz changes between his work in the 1960s and *The Fold*, but suggests that these differences are so subtle as to constitute merely a different folding (2003, 155).81 In the early reading, he argues, there is an inward folding of the identical world, while in the later reading, this world is continually unfolded, so that differences are proliferated (2003, 155). What this means is that although the discrepancy between these readings of Leibniz is so nuanced as to be evident only as a “tiny, unrepresentable fold” (Robinson 2003, 155), it effects the very possibility of how difference can be thought. Deleuze’s revision of Leibniz will be important for the final section of this chapter, which shows his development of Leibniz’s “*mathesis universalis*” (Deleuze 1994, 190) as an explanatory model of the conditions for the emergence of difference. It will also be paramount in the final chapter in this thesis, where I examine the relational properties of Deleuze’s concept of difference. I have split my discussion of Leibniz in this third chapter between this section and the final section of this chapter, in which I consider individuation, in order to reflect the two points in *Difference and Repetition* in which Deleuze significantly mobilises Leibniz’s ideas. It is through his writings on Leibniz in *Difference and Repetition* that Deleuze’s own concept of difference gains clarity.

81 Robinson writes: “in the earlier reading of Leibniz, Deleuze concentrated on the principles that emphasize a tendency to identity, similarity and exclusion in Leibniz’s system. In the later reading Deleuze focuses much more on the system’s tendency to differ and unfold itself across zones and boundaries, constantly attempting to connect everything by multiplying principles from within itself” (2003, 155–56). *The Fold* can thus be seen to offer a much more generous reading of Leibniz.
Daniel W. Smith points out that although the mathematics of calculus provides Deleuze with a model for the concept of difference to which he appeals in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze’s imperative is to develop a philosophical model rather than either a “metaphysics of calculus” or a “philosophy of mathematics” (2007a, 9). This is significant because both Hegel and Leibniz draw on mathematical ideas when modelling ontology. Seeing that Leibniz is an important figure in the historical development of calculus, particularly in relation to infinitesimals, Deleuze finds in his work a mathematical justification of difference. ⁸² According to Duffy, Deleuze developed an alternative history of mathematics as well as of philosophy. This construction, he goes on to say, creates a continuity between infinitesimal calculus and modern differential calculus (2004b, 199). Duffy’s argument rests on the place of the infinitesimal in the historical development of calculus. ⁸³ The differential is defined by Duffy as “the infinitesimal difference between consecutive values of a continuously diminishing quantity” (2004b, 199). These differences are infinitely small because infinitely smaller units exist between two whole numbers. Allowing for the expression of minute quantities, it is described by Smith as the “miracle” of differential relations (2007a, 11). What is “inessential” in scale between things, Deleuze argues, is significant because it refers not to “that which lacks importance

⁸² Aden Evens distinguishes Deleuze’s understanding of the differential, which is based on what Evens describes as “archaic interpretations of the differential”, from its meaning in modern calculus, which is as an “arbitrarily small quantity” (2000, 108). Deleuze subsequently refers to how the infinitesimally small in differential relations used to be described as “barbaric” (1981, n.p.).

⁸³ The infinitesimal had been present in seventeenth-century theories of calculus such as Leibniz’s, but had subsequently been devalued. Duffy locates this matter historically in the work of Karl Weierstrass, who in the late nineteenth century removed every reference to infinitesimals from his work on calculus. This became the dominant model of calculus until the 1960s, when Abraham Robinson reintroduced infinitesimals (2004b, 203). Duffy suggests that this renewed interest in infinitesimals prompted Deleuze to develop his Leibniz-inspired alternative history of mathematics (2004b, 212).
but, on the contrary, to the most profound, to the universal matter or continuum from which the essences are finally made” (1994, 47). This matters because if difference always exists (even infinitesimally) between finite entities then, Smith writes, “substance is individual” (2009, 53) and numerical series are infinite (Duffy 2010b, 90). The expression of infinitely small difference enables Leibniz to maintain the distinction between essences (Deleuze 1994, 46), and Deleuze in turn to challenge the mathematical foundation of Hegel’s dialectic by means of the Leibnizian calculus. I will examine the specificity of this manoeuvre in my final chapter. The significant point at this stage of my argument is that Deleuze uses differential calculus in the service of both his philosophy of difference and also his effort to undermine Hegel, and by doing so proposes an alternative trajectory through both mathematics and philosophy (Duffy 2006b, 92).

Acknowledging the link between Leibniz’s philosophical concept of the monad and his differential calculus, Evens suggests that they are built “one out of the other” (2000, 115). Deleuze defines Leibniz’s monad as “the soul or [...] the subject as a metaphysical point” (1993, 23): it is an expressive structure which reveals the torsion of the expresser and the expressed.84 It is a point of singular perspective, because it contains the infinite world while expressing only a finite part of it (Deleuze 1993, 130). No individual monad, however, can express the entire world, because the world is infinite and a monad is finite. On the contrary, the monad actualises a finite world while the infinite world remains virtual. As Deleuze formulates it: the monad

84 In Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza Deleuze contextualises this notion with reference to Spinoza’s work on the manifestation of finite difference through the expression of an infinite essence in the explication of attributes. He writes that the essence of substance has no existence outside of its expression in the attributes (1992, 42). Deleuze also compares Leibniz’s monad with Spinoza’s mode, each of which he describes as “an individual as an expressive center” (1992, 327).
contains within itself the entire sequence but expresses only a portion of it (1993, 130). If each monad did not express only its own point of view, every monad might be the same.

Smith explains that the subject does not express a point of view: instead the point of view expresses the subject (2009, 50). This is significant, according to Bryant, because it protects Deleuze against accusations that in upholding the “supposed presence and fullness” of the subject he is supporting the “cult of the individual” (2008, 152). The point of view, in other words, does not require a subject. Bryant argues that perspective is not only “the structure wherein the subject unfolds and without which it would not be” but also “the inseparability of the subject from its world” (2008, 153). Duffy’s work elucidates the reason why Leibnizian perspectivism is not the perspective of a subject: the point of view Deleuze refers to is mathematical (geometrical) and not psychological (2010a, 12). Here the mathematical point of view is separated necessarily from the metaphysical point of view. According to Duffy, the mathematical point of view is a location which can be filled by the metaphysical point (that is, the monad as soul or subject). Consequently, the point of view “preexists the subject which is placed there” (2010a, 13). What is projected outward in the point of view is this metaphysical point (Deleuze 1993, 23).

The tension in Deleuze’s work between the one and the multiple is evident everywhere in *The Fold*. Deleuze writes that Leibniz’s is the only philosophy which “has ever pushed to such an extreme the affirmation of a one and same world, and of an infinite difference or variety in this world” (1993, 58). The figure of the monad is
representative of both the singular (by being indivisible) and the multiple in so far as it contains many folds within its unity. “The One”, Deleuze writes,

specifically has a power of envelopment and development, while the multiple is inseparable from the folds that it makes when it is enveloped, and of the unfoldings when it is developed. But its envelopments and developments, its implications and explications, are nonetheless particular movements that must be understood in a universal Unity that ‘complicates’ them all, and that complicates all the Ones. (1993, 23)

This notion is objected to by Badiou, whose important critique of Deleuze’s treatment of the one and the multiple in relation to Spinoza I addressed in my second chapter. Badiou argues that Leibniz never resolves this tension, and relies on the concept of God in order to establish his claim that multiplicity rests on an absolute and founding unity. This is not an option for Deleuze, he points out: as such, this tension constitutes an even greater problem for his work (1994, 58). For Leibniz, God and the monad are a reciprocal equation (Deleuze 1993, 49), which is why he considered the absolute and the multiple to be likewise reciprocal.

Expressed in relation to the notion of possible worlds, the monad exists for a possible world which reciprocally exists in the monad. “[I]f the world is in the subject” Deleuze writes, “the subject is no less for the world” (1993, 25; emphasis in original): this is what makes the monad a mirror of the world (1993, 129). The idea of possible worlds is connected to the monad as a temporal notion, which Deleuze theorises it in relation to the event — a topic I will address in my final chapter. Leibniz identifies the actual world as the best possible, because a series of convergences have enabled it to achieve the condition of compossibility. In one of his lectures on Leibniz, Deleuze clarifies the particularity of compossibility, remarking that “there are things which are possible in themselves, but are not
compossible with another” (1980a, n.p.). At every point of divergence along this series other worlds were possible, but since they would have been incompossible with the actualised world they are deemed to have no reality (Deleuze 1993, 60). Deleuze uses Leibniz’s examples to illustrate this concept. These repeated examples are of a Caesar who does and does not cross the Rubicon, an Adam who does and does not sin, and a Sextus who does and does not rape Lucretia (1993, 60). Caesar crosses the Rubicon because not to cross it is incompossible with the actual world: the alternative outcome of not crossing it pertains to another possible world. What Deleuze finds in Leibniz’s notion of possible worlds is “vice-diction” (1994, 46), which is the opposite of Hegel’s infinitely large contradiction (Deleuze 2004, 96).

From his formulation of the concept of possible worlds, Leibniz deduces the existence of God. This is proved by the concept of “sufficient reason:” there must be a sufficient reason why the world actualises the way that it does rather than in some other way. This is not about causality, Bryant points out, which would seek to explain how or why something comes into being. Smith expresses clearly the reasoning behind this: “one has to give a reason for causality itself” (2005, 132). “Sufficient reason”, on the other hand, seeks to posit “the conditions for the inclusion of ‘predicates’ within the individual” (Bryant 2008, 227). This also allows Leibniz a more complex notion of identity, because it suggests that a subject is not only its own essence but also everything that happens to it. Smith exemplifies this with the statement, “Caesar crossed the Rubicon” (2009, 47). For Leibniz, the predicate (crossed the Rubicon) is contained in the subject (Caesar) as part of its identity. Following this logic, however, the identity of Caesar must contain the entire world,
because an infinity of causes and effects results from this action (Smith 2009, 49). This is why Deleuze must insist that Leibniz considers the monad to contain within itself the entire world (1993, 130). Smith explains that “the relation that A maintains with B must in some manner be included or comprised in the concept of A” (2005, 132), and defines “sufficient reason” as follows: “[f]or every thing, there is a concept that gives an account both of the thing and of its relations with other things, including its causes and its effects” (2005, 132). Smith concludes, then, that the principles of identity and sufficient reason are the same (2009, 47). In Leibniz’s postulation, sufficient reason ensures that the actual possible world is of necessity the most perfect: this is the world that his God chooses. Deleuze summarises this as follows:

By thus positing an infinity of possible worlds, Leibniz in no way reintroduces a duality that would turn our relative world into the reflection of a more profound, absolute world: to the contrary, he turns the relative world into our only existing world, a world that rejects all other possible worlds because it is relatively ‘the best’. God chooses between an infinity of possible worlds, incompossible with each other, and chooses the best, or the one that has the most possible reality. (1993, 60)

Deleuze cautions that the best world is differentiated not by being better in some other way but because it exists. Consequently, Leibniz regards the best and the existent as the same thing (1993, 68).

What Leibniz arrives at is an idea of harmony: the world is composed of compossibility. In Leibniz’s harmonious world, Evens writes, “God and the universe include only recognisable difference, only solvable problems — such is the best of

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85 To clarify: the subject here is the concept of Caesar, not the actual Caesar. The concept of Caesar thus contains the predicate within it (Smith 2009, 47).
86 Smith reminds us that Deleuze’s concept of Spinozian expression is in play here in a Leibnizian sense, because he implies that the subject expresses the totality of the world obscurely, but only a small portion distinctly (2005, 132).
87 Leibniz was ridiculed for this notion by Voltaire specifically, and the eighteenth-century intellectual community in general (Smith 2009, 51).
all possible worlds” (2000, 115). In a Leibnizian sense, this harmony is numerical, because the monad is not only “the inverse, reciprocal number” but also “the inverted image of God, the inverse number of infinity” (1993, 129). Leibniz believes that harmony is pre-established: this harmonic world is unlimited, and even when folded into the monad it retains the power to be unfolded and extended infinitely (Deleuze 1993, 124). According to Deleuze we do not go from monads to harmony, but rather the reverse: if something is harmonic it is a monad. The monad reveals its harmony by mirroring the best possible (existent) world (1993, 129).

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze diverges from Leibniz on the notion of harmony. This contrast brings Deleuze’s own concept of difference into relief. Whereas for Leibniz the world is inherently harmonious (because only compossibility exists in an actual sense), for Deleuze compossibility and incompossibility co-exist fundamentally: consequently, divergence can be reconfigured positively as a condition of possibility (1994, 123). Deleuze writes:

Leibniz’s only error was to have linked difference to the negative of limitation, because he maintained the dominance of the old principle, because he linked the series to a principle of convergence, without seeing that divergence itself was an object of affirmation, or that the incompossibles belonged to the same world and were affirmed as the greatest crime and the greatest virtue of the one and only world, that of the eternal return. (1994, 51)

What this means, Robinson writes, is that “nothing prevents us from affirming that incompossibles belong to the same world and that incompossible worlds belong to the same universe” (2003, 152). Deleuze insists that the endless divergence within sequences can be affirmed as part of the series itself (1994, 56). This enables incompossibles (or alternative possible worlds) to diverge from, rather than contradict, one another (1994, 48). This is how Deleuze differs fundamentally from
Leibniz. What remains, Evens writes, is “disagreement that cuts to the bottomless bottom of the ontology itself, a difference that cannot heal and does not want to” (2000, 115). What makes the nature of this difference important is that it is the condition of novelty.

For Deleuze, the principal problem with both Hegel’s and Leibniz’s model of difference is that each assumes the primacy of identity. He writes:

> Between Leibniz and Hegel it matters little whether the supposed negative of difference is understood as a vice-dicting limitation or a contradicting limitation, any more than it matters whether infinite identity be considered analytic or synthetic. In either case, difference remains subordinated to identity, reduced to the negative, incarcerated within similitude and analogy. (1994, 50)

Identity, however, can never be more than a secondary and temporary effect, because being is difference itself (1994, 50). “Being”, Deleuze writes, “is said in a single and same sense of everything of which it is said, but that of which it is said differs: it is said of difference itself” (1994, 36). In this version of the world, identity is only ever a momentary illusion which undermines the ontological reality of incessant difference. In his quest to position difference beyond “identity, opposition, analogy and resemblance” (1994, 29), Deleuze develops a metaphysical conception of it, in which difference is not only pure but prior to the momentary congealing of identity through repetition.

**The Image of Thought**

In the 1960s Deleuze’s interest in the potential for thought as the encounter with difference is evident extensively in *Difference and Repetition, The Logic of Sense* and *Proust and Signs*. These works engage with how the conceptualisation of
thought bears on the way that subjectivity is conceived and enacted. Deleuze’s endeavour is to propose thought as a creative but involuntary action which does not originate from the subject. He writes: “[t]o think is to create — there is no other creation” (1994, 147).88 Charles Stivale suggests that the (Proustian) notion of creation generated through confrontation with the unknown is one of Deleuze’s “most cherished topics” (2008, 19). The influence of this can be seen in his collaborative work with Guattari, especially in their critique of psychoanalysis in Anti-Oedipus, their use of the rhizome in A Thousand Plateaus, and their proposal of a plane of immanence of thought in What is Philosophy?89

Deleuze insists that the way thought has come to be conceptualised actually hinders thinking because, in Arnaud Villani’s words, we have “confuse[d] thought with the decorum of thought” (2006, 231). What is required in order to think, Deleuze suggests, is to destroy the Image of thought which “presupposes itself” (1994, 139). He writes: “thought is covered over by an ‘image’ made up of postulates which distort both its operation and its genesis [and] culminate in the position of an identical thinking subject, which functions as the principle of identity for concepts in general” (1994, 265). This critique is one of the central tasks of Difference and Repetition, which seeks to eliminate the presuppositions on which philosophy is

88 Although Deleuze makes this statement in relation to Antonin Artaud, the echo of Proust is also evident. In Remembrance of Things Past Proust writes in relation to thought (and in particular memory):

What an abyss of uncertainty, whenever the mind feels overtaken by itself; when it, the seeker, is at the same time the dark region through which it must go seeking and where all its equipment will avail it nothing. To seek? More than that: to create. It is face to face with something which does not yet exist, which it alone can make actual, which it alone can bring into the light of day. (2006, 62)

89 Buchanan identifies this central chapter of Difference and Repetition, which challenges the conventional notion of thought, as what enabled Deleuze’s work with Guattari, which was always focused on the creation of new concepts (2009, 208).
founded (1994, 129). In relation to the Image of thought, it is structured by what
Deleuze calls the eight postulates of thought.90 This “dogmatic, orthodox, or moral
image” of thought (1994, 131), Deleuze insists, will only hinder philosophy (1994,
134). His critique of it in the third chapter of Difference and Repetition emerges
from his analyses of Descartes, Plato and Kant, whom I will now address in turn.

Deleuze challenges the universalising function of Descartes’ c \textit{cogito} \ which, he
argues, has an impact on possible modes of subjectivity. Deleuze’s work in general
opposes the rationality of Cartesian models of thought and his collaborative work
with Guattari is no exception. In critiquing the eight postulates of thought Deleuze
aligns recognition with good sense and common sense, both of which support doxa
and thereby contribute to an Image of thought that reduces the potential for thinking
(1994, 134). Good sense is exemplified by Descartes’ orientation of thought to truth
(Deleuze 1994, 131). Common sense is itself a form of recognition: it requires a
commonality of experience which determines a specific subjective identity, as in the
case of Descartes’ c \textit{cogito} (Deleuze 1994, 133). Simon Lumsden suggests that these
postulates are epistemologically “homogenizing” because they presuppose that all
thinking beings manifest a universal subjectivity (2002, 147). The Image of thought
is insidious, Bryant charges, because it enables what is only a point of view to pose
as universal (2008, 16). Frida Beckman aligns this specifically with the Cartesian
\textit{cogito}, which “remains as a beginning of thought, not only because I am because I
think but because in postulating such a claim I take the act of thinking as a given, as
a universal premise that in itself need not be questioned” (2009, 55). Deleuze objects

90 The complete list can be found in Difference and Repetition (1994, 167).
to the assumption of commonality in this Image of thought because it contributes to abstract universals such as the Self. Contrary to Descartes, Deleuze writes:

In this sense, it is not even clear that thought, in so far as it constitutes the dynamism peculiar to philosophical systems, may be related to a substantial, completed and well-constituted subject, such as the Cartesian Cogito: thought is, rather, one of those terrible movements which can be sustained only under the conditions of the larval subject. (1994, 118)

In my fourth chapter I will examine in greater detail the dissolution signalled here of the recognisable subject in Deleuze’s work.

Deleuze’s critique of Plato is biographically significant because it constituted his thesis defence (Flaxman 2009, 12). His interrogation of Plato’s thought, Gregory Flaxman points out, is incommensurate with the general tradition of Platonism (2009, 11), in so far as they begin with a “declaration of war” (2009, 8). He makes this claim because Deleuze insists that the principal task of a philosophy of difference is the Nietzschean project: to “overturn Platonism” (1994, 59). For Plato, the world is bifurcated into the Ideal realm of Ideas (which is perfect and eternal) and the imperfect corporeal realm of Nature, which is a world of inferior

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91James Williams is critical of Patton’s translation here and suggests that renversement should be translated as “reverse” in order to preserve the sense that Deleuze aims to adjust Platonism rather than to reject it outright (2003, 79). In the first appendix of The Logic of Sense Lester and Stivale likewise translate this word as “reverse” rather than “overturn” (Deleuze 1990a, 253). This more gentle adjustment of Plato is supported at the end of the second chapter in Difference and Repetition, ‘Repetition for Itself’, where Deleuze acknowledges that anti-Platonism exists potentially within Plato’s work itself: the suggestion that becoming allows for copies to themselves become the models for replication as works of art (representation), for instance, creates a distinction between good and bad copies. Although Deleuze finds here the genesis of the overturning of Platonism, he carefully notes that this is quickly abandoned by Plato (1994, 128). In this thesis, however, I will preserve the translation as written in the interest of consistency. Badiou’s criticism of Deleuze hinges on the task Deleuze sets himself in relation to Platonism. Far from overturning Platonism, Badiou argues, “Deleuzianism is fundamentally a Platonism” (2000, 26). This is because, in expressing the univocity of difference, Deleuze appeals to what he feels is the dualistic structure of virtual/actual, in which the virtual is evidence of transcendence “‘beneath’ the simulacra of the world” (Badiou 2000, 46). Badiou positions the virtual in Deleuze as a ground or final cause for the actual (2000, 46). This is problematic, because to posit the virtual as evidence of either transcendence or an outside of immanence (on account of its unequal duality) suggests a disjuncture between the virtual and the actual that Deleuze does not uphold because of their “mutual inextricability” (2002, 149). This also ignores the operation of the virtual and the actual as a circuit (Deleuze and Parnet 2002, 150), constantly feeding back and altering each other so that there can be no ultimate ground.
copies. Deleuze rejects this version of the world because he thinks that the goal of philosophy is to realise immanence. “The poisoned gift of Platonism”, Deleuze writes, “is to have introduced transcendence into philosophy [...] Every reaction against Platonism is a restoration of immanence in its full extension and in its purity, which forbids the return of any transcendence” (1998, 137). Deleuze rejects the notion that a transcendent separation of Ideas and existence can counter the hierarchical relationship of copy to original, which is replicated in the hierarchy of essence and appearance as well as of the intelligible and the sensible. What Deleuze offers is a version of the world without originals or models: a world where there are only simulacra (1994, 66). To reverse Platonism, he insists, would involve “glorifying the reign of simulacra and reflections” (1994, 66). This is commensurate with his philosophy of difference, because “[s]ystems in which different relates to different through difference itself are systems of simulacra” (1994, 277).

The simulacrum, according to Bryant, is “the symptom that something is amiss with the traditional model of difference” (2008, 81; emphasis in original). This is because simulacra suggest the existence of another kind of difference not accounted for in the original-copy model, as the simulacrum is an equally divergent “image without resemblance” (Deleuze 1990a, 257). The simulacrum does not conceal a true identity, but is rather a component of the existent (Deleuze 2004, 114). Deleuze positions this as correlative to the eternal return (1990a, 263): it indicates that the

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92 On the surface, this appears to be similar to Baudrillard’s claim that the dominance of the simulacra evinces the postmodern condition. However, Baudrillard describes that the “successive phases of the image” (1983, 11) are historically located, whereas for Deleuze the world has always been merely one of simulacra.
eternal return is an expression of chaos, rather than a system which orders it (1990a, 264). This is an appeal to the immanence which Deleuze seeks.

Flaxman suggests that Deleuze found in Plato a formulation of thought which eliminates difference in itself (2009, 8). Deleuze calls it the first attempt “to erect the dogmatic and moralizing image of thought” (1994, 142). He is critical of the transcendence in Plato’s insistence that the identity or true essence of things is prior to the copies which we experience in the imperfect world. Plato’s Idea concerns essence, and thus determines that the question becomes “what is X?” (2004, 95; emphasis in original). Deleuze rejects the affinity of thought with the quest for the truth of transcendent Ideas (1994, 142) because, Smith writes, Ideas are “immanent, and therefore differential” (2006, 44; emphasis in original). In an address at ‘The Deleuzian Event’ Conference at Manchester Metropolitan University Colebrook describes a Deleuzian Idea as a “potential for difference” in the creation of a series (2007). It can never be distinguished as a separate entity because it coexists in a state of “perplication” (Deleuze 1994, 187). As James Williams puts it, Deleuze’s Ideas are “interconnected and inseparable relations that become determined in different ways in accordance with the different degrees of intensity of the relations” (2005, 30). In Deleuze’s system, the copy cannot possibly replicate an original which exists abstractly as a Platonic Idea. This is because

[w]e learn only insofar as we discover the Idea operating underneath the concept, the field or fields of individuation, the system or systems that envelop the Idea, the dynamisms that determine the Idea to incarnate itself; it is only in such conditions that we can lift the veil of mystery concerning the division of the concept […] beneath representation there is always the Idea and its distinct-obscure depth, a drama beneath every logos. (2004, 103)
Perhaps the most surprising element of Deleuze’s reading of Plato, Flaxman writes, is the ongoing importance of the notion of the Idea. Deleuze “takes Plato’s Ideas, which traditionally seem to have cost philosophy its cruelty and ecstasy, and finds in them instead the very spirit of Dionysus” (2009, 13).

