Difference over identity: overturning the paradigm of identity with Gilles Deleuze's differential ontology

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entitled

Difference Over Identity: Overturning the Paradigm of Identity With Gilles Deleuze’s Differential Ontology

by

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in Philosophy

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Taking Gilles Deleuze to be a philosopher who is most concerned with articulating a ‘philosophy of difference’, Deleuze’s thought represents a fundamental shift in the history of philosophy, a shift which asserts ontological difference as independent of any prior ontological identity, even going as far as suggesting that identity is only possible when grounded by difference. Deleuze reconstructs a ‘minor’ history of philosophy, mobilizing thinkers from Spinoza and Nietzsche to Duns Scotus and Bergson, in his attempt to assert that philosophy has always been, underneath its canonical manifestations, a project concerned with ontology, and that ontological difference deserves the kind of philosophical attention, and privilege, which ontological identity has been given since Aristotle. This thesis will (1) briefly characterize the history of philosophy as one which can be described as resting on an identitarian ontology, focusing on the contribution of Plato and Aristotle in particular; (2) describe the contribution of Heidegger as providing a way past ontological identity to ontological difference in asserting the event in place of *ousia* as the fundamental ontological principle; (3) assert that Deleuze’s philosophy ultimately provides the best framework for thinking of ontological difference independent of a principle or concept of identity.
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Preface

This thesis represents, first, a critique of metaphysical identity, and, second, an assertion of a philosophy of difference. Overturning the paradigm of identity over difference means initially explicating the metaphysical presupposition of identity as central to history of philosophy. This requires tracing the history of philosophy as one which operates on this very presupposition, only to show that this presupposition is not necessary, and is, in fact, aporetic. Thus, to overturn the paradigm of identity over difference truly means to present a philosophy of difference that, in its turn, accounts for identity as a derivative of difference itself. In doing so, the task does not utilize the methodology of the history of philosophy. Rather, the methodology is a rereading of the history of philosophy in a minor key, seeing the history of philosophy anew, as a history that is permeated by difference, even though identity always has the privilege of centrality. In order to carry out this overturning, I trace the canonical sense of the philosophical history as identitarian, only to present Heidegger and Deleuze as two moments in that history, two moments in which difference finally takes priority and centrality over identity.

This coupling of Heidegger and Deleuze is unique in the sense that it is not commonplace to consider the respective projects of the two philosophers as coextensive.
However, I suggest that both Heidegger and Deleuze share a common sentiment: that the presupposition of identity is one that ought to be rethought, and that difference should take on a more formative, central, productive, and privileged position than it has traditionally found itself in, as a derivative of identity, in the history of philosophy. This coupling presents something new in philosophy in that, taking identity to be a problem, taking identity to be presupposed, but never fully explicated, is an aporetic exercise throughout the history of philosophy, one which leaves both identity and difference in an inadequate conceptual state, never fully disclosed. To overturn the paradigm of identity over difference, then, is taken to present the possibility of a philosophy which thinks both identity and difference in a fully disclosed manner, each adequately, and at the same time. A philosophy of difference, fully articulated, presents a philosophical path from the impasse of inadequate identity and difference to a totally operational and explanatory philosophy of generation, corruption, change, movement, ideas, material, difference and identity. It is in this project that I follow Miguel de Beistegui’s *Truth and Genesis*. De Beistegui’s work parallels the work undertaken in this thesis in that there is a shared sentiment between them: the sentiment that difference ought to be considered, for the first time, in itself, outside of the purview of prior, presupposed identity. This is precisely the value of the thought of Gilles Deleuze, which provides the touchstone for both *Truth and Genesis* and the current thesis.