Deleuze theorises the differential property of Ideas in order to focus philosophical attention on what is existent (and therefore immanent) rather than transcendent. In Kant he finds the potential for theorising a transcendentalist empiricism. Melissa McMahon remarks that Kant is the most canonical philosopher on whom Deleuze published a monograph (2009, 88). This is not to say that Deleuze felt a particular affinity with Kant: on the contrary he described his monograph on this philosopher as a book about an enemy (1990b, 6). McMahon’s portrayal of Deleuze’s relationship to Kant as one of “ambivalence” (2009, 88) is certainly sustainable in view of Deleuze’s rejection of a philosopher whose influence on his work is apparent.93 “The strategy of Deleuze’s early work”, Smith writes, “was to return to Kant himself, take up again the problems that generated the post-Kantian tradition (as formulated by Maimon), but to develop solutions to those problems that were

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93 This supports claims made by the editors of *Deleuze’s Philosophical Lineage*, Jones and Roffe, that Deleuze was not the best judge of his own work’s “development and significance” (2009b, 3). The influence of Kant on Deleuze has been addressed also by Vincent Descombes, who writes “Gilles Deleuze is above all a post-Kantian” (1980, 152). Boundas concurs with this conclusion suggesting that “Deleuze’s entire work seems to be deployed with the spectre of Kant [...] peering over Deleuze’s shoulder” (2005a, 254). This influence is readily apparent in Deleuze’s early work. Various critics suggest that this is also evident in his collaborative work and later publications. Smith, who reads *Anti-Oedipus* in relation to Kant’s *Critique of Practical Reason*, suggests that Deleuze derived the idea of immanent and productive desire from Kant who defines desire as “a faculty that, given a representation in my head, is capable of producing the object that corresponds to it” (2006, 53; emphasis in original). Bell also thinks that *A Thousand Plateaus* is aligned with a Kantian transcendental philosophy, although he cautions that Deleuze and Guattari appeal to a different understanding of the transcendental (2006b, 5). Iain Mackenzie reads *What is Philosophy?* in relation to Kant, focusing in particular on the Kantian basis of Deleuze and Guattari’s plane of immanence (2004). Deleuze’s ‘Immanence: A Life’ also realises Kantian themes (2001). I provide these references because Kant’s influence on Deleuze is often overshadowed by a focus on Spinoza, Nietzsche and Bergson.
very different to the solutions that led to Hegel” (2006, 44). Smith suggests that
Deleuze’s monograph *Kant’s Critical Philosophy* (and his earlier writings more
generally) is more “pro-Kant” than “anti-Hegel”. Here again, he adds, Deleuze
defines his own philosophical lineage against the canon, replacing Fichte, Schelling
and Hegel with Maimon, Nietzsche and Bergson in his own post-Kantian tradition
(2006, 44).

In order to critique the Image of thought, Deleuze examines the role of Ideas in the
work Kant developed from Plato. Kant, he argues, “seemed equipped to overturn the
Image of thought” (1994, 136), and he finds supporting evidence in a series of
substitutions made by Kant which correspond to several of his own eight postulates
of thought. He is impressed by Kant’s conferral of value on problems, and by the
fact that he likewise represents the self as fractured by time, rather than as the stable
subject presupposed by the Image of thought (1994, 136). Ultimately, however, he
rejects Kant’s adherence to the categories of subject and object, and eliminates these
distinctions from the transcendental field he presents as the plane of immanence in
his final work, ‘Immanence: A Life’.

Deleuze develops what he calls transcendental empiricism in relation to his critique
of Kant. It is important to note, Cliff Stagoll cautions, that this is a challenge to the
transcendental and the empirical rather than a “unified counter-theory” (2005,

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94 The fractured I became important for Deleuze’s interest in wounds in *The Logic of Sense*. His
dramatic quotation of Joë Bosquet — “[m]y wound existed before me, I was born to embody it” (qtd.
in Deleuze 1990a, 148) — is significant to his ethical position which is akin to *amor fati*. This can be
considered in light of Boundas’ claim that the fractured subject is wounded. Boundas regards the
differences between Deleuze and Kant on this matter as significant. For whereas Kant’s wounded
subject is bandaged by the unity of consciousness, Deleuze thinks there is no longer any reason why
the should be concealed by the subject (2005a, 264).
As such, Deleuze’s mobilisation of the transcendental is significantly different from Kant’s. Kant’s “transcendental” is quite different from the transcendent, which is generally theorised as what goes beyond possible knowledge and experience, and includes concepts such as God, the Soul or the World. The Kantian transcendental, by contrast, seeks the conditions of possible experience. Deleuze criticises it because he feels that it reintroduces transcendence into thought by relating it “to” the empirical. This preposition is important, James Williams tells us, because it positions the empirical outside the transcendental (2005, 19). For Deleuze, on the other hand, everything is in the transcendental: there is no outside. This difference distinguishes Kant’s conception of the Idea from Deleuze’s. Kant’s Ideas, Smith writes, are “unifying, totalising and conditioning”, and therefore transcendent; Deleuze’s, by contrast, are “multiple, differential, and genetic” and therefore fulfil his project of immanence (2006, 48). To encounter a Deleuzian Idea, Colebrook asserts, is to “encounter what is not ourselves” (2007), and thus what will engender further difference.

Whereas for Kant a priori knowledge is based on all possible experience (and is therefore transcendental), for Deleuze knowledge must be based on actual experience. As he writes in Bergsonism: “[w]e go beyond experience, toward the conditions of experience (but these are not, in a Kantian manner, the conditions of all possible experience: They are the conditions of real experience)” (1991a, 23).

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95 Bryant describes paradoxes in Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism: after criticising Kant’s transcendentalism for not being transcendental enough (2008, 22), Deleuze used transcendental empiricism to critique empiricism (2008, 46). Roffe suggests that the irony of Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism is that it is drawn not from David Hume but from Leibniz, Spinoza and Kant (2009, 81). He explains however, that “Transcendental empiricism is not Humean — but it is the supreme consequence of Deleuze’s engagement with problems that are marked out in Empiricism and Subjectivity” (2009, 82). In my fourth chapter I will consider Deleuze’s work on Hume in relation to subjectivity.
makes Deleuze’s philosophy transcendental is the centrality of this search for conditions. This is a form of empiricism, Bruce Baugh argues, because it seeks the conditions of real experience rather than a generalised notion of (possible) experience (1992, 133). A focus on the actual rather than the possible enables individual experiences to differ without having to relate them to a universal understanding. It also acknowledges that things learned in particular experiences retroactively change how they are understood (Stagoll 2005, 282–83). Explaining why this constitutes transcendental rather than a simple empiricism, Bryant writes:

It is because experience presents us with nothing but composites, mixtures, differences in degree, and because thinking in terms of these mixtures leads us to problems on the order of transcendental illusions, that we must go beyond what is given in experience to the transcendental conditions governing the production of experience. (2008, 61)

According to Deleuze, transcendental empiricism is “the only way to avoid tracing the transcendental from the outlines of the empirical” (1994, 144).96 For Deleuze this tracing is a problem because it seeks the conditions in the conditioned and therefore, Smith writes, “conceived of the transcendental in the image of the empirical” (2007a, 6). This is problematic because certain things are imperceptible to empirical sensibility (Deleuze 1994, 144). Transcendental empiricism as Deleuze formulates it goes beyond common sense, pushes the faculties to their limits, and may enable the emergence of new faculties not determined by common sense (defined as the harmony of the faculties) (1994, 144). Deleuze argues that the conditioned emerges

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96 “Tracing” is an interesting concept in Deleuze’s work. In A Thousand Plateaus he and Guattari propose that thought seeks a map rather than a tracing, because tracing merely reproduces the old, whereas a map is constructive and infinitely revisable in dialogue with reality. They describe the map as being “oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real” (2004, 13). Deleuze’s engagement with the empirical must be seen in this light. The radical empiricism he proposes equates experience with experimentation, so that what is produced is something new rather than a reproduction of the old.
from its conditions through a process of divergence rather than resemblance. It would make no sense, therefore, to seek conditions retroactively in the conditioned.97

Deleuze is critical of simple empiricism because, being concerned with the external differences between things, it mistakes diversity for difference. The problem with this form of empiricism, according to Bryant, is that it ignores the fact that empirical engagement is “contingent and inevitably passing” (2008, 198). He evokes Bergsonian terminology when he writes that “empiricism selects differences in degree rather than differences in kind” (2008, 20). What simple empiricism overlooks is the temporality and generative power of internal difference.

Ultimately, Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism attempts to address what he describes as the givenness of the world. In Difference and Repetition he associates the given with the manifestation of difference as diversity, and writes: “[d]ifference is not diversity. Diversity is given, but difference is that by which the given is given, that by which the given is given as diverse” (1994, 222). What he aims to theorise are the “genetic conditions” (Smith 2005, 137): these imply that difference is the matrix which allows things to manifest themselves as diverse. Consequently, the given must be conceived of as dynamic.98 In this vein James Williams describes the given as “an open set of variations, each of which denies identity” (2005, 15). Bryant

97 It is important to note, as Smith does, that because conditions and the conditioned are both determined at the same time, the conditions are never static, but change in unison with changes in the conditioned (2007a, 6).
98 Deleuze’s interest in the manifestation of difference as diversity has enabled others to theorise the world as a dynamic and self-ordering system. Protevi and Bonta describe this construction of the world as self-ordering because it neither aspires to be an innate model nor is governed by anything beyond these processes (2004, 89). Manuel De Landa suggests, that in the absence of transcendent principles, the primary reality is the flow of matter-energy rather than the structures they generate (1999, 129).
also renders the given as dynamic in insisting that it does not mean this present actuality but what he calls a “morphological essence” (2008, 66). In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze is trying to construct a formal system in which variation can be accommodated.

Using Whitehead’s definition of empiricism, in *Dialogues* Deleuze situates himself as an empiricist, He writes:

> I have always felt that I am an empiricist, that is, a pluralist. But what does the equivalence between empiricism and pluralism mean? It derives from the two characteristics by which Whitehead defined empiricism: the abstract does not explain, but must itself be explained; and the aim is not to rediscover the eternal or the universal, but to find the conditions under which something new is produced (*creativity*). (Deleuze and Parnet 2002, vii; emphasis in original)

Deleuze argues that philosophy should not move from the abstract to the concrete, but on the contrary begin from “the states of things” (Deleuze and Parnet 2002, vii).

> “[I]t is the empirical”, Baugh remarks, “which explains the conceptual and the abstract conditions of all possible experience, not the reverse” (1992, 135). The purpose of Deleuze’s empiricism, Sellars emphasises, is to reject “abstract totalities” and affirm instead the “ontological priority of pluralities and multiplicities” (2007, 554). By theorising an Idea as a multiplicity, Deleuze can argue that everything is

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99 A “morphological essence”, according to Bryant, “does not characterize a thing, but a possible world, a system of appearances, a way of being” (2008, 66). In this sense he appeals to an open concept of essence divorced from the limiting uses it has in essentialism. This is commensurate with Baugh’s account of the place of essence in Deleuze’s philosophy, which dissociates it from a kind of essentialism derived from universal Platonic essences (2006, 31). I think that the terminology is still problematic.

100 The central element of Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism is the idea of multiplicity. Badiou’s critique of Deleuze is again interesting here. Rather than positioning Deleuze as the theorist of multiplicity and difference (which is what most commentators do), he insists that Deleuze is primarily concerned with re-conceptualising the “One-All” (2000, 11). It is important to acknowledge that here Badiou is not engaging with Deleuze’s ideas, but asserting that the way in which Deleuze has been read (even, it seems, by Deleuze himself) is incorrect, because it insists on multiplicity rather than the One. Burchill suggests that in this way “[t]he image of Deleuzianism as a thought affirming multiplicities as an order of difference that cannot be subjugated to the Identical, to the One, is not simply demolished by Badiou but literally erased” (2000, xiv).
a multiplicity, because every thing “incarnates an Idea” (1994, 182). In this way he attempts to engage more adequately with the multiplicity of difference, and to do so without abstracting it to what we already know through recognition.

Deleuze justifies his rejection of recognition by critiquing Descartes, Plato and Kant, and does so because of the dominant recognition-based models of thought which are traceable primarily to Hegel and Kant. As Simon Lumsden observes, this task is imperative for Deleuze because “[r]ecognition as such comes to define the very meaning of what it is to think” (2002, 148). Significantly, Deleuze does not deny the existence of representation, identity, or recognition, as they are experienced. Bryant confirms that

Deleuze is quite happy to say that representation, identity and recognition are real phenomena of our experience. We recognize things. We identify things. We represent things. If we did not do these things, then there would be no problem of representation and identity. (2008, 5)

Deleuze thinks that the problem occurs when common sense is presupposed, because that generates a version of philosophy in which recognition is assumed to be a metaphysical framework (1994, 135). “[R]ecognition”, Deleuze writes, “has never sanctioned anything but the recognisable and the recognised; form will never inspire anything but conformities” (1994, 134). Deleuze insists on theorising thought in such a way that it can access the flux of difference in which it is always immanent. What compels us to think, he maintains, is not recognition (which never perturbs thought) but encounters with what is strange and unfamiliar, or what he calls the “imperceptible” (1994, 140). Thought is therefore generated by what is outside of our framework of recognition. “For the new — in other words, difference — ”, Deleuze writes, “calls forth forces in thought which are not the forces of recognition,
today or tomorrow, but the powers of a completely other model, from an unrecognised and unrecognisable *terra incognita*” (1994, 136). This means that it cannot be adequate to the unfolding of difference through repetition.

For Deleuze, those encounters with the imperceptible which engender thought are registered through sensation, and involve a level of passivity. Olkowski writes extensively on the imperceptible. Most contemporary theories of ontology and epistemology, she observes, valorise the visible (and the processes which render things visible) rather than the unperceived and unperceivable (2007, 103). This is commensurate with Foucault’s assertion, in relation to Deleuze, that “all this swarming of the impalpable [...] must be integrated into our thought” (1970, 3).

Olkowski defines the imperceptible as what our customarily coarse scales of perception fail to register (2007, 50). She asks what our “logics and languages” might gain from a greater openness to the processes which take place beneath the level of perception (2007, 22–23). We are forced to think, Deleuze insists, by an affective encounter. It does not really matter what the encounter is with, and consequently the outcome is never determinable in advance. Bryant explains that the “encounter is contingent insofar as it might not have happened at all, insofar as it might have happened otherwise” (2008, 94). The method of transcendental empiricism is evident in the correlation of *experience* with *experiment*. This is why Deleuze values learning over knowledge in *Difference and Repetition*: “the Idea is not the element of knowledge but that of an infinite ‘learning’” (1994, 192). To theorise thought in this way does not confer value on either the rational or the

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101 This became important for Deleuze’s later work on affect.
habitual, because the encounter is primarily disruptive. As Bryant writes: “[t]hat which brings me to think is not the recognized, not what I’m accustomed to, not the habitual, but that which differs and is uncanny” (2008, 81).

Although etymologically *philosophia* is the love of wisdom, Deleuze sees philosophy (and in fact all thought) as reliant on what Kant called the “dark precursor”: an original violence that brings differences into communication in such a way that something new is generated.\(^{102}\) The dark precursor is the “invisible and imperceptible” (Deleuze 1994, 119) element that underlies thought.\(^{103}\) Deleuze also calls it the “*disparate*” (1994, 120; emphasis in original). “Thought,” he writes, “is primarily trespass and violence, the enemy, and nothing presupposes philosophy: everything begins with misosophy” (1994, 139). Deleuze is adamant that “the dark precursor is not a friend” (1994, 145). This claim has a larger context, because it relates to the determination of difference, which (according to Deleuze), arise from an undifferentiated and chaotic ground. James Williams thinks that this explains Deleuze’s interest in cruelty (2003, 58). He writes: “[t]o live is to live in horror of the ground — difference is cruel” (2003, 59). Common to both the manifestation of substance and the generation of thought is the fact that each is founded on a

\(^{102}\) The concept commensurate with the dark precursor in *The Logic of Sense* is the “quasi-cause”, which is the convergence point for a divergent series. In the translation of Deleuze’s presentation of his thesis to the Reunion of the French Society of Philosophy in 1967 (which was published in English as “The Method of Dramatization”) the dark precursor is rendered as the “*obscure precursor*” (Deleuze 2004, 97; emphasis in original).

\(^{103}\) Deleuze insists that although the dark precursor has an identity, it is “indeterminate” (1994, 119) and cannot be “presupposed” (1994, 120). These factors make it very difficult to define.
fundamental dissonance, and not on the notion of harmony that Deleuze critiques in his reading of Leibniz in *The Fold*.\textsuperscript{104}

In *The Universal (in the Realm of the Sensible)* Olkowski theorises the implications not only of positing disharmony as inherent but also of envisaging a world composed of calculations which are “inexact and unjust” (2007, 20) because they contain infinite disparity. She allegorises the reverse of this scenario by examining Italo Calvino’s *Invisible Cities*, a fiction about a world built based on perfect calculations, in which children are born monstrous. The builders of this city assumed that their calculations would lead to harmony. “But this assumes many things”, Olkowski writes:

> It assumes that the state of affairs external to the calculations, to which the calculations refer, is coherent; it assumes that reflection is real, that nature’s reason is amenable to human calculation. It assumes that the calculations of the astronomers are not other than those of the gods, that the monstrous offspring of the city are not themselves the inevitable progeny of harmony, reason, and justice. (2007, 18)

Deleuze’s world, with its dark precursor, is not one in which traditional harmony and coherence are possible. Having arisen from chaotic indetermination (Deleuze’s violence and cruelty) it manifests itself in unpredictable ways. “It is therefore true”, Deleuze writes, “that God makes the world by calculating, but his calculations never work out exactly [*juste*], and this inexactitude or injustice in the result, this irreducible inequality, forms the condition of the world” (1994, 222). The dark precursor is evidence that thought is violent. It involves accepting disharmony as primary (Olkowski 2007, 82). “What if,” Olkowski asks, “every phenomenon refers, 

\textsuperscript{104} Deleuze paraphrases Maurice de Gandillac’s assertion that “the world of Leibniz, in the end, is the most cruel of all worlds” (Deleuze 2004, 108). Smith’s interpretation is commensurate with this. He writes that Leibniz’s “rational optimism implies an infinite cruelty: The best world is not necessarily the world in which suffering is the least” (2005, 134).
not to an ordered set of calculations whose outcomes are knowable in advance, but to an infinite disparity, the sufficient reason of all phenomena” (2007, 20–21; emphasis in original).\(^\text{105}\)

“Deleuze,” Grosz writes, “is the great theorist of difference, of thought as difference” (1995, 129). Foucault’s summary of Deleuze’s thought supports her assertion:

The freeing of difference requires thought without contradiction, without dialectics, without negation; thought that accepts divergence; affirmative thought whose instrument is disjunction; thought of the multiple — of the nomadic and dispersed multiplicity that is not limited or confined by the constraints of the same; thought that does not conform to a pedagogical model (the fakery of prepared answers) but attacks insoluble problems — that is, a thought which addresses a multiplicity of exceptional points, which is displaced as we distinguish their conditions and which insists upon and subsists in the play of repetitions. (1970, 10–11)\(^\text{106}\)

In critiquing the Image of thought, Deleuze proposes his own open model of thought without postulates, which he calls this “thought without image” (1994, 276). It is precisely because he rejects the “tamed” Image of thought that he theorises its cruelty and monstrosity (Ansell-Pearson 1997b, 3). Thought needs to undergo a revolution, he argues, like the movement which substituted abstraction for representation in art (1994, 276). Thought is the ontological process of learning from the flux of difference as it is encountered in the world. For Deleuze, it is never separate from being, but instead (as Bryant puts it) “unfolds within being” (2008, 78). This returns us to the Proustian notion of thought as creation. For Deleuze, to

\(^{105}\) Olkowski here refers directly to Deleuze’s statement that “[d]isparity — in other words, difference or intensity (difference of intensity) — is the sufficient reason of all phenomena” (1994, 222).

\(^{106}\) In this article Foucault acknowledges not only the centrality of thought in Deleuze’s philosophy of difference, but also the importance of Deleuze to philosophy (and thinking) in general. Echoing Deleuze’s metaphor of lightning for those moments when difference communicates with difference and produces the new, Foucault writes: “a lightning storm was produced which will bear the name of Deleuze: new thought is possible; thought is again possible” (1970, 16).
think is to participate ontologically in the unfolding of a world of diversity through difference.

**Individuation**

“I would argue,” Bogue writes, “that a single problem occupies Deleuze from start to finish — that of difference and its expressive individuation” (2009, 133). In the final two chapters of *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze examines the genesis of this difference, in the course of proposing his own ontology of it. This is extremely important in view of his claim that “difference is behind everything, but behind difference there is nothing” (1994, 57). What is of concern here is how difference comes to be expressed. Deleuze’s account of finite difference allows him to get beyond the indeterminate flux of difference and repetition. According to James Williams, “[h]ow to account for this difference, whilst resisting atomism or an indeterminate chaos is the greatest challenge of Deleuze’s metaphysics” (2005, 15). Questioning how the finite is expressed in the infinite (and reciprocally, how the infinite is expressed in the finite) greatly occupied Deleuze when he was writing *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*. It is again present in *Difference and Repetition*, where Deleuze describes not the indeterminate flux of chaos but a highly particular formal system.¹⁰⁷

Theorising the encounter with difference in terms of sensibility, Deleuze argues that difference is experienced as intensity: imperceptible from the point of view of

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¹⁰⁷ Bryant is critical of how Deleuze has been misread in “Dionysian and empiricist approaches [...] which take him as the herald of becoming, chaos, and flux.” “Deleuzian becoming is not a chaos,” he writes, “but the unfolding of differentials that are intelligible entities” (2008, 63).
recognition, it “can only be sensed” (1994, 230). For Deleuze, thought needs to be opened to intensities which are beyond recognition and measure. “Intensity,” Deleuze writes, “is not the sensible but the being of the sensible, where different relates to different” (1994, 266; emphasis in original). If difference is the ground from which diversity emerges, then difference “gives diversity to be sensed” (Deleuze 1994, 227). Consequently, our experience of the world through sensation is the experience of difference. Intensities are sensed in their relation to each other. We sense intensive difference, Bryant explains, because we arrive at it through the experience of thresholds in which it is transformed (2008, 238–39). As Deleuze puts it, “a perception becomes conscious when the differential relation corresponds to a singularity, that is, changes its sign” (1980b, n.p.). Intensities form series and couplings in which differences communicate in an intensive field he describes as follows:

If it is true that every system is an intensive field of individuation constructed on a series of heterogeneous or disparate boundaries, then when the series come into communication thanks to the action of an obscure precursor, this communication induces certain phenomena: coupling between series, internal resonance within the system, and inevitable movement in the form of an amplitude that goes beyond the most basic series themselves. (2004, 97; emphasis in original)

In Colebrook’s summary, while engagement with “potential vibrations of difference” occurs in the sensible, Deleuze endeavours to go beyond it in order to account for how the sensible becomes possible. Differential calculus enables this encounter between thinking and the world (that is the encounter with the sensible) to be understood (2007). It is by means of this system that Deleuze theorises not only the sensible as a relation of intensities, but also the genesis of things as the emergence of a field of relations (2007).
The generation of difference emerges in the synthesis of differential calculus with Deleuze’s Ideas-as-problems, and it is here that the necessity of the virtual becomes apparent. What Deleuze is proposing at this juncture returns us to the “archaic” version of the differential (Evens 2000, 108) which he took from Leibniz. It is important to acknowledge, however, that in turning repeatedly to mathematics Deleuze is not claiming that the world is mathematically definable or knowable.\footnote{In one of his lectures on Leibniz, Deleuze points out that differential calculus does not designate reality. For although “Leibniz relies enormously on differential calculus” he treats it as “only a symbolic system” and “a way of treating reality” (1980a, n.p.).}

In differential calculus, the differential relation of $\frac{dy}{dx}$ is the infinitesimally small quantity below what can be given as a quantity. What is significant is that $dy$ as a relation to $y$ is numerically 0, and it is the same for $dx$ (Duffy 2006a, 298). Deleuze describes $dy$ as the “vanishing quantity” of $y$ (1981, n.p.) because $dy$ is the quantity, infinitely small, added or subtracted from $y$ (1980a, n.p.). This infinitesimally small quantity is nevertheless important to Deleuze. Duffy writes: “despite the fact that $\frac{dy}{dx} = 0/0$, and that $0/0 = 0$, the relation between the two differentials, $\frac{dy}{dx}$, does not equal 0, $\frac{dy}{dx} \neq 0$” (2006a, 298); or as Deleuze puts it, “$dy$ over $dx$ does not cancel out” (1981, n.p.). The differential relation reveals an infinitesimal which Deleuze calls $z$, and which is the determinable and finite quantity of the relation of $\frac{dy}{dx}$. It can thus be expressed as $\frac{dy}{dx} = z$ (Deleuze 1981, n.p.). Evens explains that this is not (as in modern calculus) an approach toward the limit, but rather “a movement of zero away from itself” (2000, 111). What is important is that this relation is independent of the terms: although how the relation of $dy$ and $dx$ is established is not determinable, the relation between these terms is (Duffy 2006a,
As Deleuze explains it, the “relation subsists and the differential relation will present itself as the subsistence of the relation when the terms vanish” (1981, n.p.). The value \( dy/dx \), therefore, is determinable only through relation (Evens 2000, 111).

Seeing that these terms reciprocally determine each other, Deleuze presents a system of manifestation which confers no constitutive power on the negative.

In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze insists that Leibniz ultimately subordinates difference to identity, notably in his principle of indiscernibles and his theory of perception. Leibniz’s principle of indiscernibles renders the relation of the infinite and the finite, and holds that no two things are the same, because of differential relation which demonstrates the existence of infinitesimals. By this logic, every drop of water in the ocean is therefore considered individual. Smith outlines the three non-conceptual ways in which this drop can be considered distinct: numerical difference (each drop can be counted and distinguished individually), spatio-temporal difference (each drop is different because it occupies a different spatio-temporal location), and dimensional and mobile difference (the physical shape and size of the drop and the speed of its movement distinguish it as individual) (2009, 53). These are non-conceptual differences of appearance only, however, because their function is “to translate, in an imperfect manner, a deeper difference that is always conceptual” (2009, 53). Smith thinks that Deleuze was greatly interested in Leibniz’s notion that the differences between things are conceptual (2009, 52). But for Deleuze this presupposes identity. In the foreword to *Difference and Repetition* he objects to the subordination of difference to identity: “they had introduced difference into the

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109 Leibniz’s concepts are individual not general, Smith points out, and in this way are distinct from those in classical logic (2005, 135).
identity of the concept, they had put difference in the concept itself, thereby reaching a conceptual difference, but not a concept of difference” (1994, xv). Smith summarises as follows what Deleuze found significant in Leibniz’s conceptual difference:

It is one and the same thing to say that the concept goes to infinity (sufficient reason) and that the concept is individual (indiscernibility). In pushing the concept to the level of the individual, however, Leibniz simply renders representation (or the concept) infinite while still maintaining the subordination of difference to the principle of identity in the concept. (2005, 136)

Leibniz’s distinction between clarity and obscurity differentiates the individual as unique even as it expresses the entire world. For Descartes, according to Deleuze, the infinite can be conceived “clearly and distinctly” (1981, n.p.) but not comprehended, because only God can comprehend the infinite. In Descartes’ system, the clearer an idea becomes the more distinct it is, because “clarity-distinctness constitutes the light which renders thought possible in the common exercise of all the faculties” (1994, 213). In *The Fold* Deleuze describes how Leibniz regards clarity as not merely emerging out of obscurity in a Cartesian manner but also returning to it (1993, 89). In *Difference and Repetition* he cites Leibniz’s example of the murmur of the ocean, in which crashing waves can be perceived obscurely but not distinctly as individual, even though collectively they make up its murmuring. To extrapolate from this example: every monad obscurely contains within it the virtuality of the entire universe, although it perceives distinctly (and therefore makes actual) only a small part of the whole. Deleuze nevertheless accuses Leibniz of lapsing into a Cartesian conception of Ideas. “No one”, Deleuze writes, has come closer than Leibniz “to the

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110 Deleuze reminds us that the distinct in Leibniz is so in the sense that it is singular or remarkable (1980b, n.p.).
movement of vice-diction in the Idea” (1994, 213). Despite the promise of “little
glimmerings and singularities” in Leibniz’s philosophy, however, Deleuze finds it
blighted ultimately by “the homogeneity of natural light à la Descartes” (1994, 213).
This is because for Leibniz “a clear idea is itself confused; it is confused in so far as
it is clear” (Deleuze 1994, 213; emphasis in original). In this way, Robinson
observes, “clarity and distinctness [...] reconstitute the pure light of reason” (2003,
154).

Leibniz almost reaches the “Dionysian” aspect of difference; but in hesitating
between the possible and the virtual, in Deleuze’s eyes he does not succeed (1994,
214). By actualising his Ideas as “a realised possible” (Deleuze 1994, 213), Leibniz
subordinates them to identity. Deleuze’s formulation of the relation of Ideas appears
to be Leibnizian when he insists on the coexistence of perplicated Ideas which are
differentially lit. This is not the case, however, when “all Ideas coexist, but they do
so at points, on the edges, and under glimmerings which never have the uniformity of
natural light” (1994, 186–87). In this sense Deleuze opposes his Ideas to Cartesian
reason (that is, to both common and good sense).

Deleuze is so deeply indebted to Leibniz that when he differentiates himself from his
influence he reveals something central to his own philosophy. His rejection of
Leibnizian composibility, for instance, results in his perception that composibility
and incomposibility coexist. Ultimately, he differs from Leibniz also on the question
of continuity. In Robinson’s summary, Leibniz thought that “there are as many
universes as there are clear and distinct points of view or perspectives on them but
the community together make up one continuous world, a world that exists uniquely as the expressed of all individual substances” (2003, 150). For Leibniz, the world God chooses is the world with the maximum of continuity, whereas for Deleuze, “the best of all actual worlds is the one with the greatest virtuality” (Robinson 2003, 155; emphasis in original). The Deleuzian virtual allows for divergence as well as convergence. According to Deleuze, Leibniz does not encounter the virtual in which disjunctive synthesis occurs as “a bringing together or synthesis of all the incompossibles as a compatible, resonating series” (Robinson 2003, 152).

This is why a singularity, as a turning point or threshold in a system, is adopted as a concept in Deleuze’s ontology. Deleuze’s idea that life is composed “from singularity to singularity” (Smith 2006, 51) has, as Smith explains, a mathematical basis, in so far as the reciprocal determination of elements in a differential relation produces singularities (2006, 51). The example from geometry that he uses is that of a square in which each corner can be described as a singular point, although there are infinitely other points on the lines that compose it. Smith explains that the singular points in a curve are those at which it changes direction (2006, 51). Since this implies a two-dimensional structure, a singularity needs to be thought of in its temporality. Bryant insists that a “singularity is not a point” because if “we conceive singularity

111 In *The Fold*, Deleuze reminds us that the singular points in a square are only two ordinary points which diverge so that “point B of a square is the coincidence of a, the last point of the line AB, and of c, the first point of BC” (1993, 60). This means that for Deleuze (following Leibniz) “Everything is regular! Everything, too, is singular!” (1993, 61). This is a difference between philosophical and mathematical terminology. Deleuze outlines in relation to Leibniz:

When Leibniz proposed this topic, the singular, there precisely is the act of creation; when Leibniz tells us that there is no reason for you simply to oppose the singular to the universal. It’s much more interesting if you listen to what mathematicians say, who for their own reasons think of “singular” not in relation to “universal”, but in relation to “ordinary” or “regular”. (1980b, n.p.)
after the fashion of the point, we remain unable to understand the different properties which Deleuze attributes to them. Rather, we must treat singularities as being a sort of thread, flow, distension, or ‘smear’” (2008, 217; emphasis in original). A singularity is always durational because it is a becoming, and as such its course can never be anticipated or calculated. The essential difference between the worlds of Leibniz and Deleuze, Smith concludes, is that for Deleuze the “World is no longer a continuous curve defined by its preestablished harmony, but [...] a chaotic universe in which divergent series trace endlessly bifurcating paths, giving rise to violent discords” (2009, 63; emphasis in original). The transcendental field that Deleuze subsequently theorises as the plane of immanence is populated by singularities and the divergence that they imply, which collectively make “thought itself explode” (Deleuze 1980b, n.p.).

Deleuze found it productive to theorise the differential relation in mathematical terms. While it is usual to produce the differential from a line of numbers, Evens remarks, Deleuze perceives the differential as itself generative and “places the differential at the origin of numbers, as the power of difference that deviates from itself to generate the entire number line and eventually the points that populate it” (Evens 2000, 111). The generative element of Ideas is for Deleuze the “problem”. The movement in thought as he proposes it, is from problem to Idea rather than from problem to solution. Because problems are “the differential elements in thought, the genetic elements in the true” (Deleuze 1994, 162), their relation to what they give rise to cannot be one of resemblance; instead it engenders both the proliferation of difference and the becoming of the world through the virtual/actual complex.
Importantly, the relation between problem and Idea is one of reciprocal
determination, as is the relation of perplication between Ideas (Deleuze 1994, 173).
This is because Deleuze considers an Idea to be a set of differential relations and
singularities (turning points in a system) which compose a multiplicity. The idea is
thus “a system of multiple, non-localisable connections between differential elements
which is incarnated in real relations and actual terms” (1994, 183).

Differential calculus is significant for Deleuze because of what it reveals about
problems and how they relate to Ideas. It enables him to synthesise his reading of
Leibniz with his reading of Kant. It is because Ideas are both problematic and
problematising that Deleuze regards them as the differential of thought (1994,
169). While he applauds Kant for theorising Ideas in this way (1994, 161),
Deleuze ultimately rejects Kant’s work on problems because his appeal to common
sense fails. “Far from overturning the form of common sense”, Deleuze writes, “Kant
merely multiplied it” (1994, 137). Deleuze is similarly critical of Kant’s emphasis on
solving problems by means of legitimate use of the faculties as dictated by common
sense, because to do so is to imprison problems within the limitations imposed by a
distinction between the possible and the real (1994, 161). Deleuze substitutes for the
“identity, convergence and collaboration” which accompany common sense a
“discordant harmony” amongst the faculties (1994, 193). Moving from faculty to
faculty without the coherence of common sense, Ideas are “multiplicities with
differential glimmers” (1994, 194). The dogmatic Image of thought not only
determines the pathway along which thinking moves from problem to solution but

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112 Evens refers to Deleuze’s differential as “a problematic power, the power to problematize” (2000,
108). For Deleuze the problematic is “the ensemble of the problem and its conditions” (1994, 177).
also presupposes that problems are “ready-made” before the thinker encounters them, and that they will disappear with the realisation of a solution (Deleuze 1994, 158). As Bryant points out, this procedure restricts problems to the framework of recognition (2008, 155).

For Deleuze, thought arises from problems generated when dissonant things come into contact with one another and which “perplex” us (1994, 140). Because thought is self-generating in transcendental empiricism, it does not assume the primacy of the subject. This is because, “[p]roblems do not exist only in our heads,” Deleuze writes, “but occur here and there in the production of an actual historical world” (1994, 190). Being present in all interactions, the posing of problems is not restricted to humans.113 Deleuze models his own dialectic on the generative power of “problems and questions” (1994, 157). It is important to note that Deleuze does not reject the dialectic as such, but only Hegel’s dialectic, which he describes as a “perversion” of it (1994, 164). Deleuze’s own dialectic is not premised on negation, but arises instead from the flux of problems and the consequent unfolding of the new which it drives. It is connected to “the art of multiplicities” because it is “the art of grasping the Ideas and the problems they incarnate in things, and of grasping things as incarnations, as cases of solutions for the problems of Ideas” (1994, 182).

According to Bryant, the process of actualisation thorough differenciation is a “variant of the principle of sufficient reason” (2008, 226) rather than an account of

113 A change effected by an external influence on the sedimentary pattern of a rock can similarly be seen as the result of a problem which has been posed (De Landa 1999). Deleuze also describes an organism as “nothing if not the solution to a problem, as are each of its differenctiated organs, such as the eye which solves the light ‘problem’” (1994, 211).
what causes being to manifest. “Sufficient reason” seeks the conditions under which individuation occurs, but not why it does so. Remembering that Leibniz considers sufficient reason to be a way of thinking which includes the predicate in the subject, and bearing in mind the consequent model of relationality this implies, we can see that what Deleuze is offering (via his system of differen\textemdash\textenquote{tication as it plays out between the virtual and the actual) is an account of relation.

The process of differen\textemdash\textenquote{tication is a complex system for describing the relationship between the virtual and the actual, which Boundas refers to as the “twin processes of the real” (2006b, 4): differentiation is the reciprocally determining relation of Ideas in the virtual, and differenciation is the movement by which the virtual Idea becomes actual. This process takes place in the virtual, and comprises the differential relations of Ideas, singularities (which are turning points in this system), and the problems posed which differen\textemdash\textenquote{tiate each other. Collectively they engender a response through the differenciation of actual things (Deleuze 1994, 207).\textsuperscript{114} Neither of these processes involves negation, because the “Idea knows nothing of negation” (1994, 207). John Protevi summarises as follows the system which Deleuze is proposing: “life is virtual differen\textemdash\textenquote{tiation ceaselessly differen\textemdash\textenquote{tiating in divergent actualization” (2006, 31).

As I argued in my second chapter, Deleuze derives from Bergson his notion of how the relationship between the virtual and the actual is structured. It is now clear why he preferred it to the possible/real structure, which consists of representation and consistency. Because the virtual does not resemble the actual, divergence is

\textsuperscript{114} It is important to note that although an Idea can be differen\textemdash\textenquote{tiated, it can never be differen\textemdash\textenquote{tiated (Deleuze 1994, 187).
prioritised. The movement from virtual Idea to actualised form is not one of identity, because it is not a structure which incorporates the possible (Deleuze 1994, 191). The Idea will therefore manifest itself in the actual along “divergent lines” (Deleuze 1994, 212) as something novel. Deleuze writes:

Difference and repetition in the virtual ground the movement of actualisation, of differenciation as creation. They are thereby substituted for the identity and the resemblance of the possible, which inspires only a pseudo-movement, the false movement of realisation understood as abstract limitation. (1994, 212)

Bryant describes the virtual as the sufficient reason for the actual (2008, 233), not only because they are inescapably implicated in one another but also because the conditions for the actual subsist in the virtual. In this way, Bryant writes, what is actualised is only one of the “combinational possibilities belonging to the system” (2008, 234). Examining how the virtual and the actual complement one another, Hansen writes: “emergent actuals do not limit the virtual by means of an operation of negation, but rather express a concrete differentiation that remains in contact with the domain of intensity (or the virtuality) from which it emerges” (2000, para. 19). Most importantly, the virtual/actual structure provides Deleuze with a method for theorising manifestation in such a way as to emphasise the relation and implication of the virtual in the actual (and the reciprocal).

Deleuze’s work on individuation explains the processes of genesis.115 Colebrook highlights the importance of this, because “the task of [Deleuze’s] philosophy properly speaking does not lie in accepting the already differentiated world of subjects and objects, but in thinking the powers, forces or desires that synthesize

115 Bryant considers this to be a neglected aspect of Deleuze’s work. “[T]he question of individuation,” he writes, “has all the appearances of being a central and crucial concern in Deleuze’s thought. Yet strangely, Deleuze’s extended discussion of individuation has received very little attention in the secondary literature” (2008, 39).
Deleuze theorises his transcendental field of “pre-individual singularities” with reference to Gilbert Simondon’s valorisation of genesis. In his 1966 review of Simondon, Deleuze outlined two of Simondon’s critiques of traditional concepts of individuation, the importance of which is evident in *Difference and Repetition*. In the first, Simondon criticises the tendency to begin from the individual and then trace its processes of individuation, thereby prioritising product over process. The second is to envisage individuation as “coextensive with being” (Deleuze 2004, 86), which results in a principle of reflection being posited at the expense of a “truly genetic” individuation (Deleuze 2004, 86). This became important in Deleuze’s account of ontogenesis: the study of how things become the way they become (Evens 2000, 106). Ontogenesis as Simondon uses the term, concerns “the becoming of being”, rather than “the genesis of the individual” (Ansell-Pearson 1999, 90). Toscano describes Simondon’s work as a “relay” point between Deleuze’s concepts of differeniation and differenciation (2009, 382): it locates individuation between the virtual and the actual in a differential process.

Deleuze also borrows Simondon’s concept of the interaction of the disparate, which becomes a central idea to *Difference and Repetition*. Here Deleuze connects individuation with the kind of actualisation prompted by the communication of what is disparate (1994, 246). “In all these respects”, Deleuze writes, “we believe that individuation is essentially intensive, and that the pre-individual field is a virtual–ideal field, made up of differential relations” (1994, 246). Toscano connects the

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116 Alberto Toscano acknowledges that Simondon’s work became useful to Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* and *A Thousand Plateaus* (2009, 382), the latter of which is less focused on this problem of genesis (2009, 390). My own comments apply only to Deleuze’s engagement with Simondon in the former text.
communication of disparates with the way Deleuze reads Leibniz (which he presents as a politics). This synthesis of Simondon and Leibniz, Toscano writes, enables not only “communication between initially incompossible series” but also “the invention of a common that is not given in advance and which emerges on an ontological background of inequality” (2009, 393). Individuation has neither an endpoint nor a goal, but should be thought of instead as a perpetual process.

Smith summarises Deleuze’s ontology as “Being = Difference = the New” (2007a, 3). He distinguishes the idea of the new from such related concepts as change, causality or emergence, because he understands that the Deleuzian “new” operates at the most fundamental ontological level (2007a, 3). Although difference is for Deleuze the condition of being, it manifests itself as becoming, which means that being itself is a creative power. “Being creates”, Bryant paraphrases, “we are part of that creation. Being is not, for Deleuze, our creation” (2008, 12). This radical notion of the new must be stripped of its positivist associations, because it cannot be correlated with progress. Rather, the new is inevitable as it is when Deleuze theorises the eternal return of difference in a synthesis of Spinoza, Nietzsche and Bergson, which I examined at the conclusion of the second chapter of this thesis.

This notion of the new is connected to the final passage of *Difference and Repetition*, where the synthesis of Spinoza, Nietzsche and Bergson is evident. As such it is of significant importance to the connection between the second and third chapters of this thesis. Deleuze writes:

117 Toscano cautions that Deleuze finds Simondon’s own ethics problematic (2009, 393). This was already evident when Deleuze reviewed Simondon (2004).
A single and same voice for the whole thousand-voiced multiple, a single and same Ocean for all the drops, a single clamour of Being for all beings: on condition that each being, each drop and each voice has reached the state of excess — in other words, the difference which displaces and disguises them and, in turning upon its mobile cusp, causes them to return. (1994, 304)

This is one of the richest passages of Deleuze’s entire body of work. Reminding us of vocality and Scotus’ univocal being, it evokes Leibniz’s example of the obscure and distinct perception of the ocean (to which Deleuze returns many times in *Difference and Repetition*): all of these exemplify Spinoza’s immanence. The passage conjures up the idea of the singular, the individual, and the distinct in relation to immanence, and does so in a revised version of the question that Deleuze seeks in the work of Spinoza: how do finite differences manifest infinite substance? This problem permeates *Difference and Repetition*, concerned as it is with the conditions of being, or what this text describes as sufficient reason. Wherever Deleuze turns he finds difference. Diversity emerges from the matrix of difference, which relates always and only to other forms of difference in the generation of the new, which he regards as another word for difference. This is a temporal notion taken from Bergson, although in this text Deleuze rejects Bergson’s notions of difference in kind and difference in degree, preferring instead difference as intensity, which he treats as foundational. The “mobile cusp of difference” can be understood to mean difference as duration, and difference and repetition read as becoming. And finally, Deleuze reconfigures Nietzsche’s eternal return as the eternal return of difference, which entails both the generation of the new and the inevitability of difference.
There are, of course, consequences for theorising a radical ontology of difference and repetition. In this thesis I am concerned with exploring this through an examination of the kinds of subjectivity that Deleuze renders commensurable with the specificity of his ontology, and which, I claim, prompt us to reconsider the possibilities for both politics and ethics.
Chapter Four: Subjectivity

In light of Deleuze’s ontology of difference and repetition, locating the possibility of a functional subject in his work is a daunting task. In reconceptualising thought as a property of differential Ideas and problems, Deleuze also rejects the notion that thought constitutes the interiority of a bounded and coherent (Cartesian) subject. He is deeply suspicious of the subject because he considers it to be (like God) a “stronghold of transcendence in modern philosophy” (Neil 1998, 429). He worked on the history of philosophy partly in order to create a system in which transcendent entities such as this would have no place. Not that subjectivity is absent in Deleuze’s work: he just did not want to confer on it metaphysical primacy which would make it a transcendent principle. This is because he regards the subject as always the effect of other processes, both micro and macro. What this means, Bryant concludes, is that “the subject cannot function as the ultimate ground” (2008, 178). To complicate matters further, although Deleuze was always interested in subjectivity, his conception of the subject varied at different stages of his work (Boundas 1991, 11). For this reason, Boundas argues, Deleuze’s theory of the subject is like his other work: a series of convergences with and divergences from the work of others (1991, 13).

This chapter is concerned with the consequences of Deleuze’s ontology of difference and repetition for our notions of subjectivity, embodiment and politics. My contention is that although Deleuze’s model of subjectivity is at odds with liberal individualism, this does not mean that it cannot be politically engaged. In tracing the trajectory of Deleuze’s work on subjectivity from his early study of Hume to his late
figuration of the fold in both *Foucault* and *The Fold*, I want to demonstrate its relevance to his work in general. In addressing *Difference and Repetition* I will focus on the implications for subjectivity of Deleuze’s work on time. For Deleuze, the subject is never complete, because it is always in the process of becoming. The subject that he elucidates here is the one which he considers best suited to the ontology of difference and repetition which I outlined in the previous chapter. I then turn to ways in which the Deleuzian subject can be said to be embodied. There are two reasons for this. On a pragmatic note it provides theoretical access to the extremely abstract model of subjectivity which Deleuze develops. In being embodied, this subject is also at odds with the Cartesian splitting of the body and consciousness which Deleuze explicitly rejects.¹¹⁸ Examining the embodied nature of his model of subjectivity is politically important then for reconceptualising politics: the Deleuzian subject is capable of political actions precisely because it is embodied in relational networks with both others and its environment, and is therefore not individualistic but collectively constituted. I contend that the way Deleuze theorises subjectivity provides new resources for a politics of difference, in so far as it precludes identity as a foundational category.

**From Hume to the Fold**

Although Deleuze’s monograph on Hume is one of his earliest publications, Roffe notes that Hume does not play a significant role in Deleuze’s subsequent writings (2009, 67). Deleuze reads Hume differently from British empiricists, who examine Hume’s empiricism in terms of how impressions relate to ideas. Deleuze focuses

¹¹⁸ The implications of this for gender will be examined in the final section of this chapter: ‘Politics without Identity’.
instead on the emergence of the subject from empiricism (Roffe 2009, 69). Robyn Ferrell thinks that this attempted reorientation of Hume studies, together with the lack of interest in Hume in French philosophy more generally, explains why thirty-eight years elapsed before the French edition was translated into English as *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume’s Theory of Human Nature* (1995, 585). What Deleuze finds he has in common with Hume, Boundas argues, is an interest in difference and the “serialization/compossibility” of things which are different (1991, 7). Aligning Deleuze’s reading of Hume with his reading of Nietzsche, David Neil suggests that Deleuze regards both Hume and Nietzsche as belonging “to a select group of untimely philosophers who insist on the concrete richness of the sensible, who do not subordinate difference to identity, who reject the logic of negation, who affirm the powers of chance and contingency and who express a hatred of interiority” (1998, 424). These themes, which are central to both *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, were to be developed with different vocabularies in Deleuze’s work after the 1960s.\(^\text{119}\) Consequently, although Hume’s philosophy does not figure significantly in Deleuze’s later writings, it not only catalysed but helped to crystallise some of his life-long interests.

Deleuze also discovered in Hume a theory of the subject and of intersubjectivity. He returns to it in *Difference and Repetition*, and specifically to Hume’s view of the place of habit in subjectivity, which Roffe positions as a direct development of work he had undertaken fifteen years earlier in *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (2009, 67).

\(^{119}\) Roffe observes significant shifts in interests and terminology between *Empiricism and Subjectivity* and Deleuze’s later work (2009, 67). Boundas exemplifies them in what he identifies as the central elements of Deleuze’s theory of subjectivity: anticipation and invention. He suggests that “anticipation” was later be termed “repetition” or “absolute memory”, and “invention” became “assemblage” or “becoming” (1991, 14).
Deleuze’s unconventional reading of Hume is guided by the question of how we become subjects (1991b, 31). He answers this by examining the relation between the mind and the given. The logic by which the subject emerges is demonstrated in the process which results from this relation. For Hume, thinking concerns perceptions, which are made up of sensation and reflection: what eventuates is a “network of impressions and ideas” (Ferrell 1995, 586). An impression results from the encounter with the given: described in this context as the “flux of the sensible” (Deleuze 1991b, 87), it registers in the mind as a perception of sensation. It can also result from reflection generated through the associations of ideas. These associations are disparate, the consequence of chance encounters (1991b, 22–23). The subject emerges as a system for ordering the randomness of associations in the mind.\(^{120}\) This precipitates what Roffe describes as the “emergence of an active subject” (2009, 70). Associations artificially create order in such a way that it masquerades as truth. Deleuze describes these illegitimate fictions as the “simulacra of belief” (2004, 165): they occur through the principles of resemblance, contiguity and cause and effect, which result when associations in the mind form a repetitive pattern. The subject is therefore constituted by habits. “To speak of the subject”, Deleuze writes, “is to speak of duration, custom, habit, and anticipation” (1991b, 92). Because the mind is constructed, it consists only of the ideas and impressions which it contains and therefore cannot be seen as conforming to a pre-existing ideal of subjectivity (1991b, 29). This means that experience does not happen to an already established and fully

\(^{120}\) For Deleuze, the principles of association in Hume are complemented by the principles of the passions, which according to Roffe enable the subject to be moral (2009, 72). This is the basis of the theory of intersubjectivity in *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, which examines the subject as an ethically situated entity.
constituted mind: on the contrary, what constitutes the mind are experiences themselves, registered as the ideas that reflect the encounters of sensation.