This constitutes a revitalization of ontology as metaphysics, of a discourse on being in general and first principles, albeit in a radically new way. Given the status of metaphysics as antiquated and impotent after its fall from occupying the place of the science of all sciences, this return to metaphysics runs against the grain of contemporary
philosophy, the task of which seems, regardless of the specific motivations of particular
domains within philosophy, to critique metaphysical thought at all turns. However,
ontological thought seems to be a necessary feature of thought in general, and
metaphysical positions cannot be left to chance. The sciences cannot be entrusted with
the task of general ontologies, because the scientific method (1) does not take its task to
be ontological, and (2) presupposes ontological concepts in order to furnish itself with
theoretical potency. Granted, if metaphysics as a concept and method is taken to mean a
type of ontological thought which has a history, then this thesis agrees that metaphysics is
a moment to be moved past. Following Bergson and Deleuze, contemporary science has
not yet found its proper metaphysical position. As such, the requirements of a general
ontology, and even contemporary science itself, demand a new metaphysics, and this
thesis proposes that this new metaphysics be a metaphysics centered on difference, not
identity. Leaving ontological thought itself to chance means irresponsibly neglecting
critical thought regarding the types of entities which are taken to be real, in the sense of
their import and affect. Regardless, entities are privileged, so the philosopher, above all
others, has the obligation to consider this privileging as such. Even for Kant, who stands
as one of the most decisive moments in the dissolution of metaphysics, states, in the first
Critique, Preface to the Second Edition, that metaphysics “would survive even if all the
rest [of the sciences] were swallowed up in the abyss of an all-destroying barbarism,”
(Bxv). It is this perennial endurance and importance of metaphysics which demands that
it not be left to chance, even if it is no longer regarded as the science of sciences, but a
discourse as essential as the others.
Chapter 1

Identity

What is identity? How and why has identity taken up such a privileged position in the history of philosophy as it has? Such a question as ‘what is identity?’ is one that has been reiterated since philosophy’s inception time and time again, albeit in forms relevant to the nuances of the specific subdisciplines within the field of philosophy itself. Obviously, in metaphysics and ontology, identity is a persistent problem which philosophers encounter, and is often accompanied by the equally problematic correlates of unity and being. As Leibniz consistently reminds us, “To be a being, to be one being, and to be one being are all one and the same thing.”¹ For identity’s part in epistemology, one needs to only consider that its most basic pursuit is toward the troubling relationship between the concept as knowledge and its object, in other words, the conditions, or even the possibility, of their identity. Logic, of course, is consistent with the rest of the history of philosophy and its involvement with identity via the law of identity, and its infraction,

equivocation. The ethical and political, even, are fully entwined with the preoccupations of identity in that the question is always one of the identity of a concept of the good, the just, etc., and what kind of active pursuits are permissible or advisable in relation to the concepts in question. These four basic regions of philosophical questioning inform all of the others; it is not surprising, then, that identity forms either an assumption or a problem to all of the various pursuits dependent on these four basic regions. It is even less surprising that identity play such a fundamental role in philosophy when one considers that the advent of the problem of identity corresponds to the birth of Western philosophy, and that, given this, we may not even be able to justifiably make a meaningful distinction between the two.

1.1 Overview

Still, what is identity? How and why has identity taken up such a privileged position in the history of philosophy as it has? The question demands a kind of backward thinking, a retracing of the steps through historical analysis. This is precisely the aim of this chapter. Furthermore, this retracing will follow the path of metaphysical identity in particular and its complicated history. This decision is justified in that questions concerning ‘that which is’ are the most fundamental and influential ones in the history of philosophy, a discipline which began as such questions, and a discipline that is inextricably bound up with the concepts which those questions produced as answers.

De Beistegui asserts that the principle of identity in logic is only a self-evident foundation in that it was the product of an early, “ethico-theoretical presupposition,” a decision made on the part of philosophers concerned with ethics and metaphysics, not logic (Ibid., page 38). This point will be clarified below.
However, and this must be made clear, the history of philosophy is by no means simple. One could just as easily portray our tradition in a different light, emphasizing characteristics particular to another subdiscipline of philosophy. Yet, the wager of this thesis is that this type of identity is always at work in any philosophy, and the retracing about to be undertaken has a specific, even transgressive, motive. The question concerning identity always implicates another, more subterranean, one. What is difference? How and why has difference taken on such a subordinate position in the history of philosophy as it has? For every privileged treatment of the problem of identity in philosophy, there seems to be a secondary, and an oftentimes comparatively dismissive, treatment of difference, to the point that, frequently, it does not even seem to be a problem enjoying the gravity of the problem of identity.