The germination of Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism is evident in his discussion of the given in Empiricism and Subjectivity. He outlines the problem of the subject in relation to the given: “how can a subject transcending the given,” he asks, “be constituted in the given?” (1991b, 86). His answer is that because the mind is identical with the given it cannot transcend it. But transcendence likewise is given, he adds, because it is “given as practices, as an affection of the mind, as an impression of reflection” (1991b, 28). Although the subject is able to transcend the given by its ability to believe in things which are beyond its own experiences (1991b, 24), it is not exterior to the influence of its world. Buchanan highlights the importance of this double movement when he writes that the subject is not only “the product of social mechanisms” but also “capable of manipulating those mechanisms” (1997a, 486). This torsion between the subject and the world remains a tension throughout Deleuze’s work. The Deleuzian subject is always a product of its world, as is particularly evident in Capitalism and Schizophrenia. In addressing these texts Roffe asks: “[i]f we, as subjects are constituted by the society of which we are a part, how can we intervene, resist or challenge the structures of these societies if we want to change what we are?” (2007, 42). The answer Roffe suggests, can be found in the continuous process of making and re-making undergone by the Deleuzian subject. This process is articulated against both the ever-changing social landscape in which it is situated and the pre-individual processes which underlie it (2007, 43). As a result, the subject itself necessarily changes. What agency the subject has in this
process, and the extent to which agency is necessary or even possible, are questions which require further investigation.

The subject’s ability to engage creatively in new ways of being is addressed in Deleuze’s analysis of Foucault’s work, which he finds articulates (like Hume’s) a constructivist position. The constructivism common to Deleuze’s reading of Hume and Foucault is evident in *Empiricism and Subjectivity* where the subject is an effect or residue of the processes which enable it to emerge (1991b, 26), and “is defined by the movement through which it is developed” (1991b, 85). In his introduction of this volume Boundas takes this to mean that the subject Deleuze found in Hume can be figured as “a task which must be fulfilled” (1991, 8). This implies, Ferrell notes, that the Humean subject has no essential nature, but is positioned instead in what subsequently came to be called a constructivist manner (1995, 587). In *Foucault*, Deleuze returns to this constructivist model which, like his book on Hume, is a significant site of his work on subjectivity. The model of the fold developed both here and in *The Fold* demonstrated that the interiority of subjectivity is an internalisation of outside forces rather than an innate essence.

When interviewing Deleuze for *Libération*, Robert Maggiori described *Foucault* as a “work of mourning” (qtd in Deleuze 1990b, 84), to which Deleuze responded that it

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121 Ferrell described Deleuze’s reading of Hume as proto-poststructuralist, because it not only prioritises this notion that the subject is constructed but also insists that Hume focuses on the effects and representation rather than its cause and origins (1995, 592).
is rather a “tearing open” of Foucault’s entire work (1990b, 84). This book, however, is not a commentary on Foucault but a consolidation of Deleuze’s own ideas. The question of whether it is a “highly misleading account of Foucault’s work” (Hallward 2000, 99) is less interesting for the purposes of my own argument than the fact that it demonstrates developments in Deleuze’s own thought. The interests that Deleuze shares with Foucault are more significant than their differences. As Hallward acknowledges, this commonality is evident in their theoretical imperative to eradicate oppressive categories of being (2000, 99). Both thinkers are also concerned with articulating a philosophy which creates new spaces for thought.

Consistently with the rest of his oeuvre, Deleuze continues to write of the processes by which subjectivity is produced, “precisely because there is no subject” (1990b, 114). What he means is that there is no true self waiting to be expressed: there are only the processes by which expression is effected. It is not that subjects have no material reality, but what they signify are moments at which a particular alignment becomes visible and articulable, and thus capable of being known. In this way, the subject is always derivative (1988a, 106). Foucault’s theorisation of subjectivity by contrast, treats the subject as derived specifically from power and knowledge, and

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122 According to Deleuze, the point of taking someone’s work in its entirety enables one not only to understand it but also “to try and follow rather than judge it, see where it branches out in different directions, where it gets bogged down, moves forward, makes a breakthrough” (1990b, 85). This provides a justification for a thorough reading of Deleuze’s own work, rather than utilising the “toolbox” approach which has been popularised.

123 For a detailed discussion of the specific differences between Deleuze and Foucault see Hallward (2000, 101). Deleuze himself comments on their differing uses of “desire” and “pleasure” (1997, 189).

124 Interestingly, this is something which Patrick Ffrench says Deleuze emphasised when he read from _The Use of Pleasure_ at a ceremony marking Foucault’s death. The specific passage was: “what is philosophy today — philosophical activity, I mean, if it is not the critical work that thought brings to bear on itself. In what does it consist, if not in the endeavour to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known?” (qtd in Ffrench 2004, 291).
these “three dimensions — knowledge, power and self — are irreducible, yet constantly imply one another” (1988a, 114). The imbrications of power and knowledge with subjectivity create the conditions under which it can manifest, and resist, its sanctioned forms. Deleuze writes:

The struggle for a modern subjectivity passes through a resistance to the two present forms of subjection, the one consisting of individualizing ourselves on the basis of constraints of power, the other of attracting each individual to a known and recognized identity, fixed once and for all. The struggle for subjectivity presents itself, therefore, as the right to difference, variation and metamorphosis. (Deleuze 1988a, 106)

To struggle for the right to difference is to challenge regimes of power and knowledge by invalidating the concept of recognisable identity. Ffrench describes this process as a “pragmatics of difference within the everyday” (2004, 304). Deleuze acknowledges this political agenda when, discussing Foucault in Negotiations, he describes subjectivation as a Nietzschean project to “search for another way of life, a new style” (1990b, 106).

The trope of folding developed in Foucault theorises the internalisation of the outside. It anticipates Deleuze’s work on Leibniz in The Fold and signals one of his enduring interests. Subjectivation itself is described by Deleuze as a process of enfolding both the ontological and the social and therefore resonates strongly with his work on Leibniz (1988a, 116). Foucault’s work on the outside, he admits, provided him with a way of moving past the impasse created by the determining forces of power and knowledge. “Deleuze’s qualification of subjectivation”, Ffrench notes, is “a concept in Foucault’s [late] work which offers a line of flight or an escape route out from under the ubiquitous net of power thrown in [Discipline and Punish] and [The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge]” (2004, 303). When
Foucault speaks of “the outside” he is referring specifically to the outside of knowledge, which he calls thought because, being beyond the stratifications of both power and knowledge, it fundamentally engages the non-stratified (Deleuze 1988a, 87). Instead of being dependent on a “beautiful interiority”, the Foucauldian outside “dismembers the internal” (Deleuze 1988a, 87). This further consolidates Deleuze’s view that the subject has no innate interiority: instead it contains the outside enfolded within it, because thought “belongs to the fold of Being, rather than to the subject” (Faulkner 2006, 140). By enfolding the outside, the subject is able to differentiate itself from the coercive mechanisms of power, and to form a relation to itself by which it produces itself (Deleuze 1988a, 101).

With reference to Melville, Deleuze writes that “we look for a central chamber, afraid that there will be no one there and the man’s soul will reveal nothing but an immense void” (1988a, 121). Interiority is not rendered vacant in Foucault, because within the folds there is life. The life within the fold he writes “is the central chamber, which one needs no longer fear is empty since one fills it with oneself” (Deleuze 1988a, 123). Ffrench sees this as a “turning inside out”, in which the “self” becomes a manifestation of the outside (2004, 304). For Deleuze, modes of subjectivation involve “subjectless individuations” (1990b, 116). These imply a re-thinking of Being as becoming, and the supersession of persons and identities by a field of individuations (1990b, 93). The result is a concept of “a life” which May describes as at once both “metaphysical and political” (1991, 24). In ‘Immanence: A Life’ Deleuze develops his concept of a-subjective life which, being no longer “dependent on a Being or submitted to an Act”, provides the conditions in which
absolute immanence can be realised (2005, 27). Deleuze distances himself from Foucault, who regards bodies and pleasures as the vehicles through which new ways of living and new experiences of life become possible. Deleuze finds this problematic, because it relies on a transcendental subject. He therefore appeals instead to the immanent flows of desire which, he writes,

implies no lack; neither is it a natural given. It is an agencement of heterogeneous elements that function; it is process as opposed to structure or genesis; it is affect as opposed to sentiment; it is “haecc-eity (the individuality of a day, a season, a life) as opposed to subjectivity; it is an event as opposed to a thing or a person. (1997, 189; emphasis in original)

Here again we see evidence of Deleuze’s differential system of reading. By distancing himself from Foucault he is able to articulate his own central concepts: subjectless individuation, a life, and haecceity, all of which provide a foundation for his philosophy of difference.

The Fold addresses the trope of folding in relation to subjectivity. Although the monad is not a subject, but rather any indivisible structure or a basic unit of substance, its conceptual form nevertheless influenced Deleuze’s ideas on subjectivity. Once again, he formulates his own theory of subjectivity by critically revising Leibniz’s ideas. Deleuze models subjectivity as a baroque house which has two floors: the lower level of which contains the “pleats of matter”, and the upper the “folds of the soul” (Deleuze 1993, 4). The lower floor is composed of what O'Sullivan calls the “texturology” of organic and inorganic matter (2005, 103). While the contents of the lower floor are subject to constant interaction and influence, the upper floor (which contains the soul or monad) is closed. This figure of closure is complex: it is possible for Leibniz only because the monad already contains the entire world. This does not mean that all monads are the same; rather,
they are individual because they make clear only one perspective. Perspectivism, Deleuze writes, “does not mean a dependence in respect to a pregiven or defined subject; to the contrary, a subject will be what comes to the point of view, or rather what remains in the point of view” (1993, 19). This foregrounds the notion of the subject as an effect or residue. Perspectivism allows the subject to contain the infinite but express the finite. Because this subject is a product of the world it contains, simple notions of interiority and exteriority are rendered problematic. Deleuze insists that this is what allows the subject to be *for* the world rather than *in* it (1993, 26). It is *for* the world, however, in a state of closure: Leibniz’s monad on the upper floor of the baroque house has no windows through which things can pass in or out. Deleuze writes:

> Closure is the condition of being for the world. The condition of closure holds for the infinite opening of the finite: it ‘finitely represents infinity.’ It gives the world the possibility of beginning over and again in each monad. The world must be placed in the subject in order that the subject can be for the world. This is the torsion that constitutes the fold of the world and of the soul. And it is what gives to expression its fundamental character: the soul is the expression of the world (actuality), but because the world is what the soul expresses (virtuality). (1993, 26)

This is a problematic thesis which Deleuze revises at the end of *The Fold*. The difficulty posed by this model of the subject is that although it internalises the entire world (and is therefore subject to the influence of this world) its closure entails a limited potential for interaction with both the world and others. Deleuze’s revision of Leibniz’s notion of harmony affirms divergence rather than convergence, because the monad is no longer closed. “[W]hen the monad is in tune with divergent series that belong to incompossible monads”, he writes, “then the other condition [closure] is what disappears: it could be said that the monad, astraddle over several worlds, is kept half open as if by a pair of pliers” (1993, 137). Monads are thus interrelated and
inseparable, brought together by the dissonance they find in the series each expresses. Boundas describes this as a folding of the two levels of the baroque house. The fold of the world is what holds the diverging series together (1993, 10).

Deleuze’s discovery of “new ways of folding” (Deleuze 1993, 137) can be seen as a fold between his book on Foucault and the one on Leibniz. This is the ethics of subjectivity: new foldings are always required, and they precipitate new ways of being. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze is exploring what new modes of subjectivity are required by his differential ontology.

**Passive Selves and Larval Subjects**

The ideas about subjectivity in *Difference and Repetition* occupy the middle of the temporal trajectory from Deleuze’s work on Hume to his later writings on the figure of the fold. Like these other texts, *Difference and Repetition* offers a radically constructivist subject. Deleuze’s interest in this book is in those processes and forces over which the subject has limited control, but which nonetheless constitute it along constructivist lines. This is not simply a form of social constructivism, which separates humans (as a cultured entity) from nature; instead, it presents to both sides of this dichotomy a form of agency, and by doing so problematises the dichotomy itself.125 *Difference and Repetition* focuses on the subject as a consequence of other processes. This results from of the ontology of difference and repetition, which positions identity not as a primary manifestation but as a secondary effect. Deleuze is particularly interested in those processes of difference and differentiation which underlie the appearance of subjectivity. As an effect of repetitions, the Deleuzian

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125 The terms of this idea of constructivism are taken from Herzogenrath (2008a, 1).
subject can never be a completed project, because its temporality makes it always in the process of becoming different. In this sense, time can be figured as identity’s “greatest enemy” (Faulkner 2006, 1). Deleuze’s work on time, Jay Lampert concludes, is an “experiment in thinking difference without identity” (2006, 13).

The three syntheses of time constitute Deleuze’s attempt to transcend the Kantian triad of apprehension, reproduction, and recognition, which rely on a representational model of time. Deleuze coopts Hume, Bergson and Nietzsche as allies in this project (Faulkner 2006, 14–15). I focus on the concept of time in such detail because it not only enables Deleuze to advance his own theory of repetition but is also central to what he later describes as “becoming”. This notion is the most significant aspect of the Deleuzian model of subjectivity, because by situating the subject in time, it is able to differ from itself perpetually. The first synthesis of time is habit, which concerns the living present; the second, memory, focuses on the pure past; the third, the empty form of time, accommodates the future. The theme of passive synthesis was to be developed in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, as well as in *Anti-Oedipus*. I will focus only on how it functions in *Difference and Repetition*, because there it shows how the temporality of the eternal return renders identity illusory. This became crucial to all of Deleuze’s subsequent work. The concept of passivity which Deleuze utilises here is constitutive rather than active (1994, 73). This is an important aspect of his constructivism: the subject is

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127 Lampert notes that in phenomenology passive syntheses are diminutively active. He connects this to Husserl’s work, from which the term is taken. But, he clarifies, this is not what Deleuze means. Deleuzian passivity is much more radical because it “can do more than active being” (Lampert 2006, 17).
constituted through passivity which is essential because it frees the subject from sedimented patterns of activity (Lampert 2006, 17). We are necessarily passive to time, Faulkner writes, because “we do not control it, it controls us” (2006, 1). The significance of this, Colebrook points out, is that “if, for Deleuze, we can turn back to the pre-history of the passive syntheses, we can also look forward to an art and politics of affect, intensity and forces” (2001, 25).

The first synthesis of time, habit, provides it with its “foundation” (Deleuze 1994, 79). Following Hume, Deleuze regards habit as the relation to the future through the contraction of past events into a living present of expectancy. Repetition is the expectation that the contraction of events in the past will recur to form a series such as AB, AB, AB, where B is assumed to follow A because it has always done so in the past. As James Williams cautions, several contractions are in play here: the contraction of the AB, AB, AB habit, the contraction into the unit of AB, as well as everything that contracts into the separate entities of A and B (2003, 88). This means that although repetition exists in experience, it does not create causal links. A does not determine B, nor must B follow from it; the repetition exists rather in the perception of AB, AB, AB. “This living present”, Deleuze writes, “and with it the whole of organic and psychic life, rests upon habit” (1994, 78). These are habits not just of the mind but also of the organism (for example, the heart’s habit of beating), which is made of “contemplated and contracted” elements and habits (1994, 75). The micro-habits which compose the self occur on a level prior to sensation, and are acquired through contemplation rather than activity (Deleuze 1994, 73). In this sense, the self (which is itself a contemplation) is also a conglomeration of contemplating
units: the heart, for example, beats through contemplating the contraction of its prior beatings.128 Contemplation, then is not something afforded to the mind, but rather the ability to contemplate a series so that it can continue through habit.129 In this sense, the heart literally contemplates. The organism’s passively organic habits underlie the passivity of its “receptive and perceptual elements” (1994, 73). Olkowski points out that this kind of synthesis occurs at the level of those “physiological, chemical, biological or social processes” which constitute the “multiple motions of every individual” (2007, 27). What we refer to when speaking of the self, according to Deleuze, is an assemblage of the “thousands of little witnesses which contemplate within us” (1994, 75). The passive synthesis of habit is what constitutes life itself as the habit of living (1994, 74).

Deleuze, however, does not value habit very highly, because he considers it the basis on which good sense is postulated in the Image of thought. In rejecting recognition, he values encounters with the kind of difference which breaks habits. As I argued in my chapter on ontology, the encounter which causes divergence within a series is an extremely important idea in Deleuze’s work. According to Bryant, the encounter is opposed to habit precisely because it “interrupts experience, does it a violence, [and] calls its assumptions into question” (2008, 77). The breaking of habit through disruptive encounters is more significant than its continuation. There is still a level of passivity here, however, because (Bryant reminds us) this encounter can be neither

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128 Deleuze explains that he is not speaking about the contraction and dilation of the heart as it beats, but is using them metaphorically to designate the dynamics of habit. He calls this kind of contraction the “fusion” of succession in a “contemplative soul” (1994, 74). This formulation strikingly resembles Leibniz’s notion that the monadic units which make up the self are perceptive souls.

129 This contemplation cannot be seen as either a form of agency or a kind of self-reflection. “We do not contemplate ourselves”, Deleuze writes, “but we exist only in contemplating” (1994, 74).
willed nor chosen; rather, it is the encounter which “chooses” to move through the individual (2008, 77).

Whereas the first synthesis of time is described by Deleuze as its “foundation”, the second — the synthesis of the whole past through memory — is its “ground” (1994, 79). The first synthesis of time (habit) must occur in the second (memory), because the second synthesis ensures that the present passes. Deleuze differentiates the two as follows: “[h]abit is the ordinary synthesis of time, which constitutes the life of the passing present; Memory is the fundamental synthesis of time which constitutes the being of the past (that which causes the present to pass)” (1994, 80). He had already worked through the concepts of memory and time in *Bergsonism*, and his investigations in *Difference and Repetition* demonstrate his indebtedness to Bergson’s *Matter and Memory*. In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze speaks of memory in the second synthesis of time as both active and passive. It functions actively in representations of the past, but passively in relation to the pure past. In the second synthesis of time, he reveals four paradoxes of the pure past. The first is that past and present are *contemporaneous* because the past itself was once the present. Secondly, the present *coexists* with all those previous presents which make up the whole past and call forth the new present. Thirdly, although the synthesis which constitutes the pure past is independent of (but related to) the present, it *pre-exists* the present which passes. And fourthly, the past coexists not only with the present in a state of relaxation and contraction, but also with itself as different levels or layers. This results in a multiplicity of durations (1994, 82–83). The present and the future are both elements of this pure past (which is virtual) because they too will pass. The
past is thus the “the synthesis of all time” (Deleuze 1994, 82). It subsists in the present at both the biological level of cellular hereditariness (as Ansell-Pearson has shown [1999, 100]) and in terms of the impingement of past events on the present state of affairs. Deleuze writes of this notion of the past:

We cannot say that it was. It no longer exists, it does not exist, but it insists, it consists, it is. It insists with the former present, it consists with the new or the present present. It is the in-itself of time as the final ground of the passage of time. In this sense it forms a pure, general, *a priori* element of all time. (1994, 82; emphasis in original).

Unlike habit which synthesises a specific series of the past, memory synthesises the whole of it, but experiences its contractions and relaxations rather than its entirety. Memory is described by Clayton Crockett as a “technical lever of intervention into the present” (2005, 179). This can be imagined through the figure of the fold, in so far as aspects of the past can be brought to bear on the present in original ways by means of novel foldings. Reminiscence in the Proustian sense of involuntary memory indicates that this is not always a conscious action: it exemplifies an eruption of the pure past as the new. The forgetting of Combray in Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past* generates something different, “in the form of the past which was never present” (Deleuze 1994, 85). Access to the whole past, James Williams writes, mobilises a system which creates connections “that hold between all things” (2003, 97).

The third synthesis of time enables Deleuze to theorise the possibility of a future, which James Williams calls “the conditions for actions that drive towards the new” (2003, 102). Conceived of as a “drive,” the future can be seen as a forced movement
which involves Deleuze’s dark precursor (Lampert 2006, 67). Deleuze begins his elucidation of the third synthesis of time by first critiquing Descartes and Kant. The Cartesian cogito, which exists as a thinking subject, demonstrates a relation in which the “I think” is determined, but the implied “I am” is undetermined. Deleuze avails himself of the Kantian critique of this manoeuvre: namely, that the determined cannot influence the undetermined directly, because it has to be mediated by a third term: the determinable. That determinable is time, which constitutes an internal relation between thought and being (1994, 85–86). This means that only thought-within-time can determine the self, which Kant regards as passive and receptive. If time is internal to the subject, it will cause a fracture which splits the self. Crockett explains that this is because time “divides the empirical self which is experienced within time from the transcendental unity of apperception which performs the temporal synthesis which defines knowing” (2001, 62). Consequently, the active knowing subject of the “I think” is split from the passive objective subject of the “I am” (Crockett 2001, 65). Deleuze is critical of Kant, however, partly for assuming that this fracture could be filled with an “active synthetic identity,” and partly for conceiving of the passive self as receptive, thereby refusing the possibility that passivity itself is capable of a synthesis which can engender future actions (1994, 87). Deleuze’s third synthesis of time envisages it as split asymmetrically by means of a caesura which also totalises time. “The caesura”, Deleuze writes, “along with the before and after which it ordains once and for all, constitutes the fracture in the I (the caesura is exactly the point at which the fracture appears)” (1994, 89). The self is therefore fractured by time in a Kantian sense. For Deleuze, however, the fractured I

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130 Lampert thinks that Deleuze fails to offer a complete analysis of how the dark precursor functions in relation to time. He speculates on how the dark precursor might function in this context (2006, 67–68).
and the passive self are what “find a common descendent in the man without name, without family, without qualities, without self or I” (1994, 90). In other words, it is the future which guarantees that identity will pass away, and leave only the persistence of difference.

Deleuze insists that his third synthesis enables a pure and empty form of time. Ansell-Pearson makes two clarifying distinctions in relation to this concept: purity occurs because this notion of time is not impinged upon by a foundational subject, and the emptiness reminds us that time contains the unpredictability of difference and repetition (1999, 103). This is why James Williams refers to the third synthesis of time as a “chancing” (2003, 102): the eternal return of difference produces the future as unpredictable novelty. As I have already argued, Deleuze’s work on the eternal return is a conscious revision of Nietzsche, whose concept of time Deleuze considers to be limited. “Nietzsche”, he writes, “gave us only the past condition and the present metamorphoses, but not the unconditioned which was to have resulted as the ‘future’” (1994, 92). Here Deleuze proposes a different structure of repetition, in which the past is “repetition”, the present is “the repeater” and the future is “that which is repeated” (1994, 94). Nevertheless, the future is still a repetition: a “royal” repetition, which ensures that time is ordered and difference produced (1994, 94).

This means that repetition facilitates difference as a temporal concept which constitutes the future as the new (1994, 90). “Time”, Grosz writes, “the very matter and substance of history, entails the continual elaboration of the new, the openness of things (including life, texts, or matter) to what befalls them. This is what time is if it is anything at all: the indeterminate, the unfolding and emergence of the new”
This novelty emerges through repetition, which Nathan Widder defines as the expression of the “structure of time itself” (2006, 408). It is the basis of Deleuze’s concept of becoming, which Patton regards as the point at which critical freedom becomes possible. Deleuze does not think of freedom in the liberal sense as the pursuit of one’s interests and “most significant desires” without hindrance. Instead he regards freedom as what is expressed at those moments when something becomes other than it was (Patton 2000, 83–87).

Widder finds a central paradox in all three of Deleuze’s syntheses of time, namely, that “the self constitutes time through repetition, but also resides within time” (2006, 410). Several implications arise from the combined analysis of these three syntheses of time. The first is that passivity is perceived to be prior to activity: all future actions both presuppose the passive synthesis of habit and the synthesis of the whole past (Williams, James 2003, 104). Consequently, James Williams writes,

[w]e have to seek an openness to difference in itself. We have to allow passive synthesis of the third kind to occur. Rather than selecting a pure variation, an intensity, an idea, these must happen to us and make us individuals. More seriously, we have to find ways to escape the hold of our senses of self, identities and categories in order for this happening to take place. This is why Deleuze describes the third repetition as a ‘dice throw’, a risky act that does not know its outcome. (2003, 16)

The political implications of this are immense. As May points out, if time eradicates identity, and leaves only difference, there is no essence at which politics can be directed (1996, 298). It is consequently impossible to reclaim Deleuze for a politics that speaks through identity.

The residual subject is “larval”, because it exists beneath and prior to a subject endowed with the capacity to act. This larval self is therefore the condition of all
actions. “Selves are larval subjects”, Deleuze writes; “the world of passive syntheses constitutes the system of the self, under conditions yet to be determined, but it is the system of a dissolved self” (1994, 78). Examined in relation to Deleuze’s work on the Image of thought, his need to labour the passive self, the larval subject and the dissolved self becomes more obvious. His insistence that thought is sustained not by a fully developed subject like Descartes’ *cogito* (1994, 118), but only by a larval subject, is clarified in his work on passive syntheses and time in *Difference and Repetition*. This is because Deleuze thinks that the dynamism required for the resonance of discordant series (which is central to both the processes of individuation and the manifestation of difference through differenciuation) can be experienced “only at the borders of the livable” (1994, 118). It occurs “under conditions beyond which it would entail the death of any well-constituted subject endowed with independence and activity” (1994, 118). Deleuze theorises thought in such a way that the subject cannot be envisaged through representation. This is not to say, Lumsden argues that “there is no subject, but simply that the model of subjectivity as ego, self, or as any originary unity is inconsistent with the image of thought which underscores it” (2002, 150).

Deleuze returns repeatedly to the figure of the embryo which, although incomplete, can sustain processes of becoming different which a fully constituted adult cannot.\(^\text{131}\) The embryo can therefore be seen to “live the unlivable” (Deleuze 1994, 215), because it embodies a flexibility which enables it to differentiate in a manner which a

fully formed adult would find impossible.\textsuperscript{132} The larval subject can also access the dynamism manifested by the embryo because it is not a fully constituted and stable self but only a “rough draft” (Deleuze 2004, 97). Instead of enabling the self to consolidate into a subjective identity, the differential power of Ideas turns it into larvae (Deleuze 1994, 219). This is because “larvae bear Ideas in their flesh, while we do not go beyond the representation of the concepts” (Deleuze 1994, 219). This larval subject is capable of enacting difference in ways inconceivable in the Enlightenment model of subjectivity. The larval subject cannot be the foundation of thought because it is only the effect of other processes; it is the site rather than the source of thought. The incompleteness of the larval subject is what makes it more capable of an ethical engagement with difference, a topic I will discuss in my fifth chapter.

For Deleuze, the recognisable subject is replaced by those processes of individuation in which difference is unfolded. In this respect he appears to embrace extreme abstraction. However, because he already theorises the “I” and the “Self” as abstract universals, his imperative is to address more adequately the concrete differences which compose the world and undermine all knowable form. His point is that the ways in which the Self is deployed limit our engagement with a deeper level of difference. But there is a more significant problem with the “I” and the “Self”: in ignoring the processes of individuation which operate beneath their assumed coherence they are “defenceless against a rising of the ground which holds up to them a distorted or distorting mirror in which all presently thought forms dissolve”\textsuperscript{132}

\textsuperscript{132} In \textit{A Thousand Plateaus} Deleuze and Guattari explain that his reference to an embryo (and to an egg) has nothing to do with regression (2004, 181).
The Deleuzian individual cannot be equated with the liberal individual, because it is a figure subject to processes it cannot always control, understand or even perceive. In this way, individuality is dissolved into the ever-changing processes which constitute it (Deleuze 1994, 254). According to Hallward, this is an “unlimited process of (self-)differentiation” (2000, 94; emphasis in original) because it occurs on an immanent plane, and therefore does not encounter structures which might “limit its play” (2000, 95). The other implication of immanence in this context is that it eliminates those innate essences or divine entities whose effects would be determining.

The model of subjectivity which Deleuze elucidates is extremely abstract. Since it involves rejecting those aspects of subjectivity which constitute the liberal individual (such as agency, self-knowledge, consistency, coherence, and the ability to effect change rather than be affected by it) it is difficult to imagine how the Deleuzian subject could be politically functional, let alone engaged. It is my contention that the political potential of the Deleuzian model of subjectivity becomes clearer when it is examined in relation to embodied subjectivity. This subject may be more capable of engaging with not only an ontology of difference and repetition, but also the material differences which compose reality. How subjectivity is embodied in Deleuze’s work is the subject of my next section.

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133 The rejection of a foundational subject has a further implication Bryant argues: it cannot be the vehicle for achieving real experience in Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism. Bryant concurs with Grosz that Deleuze’s work cannot be thought of as phenomenology, although he thinks it may be a radicalised version of it. Consequently, “we can only arrive at insight into the conditions of experience on the basis of a unique and special experience of difference” (Bryant 2008, 48; emphasis in original).
Embodiment

Deleuze’s work on the body arguably reveals his greatest debt to Spinoza, who rejected not only Descartes’ binary structure of mind and body but also his privileging of the mind as the locus of the disembodied self. Spinoza proposed instead a monism which denies the primacy of either mind or body. The significance of this point cannot be overstated. Because mind/body dualism has been complicit in alignment of women with body, it has resulted in the marginalisation of women: challenging this dichotomous understanding of embodied corporeality has therefore been an important feminist project.\textsuperscript{134} The parallelism of mind and body ensures that they are always considered together. “What happens to our body”, Buchanan writes, “also happens to our mind, thus we come to know our mind via our body, and our body through our mind” (1997b, 76). Mind and body are both discrete and inseparable because (according to the univocity which Deleuze attributes to Spinoza) they are the expression of the same infinite substance. Genevieve Lloyd explains that Spinoza treats individual bodies not as different substances but rather as different modes of the same substance (1996, 49). The equivalence of this materialism, has implications, according to Hardt, who writes:

\begin{quote}
\text{the central project of materialist philosophy, in its many historical guises, is precisely to combat this proposition of priority, to challenge the notion of interrelation as subsumption: Bring the body out from the shadow of the mind, bring practice out from the shadow of theory, in all its autonomy and dignity, to try to discover what it can do. (1993, 107)}
\end{quote}

Hardt alludes here to the catch-cry that Deleuze formulates in relation to Spinoza: we do not yet know what the body can do (1988b, 125). This remark positions the body as neither a definable nor knowable entity, but as a site of knowledge production. In Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza, the dynamism and capacities of the body enable it to

\textsuperscript{134} For a discussion of this point see Grosz (1994).
forever exceed the determinations of knowledge. The body is thus the location of experimental practices: generating new knowledges, it requires a new ethics.

Deleuze identifies two fundamental questions asked by Spinoza: what is the body’s structure in terms of the relations that compose it, and what can it do in terms of its capacity for affect (1992, 218). The Spinozan body is articulated on the two axes of the kinetic and the dynamic. Kinetically, the body (taken as a composition of infinite particles) is defined in terms of its rest and movement, including the velocity of the latter. Massumi acknowledges that although Deleuze speaks of this in terms of speed and slowness, it is qualitative rather than quantitative and refers to different kinds of movement (1996, 182 n.17). On the dynamic axis, the body is defined in terms of its capacity to affect other bodies and in turn be affected by them. The capacity for affection is not fixed but elastic (Deleuze 1992, 222): affects increase or decrease a body’s power to act. This takes two forms: sad passions result from a decrease in the body’s capacity for action, whereas joyful passions are the result of an increase (Deleuze 1988b, 27).

The politics enabled by Deleuzian philosophy is based on understanding the affective capacities of bodies in particular arrangements. It is thus a politics of localised interactions. Buchanan argues that this facilitates thinking about the body in terms not of cause and effect (aetiology) but action and affect (ethology) (1997b, 74). It is at odds, then, with the impenetrability of the liberal individual, which remains the

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135 Deleuze subsequently defines the kinetic and dynamic as the longitude and latitude of the body (1988b, 127).
136 This is not how the liberal tradition defines power, which it conceives of as the power over others. For Deleuze, power is the capacity to become different (Patton 1994a, 161).
agent of affect rather than the subject of affective influences. The body cannot be thought of as the origin or final point of identity, because embodied individuals are enmeshed in active processes of engagement with their surroundings. By emphasising the productive spaces between bodies, this foundation brings the body into dynamic connections with the world. This kind of body is networked inextricably with its environment. “Spinoza understands the body as a nexus of variable interconnections, a multiplicity”, Gatens writes; it is “permanently open to its surroundings and can be composed, recomposed, and decomposed by other bodies” (2000, 61). This gives primacy to the interactions of the body, rather than its form or content. If we understand the body as something which cannot be “known” in a definite sense, and as lacking a “true nature”, all that remains are its capacities for interaction; according to Gatens, these can only “be revealed in the ongoing interactions of the body and its environment” (1988, 69).137

This is what makes Spinoza’s model of the body the driving force of his ethics. Instead of proposing a morality of good and evil, Spinoza’s ethics are relative: they privilege the affirmation of being by increasing a body’s power to affect and be affected. The realisation of joyful passions is emphasised. “The Ethics”, Deleuze declares, “is necessarily an ethics of joy: only joy is worthwhile, joy remains, bringing us near to action, and to the bliss of action. The sad passions always amount to impotence” (1988b, 28). Hardt finds this increase in joyful passions significant because it precipitates and amplifies the power for action. The ethics thus prioritised are for him the imperative to “[b]ecome active, become adequate, become being”  

137 Although Butler has described this alliance as unlikely (1993, 4), ecophilosophical work on Deleuze is developing precisely that relation of subject and world which Gatens describes. See, for example, Herzogenrath (2008b).
Aurelia Armstrong examines how this imperative to become active is the basis of the agency Deleuze finds in Spinoza. Far from confirming a version of liberal individualism, agency is here “an irreducibly collective or combinatory process” (1997, 50). Armstrong finds this illustrated in Deleuze’s analysis of Spinoza’s *conatus*. Here, striving for self-preservation is not an individual task but it has two aspects, each of which requires an encounter with other bodies: the destruction of incompatible bodies, and (more importantly for Armstrong) the forming of “coalitions” with compatible bodies, which enable it to “increase its capacity to ward off potential threats to its perseverance” (1997, 54).

The influence of Nietzsche is evident in Deleuze’s appeal to the body as a temporary congealing of dynamic forces. Although the moments at which these forces coagulate are temporary, the plurality of competing forces is not exterior to reality; on the contrary, reality itself is composed of these forces and their conflicts (Deleuze 2006, 39–40). Rosi Braidotti therefore defines the body as “the complex interplay of highly constructed social and symbolic forces. The body is not an essence, let alone a biological substance; it is a play of forces, a surface of intensities; pure simulacra without origins” (1994a, 112). This entails a notion of subjectivity which refuses the stability of identity. That project is evident in the work of Grosz, who points out that if we understand subjectivity to be both isolated and coherent we will fail to acknowledge the potentially infinite ways in which things can be interconnected, and in ways undetectable by models of identity (2005b, 167). She writes:

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138 Buchanan suggests that Deleuze’s account of the body is aligned with Nietzsche’s because both are constructivist (1997b, 81). This is significant, Jill Marsden writes, because the body is represented as “dynamic and non-essentialist” (2004, 310). Perhaps this explains why so many feminist scholars have taken up Deleuze’s model of the body. I discuss this matter in the final section of this chapter.
It is a useful fiction to imagine that we as subjects are masters or agents of these very forces that constitute us as subjects, but it is misleading, for it makes the struggle about us, about our identities and individualities rather than about the world; it directs us to questions about being rather than doing; it gives identity and subjectivity a centrality and agency that they may not deserve, for they do not produce themselves but are accomplishments or effects of forces before and outside of identity and subjectivity. (2005b, 193–94; emphasis in original)

Theorising these forces enables us to examine those things which occur “above” and “below” the person, and by doing so take into account both the macro- and micro-processes of their influence (Protevi 2001, 3–4). Although my own focus in this thesis is mainly on the human body and human interactions, thinking about the body in terms of arrangements of forces need not be limited to the human or even the organism. For Deleuze, a body can be chemical, political, corporate or social; it can be organic or artificial. Emphasis on forces enables movement and stasis in a system to be studies without basing such enquiries on the normative figure of the liberal individual. Protevi therefore thinks that the study of bodies requires a “political physics,” which he describes as both a “politicized physics” and a “physicalized politics” (2001, 3). The figure of the body without organs as mobilised by Deleuze and Guattari in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* brings into clearer relief Deleuze’s work on the body.139 The body without organs synthesises forces which occur both “above” the subject (such as the pressures of social, political and discursive systems)

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139 It is important to note a shift in terminology between *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. In the former, the body without organs is much closer to Artaud’s model, from which it is drawn: because it is full when it has reached a level of anti-production, it therefore cannot productively form connections (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 15). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, however, the full body without organs is in a state in which it can maximise its potential to form connections, and it is the empty body without organs which must be avoided. Here the body without organs is full of “gaiety, ecstasy, and dance” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 167). I focus here primarily on the body without organs as conceived of in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Protevi suggests, however, that the full body without organs of *A Thousand Plateaus* is not without some level of order. Unlike the organ-ised body which is determined by a transcendent entity (such as the subject) and is therefore hylomorphic, the body without organs is self-ordering in the sense that it creates an imminent ordering, in which desire flows in unconventional patterns (2001, 7–11).
and also “below” it (such as flows of bodily fluids or those micro-processes of passive synthesis examined in the last section of this chapter).

The body without organs cannot be considered a direct correlate of the body. Instead, Buchanan argues, it articulates the limits of the body. He writes:

> The question works by staking out an area of what a body actually can do. This area is restricted by obvious physical restraints which must be respected. But this does not mean that there is no beyond, or that a beyond cannot be desired. And it is just this beyond — beyond the physical limits of the physical body — that the concept of the body without organs articulates. (1997b, 79; emphasis in original)

Buchanan goes on to say that because the body without organs begins at the limits of the body, the latter can “push” away the body without organs by enlarging its capacity for affect (and hence the force that it wields) in order to extend what it can do. “The body”, he writes, “is not and cannot be a body without organs, but must forever grapple with the BwO” (1997b, 88).

The body without organs is figured paradoxically as both the impossible pre-social body and a future entity that must be actively constructed. This can be seen when Protevi figures the body without organs as the “memory of the body they stole from us” (2003, 184). Protevi’s body without organs is the pre-signified body, which is subsequently lost in social overcodings. This interpretation is supported by Deleuze and Guattari’s claim that the body without organs is what remains after the “phantasy, and significances and subjectifications” have been taken away (2004, 168). The body without organs, however, exists concurrently with the fleshy, socialised body, and for this reason cannot be seen as a regression. In fact, the body

140 This echoes Deleuze and Guattari (2004, 305).
without organs can never be entirely free of the sedimentation of social coding, because it must articulate itself against (and thus exist within) the structures that organise the world. Protevi describes the body without organs as “haunt[ing] organized bodies as the roads not taken of non-organismic orderings” (2001, 198). In this way, the body without organs both undermines and is inseparable from the organised body. Protevi and Bonta support this view by insisting that the body without organs cannot be seen as a return to an infantile or polymorphous state (2004, 63). It functions rather as a future limit, and as such it is unattainable (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 166).

Because the body without organs is disinvested of underlying significance, it enables desire to flow freely and maximises the potential connections between parts. The kind of desire affirmed in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* is a pre-personal force, and not something that arises from the interiority of the subject. Challenging the Oedipal configuration of desire entails rejecting the psychoanalytic model of the unconscious, and consequently freeing desire from sexuality and its associations with pleasure. In their tirade against Oedipus, Deleuze and Guattari mobilise something similar to Foucault’s repressive hypothesis by insisting that Oedipus inserts desire while simultaneously prohibiting it (2005, 79). Rejecting the psychoanalytic correlation of desire with lack, they consequently refuse the entire history of philosophy that either
supports or perpetuates this coding.\textsuperscript{141} In Deleuze and Guattari’s schema, desire cannot be lack because it “does not take as its object persons or things, but the entire surroundings that it traverses” (2005, 292). Such univocity, Patton observes, erases those divisions to being which would enable a system of lack to develop (1994a, 160). Lack is thus not primary: instead, it is overcoded on to desire by both psychoanalysis and capitalism. Desire, Deleuze and Guattari argue, is not only everywhere but also productive. The flows of desire produce connections between things, which subsequently disconnect, re-connect and form new connections in alignments which are called “desiring machines” in \textit{Anti-Oedipus} and “assemblages” in \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}.

Desire is anarchic and unpredictable: there are neither set patterns nor goals in either the connections it produces or its ruptures of organised systems. Desire is thus evident whenever such ruptures occur; and because what flows from them is fundamentally schizophrenic, they could never have been contained in the Oedipal triangle. They write:

But through the impasses and the triangles a schizophrenic flow moves, irresistibly: sperm, river, drainage, inflamed genital mucus, or a stream of words that do not let themselves be coded, a libido that is too fluid, too viscous: a violence against syntax, a concerted destruction of the signifier, non-sense erected as a flow, polyvocity that returns to haunt all relations.

(2005, 133)\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{141} Grosz finds this of significant interest to feminism, because the traditional coding of women as the “repositories” of lack in the constitution of desire extends to notions of “presence and absence, reality and fantasy,” and positions woman as the other of man whose function is to embody this lack for them (1994, 165). Equally useful for feminism, according to Margrit Shildrick, is Deleuze and Guattari’s removal of desire from the “hegemony of the Symbolic”, and the way in which their account of embodied differences opens up the possibility of an “alternative sexual imaginary yet to be realised” (2009, 143).

\textsuperscript{142} The andocentric basis of Deleuze and Guattari’s metaphors is problematic for feminist appropriations of them like the one Shildrick envisages.
Desire always has the potential to “demolish entire social sectors” (2005, 116), not because it is asocial or even antisocial, but because it interrupts socially coded flows so that new arrangements can arise. This is not a utopian claim that the revolution of desire will bring about what we have been promised: that would be incommensurable with Deleuze and Guattari’s overall project, because the form assumed by change is always unpredictable. It is nevertheless an “immanent” utopia which Philip Goodchild thinks is realisable in the connections between people and the experimental assemblages they form (1996, 196). Patton argues that this is precisely why desire is productive — it produces actual and virtual connections both between and within bodies, and as such actively constructs reality (2000, 70). Refigured as productive and eruptive, desire has a world-making function.

This account of the workings of desire, Grosz writes, enables the body to be theorised “without a psychical or secret interior, without internal cohesion and latent significance” (1994, 169). The body without organs described in A Thousand Plateaus is not Artaud’s body which has emptied out its organs; instead, it is a body whose organs are not subject to those “significances” Grosz speaks of, and can therefore function differently and create new assemblages. The phallus is not the privileged signifier in the body without organs. More significantly, because it is disinvested of latent meaning, nothing “rightfully” fills this vacancy. This does not mean, however, that transactions either within the body or between bodies are non-hierarchical. Hierarchies do certainly emerge, Grosz reminds us. But they do so as the result of temporary organisations rather than as expressions of an innate “nature” or “value” (1994, 167).
The body without organs offers the potential for interactions because it is a virtual site on which new actualities become manifest. Deleuze and Guattari observe, however, that although it enables the self to be dismantled, this process is undertaken with caution. The aim is not to wildly destratify the organism, significance and subjectification, because this would result in a “botched” body without organs. They write:

You have to keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn; and you have to keep small supplies of significance and subjectification, if only to turn them against their own systems when the circumstances demand it, when things, persons, even situations, force you to; and you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality. (2004, 178)

The connections enabled by the body without organs reveal that it is always a collective rather than individualistic project. This is why Protevi and Bonta locate it as a space for ethical selection (2004, 62): the fact that all connections become possible does not mean that all connections should be entered into.

The body without organs is therefore commensurate with Deleuze’s reading of the Spinozan body. Its most significant feature is to imagine and enact new connections on the plane of immanence by experimentally creating new pathways through which desire can flow. “[A]s the composition of Spinozist bodies on the plane of immanence”, Armstrong writes, the becoming of bodies “involve[s] us in the political task of becoming other, resisting and undermining the various organized limits to our powers, and in doing so perhaps changing these limits themselves” (1997, 56). Olkowski considers this inevitable, because desire — in producing bodies-in-process rather than mute substances — ensures that the future forms of
bodies and of the world they participate in (and hence produce) are never knowable in advance (1999a, 116). The body cannot be thought of as individual, bounded, or coherent because it is constituted fundamentally by the connections it enters into. Always forming experimental alignments, this body has no desire to be either standardised or normative. These connections do not discriminate between the human and the non-human, the organic and the inorganic, or the natural and the artificial. It is for this reason that Barbara Gibson describes the self as “distributive” (2006, 189): being embodied, it is networked necessarily with both other bodies and the world.

Embodiment, of course is not the focus of *Difference and Repetition*. But by situating it between Deleuze’s historical studies and his work with Guattari in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, ideas about the body can be extracted from the ontology of difference and repetition it presents. An important example of this is Deleuze’s elucidation of repetition, which has two significant implications. First, the body can be thought of as something manifested in corporeal repetitions, active as well as passive.¹⁴³ This not only has an impact on embodied subjectivity but also determines how bodies come to be made manifest. “There are no ‘sovereign’ individuals who act upon the world”, Anna Hickey-Moody and Peta Malins write, “there are only bodies that are

¹⁴³ This is similar to Butler’s work on gender, in that she too claims that gendered subjectivity is constituted through the repetition of “acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires” (1999a, 173) which create the illusion of an interior gendered self. In *Bodies that Matter*, in which this hypothesis is elaborated, she argues that it is not only gender which is constituted through corporeal repetitions. The body also emerges through these processes (as sexed male or female), so that reproductive heterosexuality can be sustained and naturalised (1993). But whereas Butler proposes subversive repetition as a source of agency and resistance for the subject, Deleuze challenges the appearance of a stable subject by mobilising the process of “desubjectification”. What both theorists emphasise is the productivity of the undoing or failure of subjective coherence: Butler proposes a process by which the subject uses the tools made available to it by the system of norms through which it is constituted in order to challenge those norms, Deleuze, however advocates a form of non-engagement in which the subject pursues “lines of flight” away from subjective identity.
produced through their contexts and connections with the world” (2007, 4). These repetitions give the body the illusion of stability and identity, whereas in fact there are only corporeal habits. Widder describes identities as “nothing more than optical illusions” (2006, 405). This raises an important point. The claim is not that corporeal identities do not exist — for in fact they compose our material reality as we perceive it — but that they are a secondary sedimentation of other processes. Because the body is subject to corporeal stylisation it cannot be considered a-historical, and therefore needs to be understood as capable of change. The body without organs exemplifies this process. There are always other ways to connect, and other things to connect with, and by producing new bodies they have a world-making effect. This brings us to the second implication of Deleuze’s elucidation of repetition, which is demonstrated by his third synthesis of time: namely, the movement to the future which guarantees that things will become different through the eternal return. Bodies, therefore, cannot be thought of as static, self-identical or completed because they are always in the process of becoming.

The body as theorised in *Difference and Repetition* is capable of action, even though it is produced through passive processes. It can therefore never be correlated with the flesh of that Cartesian body which is merely the passive container of the active mind. Although Deleuzian subjectivity is composed of what Mariam Fraser calls “temporary and contingent coagulations” (2001, 104), political action and engagement take place in the body. Deleuze’s model of embodiment enables us to think about particular bodies not in terms of their conformity or otherwise to a normative ideal, but in terms of what they can do, what arrangements they can enter
into, and what they can become. The question of what the body is will interest those who seek to preserve or reinstate a normative model of it. A politics engaged in offering new insights into embodied practices, on the other hand, will find the question of what the body can do far more productive.\textsuperscript{144} In the following section I will examine the kind of politics which this radical notion of embodiment asks us to re-imagine.

### Politics without Identity

A politics drawn from Deleuze’s work poses an important challenge to conventional political discourses, which (as Mariam Fraser puts it) allows “identity and selfhood [to] remain the privileged terrain from which a politics can be articulated” (1997, 33). A politics derived from Deleuze’s ontology of difference and repetition, however, cannot be based on either identity or a stable and autonomous subject. In the absence of the sovereign subject as the locus of political consciousness, the body becomes the site of political action in Deleuze’s work. Although this locates politics at a corporeal level, it does not do so individualistically, because Deleuzian embodiment is a fundamentally collective activity: bodies are formed through patterns of connection and disconnection with other bodies and with the world.

\textsuperscript{144} It is perhaps for this reason that Deleuze’s work (particularly with Guattari) has provided a useful theoretical model for scholars who challenge the primacy of the normative body. This is evident in work on disability: see, for example, Hickey-Moody (2006) and (2009), Gibson (2006), and Shildrick (2004) and (2009). Shildrick finds Deleuze and Guattari particularly useful to disability studies because they abandon notions of lack/wholeness and remove difference from that polarisation of difference/sameness which produces the normative/non-normative dichotomy (2009, 157). Her own critical project challenges the conventional notions of disability by bringing it into contact with work on sexuality, and in particular queer theory: “The so-easily silenced whisper of a kinship that would be denied [sexuality and disability] — for it unsettles the foundations of Western subjectivity — is growing into a roar that marks a new understanding of embodiment which owes much to Deleuze” (2009, 142). She goes so far as to claim that Foucault’s prediction that “one day, this century will be known as Deleuzian” (1970, n.p.) is in part being realised in critical disability studies (2009, 142 and 190 n.15).
Instead of situating politics in the interiority of a sovereign subject, Deleuze grounds it in the spaces that connect all of us to one another and to the world we inhabit. To conceive of a politics which focuses only on these connective spaces involves finding resources in places previously considered as the negative space of absence or vacancy. It cannot be an identity politics, because it lacks those stable positions which strategically ground the individual’s claims to speak. Nor is it a form of political quietism (an accusation frequently levelled against poststructuralist politics) because it challenges the status quo through actions, alignments and constant re-configurations.145

I contend that all of Deleuze’s work is political, in so far as it challenges accustomed ways of being and is thus tied to his model of subjectivity. “It is important to stress that the new subjectivity proposed by Deleuze is eminently political”, Braidotti writes; “his is the kind of poststructuralist thought that aims at reconnecting theory with the daily practices of resistance” (1994b, 165). As well as rendering politics in these ontological terms, Deleuze’s method of reading can also be seen as a political challenge to canonical philosophy in the Western tradition. It is undeniable, however, that the collaboration with Guattari is more overtly political in its concerns than his own work in Difference and Repetition. What unifies his politics, whether overt or implicit, is the question of difference. From my own perspective no other question is more important for politics than this one. May makes this clear in Reconsidering Difference, where he claims that most French thought after World War II is concerned with how difference should be configured and valorised (1997, 2).

145 For a strong critique of poststructuralist politics as a form of political quietism see, for example, Nussbaum’s criticism of Butler’s feminism (1999).
Although May is interested in the philosophy of difference, his arguments are framed historically in claims about the implications of philosophical systems in events such as the Holocaust, racism, religious fundamentalism and ethnic cleansing. Faced with these devastating annihilations of difference, he argues that “the question of difference and of differences, of how to understand them and of how to respect them, needs to occupy us much more than it has” (1997, 9). But as Patton reminds us, difference can be coopted for a discriminatory politics just as easily as for a progressive agenda which seeks to eradicate such discrimination (2000, 46). “A politics of difference”, he writes,

requires the conceptual determination of difference and the specification of relevant kinds of difference, in an ontological, ethical or political sense. This is how the French philosophers of difference have provided support for a politics of difference: not only by their refusal to treat difference as secondary, derivative or deficient in relation to a presumed identity, but also by providing conceptual grounds for the autonomy of individual differences and rejecting those forms of reductionism which treated particular differences, such as sex and race, as subordinate to one central difference or social contradiction. (2000, 46)

I argue that there are three reasons why Deleuzian philosophy is useful for a politics of difference. First, Deleuze’s conception of difference is imperative because, by rendering it as a primary rather than secondary manifestation, he gives it a metaphysical status. Secondly, by re-figuring difference in such a way that it cannot be subsumed by identity, he rejects binary configurations such as either/or, normative/deviant, and us/them. Thirdly, the kind of difference he proposes is not based on current identities, but is instead abstract and differential. This is what makes a Deleuzian politics of difference open to the future. 146

146 If we examine this matter in relation to gender (for example), it means that sexual difference need not be limited to an artificially binarised notion of male and female; instead, it enables a continuum of different sexual morphologies, not only as they exist in material reality but also as they may come to exist in the future. Although contemporary theorists of transsexual and intersex politics have not yet taken up Deleuze’s philosophy, it is commensurate with some of its key principles as expressed in Butler’s work in this area. See for example Butler (2004).
It is worth looking briefly at the figure of the majoritarian, which first appears in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* and is developed in *A Thousand Plateaus*. The point of doing so is to illustrate the benefit of the particular form of politics which Deleuze enables in both his solo and collaborative work. The majoritarian is not a statistical notion, because it begins with the “majoritarian Fact of Nobody” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 118). As a normative ideal this is not something which cannot be achieved materially; it therefore remains an unoccupied space. Consequently, consistency with the ideal is available only in a relation of proximity: even those who are grouped as belonging to this normative category do so only in degrees of approximation. The figure of the majoritarian thus enables us to separate dominant regimes of power and knowledge from the incoherent “failures” which constitute the material reality of embodied subjectivity. This political structure is beneficial because it challenges the binary distinction between normative and non-normative or resistant by refusing anyone access to the normative position. Deleuze and Guattari argue that what remains are those minoritarian becomings in which everyone is engaged, but which occur at different degrees of distance from the majoritarian standard. Seeing that the field of minoritarian becomings is too diverse to be contained by knowledge, it enables both difference and dissonance. Deleuze and Guattari illustrate by comparing denumerable with nondenumerable sets. They write:

The power of the minorities is not measured by their capacity to enter and make themselves felt within the majority system, nor even to reverse the necessarily tautological criterion of the majority, but to bring to bear the force of nondenumerable sets, however small they may be, against the denumerable sets, even if they are infinite, reversed, or changed, even if they imply new axioms or, beyond that, a new axiomatic. The issue is not at all anarchy versus organization, nor even centralism versus decentralization, but a calculus or conception of the problems of nondenumerable sets, against the axiomatic of denumerable sets. Such a calculus may have its own compositions, organization, even
centralizations; nevertheless, it proceeds not via the States or the axiomatic process but via a pure becoming of minorities. (2004, 520)

Let us examine this in relation to those three contributions which, I contend, Deleuze makes to a politics of difference. First, the primacy of difference is assured through the proliferation of minoritarian practices. This does not value the same, or conformity, or equivalence, even if they are individually desired. Instead, it values and affords power to the nondenumerable, or the difference beyond quantifiable knowledge. Secondly, the majoritarian/minoritarian distinction paradoxically refuses a dichotomised understanding of conformity and resistance, because the majoritarian is an unoccupied space. This obliges us to refigure notions such as inclusion and exclusion, and displaces questions of resistance and failure. Deleuze here offers a new dichotomy between major and minor, which could be figured in Deleuzian terms as either denumerable and nondenumerable sets, or the recognisable and the imperceptible. Thirdly, power is conferred upon the nondenumerable precisely because it is unknowable. The existence of the minoritarian unsettles the majoritarian in the same way as a nondenumerable set problematises a set that is denumerable. These unpredictable arrangements facilitate a future which is not knowable in advance.

What a Deleuzian politics of difference might look like can be illustrated by the example of corporeal feminism, because the movement which promotes it is not only
greatly indebted to Deleuze’s work but also makes embodiment central to politics.\textsuperscript{147} Although there is, in Deleuze studies, a minor strain of criticism of Deleuze — whose notion of the body is said to be solipsistic and “inherently anti-social” (Mullarkey 1994, 342)\textsuperscript{148} — corporeal feminism has found Deleuze useful for thinking about those undeniably collective pursuits, politics and ethics. Despite its abstraction, Deleuzian theory has contributed usefully to both disability and feminist politics, and has done so (according to Shildrick) for two reasons: first abstract theories like Deleuze’s “progressively spill over into more substantive matters” and secondly, the politics in both of these fields is activist (2009, 176). This is not to say, however, that feminism has embraced Deleuze wholeheartedly: his concept of “becoming-woman” for instance has aroused particularly strong objections.\textsuperscript{149}

\textsuperscript{147} See for example Grosz (1994) and (1995), Gatens (1996) and (2000), Probyn (1996), and Braidotti (1994a), (2002) and (2006). Colebrook also classifies Butler and Lloyd as corporeal feminists, because their work uses embodiment to propose an anti-Cartesian challenge to Western metaphysics, which assumes a disembodied, rational consciousness and refuses sexual difference (1998, 37–38). Although she makes an interesting case, I myself would not include Butler as a corporeal feminist because she is working primarily in a different philosophical trajectory which, in utilising Hegel and focusing on the constitutive power of negation (1987; 1994), is incommensurable with the Spinoza-Deleuze-Irigaray configuration which I consider foundational to corporeal feminism. Colebrook addresses the distinction between Butler and the aforementioned feminists (although along a slightly different axis) in her paper, ‘From Radical Representation to Corporeal Becomings’. Here she suggests that Grosz, Gatens and Lloyd escape the matter/representation binary in which Butler remains trapped (2000a). Another important definition of corporeal feminism is offered by Patricia MacCormack, who positions it as a specifically Australian movement. Corporeal feminists, she writes (and she augments the list I have offered with Zoe Sofoulis and Rosalyn Diprose), “deal with French male philosophers, critically and sympathetically, with the body, and with queer sexuality” (2009, 85).

\textsuperscript{148} Mullarkey also refers to Deleuze’s concept of corporeality as “an anonymous site of wild Dionysian excess” (1994, 340) and later as “autistic” (1994, 351).

\textsuperscript{149} See Jardine (1984) for the feminist criticism of Deleuze which has attracted the most attention. For an interesting refutation of this piece see Bogue (2009), who, with reference to Deleuze’s work on Tournier’s Friday, argues that the absence of woman in Tournier’s novel is not so much misogynistic (as Jardine contends) as homoerotic: I will address this matter in more detail in my fifth chapter. For another early analysis of the problematic nature of the becoming-woman figure see Braidotti (1991). This ambivalent critique is particularly interesting in light of the privileged place Deleuze came to hold in Braidotti’s subsequent work. For Grosz’s own hesitations about using Deleuze and Guattari for feminism see (1994, 182–83).
Deleuze’s work is significant for feminist theory because, in dislodging the sovereign subject, it thereby dismisses the concomitant discourse of political teleology. This is evident in Grosz’s work, particularly in *Volatile Bodies*, which became the seminal text for corporeal feminism. Because her version of feminism is a process-politics characterised by incessant and endless struggle, it cannot be goal-oriented: consequently, it will never achieve the utopian condition of equality it aspires to (1994, 178). The implications of this are vast and have an impact on ideas about subjectivity and recognition. The feminism Grosz advocates contains the potential for a reworking of subjectivity, so that feminist struggle is no longer premised on a definitive notion of female and male subjects. The task of feminism is rather to “render more mobile, fluid, and transformable the means by which the female subject is produced and represented” (Grosz 2005b, 193). As a fundamentally minoritarian practice, such a movement would not be subject to the majoritarian identities which structure social domination. It would therefore not be a matter of replacing the current system (patriarchy) with something else. After all, Grosz argues, this would be predictable, and not particularly revolutionary (2000a, 215). The more important question, MacCormack argues, is “what tactics alter paradigms and what revolts rupture systems, not what we could replace with something else within those systems” (2009, 93). This is not a politics of recognition, which empowers those who are socially-dominant to confer and validate recognisable identities. Instead it is what Grosz calls a “politics of imperceptibility” (2002, 470), a “politics of acts, not identities” (Grosz 2002, 470), which prioritises actions rather than the people behind them, and focuses on those alignments and assemblages which refuse finality and

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Grosz explains that this is not the denial of sexual difference, but rather its “increasing elaboration” (2005b, 195).
obstruct political teleology. Such politics is open also to the future configurations of

Because this is a feminist politics predicated on the Nietzschean notion of mobile and
competing forces which renders the world perpetually in flux, the resultant feminism
will be a complex and multi-faceted alignment of shifting forces. This leaves
feminism with enough space to be contradictory, and to represent many disparate
interests and objectives. Most significantly, feminism will then be rendered as a
political movement which is always required. As such, MacCormack argues, it will
resist any tendency to frame a post-feminism (2009, 87).\(^{151}\)

Colebrook and Bray tie the use-value of Deleuze for feminism to the place of the
body in his work, which enables feminism to be “positive, active, and affirmative” in
its concern with how “bodies become, intersect, and affirm their existence” (1998,
36). The importance of acknowledging the embodied nature of subjectivity, Braidotti
reminds us, is that to refuse the “traditional vision of the knowing subject as
universal, neutral, and consequently gender-free” is to foreground the specificity of
corporeality (1994b, 161). Corporeal feminism finds the Deleuzian body useful
because, like his vision of subjectivity, it is always in process and can never be
definitively known. The identities of particular bodies are less important than the

\(^{151}\) Post-feminism is a movement which has less traction in the academy than in popular culture.
Loosely, post-feminism can be seen as a generational phenomenon. Although it has developed out of
power feminism, girl-power and the more radical riot grrrl movement, it has a neo-conservative and
normative agenda. Ann Brooks sees it as occurring at the intersection of postmodernism,
poststructuralism and post-colonialism: speaking back to feminism it therefore cannot be characterised
as a backlash (1997, 1). Other scholars such as Angela McRobbie argue that post-feminism
undermines the interests of feminism because it either repudiates it or relegates it to the past (2004,
255, 262). This is commensurate with MacCormack’s assertions that post-feminism is insidious, not
only because it thinks that feminism has already achieved its goals but also because it is a “pseudo-
feminism anchored on capitalism’s ‘freeing’ of women to do (that is, buy and ergo look) what and
how they want and, cynically, freeing them from being feminists at all” (2009, 87).
actions and interactions they are capable of. To acknowledge that bodies interact variously enables the development of ways of living other than those currently sanctioned by existing identities. To do so is to account for the specificity of the body (its capacity to act, connect and disconnect) without restricting it to a normative identity position. By refusing to confer primacy on identity we can acknowledge that the changing and multi-faceted desires of subjects make them complex and incoherent. The sovereign subject is replaced by lived practices, which reveal the various ways in which subjects are embodied, located and connected. This is a politics in which difference is not merely enabled but affirmed.

Colebrook argues that such anti-subjectivism engenders a shift away from a regime of “decisions, justifications, legitimate representation or right” (2000b, 58). The politics of acts rather than identities in Deleuze’s work results in the redefinition of ethics as a practice. Foucault’s late work inspires Deleuze to ask: “what is our ethics, how do we produce an artistic existence, what are our processes of subjectification, irreducible to our moral codes? Where and how are new subjectivities being produced? What can we look for in present-day communities?” (1990b, 114–15). In my final chapter I turn to these ethical questions.
Chapter Five: Ethics

Hallward concludes that the most important question to be asked of Deleuze is: “should he be read as a philosopher of relational difference?” (2000, 95; emphasis in original). I agree that this question is indeed pivotal for the interpretation of Deleuze’s work. Unlike Hallward, however, who answers it in the negative, I am interested in how the potential for relationality in Deleuze’s work can be seen as an ethical structure. My claim is that relationality is fundamental to Deleuze’s differential ontology: there is no concept of being in his work which is not interactive. This is the basis of his appeal to immanence. How these differences come to interact is a metaphysical question tied to his ontology of difference and repetition.

My concern in this final chapter is how the relationality of difference in Deleuze’s work might become a useful resource for ethical theory. It is because relationality is such a radical component of his work that ethics is an important, albeit often implicit, aspect of it. Deleuzian ethics not only presents a significant alternative to Hegelian recognition but also proposes in-between space as an ethical site. This suggests a version of ethics in which the ethical core does not reside in an interior repository of subjectivity; instead, it is immanent in the structures of the world. In the first section of this chapter I return to the notion of the differential relation in Deleuze’s ontology, which supports a metaphysical system at odds with Hegel. I do so because this aspect of his revision of Leibniz enables him to theorise difference at its most abstract. Differential ontology is both the condition that Deleuzian ethics must accommodate and the relational structure which enables ethical engagement. In the second section of this chapter I revisit Deleuze’s model of subjectivity. Although the
Deleuzian individual is produced through processes of individuation, the subjectivity it embodies is networked in productive and differential relations both to others and the environment. I trace this development through Deleuze’s early critique of Sartre, his important essay on Michel Tournier’s *Friday* (in *The Logic of Sense*), and his discussion of the Other in the fifth chapter of *Difference and Repetition*, ‘Asymmetrical Synthesis of the Sensible’. Intervening in debates about the Other in Deleuze’s work, I argue that his ethics operates beyond that notion of Hegelian recognition, which is so pervasive in contemporary ethical thought. In the final section of this chapter I examine how Deleuze’s work on love illustrates an ethical relation which is a potential site for political engagement.

**Differential Ontology**

The central problem of differential ontology is to determine how differences relate to one another, and what is produced in such interactions. In seeking an answer to this question I begin with Deleuze’s critical revision of Leibniz’s work, which (I have been arguing) is both a product of his differential process of reading and is imperative to the formation of his own philosophy of difference. In this chapter I focus on the ethical potential of the differential relation which emerges (largely) from this revisionary reading of Leibniz. I will also examine how the question of the relation between one difference and another exposes the foundation of the disagreement between Deleuze’s metaphysics and Hegel’s. The model of relation facilitated by the notion of the differential is important for Deleuze, Duffy writes,
because they are the “compositional relations” between individuals (2006a, 305).\textsuperscript{152} But it is more than this, because the differential relation is an engagement between things which are different. It is therefore a way of theorising how individuals relate to each other and to the world through difference itself. Before examining the ethical potential of the idea of differential relations, I will briefly reiterate the claims I have made about Deleuze’s important divergences from Leibniz’s work in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Fold*.

In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze criticises Leibniz’s model of infinitely small differences, for remaining so close to the principle of identity (or infinite representation) as to sacrifice the virtual to the possible (1994, 50, 214). This is characteristic of all Deleuze’s work on Leibniz in the 1960s, including *Expressionism in Philosophy* and *The Logic of Sense*. But in *The Fold* Deleuze represents Leibniz’s work as a more open system which accommodates the proliferation of difference.

Although Deleuze’s argument against Leibniz’s work on the incompossibility of possible worlds occupies the entirety of *Difference and Repetition*, a truncated form of it is clearly expressed in the twenty-fourth series of the *The Logic of Sense*. This particular version of the argument also reveals its connection to his theory of the event. Deleuze begins by reminding us that the compossible and the incompossible are not the same as identity and contradiction, but rather the potential convergence or divergence of a series (1990a, 171). Leibniz develops a method of exclusion by

\textsuperscript{152} This is, of course, not to say that the relations between individuals can be calculated mathematically.
prioritising convergence, but only because his philosophy includes a God who
chooses between possible worlds (Deleuze 1990a, 172). This theological perspective,
Deleuze writes, is “no longer justified” (1990a, 172); because there is no longer a
deity making choices, the divergence of series can be affirmed, and incompossibles
can coexist.

Deleuze is able to do so partly through his concept of the virtual — that differential
space of diverging series whose resonance makes incompossibility itself a “means of
communication” (1990a, 174). The simplest form of this notion is expressed
anthropomorphically by James Williams, who writes that we communicate “through
our differences” (2008a, 166). This sentiment is also evident in Bogue’s appeal to the
“transversal” method of Deleuze’s thought. “Deleuze’s way”, he writes,

is the transverse way, the diagonal path connecting incommunicable ways,
a trajectory that intensifies the distances between locations. His way is
also a way of doing – a practice of making transverse connections, of
assembling multiplicities that affirm their differences through their
connections. (2007, 2)\(^ {153}\)

What is brought together enters into communication out of difference rather than
commonality. Not limited to the human, communication is concerned with the
potential connections between things; or, to use another Deleuzian term, how they
are folded. This is not to say that disjunction becomes conjunction, but that it
designates an opening to an “infinity of predicates” which erases the self (Deleuze
1990a, 174). Deleuze substitutes for Leibniz’s best possible world chosen by God a
“chaosmos” in which infinite series diverge and converge (1990a, 176), and where
divergence can be affirmed as part of that series rather than as a contradiction (1994,

\(^ {153}\) Bogue notes that transversality is a concept Deleuze found in Proust’s work and engages with in
*Proust and Signs*. It is also evident, he suggests, in the work that Guattari did on institutional analysis,
before their collaborative efforts (2007, 2).
The world as Deleuze theorises it is just one of many virtual versions which subsist in the actual world. This is that world of cruelty and violence, founded on the seething flux of difference, which I addressed in my third chapter in relation to the Image of thought.

The temporal proliferation of diverging and converging series is evident in the philosophy of the event, particularly as it is extrapolated in *The Logic of Sense*. Deleuze describes Leibniz as the first great theorist of the event (1990a, 171). The principal components of Deleuze’s ethics of the event are Stoic philosophy, the poetry of Joë Bousquet, and Nietzsche’s affirmation of *amor fati*. A focus on the event is commensurate with Deleuze’s sustained devaluing of the human as an agent of action, influence and change. The event is a turning point or transformation in a system. It is such a slippery concept in his work that to describe the event as what happens is merely an approximation to it. Badiou explains that the Deleuzian event is not “‘that which happens’, but that which, in what happens, has become and will become” (2007, 38). An event is the expression of an alteration which arises from a mixture of circumstances, and includes the bodies (not necessarily human), ideas, and emotions which are implicated in this change. James Williams cautions that it does not signify the emergence of something new, but is rather a continuation in the series in which it occurs (2008a, 1). The event challenges conventional understandings of time and space. In this context, series should not be thought of in a

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154 In describing this as a “Cosmic Stoicism” (2006, 164), Sellars reminds us that Deleuze does not equate Stoicism with heroic endurance. In the Twenty First series of *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze makes much of Joë Bousquet who, incapacitated by a debilitating wound in his youth, reflects: “[m]y wound existed before me, I was born to embody it” (qtd in Deleuze 1990a, 148). Conceptualised as a wound, the event is something which changes the course of a series, thus enabling the present and future configurations of the world to become manifest. The wound, therefore, should not be resented. “The ethical choice, for Deleuze”, Sellars writes, “is one between a life of bitterness and a life of joy” (2006, 166).
linear sense (as a sequence). This is because *The Logic of Sense* works with a nonlinear notion of time, which Deleuze figures partly as Chronos (time as the mixture of bodies and present states of affairs, in which past and future are both aspects of the present) (1990a, 162), and partly as Aiôn (time as the “infinite subdivision” of past and future) (1990a, 77). These twin concepts of time enable us to understand that both series and events (as well as the resonances engendered through the series) move through time in a non-linear fashion.

This conception of the event enables Deleuze to theorise ethics within the structure of immanence. The resultant ethics accounts for processes of collective ind individuation, and reflects what Sellars describes as Deleuze’s “commitment to a process ontology” (2006, 166). In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze writes, “[e]ither ethics makes no sense at all, or this is what it means and has nothing else to say: not to be unworthy of what happens to us” (1990a, 149). To be worthy of (or to will) the event is to become adequate to it. In the Spinozan sense, “adequate” implies equality; and as such Deleuze thinks that we should live in a way which is equal to the unfolding of the world as incessant difference and change. This entails relating to a continuously unfolding alterity as the new, rather than requiring it to take a recognisable form. Our ethical imperative is therefore to allow ourselves to be made and unmade in our relations with those differences we encounter and facilitate. In Deleuze’s philosophy nothing is more important than this. For Robinson, it involves “a constant encounter with philosophy as the event of difference — understood as a continuous effort to construct a new ontological and metaphysical image of thought
and a new ethics and politics — a thought ‘worthy’ of the events that befall it” (2003, 143).

In Sellars’ estimation, Deleuze’s stoicism operates in two different ways. The first is by conceptualising the individual itself as a series of events or processes. The second involves understanding that the individual is a structure in which the boundaries between the self and its surroundings (corporeal as well as incorporeal) are dissolved through the incorporation of events. This second sense of Stoicism, Sellars argues, is the “lesson that Deleuze draws from Spinoza” (2006, 166). This means that the individual can be conceived of as a temporal synthesis of events into a series: “every new event becomes a constitutive component that must be affirmed as part of oneself” (Sellars 2006, 161). To affirm the events which befall us is not to accept fate passively, but to participate actively in the unfolding of the world. Because the event is a process, James Williams explains, to will the event is not to accept a static state of affairs, but to acknowledge a “complex ongoing multilayered process of transformation” (2008a, 141); or in other words, the ways in which the event resonates through a series. Participation becomes possible by counter-actualising the event: we thereby allow ourselves to become other through our exposure to what simultaneously impacts on the unfolding of the series. This is a creative task, Bogue writes, because it “entails both a process of exploring and hence constructing
connections among differences, and a process of undoing connections in an effort to form new ones” (2007, 10).  

There is a strong Nietzschean element in the affirmation of the event. The affirmation of the dicethrow in Nietzsche and Philosophy reveals the connection between Stoicism, *amor fati*, and Deleuze’s work on Leibniz. To accept the roll of the dice is to affirm in advance every possible outcome (Deleuze 2006, 26). According to Sellars, this evinces Deleuze’s separation from the Stoics because this process is non-teleological: being subject to chance, the outcome of the dicethrow cannot be part of an overarching plan (2006, 167). It differs also from the Leibnizian universe, because there is no God to choose between possible worlds. “Leibniz did not attain the free character of this play”, Deleuze writes in The Logic of Sense, “since he neither wanted nor knew how to breathe enough chance into it, or to make of divergence an object of affirmation as such” (1990a, 114).

The affirmation of divergence has a significant impact on Deleuze’s revision of Leibniz’s monad, which is radically altered in The Fold. As a metaphysical point or self-contained unit already containing obscurely within it the entire world but expressing only a unique perspective of that whole, Leibniz’s closed monads express a pre-established harmony. Duffy thinks it “necessary [for Leibniz] that the monads are in harmony with one another,” because “in fact the world is nothing other than

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155 Bogue describes this as a futural orientation, which is Deleuze’s “belief in the world” (2007, 10). Precisely what this “belief in the world” entails is elucidated in Negotiations when, in an interview with Antonio Negri, Deleuze says: “If you believe in the world you precipitate events, however inconspicuous, that elude control, you engender new space-times, however small the surface volume” (1990b, 176). This suggests that “belief in the world” is a form of trust in the futural unfolding of chance.
the preestablished harmony amongst monads” (2010a, 15). Deleuze writes of Leibniz’s conception of harmony, that only when God judges a thing to be harmonic is it considered a monad, and that consequently “the monad is the existent par excellence” (1993, 129). This harmony is possible because each of the monads contains the whole obscurely within its closed structure: in this respect they mirror the world. A Leibnizian monad has no windows through which anything can pass in or out; so although it is a product of this internal world, its capacity for interaction is therefore limited. Deleuze, however, claims that the monad need not be a closed structure (1993, 132).\textsuperscript{156} In fact, his affirmation of divergence enables him to refigure the notion of monadic harmony radically as a “new harmony”. Unlike Leibnizian harmony, which is premised on the consonance which results when stable chords incline toward “resolution or a modulation” (1993, 132), Deleuze’s “new harmony” is capable of accommodating dissonance, or “instable combinations” (1993, 131).\textsuperscript{157} No longer reliant on the closure of the monad, this “new harmony” of monads is open to a “spiral in expansion” (1993, 137), which causes them to interpenetrate in such a way that they are constantly modified. A new way of conceiving of ethical interactions between individuals emerges from Deleuze’s revision of the monad.

Deleuze clearly developed his theory of relationality by engaging with the two seventeenth-century philosophers he was most interested in: Spinoza and Leibniz. “Right from the beginning”, Etienne Balibar remarks, “[L]eibnizian and [S]pinozistic

\textsuperscript{156} It is important to note that Hallward regards Deleuze’s singularities as “no more related to each other than Leibniz’s windowless monads” (2000, 96; emphasis in original). I think Hallward’s claim is unsustainable, because in Deleuzian theory the monads are not closed but interpenetrating. \textsuperscript{157} This is not to say there are no moments of dissonance in Leibniz’s idea of harmony, but to point out the particular way in which his harmony achieves resolution. For further discussion of this point see Laerke (2010).
theories imply that singularities are interconnected, building up a ‘network’ or a ‘system’” (1997, 9–10 n.9). The complementary nature of Deleuze’s work of these philosophers is likewise evident in Duffy’s comments on the connection between Spinoza’s ontology and Leibniz’s mathematics (2006b, 254). Deleuze derived from Spinoza his understanding of how things are expressed through the implication, explication and complication of substance. The affective relation between bodies (by which Spinoza theorises their composition and decomposition) also attests to a radical interdependence. “The expressed world”, Deleuze writes, “is made of differential relations and of contiguous singularities” (1990a, 110–11). This is a world in which series interpenetrate, and where communication is possible because of difference, and not in spite of it, as the inclusive affirmation of incompossible worlds makes evident. The constant relations between these differences need to be envisaged, Deleuze insists, as “types of events, and problems in mathematics” (1993, 52). The question that emerges out of this synthesis is thus: what implications does a mathematical understanding of the differential relation have for the manifestation of the world as Deleuze theorises it? In the remainder of this section I will examine how Deleuze’s version of differential calculus diverges from Hegel’s own dialectical understanding of it. Although these different interpretations of calculus are concerned with things which are minuscule in scale, they impact foundationally on their respective versions of ontology.

The logic by which Deleuze theorises the manifestation of difference appears similar to Hegelian logic, in so far as both systems are relational in structure. Yet in *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze clearly rejects Hegel’s dialectical logic when he
writes: “[j]ust as we oppose difference in itself to negativity, so we oppose $dx$ to not-A, the symbol of difference [...] to that of contradiction” (1994, 170). The difference between Hegel and Deleuze, then, comes down to divergent uses of differential calculus.\textsuperscript{158} Although Deleuze and Hegel both offer a metaphysical notion of calculus, their differing interpretations of it result in philosophies of difference which are at odds with one another. This is in part a question of influence, so that while Hegel draws his authority from Newton, Deleuze is indebted to Leibniz (Somers-Hall 2010, 570), and whereas Leibniz was preoccupied with diminishing quantities which are infinitely small, Newton considered them too small to be significant. This explains their mathematical differences. Newtonian calculus is based on the notion of ratios whose differentials, which he called “fluxions,” vanish at the limit point instead of incorporating infinitesimals (Somers-Hall 2010, 561). The values in a ratio become determinable if the infinitesimals are eliminated. Hegel’s own understanding of calculus is premised on the ultimate ratio, which enables him to express the dialectical infinite. The differential incorporated into his dialectical logic is what Deleuze describes as “not-A” (1994, 170). Hegel’s differential relation is expressed as a ratio: things acquire meaning in relation to one another, and specifically in an oppositional structure of determinate values. In this model, Somers-Hall writes, “both the ratio itself as well as the terms can only be understood as a totality” (2010, 563). They are therefore inseparable.

\textsuperscript{158} It should be noted, of course, that Leibniz, Hegel and Deleuze were all working on differential calculus at different moments in its historical development. For a discussion of how their philosophical systems were affected by this history see Duffy (2006b) and (2006c), and Somers-Hall (2010).
Deleuze’s different understanding of differential calculus underpins his move away from Hegel. It must be noted, however, that Deleuze not only rejects Newton on the grounds that he equates the differential with zero (1994, 172), but also parts company with Leibniz in his interpretation of the differential. This is principally because Deleuze rejects Leibniz’s “abyss” (1994, 170) of infinitely small differences: because $dx$ is undetermined in relation to $x$, he argues, the differential is premised on a difference which cannot be quantified or represented. Once again a revisionist reading of Leibniz enables Deleuze to articulate his own philosophy. Instead of treating the differential as a ratio, Deleuze keeps the differentials separate (Somers-Hall 2010, 568). As a result, “$dx$ appears as simultaneously undetermined, determinable, and determination” (Deleuze 1994, 171), because although each of the differentials $dx$ and $dy$ is undetermined, what they generate through their relation is determinate. For Deleuze, the generation of difference is manifest in reciprocal synthesis; or as Bryant puts it, because “differential relations only have value by virtue of a reciprocal synthesis or determination” (2008, 200). Deleuze rejects Hegelian logic by privileging reciprocal synthesis rather than opposition and negation. This move is commensurate with his overall project in *Difference and Repetition*, which is to situate difference beyond representation.

The key dissimilarity between Deleuze and Hegel, then, is evident in Deleuze’s work on the differential relation which allows him to theorise a reciprocal synthesis which expresses the differences internal to each component, rather than following the Hegelian logic of opposition, negation, and the infinitely large extrapolation of difference to contradiction. This is essentially the difference between their dialectics.
In his otherwise excellent article on this topic, Somers-Hall does not acknowledge that Deleuze, like Hegel, also uses differential calculus in the service of a dialectic, but one which is about the generation of difference through the process of differentiation rather than being premised on opposition. The question of whether these different interpretations of differential calculus produce different mathematical results is less significant than their differing ontological implications.

The virtual realm of Ideas is a differential space of differentiation in which problems emerge. Using a Nietzschean analogy Deleuze writes of the Idea as a question of a throw of the dice, of the whole sky as open space and of throwing as the only rule. The singular points are on the die; the questions are the dice themselves; the imperative is to throw. Ideas are the problematic combinations which result from throws. (1994, 198)

In the Deleuzian logic of differentiation, difference exists only in those reciprocal relations which constitute it. This takes place in the process by which Ideas and problems differentiate in the virtual, and are subsequently differentiated in the divergence by which the virtual is actualised. Differences generated in the differential relation are determined by the relation itself, and not by external factors. These interconnected differences produce both bodies and of the world. The plurality of the virtual generates “a collection of interconnected worlds constituted by series” (Williams, James 2008a, 5). This is not to say, as Laerke usefully reminds us, that the world is composed of static yet interconnected things or points. Rather, it consists of a “continuous series of differentials, variations or actions” (2010, 28). When differences communicate, they generate what Deleuze calls disjunctive syntheses (1990a, 174). This phenomenon has significant implications for ethics, which
according to Deleuze, can be based only on the “new harmony” of violent discords. In Bogue’s phrase, this affirms the “play of the world” (2007, 8).

Deleuze’s ontology is ethically significant because it is fundamentally relational in a radically new sense, in so far as it is based not on commonality but on difference. While it is true that Deleuze continues to speak of singularities, processes of individuation, and individuals, we need to remember that in his philosophy they are possible only through a radically different notion of how things relate to one another. In brief, his ontology is premised not on similarities (unless difference itself is positioned as a commonality) but on a system of differential relations.

The Otherwise Other

In my fourth chapter I discussed Deleuze’s conception of subjectivity as merely the provisional congealing of much more complex, fragmentary and incoherent processes. How, then, can a subject-in-process engage not only with other subjects-in-process but also with their environment? In the previous section of this chapter I discussed how Deleuze’s ontology marks its difference from Hegel by being fundamentally differential. In this way he challenges Hegel’s dialectic model of thesis-antithesis-synthesis with his own dialectic of reciprocal synthesis which emerges through the divergent processes of differential. This discussion can however be extradited from the abstract metaphysical level of the previous section and applied to the interactions between individuals. If such interactions were no longer based on Hegelian recognition, we could try to account for them in terms of the differential ontology on which Deleuze’s work is premised. Accordingly, this
section examines how Deleuze’s work on the self/Other relation is part of his alternative to Hegelian recognition.

Deleuze’s work on the Other is perhaps the most contested aspect of his work. This may be because his treatment of this figure is ambivalent. I regard this work of Deleuze’s as an extremely important component in the location of Deleuzian ethics in the relational spaces between both one individual and another and the world they find themselves positioned in. Deleuze’s own ambivalent treatment of the Other is mirrored in the field of Deleuze studies, which is split between those who claim Deleuze’s work on the Other is the basis of ethics, and those who think that his apparent eradication of the Other is both ethically and politically problematic.¹⁵⁹ I will trace these tensions in the secondary material at appropriate stages in my reading of Deleuze’s texts. I will begin with his early work on Sartre before showing how this is developed in his important essay entitled ‘Michel Tournier and the World without Others’, which appears as an appendix to The Logic of Sense.¹⁶⁰ I will then scrutinise how it functions in the conclusion to the fifth chapter of Difference and Repetition: ‘Asymmetrical Synthesis of the Sensible’.

In Deleuze’s relationship to Sartre, Faulkner detects both “fidelity” and “betrayal” (2002, 25). Although Deleuze greatly admired Sartre, he ultimately distanced himself

¹⁵⁹ Deleuze’s work in this area is affirmed by Boundas (1997), James Williams (working on morality) (2003; 2008a; 2008b), and Bogue (2007; 2009); it is criticised by Jardine (1984), Hallward (1997; 2000; 2006), Olkowski (2007), and Jack Reynolds (2008a; 2008b). It should be noted that Olkowski’s hesitation with Deleuze appears in the cited publication and not in her previous work.

¹⁶⁰ Tournier was an enduring friend of Deleuze’s and typed the manuscript of his book on Hume. This is acknowledged in the dedication to the French edition of Empiricism and Subjectivity: “For Michel, this book which he typed, and criticized, and scoffed at, and perhaps even shortened, because I’m sure it was longer, but which is also to some extent his book insofar as I owe him a great deal (not for Hume) as regards philosophy” (qtd in Tournier 2001, 202).
from the man whom he described as the “first great philosopher of the Other” (1990a, 366 n.12), and he does this through this critique of the self/Other relation.\footnote{Deleuze reveals his admiration of Sartre in \textit{Dialogues} (2002, 12, 57). In his biographical sketch of Deleuze, Tournier notes that in his early twenties Deleuze was “heavily” influenced by Sartre (2001, 202). In his piece on Sartre’s refusal of the Nobel prize, “He Was My Teacher”, published initially in 1964 and published in English in \textit{Desert Islands}, Deleuze describes that Sartre taught “new ways to think” (2004, 77), and concludes: “Sartre remains my teacher” (2004, 79).}

Articles translated as ‘Description of Woman: for a Philosophy of the Sexed Other’ (2002) and ‘Statements and Profiles’ (2003) indicate that his engagement with Sartre had begun as early as 1945. These publications fit awkwardly into the Deleuzian oeuvre. Notwithstanding Faulkner’s rigorous defence of these texts (2002), to describe their gender politics as problematic is an understatement, because their position on women is essentialist and conspicuously equates women with the flesh. It must be remembered, however, that Deleuze was in his very early twenties when he first published them, and that Simone de Beauvoir’s \textit{Le Deuxième Sexe} (1949) had not yet appeared. It is also worth considering that they may never have been re-published and translated into English if Deleuze’s subsequent work had not attracted so much attention. They certainly cannot sustain much critical interrogation. Nevertheless, they make interesting reading in relation to feminist critiques of Deleuze, particularly by Jardine (1984) and Braidotti (1991). Like the concept of becoming-woman, the problematic nature of gender politics in Deleuze’s own and collaborative work with Guattari could be reinvestigated profitably in relation to his juvenilia.

What Deleuze initially found attractive was Sartre’s focus on the structure of alterity, and his construction of it as an ontological rather than epistemological concern (Boundas 1997, 340). “Deleuze approves”, Boundas writes, when “Sartre offers the
constitution of the self as a problem to be solved, instead of an answer to a non-existing question” (1997, 340). Deleuze was hesitant, however, about the place of looking in Sartre’s work. This is evident when he objects that Sartre’s formulation of subject/object relations assumes a “reciprocity of consciousness” (2002, 17) which enables the Other to be recognised as another subject. In the Deleuzian schema, it also became problematic to figure the Other as another subject, because such a structure is not only limiting but also ontologically compromising (Lambert 2002, 33). These attitudes are commensurate with Deleuze’s repeated example that there is no “person” to be fatigued: there is fatigue, “and that is all” (2002, 17).162 In The Logic of Sense he writes:

> The error of philosophical theories is to reduce the Other sometimes to a particular object, and sometimes to another subject. (Even a conception like Sartre’s, in Being and Nothingness, was satisfied with the union of the two determinations, making the Other the object of my gaze, even if he in turn gazes at me and transforms me into an object). (1990a, 307)

Deleuze attempted to demolish Sartre’s conception of the subject by arguing that, because “things do not have to wait for me in order to have their signification” (2002, 17), the Other must exist independently of its function in subject/object relations: that structure is thereby made redundant. This critique emanates from his own theory of differential relations, which achieve their potential by eradicating structural boundaries such as subject and object.

This must be read also in the context of Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism, which does not concern itself with the lived experience of a stable subject (1994, xx) because it is a way of thinking about experience that does not depend on the

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162 See also Deleuze (2003) and ‘The Exhausted’ in Essays Critical and Clinical (1998).
distinction between subject and object. Boundas claims that Deleuze always values empiricism more highly than phenomenology (1991, 5). The reason for this is evident in Grosz’s insight that Deleuze’s work is not part of the affective turn, which she clarifies as phenomenological because of the value it confers on a subject who experiences (2007, 252). For Deleuze, there is no subject who experiences the objective world: there is only experience. Because experience is not internal to a subject, it operates transcendentally on a plane of immanence. Colebrook explains: “Deleuze argues that there simply is the givenness of the world. From this we might distinguish subjects and objects but this would always be after the event” (2000b, 58; emphasis in original). When Deleuze argues that the transcendental cannot be derived from the empirical (1994, 144), he explicitly refuses recognition, and he does so because it “leaves us with things which are recognizable, instead of allowing us to behold the radical contingency of always already new encounters” (Boundas 1997, 346). This implicit critique of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, which posits a subject who experiences the objective world, was to be continued and developed in Deleuze’s work on Tournier’s *Friday*.

Published in French in 1967, and translated into English in 1969, Tournier’s *Friday* is an early postmodern reworking of Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, which examines how the stranded protagonist relates to his surroundings in the absence of other people. *Friday* interests Deleuze precisely because the absence of the Other enables its role to be examined (1990a, 307). Deleuze distinguished the “a priori Other” (1990a,

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163 As Boundas argues, however, although Deleuze rejects the categorical distinction between subject and object, his transcendental empiricism is still tied to the problem of subjectivity, which he returns to throughout his work. He comments: “Deleuze will never waver in his conviction that only empiricists have the right access to the problem of subjectivity” (1991, 14).
307; emphasis in original), which is the possibility of the Other in a structural sense, from the “concrete Other” (1990a, 318; emphasis in original), which he describes as “I for you and you for me” (1990a, 318). The a priori Other precedes the manifestation of subjects and objects which are subsequently organised through this structure. The Other is therefore a mediating structure which organises the perceptual field: bringing into existence things which the subject cannot perceive, it offers them as potential objects of desire (Deleuze 1990a, 305–06). The Other therefore structures the world for us in such a way that, according to Bryant, we become social subjects (2008, 15). This anticipates a claim subsequently made by Deleuze and Guattari: namely, that desire is social, and that its current organisation into heterosexual couples and nuclear families is socio-historically specific (2005).

Because the Other structure is a priori, Reynolds thinks that Deleuze’s exclusion of it from the transcendental field of difference and repetition is unsustainable (2008a, 81). Deleuze, however, positions the Other structure as a social rather than metaphysical a priori. As with his work on recognition, he is not claiming that the Other structure is not part of our lived reality; rather, it is a secondary manifestation which to a certain extent renders coherent the complexity of the differential relations of difference and repetition. Deleuze illustrates this through the figure of Tournier’s Robinson, whose desire, in the absence of other people, becomes “solar” (Deleuze 1990a, 318): it is an “elemental” sexuality (Tournier 1997, 211; emphasis in original). At this point Robinson encounters the “otherwise Other” (Deleuze 1990a, 319), the “real structure of alterity” (Boundas 1997, 341). This is described by Deleuze as “not an Other, but something wholly other” (1990a 317), that “otherwise
Other” which is revealed when the structure of the Other is erased. This is, notably, the point at which Jardine’s criticism of Deleuze is directed because she takes the eradication of the Other to mean the eradication of the feminine (1984, 59). The function of Friday in Tournier’s text becomes evident here. Robinson finds himself otherwise only when he stops organising his world thorough the structure of the *a priori* Other. Re-birthing from the womb of Speranza, he re-directs his desire into copulating with the ground, in what Jardine describes as a “cosmic orgy” (1984, 57): discovering beneath Speranza another island, he encounters in Friday the otherwise Other. Only by abandoning the Other structure can he encounter the otherwise Other in its alterity.

Deleuze describes the Other as “the expression of a possible world” (1990a, 309). This phrase dates back to Deleuze’s earliest work, and has been subject to differing interpretations, all of which hinge on what the word “possible” means in this context. Deleuze himself attributes the phrase to Tournier, referring in 1945 to the unpublished manuscript of *Friday* (2002, 23 n.3). Although it has a Leibnizian resonance, Leibniz’s possible world has no reality, as Deleuze and Guattari point out in *What is Philosophy?* (1994, 17). As a possible world, the other person is a potential and affective reality. The same example is used in *The Logic of Sense* and *Difference and Repetition*, where a terrified face exemplifies the expression of an

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164 This interpretation is certainly plausible if Deleuze’s work is read in a particular way. Tournier’s Robinson could be said to usurp female space, or at least to appropriate it for male self-transformation, when he declares: “*I must consider myself feminine and the bride of the sky*” (1997, 212; emphasis in original). But Jardine’s claim that this is a world of “mono-sexual, brotherly machines” (1984, 59) cannot be sustained, however, in light of Deleuze’s appeal to the otherwise Other.

165 The gendering at work here is problematic. Robinson’s re-birth codes Speranza as not only female and maternal but also as an object of male self-transformation. His copulation with the ground is commensurate with representations of colonisation as rape.
alternative relation to the world which Deleuze describes as a frightening “possible world” (1990a, 307; 1994, 260). In this way, he writes, “our possibles are always Others” (Deleuze 1994, 260). Because the subject annihilates its own possible world every time it encounters the one presented by the Other, the self is never more than a “past world” (Deleuze 1990a, 310). “The mistake of theories of knowledge”, Deleuze concludes, “is that they postulate the contemporaneity of subject and object, whereas one is constituted only through the annihilation of the other” (1990a, 310).

Bogue offers two interpretations of the Deleuzian “possible”. In Deleuze’s Way he writes (in relation to *Difference and Repetition*):

>The face points toward possible worlds yet unspecified, and if I am to encounter that sign, rather than simply classify it (ignore it, reject it, imitate it), I must enter with it into the composition of a world enfolded in its possibilities. To do so, I must construct a plane of immanence in which I and others are no longer fixed entities, but instead residual points of emergence within an unfolding ensemble of speeds and affects. The actualization of a specific world that arises from the unfolding of the other’s possible worlds may eventuate in a discrete self and a definite other, but the encounter itself, in which possible worlds become manifest, opens up in a dimension of apersonal affects and speeds. (2007, 13)

In the context of Deleuze’s Spinozism, Bogue argues, possible worlds have a positive role, because they open up affective experience and enable continual differentiation. This is commensurate with James Williams’ insistence that the Deleuzian “possible” is a latency in the real world: it has reality as a “latent set of virtual relations” (2005, 39) we were unaware of, and it achieves reality when we encounter it as a possible. But this does not imply, he adds, “that the possible is a key ontological property of worlds” (2005, 36). Possible worlds enable Deleuze to theorise the other person in such a way as to persevere an unrepresentable residue, thereby preventing them from being incarcerated in fixed categories of identity.

“What remains ‘unthought’ and ‘outside’ representation”, Lambert writes, “is
precisely the difference that is implicated and enveloped (interiorized) in the idea of another possible world that the Other Person expresses as a *reality*” (2002, 33; emphasis in original).

In a more recent publication, ‘Speranza the Wandering Island’, Bogue writes of the possible in relation to the *Logic of Sense*. He cautions that “the possible” can be considered in two ways: as an achievable possibility, or as “alternatives beyond expectation” (2009, 132). In the work on Tournier in *The Logic of Sense*, Bogue thinks that Deleuze is using the term “possible” in its limiting sense (2009, 132). By contrast, the notion of the possible which Deleuze takes from Bergson is much closer to Bogue’s first option. This is a “possible” in the sense of something which is already known (or knowable) and as such it limits the process of different/ciation by which the virtual actualises along divergent lines. The Other which Deleuze rejects is therefore not other people per se, as Hallward problematically claims (2006, 92), but *the a priori* Other in this limiting sense (Bogue 2009, 127).\(^{166}\) Deleuze find this exemplified in Tournier’s description of the arrival of a ship on Speranza: “each of these men was a *possible* world [...] the possible obstinately passing for the real” (Tournier 1997, 220; qtd in Deleuze 1990a, 308; emphasis Tournier’s).

In this context, the possible is problematic because it ruptures the immanence which Deleuze thinks can be achieved by eradicating the categories of subject and object, self and Other. As Faulkner reminds us, Deleuze’s work on Tournier’s *Friday* is “going against a tradition in philosophy in which consciousness is the light cast upon

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\(^{166}\) With reference to Hallward’s book *Out of this World*, James Williams would like this “*dreaded and misleading phrase*” to “*pass intro the deepest recesses of dusty libraries soon!*” (2008b, 98; emphasis in original).
things which makes them visible” (2002, 27). This is evident in Deleuze’s claim that “[c]onsciousness ceases to be a light cast upon objects in order to become a pure phosphorescence of things in themselves” (1990a, 311). If the Deleuzian possible is just a different realm of the real (the real without actuality), then others — as possible worlds — rupture its immanence. “Possibility”, Faulkner writes, “disrupts the immanence of the real world by placing within it a supplementary reality” (2002, 27; emphasis in original).

Reynolds thinks that these alternative interpretations indicate inconsistencies between *Difference and Repetition* and the Tournier piece in their respective discussions of the Other as a possible world (2008b, 101–12). I do not want to limit the implications of these differing interpretations of Deleuze, especially in view of Reynolds’ contention that this inconsistency in Deleuze’s work on the Other “threatens to illuminate some pivotal questions about the status of his metaphysics of difference” (2008a, 81). Nevertheless, I think that Deleuze’s work on the Other can be read most productively in relation to his general project of creating a philosophy of immanence. Furthermore, I think there would be significant benefits if we were to shift our critical focus from “possible” to “expression” in Deleuze’s phrase: “the Other as the expression of a possible world” (Deleuze 1994, 261; emphasis in original).

Deleuze regards the individual as an expressive structure. This focus on expression enables him to avoid crediting the Other with the internal and coherent consciousness which he denies subjectivity. What matters is how the Other expresses
a world: such expressions occur regardless of whether or not there is a subject to “receive” it. The ethical relation is not between subject and object, or self and Other, or subject and subject: it is the relation between expressive individuals. As a result of its continuous relations with others, the Deleuzian individual exists in a constantly unfinished state of individuation. Consequently, Deleuze’s use of the term “individual” cannot be understood as a form of self-contained individualism.

Deleuze describes individuals as expressive in the context of the perspectivism of Leibniz’s monad. The Leibnizian individual contains Ideas and intensities, but expresses only a portion of them with clarity, thus leaving the rest obscure. It expresses its perspective on them without benefit of a subject to do the expressing: there is only the expression itself. In this way, the immanent world becomes populated with differing expressions of the same virtual whole. Individuals express their perspectives through a necessarily vague assemblage of affects and sensations. Whenever we encounter another individual, we come into contact with the way another person affectively engages with their surroundings. Our own empirical engagement with the world is unique, Deleuze argues, and is broadened by witnessing how other individuals both engage in and articulate their own affective experiences of the world. “The duty of the other (if one may speak of duty)”, Bogue summarises, “is to affect and be affected, to suspend, as much as one can, the categorization and comprehension of the other, and to open oneself to the undetermined, hidden possible worlds that are expressed in the affective signs of the other” (2007, 13).

167 This contrasts explicitly with Sartre’s focus on the gaze as something which objectifies the Other, and in turn makes the subject the object of the Other.
What Deleuze refers to in *Difference and Repetition* as the I-Self psychic system is the structure by which the subject explicates the Other, and by doing so forces it to exist within that ontologically problematic self/Other structure against which Deleuze is writing. In his conclusion to the book, however, he insists that the existence of other people (as expressions of possible worlds) is what enables further individuation to be experienced. By denying the self any significant role, Deleuze elevates the importance of other and different expressions of the world (Deleuze 1994, 281).\textsuperscript{168} His ethical imperative is: “not to explicate oneself too much with the other, not to explicate the other too much, but to maintain one’s implicit values and multiply one’s own world by populating it with all those expressed that do not exist apart from their expressions” (1994, 261). This may sound like a ridiculously complex way to arrive at the idea that other people are perhaps unknowable, and to confirm that epistemology does violence to ontology. But it has far-reaching implications for ethical theory. For what Deleuze is claiming is that ethical relations are not made possible by developing better knowledges of either the Other, or of other people. In this model, recognition is neither conferred nor received. Instead, ethics becomes possible by constantly suspending knowledge, and re-affirming that suspension in every encounter.

In focusing on the relations between individuals I do not want to suggest that this makes the world more harmonious. Deleuze does not consider the relations between individuals harmonious: on the contrary, writes Reynolds, he “continually reaffirms

\textsuperscript{168} Tournier likewise signals that others are more important than the self by naming his novel after Friday rather than Robinson.
the impossibility and failure of all theoretical positions that presuppose any kind of harmonious connection between self and world, and self and others” (2008a, 70). This is commensurate with both his valuing of dissonance and his postulation of a “new harmony”. The relation to other people is not reassuring: we do not find in others either a reflection of our self, or a system of identifications, or a structure of reciprocal recognition. In this sense, refusing to participate in identity or identitarian systems can be seen as an ethical prerogative. Deleuzian ethics acknowledges the differential relations which compose ontology and undermine identity. Only by abandoning recognition can the subject engage with others in a way that enables it to experience alterity comprehensively. A Deleuzian engagement with both others and the world, Bryant writes, requires us to “seek out those gaps, events, traumas, shocks, and encounters which upset the smooth continuity of the subject, call its recognition into question, and introduce it to a domain that is neither that of the subject nor of the object” (2008, 266).

Olkowski, however, is not convinced by the seemingly utopian potential of this way of imagining a relation between individuals, which by not imposing limiting categories on identity avoids epistemological violence. In its place she offers a slightly more sustainable, if more devastating, critique of the ethical potential of Deleuze’s work on the self/Other structure. Her earlier publication, Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation, had expressed interest in Deleuze’s Nietzschean theory of a world of forces. But in The Universal (in the Realm of the Sensible) she questions the limits of such a theory (2007, 51 n.16), asking (implicitly) whether the Deleuzian world is one we would want to live in. Olkowski examines Deleuze’s
work on the self/Other relation to suggest that it offers an unacceptably limited philosophical perspective on human relations. If people are the expression of a possible world which unfolds on the plane of immanence, this version of humanity is devoid of nuance and complexity: Deleuze’s plane of immanence, she writes, is “anonymous, empty, gray” (2007, 47). Deleuze’s analysis of Tournier’s Friday, she objects, formulates a theory of the self in the literal absence of the Other. If the Other is figured in this way, it is itself defined as an absence or nothingness, rather than a presence articulated in particularities (Olkowski 2007, 43). Olkowski summarises as follows her critique of Deleuze’s work on the Other:

[I]f when an Other appears in the midst of the possible world they express, if ‘I’ as the expression of a different possible world must be first annihilated, then it is impossible that there would ever be any intimate relations between anyone. In this scenario, love involves no frequencies, no vibrations or oscillations of molecules of air or molecules of matter, nerves or cells. Love is an expression of a possible world; hate too has nothing visceral about it, it simply expresses another possible world. We would be mistaken if we were to imagine that the creation of love or hate is an emergent construction of ‘one’s’ own’ sensibilities, for what is ‘one’s own’ is, in this structure, nothing; intensity is all, the manifold of continuous space-time is reality. (2007, 43–44)

A significant problem with Deleuze’s abstract rendering of the structural relation of the subject to the Other is that it appears to eliminate precisely those subjects who might otherwise engage meaningfully with difference. But is Olkowski justified in concluding that Deleuze’s world is a loveless place? In my next section I examine his writings on love in order to interrogate Olkowski’s perhaps existential question: “Does the claim that Being is univocal and that the chaos that the multiplicity of planes of immanence generates satisfy our craving for a multiple world, a changing world, a startling and beautiful world, a world of pleasure and pain, love and hate?” (2007, 39).
Deleuze’s writings on love have not been examined adequately by either Deleuze scholars or theorists of intimacy more broadly. I think there are two important reasons why Deleuze’s work on love should be given further attention in both of these domains. First, the model of love he proposes is founded on the affirmation and proliferation of difference, which disrupts the dominant ways in which discourses about love continue to operate in the Western tradition. Secondly, Deleuze’s writings on love illustrate both his model of ethical interaction and the kind of political subjectivities which are possible after poststructuralism. Most importantly, the model of love he theorises is not based on recognition which makes it indispensible for my argument in this thesis.

In a lecture on love at the European Graduate School, Hardt suggests that an academic reluctance to theorise love has not only limited our understanding of it but also engendered critical resistance to intellectual work on it (2007). This problem has been caused partly by ideological investments in the way in which love has been socially organised, particularly in conventional attitudes to both romantic and familial love. In the West, Zygmunt Bauman argues, love is understood

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169 Catherine Belsey finds the implication of love in both normative heterosexuality and traditional models of gendered behaviour problematic. Theorising love from a feminist perspective is difficult because it has been ideologically mobilised so thoroughly and in ways that contribute to the social and political constraint of women. “True love”, she writes, is itself another kind of fundamentalism, has legalized prohibitions, coercions, narrow properties, expropriations and the transformation of people into property. With the best of intentions, the metaphysical ideal of true love, and the concomitant effort of the modern Western world to confine and contain desire within the legality of marriage, have produced, we are now in a position to acknowledge, at best a lifetime of surveillance and self-surveillance for the couple in question, and at worst the perfect opportunity for domestic violence and child-abuse, concealed within the privacy of the nuclear family. (1994, 74)
predominantly in terms of sexual difference, and the generative power of penetrative heterosexual intercourse in reproduction (1999, 25). “The dominant contemporary notions of love”, Hardt writes, “do indeed conceive love as [...] a process of fusion or merging” (2009, 2). The heterosexual couple is represented as two complementary halves of the one whole. This structure positions heterosexuality as not only complete but also — and more problematically — natural and inevitable.

Love needs to be interrogated, however, precisely because it is imbricated in a network of discourses about gender, sexuality, patriarchy, capitalism and the family. This is particularly important in a Western philosophical tradition which by constructing love as a metaphysical concept, enables its problematic ideological investments to pose as both foundational and unchanging. What is lost by positioning love in these ways is an acknowledgement of the various social and historical constructions of both love and the practices of loving.

The way in which love has traditionally been organised, in heterosexual couples and nuclear families, is socio-historically specific and therefore subject to change. Although models of free, radical, or “transgressive” love indicate that normative ideology has failed to monopolise the “naturalness” of heterosexual love, they are subject to the same contingencies. The various ways in which love can be both imagined and enacted is facilitated through the critiques of these normative structures. As Oliver argues: “[o]ur relationships, family structures, and family dynamics change when we can imagine them differently; and as we recreate our families outside the restrictive and unrealistic ideal of the nuclear family, we
transform our images of ourselves, our relations to others, and the possibility of love” (2000, 16). This is not just a matter of imagining different structures. It also involves acknowledging that transgressions of these repressive structures are already occurring, although our current systems of meaning and value render them unintelligible. This is because any deviation from normative systems, no matter how minuscule, reveals their failure by questioning the assumption that they are culturally universal and/or biologically innate.

The widespread reluctance to examine love critically is replicated in the field of Deleuze studies. Although much work on sex and sexuality is underpinned by Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of desire, only recently have Deleuze’s writing on love begun to be theorised. This is perhaps not surprising, as Deleuze’s work on love may appear to be at odds with both his anti-humanism and his refusal to regard the human subject as either stable or coherent. But this is the case only if love is imagined to require “the human” and “the subject” to perform it, or if such matters are presumed to be absent from Deleuze’s work. In accordance with my previous

170 To date, the most significant treatment of love in relation to Deleuze’s work is Protevi (2003). Love is also examined in Janell Watson (2004) in order to theorise what Deleuze and Guattari’s writings on courtly love mean for intimacy and domestication, in Stephen Hawkins (2005) in relation to the event, and in a brief vignette on love’s erotics in May (2005). John Raymaker’s Empowering Philosophy and Science with the Art of Love: Lonergan and Deleuze in Light of Buddhist-Christian Ethics (2006) also examines Deleuze and love but, in privileging a transcendent religious framework, is at odds with Deleuze’s work. This book is not in dialogue with the field of Deleuze studies and as such I have disregarded it. I would suggest that recent work by Michael Hardt (1997), (2007) and (2009) on a political concept of love also demonstrates a debt to Deleuze. This work can be situated within a broader movement in contemporary critical theory to re-examine love’s political potential, of which recent work by Terry Eagleton (2003), bell hooks (2000) and Chela Sandoval (2000) can be seen as typical. In his work with Antonio Negri in Multitude, Hardt suggests that what we need is “a more generous and more unrestrained conception of love” (2004, 351). Hardt attributes to love a dynamism which figures it as a constitutive force. In according love the power to be “productive, even ontologically productive” (2007), Hardt suggests that love needs to be conceptualised as a negotiation in which things are practiced and learned. In this way, he proposes that love can be seen as a “kind of training ground for the creation of subjectivities capable of […] democracy” (2007). This is significant to the way in which we read Deleuze’s work on love because it reminds us that the Deleuzian subject is capable of political engagement, as I outlined in my fourth chapter.
examination of Deleuzian subjectivity, in what follows, I argue that Deleuze’s work on love evinces a persistent residue of subjectivity, even though it takes a radically destabilised form.

Love cannot be described as a dominant theme in Deleuze’s work. It is nevertheless significant because he returns to it repeatedly, in his earliest articles, the development of his own philosophy of difference, and in his collaborative publications with Guattari (and Parnet). In *Difference and Repetition* he writes: “[t]here is no love which does not begin with the revelation of a possible world as such, enwound in the other which expresses it” (1994, 261). What are we to make of this statement? It depends on how we read “possible worlds”, a phrase subject (as I noted earlier) to two different interpretations. In one sense it means that love enables difference to be encountered by witnessing how others express their relation to the world. In another sense, it means that the structure of the Other produces a version of love which is trapped in the possible/real dichotomy and therefore prevents the process of differentiation. This raises the question of why Deleuze chose to end the final chapter of *Difference and Repetition* with this troubling allusion to love.

In both *The Logic of Sense* and *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze relates the connection he makes between love and possible worlds to the figure of Albertine in Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past* (1990a, 308; 1994, 261). By bringing to bear on this reference Deleuze’s most extended treatment of love in *Proust and Signs* we can understand how love functions in his work as a whole. Deleuze’s book on Proust

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171 The connection of love to (possible) worlds will be taken up once again in *Anti-Oedipus* in which Deleuze and Guattari write, “we always make love with worlds” (2005, 294).
describes love as an apprenticeship to signs (2000b, 7). This is intelligible within his
general theory of signification, which states that signifiers artificially over-code a
field of difference. Love is here conceived of as a process of deciphering. Its function
is to expose that flux of difference which, instead of consolidating subject/object
relations, results in a process of de-personalisation (Deleuze 2000b, 37).

Deleuze also offers a less ambivalent rendering of love in Capitalism and
Schizophrenia, which is worth examining here because of the light it casts on his
appeal to love in Difference and Repetition and The Logic of Sense. The extended
examination of love in these books illuminates in particular Deleuze’s own work on
the self/Other relation, and more generally the ethical potential of his writings. The
examination of love in both volumes of Capitalism and Schizophrenia is conducted
outside the confines of the coded system of psychoanalysis. Love is a central concept
in Anti-Oedipus, Protevi argues, because it is “anti-Oedipality itself” (2003, 187). In
this text Deleuze and Guattari attempt to liberate love from oedipal configurations of
it. “Sexuality and love”, they write “do not live in the bedroom with Oedipus, they
dream instead of wide open spaces” (2005, 116). This is commensurate with
Deleuze’s critical interest in “perversion” in both The Logic of Sense and
‘Statements and Profiles’. Both these texts examine the multiple ways in which
desire and love can function when it is no longer the domain solely of
heteronormative couples and the nuclear families.\(^{172}\)

\(^{172}\) This supports Verna Andermatt Conley’s claim that Deleuze and Guattari’s work anticipates
contemporary queer theory (2009, 24).
In *A Thousand Plateaus*, love attains a cosmological pitch. In relation to the body without organs, it appears on a list which includes “the simple Thing, the Entity, the full Body, the stationary Voyage, Anorexia, cutaneous Vision, Yoga, Krishna” and “Experimentation” (2004, 167). Signalling the moment of openness to a difference which is beyond identity, analogy, opposition or resemblance, love transcends the principles which determine intelligibility. Love is therefore not about recognition either of the Other or by the Other, but is instead impersonal. This does not mean that it is not specific – only that it is concerned with eradication of the stable subject, the person, the organism. In this context, Deleuze and Guattari write of love in terms of lines of flight into imperceptibility, a point reaffirmed by Deleuze in his *Dialogues* with Parnet (2006, 46). It is worthwhile to quote Deleuze and Guattari at some length on this matter:

> One has become imperceptible and clandestine in motionless voyage. Nothing can happen, or can have happened, any longer. Nobody can do anything for or against me any longer. My territories are out of grasp, not because they are imaginary, but the opposite: because I am in the process of drawing them. Wars, big and little, are behind me. Voyages, always in tow of something else, are behind me. I no longer have any secrets, having lost my face, form, and matter. I am now no more than a line. I have become capable of loving, not with an abstract, universal love, but a love I shall choose, and that shall choose me, blindly, my double, just as selfless as I. One has been saved by and for love, by abandoning love and self. Now one is no more than an abstract line, like an arrow crossing the void. Absolute deterritorialization. One has become like everybody/the whole world (*tout le monde*), but in a way that can become like everybody/the whole world. One has painted the world on oneself, not oneself on the world. (2004, 220–21)

This passage encapsulates the extraordinary range of Deleuze’s critical attitude to love. The idea of the double here is reminiscent of his claim in the Tournier article that the otherwise Other is neither subject or object but a true double: “one who reveals pure elements and dissolves objects, bodies, and the earth” (Deleuze 1990a, 317). In *Dialogues*, Deleuze and Parnet examine the possibility of experiencing love
by shattering it (2002, 46): only by abandoning limited notions of love can new forms of love, desire and connection become possible. This theme is tied inextricably to recognition. What possibilities might there be for love beyond that limited notion of it which socially is coded (Oedipal) and sanctioned (as reproductive heterosexuality)? What is possible beyond those forms of love rendered recognisable by that ideology? More importantly, what possibility is there for a love which not only does not require the stable subject but is actively engaged in undoing that structure? What are the consequences of this radical construction of love for Deleuze’s interrogation of subjectivity?

In A Thousand Plateaus Deleuze and Guattari explicitly connect love to naming. They write that love is an act of depersonalisation on the body without organs, and that it is precisely what makes naming possible. This is because, by denying recognition and undoing the pretence of coherence, we can experience others as multiplicities. This is why Deleuze and Guattari describe love as “[h]eavenly nuptials, multiplicities of multiplicities” (2004, 39–40). The interaction between lover and beloved is founded on their unknowability, a condition determined by the virtual and the process of becoming. In this context, Watson writes, love is molecular because it is what dissolves personhood and the subject: it is “[i]ntimacy without subjectification” (2004, 90). Love, Deleuze and Guattari argue, brings into existence the “most intense discernibility in the instantaneous apprehension of the multiplicities belonging to him or her, and to which he or she belongs” (2004, 40).
For Deleuze, the constitutive function of love generates the proliferation of difference. This is what enables him to depart radically from philosophical tradition, which represents love in terms of merging, unity, and recognition. The encounter with other people, with otherwise Others, is a process by which the self is undone.\textsuperscript{173} The depersonalisation which love entails eradicates the subject while retaining both subjectivity and subjective experience. This is what enables the consolidation of differences in forms beyond those which are recognisable. Far from erasing subjectivity, Deleuze’s work proliferates the possibilities for subjectivities which are unrecognisable because they are beyond our current systems for establishing meaning and ascertaining value. By refusing to accept the fiction that subjectivity is stable we enable new points of connection to be made and therefore new assemblages to become possible. This is why in Protevi’s formulation love is “complexity producing novelty” (2003, 191). “Love”, he writes, “is the call to enter that virtual and open up the actual, to install inclusive disjunctions so that the roads not taken are still accessible, so that we might experiment and produce new bodies” (2003, 184).

Deleuze’s work on love illustrates his model of ethical interaction, which is based on a differential ontology that is itself the endless production of difference. Seeing that this ontology prevents the Deleuzian subject from being premised on recognition, it is open to newness as alterity. It is for this reason that Deleuze rejects the \textit{a priori}

\textsuperscript{173} This is not unlike Butler’s claim that our relations to others undo us (2004, 19.). For both these thinkers, difference alters subjectivity so fundamentally as to undo its coherence. They disagree, however, on the ethical place of recognition in this process. For Butler, the subject’s engagement with the other is filtered necessarily through recognition. For Deleuze, on the other hand, only by abandoning recognition can the subject engage with others in a way that enables it to experience alterity comprehensively.
Other in favour of the otherwise Other. The version of love he proposes must be seen in this light: abandoning what is recognisable about both the self and other people enables the possibility of love to be realised. This reconfiguration of love necessarily relocates the ethical relation beyond recognition.
Conclusion: Ethics Beyond Recognition

I began this thesis with an epigraph from Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*: “epistemology is not innocent” (2004, 53). The political impetus of this thesis has followed from this statement, as I have been concerned with critiquing the epistemological frames through which ethics is imagined. At this present moment in our intellectual history, I have claimed, it is imperative to critique ethical theory because ethical discourse has become ubiquitous in Humanities scholarship. Ethics is not a mute reflection of the world but a form of representation with a world-making function. As such, how we formulate and apply ethical theory to cultural productions affects the ways in which we both understand and create our lived reality.

I have been less concerned with defining ethics prescriptively than with exploring the ways in which certain versions of ethical theory constrain meaning while others enable it. I acknowledge that there is no answer to the “problem of ethics” referred to in the title of my thesis. I have chosen rather, to seek in the work of Deleuze resources which enable ethics to be speculatively re-imagined. Nonetheless, I am acutely aware that to do this is to impose on ethics yet another epistemological frame which constrains meaning in a particular way, and as such is as susceptible to critique as all the other frames. Such a critique is a task for another occasion. But it raises a point that I feel is enormously important for the Humanities and which speaks to my own disciplinary concerns in English. Theory, and philosophy more generally, should not just be used by literary scholars as a tool for reading and interpreting texts. Ethics is based on theories which themselves need to be
interrogated and re-interrogated as critically as other forms of representation. Ethical criticism needs to become more meta-theoretical.

My own critical interest in these matters is evident in my introductory chapter, with the suggestion that “the ethical turn” in the Humanities has been largely a development of the recognition-paradigm in ethical theory. Attributable to the legacy of Hegel, it is sustained in a contemporary form in the work of Butler. The problem with Hegelian recognition is that, by constraining the way in which difference can be theorised, it prevents the conceptual possibility of alterity. Recognition also determines a specific relation between the subject and others which grounds it in negativity. In this thesis, by contrast, I have explored the possibility of developing an ethical theory which can function beyond recognition. Although Levinas’ ethics of absolute alterity appears capable of doing this, I do not think he succeeds in marking his distance from Hegel. The reason why I also found his work antithetical to my larger concern with the ways in which meaning can be made, unmade and remade is that by positioning ethics as first philosophy he puts it beyond the reach of critique.

In the work of Deleuze, on the other hand, I have found a more productive response to the hegemony of recognition in ethical theory, and the possibility of formulating an ethical relation beyond Hegelian recognition. My second chapter, “Lineage”, examined how Deleuze’s account of the history of philosophy informs his conceptual struggle with Hegel. His work on Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Bergson amounts to a sustained attack on Hegel, which results in his rejection of the canon of philosophy and the construction of his own alternative philosophical lineage. Those three
philosophers were important to Deleuze because the differential style of reading he utilised enabled him to exploit their work for his own ends. Reading Spinoza prompted the idea that all difference is the univocal expression of being. Nietzsche showed him how to affirm this being whose temporal duration he found in Bergson. Synthesising these three ideas, Deleuze conceptualised repetition as the eternal return of difference.

In my third chapter, “Ontology”, I focused on how Deleuze’s critique of recognition continues in Difference and Repetition, where he uses his differential style of reading to formulate his own ontology. Difference is positioned here as the matrix through which diversity manifests itself, and which enables finite differences to be expressed through univocity. In this way, identity is refused metaphysical primacy. I subsequently traced the development of Deleuze’s ontology through his critique of Hegel and Leibniz, his challenge to the Image of thought, and his work on individuation. By theorising (via Leibniz) the coexistence of incompossible possible worlds, Deleuze proposes a world founded on a “new harmony”, in which dissonance and contradiction can be affirmed as part of infinitely diverging series of differential relations, Ideas as differential problems, and events. I have found the particularity of Deleuze’s ontology extremely important because it indicates the conditions with which an ethics drawn from his work must contend.

In my fourth chapter, “Subjectivity”, I examined the consequences which arise when Deleuze’s ontology of difference and repetition is brought to bear upon notions of subjectivity. His work, I argued, does not signal the eradication of subjectivity, even
though it dismembers the subject; instead it presents subjectivity as a radically constructivist site, networked in connections with others as well as with its environment. This move puts the subject at odds with the individual encountered in liberal ideologies. But it does not mean, I have argued, that Deleuzian subjectivity is incapable of ethical engagement or political action. In this chapter I traced the trajectory of Deleuze’s work on subjectivity from his monograph on Hume to his theorisations of the fold in relation to both Foucault and Leibniz. This provided the context for those “passive selves” and “larval subjects” encountered in *Difference and Repetition*. Because of the abstraction of this subject, and to distance it from Cartesianism, I examined how it can be theorised as embodied, which, I argued, enables it to be understood as engaged in a politics of acts rather than identity.

In my final chapter, “Ethics”, I examined the foundational properties of relationality in Deleuze’s concept of difference and consequently in his ontology. Returning to his work on Hegel and Leibniz in *Difference and Repetition*, I reviewed the specificity of his divergence from Hegel. Their differing interpretations of differential calculus, I argued, profoundly influenced the particular versions of ontology which each of them promulgated.\(^{174}\) Hegel and Deleuze differ markedly from one another in their dialectics. For whereas Hegel theorises the manifestation of difference in terms of the contradiction of the infinite ratio, Deleuze theorises reciprocal synthesis through the process of different/ciation. As a result, Deleuze’s differential ontology is

\(^{174}\) The potential of the interdisciplinary nexus of Mathematics and Philosophy is something which requires further consideration particularly as it pertains to ideas about the logic through which being can be theorised. Proposing new logics, particularly ones which provide alternatives to the Hegelian model, have implications for ethical theory which my thesis only begins to indicate. This could potentially develop from Deleuze’s revision of Leibniz, which although thoroughly examined by scholars like Smith and Duffy, has not been examined extensively for its latent ethical potential.
simultaneously the condition which his ethics must accommodate and the relational structure through which his ethics becomes possible.

In the last two sections of this final chapter I examined the function of intersubjectivity in Deleuze’s work, analysing the self/Other relation and how and why it has been critically contested in Deleuze studies. By privileging otherwise Others above the structural Other, I argued, Deleuze successfully overcomes the problem of recognition. The potential for this move, I suggested, is to be found in Deleuze’s work on love, which does not depend upon recognition because it is premised on the proliferation of difference. It is for these reasons that I question the positive value conferred on recognition in contemporary ethical theory. Recognition is neither sufficient nor necessary when theorising ethics, politics, human interaction, or even love.

This returns me to Oliver’s question, which I quoted in the introduction to this thesis: “[c]an we conceive of the intersubjectivity of the subject without relying on the Hegelian warring struggle for recognition that dominates contemporary theory?” (2001, 6). The short answer to Oliver’s question is that we can, because Deleuze has enabled us to imagine a kind of intersubjectivity which is beyond Hegelian recognition. But that answer provokes a further question, namely does the version of intersubjectivity that Deleuze theorises, and which (I have argued) is an ethical space where the encounter with alterity and the proliferation of difference results in the refusal of recognition, entail any less of a violent struggle? This is something which remains to be investigated.
The ways in which recognition functions in ethical theory and in other theoretical projects certainly requires a more extended consideration than I have been able to give them here, as does identification of other ethical work which attempts to escape the recognition-paradigm. Such enquiries bear on questions of how we imagine community, and the ways in which it is being mobilised in contemporary critical work. These are questions I intend to address in my subsequent research. Because our representations of the world are also constructions of it, such work is important not only for interrogating those systems of meaning which compose our philosophies but also for speculatively re-imagining, and materially re-creating, the possibilities for living.
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