On the one hand, this seems natural. If philosophers should be motivated primarily by an intention to develop adequate concepts of identity, be they in regard to metaphysics and ontology, epistemology, logic or ethical thought, then difference would naturally only be a problem contingent upon the solution to the larger problem of identity. In this case, and this seems to be the trend, if there is a problem of difference, it is only an appendage of the problem of identity. Only once we develop an adequate concept of identity, so the thinking goes, one that suits our task, could we then work on the problem of difference, where difference is conceptualized on the basis of our notion of identity. On the other hand, however, if we were to invert the paradigm, difference would be the primary problem. In this case, difference would demand its own adequate concept first. Then, it follows that developing an adequate concept of identity would be contingent upon first developing an adequate concept of difference. Difference would be
primary, and identity subordinate. Consider for a moment that the organic and even obvious nature of seeking identity before difference was not a necessary procedure, and that this paradigm, as influential as it had been, was accidental. If identity has been such a persistent, elusive problem throughout the history of philosophical thought, maybe the very act of privileging identity itself is the problem. Identity seeming to be such a problem would, in the end, turn out to be a false problem.

Of course, one would be justified in being skeptical of the idea of inverting the paradigm of identity over difference. After all, the history of philosophy itself is one of philosophy’s most precious resources, and a radical reimagining of our basic principles may seem to be too close to a cavalier revision of our history. At the same time, there is a serious precedent for such an endeavor, and this thesis should be considered anything but revolutionary. Difference has always been under the surface of identity, and certain philosophers, Heidegger in particular, have gone to great lengths in laying out the groundwork for such a paradigm inversion. This thesis is very much in that tradition. However, it is Gilles Deleuze who will offer the clearest philosophical program inspiring the current undertaking. This project is indebted to Deleuze for having provided a path toward a philosophy that gives difference a concept of its own, a philosophy of difference. He accomplishes this while accounting for identity on the basis of difference, and, crucially, providing a compelling and responsible, albeit at times unique, presentation of the history of philosophy. At the same time, he asserts that any philosophy of difference must, necessarily, be intimately bound up with a philosophy of repetition. Thus, his work represents a conceptual intervention in traditional accounts of metaphysical identity and time. In his own words, Deleuze lays out an outline for that
program when introducing *Difference and Repetition*.

Perhaps the mistake of the philosophy of difference, from Aristotle to Hegel via Leibniz, lay in confusing the concept of difference with a merely conceptual difference, in remaining content to inscribe difference in the concept in general. In reality, so long as we inscribe difference in the concept in general we have no singular Idea of difference, we remain only with a difference mediated by representation. We therefore find ourselves confronted by two questions: what is the concept of difference—one which is not reducible to simple conceptual difference but demands its own Idea, its own singularity at the level of Ideas? On the other hand, what is the essence of repetition—one which is not reducible to difference without a concept, and cannot be confused with the apparent character of objects represented by the same concept, but bears witness to singularity as a power of Ideas? The meeting between these two notions, difference and repetition, can no longer be assumed: it must come about as a result of interferences and intersections between these two lines: one concerning the essence of repetition, the other the idea of difference.\(^3\)

It is precisely this line of thinking that this thesis wishes to explicate and mobilize against the philosophy of identity. In doing so, this thesis will, first, determine the history of philosophy as a history dominated by the metaphysical concept of identity. From Pre-Socratic thought, Platonism and Aristotle, the trajectory of a paradigm of identity over difference is set for philosophy to follow for over two millennia. Secondly, this thesis will examine Heidegger’s contribution to overturning the paradigm of identity over difference, giving a place to difference previously unseen in the history of philosophy by reorienting the basic understanding of metaphysics as such. Thirdly, this thesis will suggest that, in order to determine an adequate concept of difference in itself, Deleuze’s philosophy ultimately surpasses Heidegger’s by seeing in the history of philosophy, not

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the absolute destiny of metaphysics as closure, but the condition for resuscitating difference. Finally, this thesis will mobilize Deleuze’s philosophy of difference to suggest that thinking difference in itself, overturning the paradigm of identity over difference, is a task which presents philosophy with an adequate description of both identity and difference, while eliminating certain persistent aporia which philosophy has encountered throughout its history dominated by the priority of identity.

Before moving ahead, however, it is worth taking a moment to elucidate what should be concerns or questions on the part of the reader. Firstly, what, exactly, is meant by identity here? In what sense is this term to be used, since it has already appeared in at least a few different senses already? Is it the ancient sense of the generality of ‘that which is’, or even the particularity of ‘what it is to be a being of a certain kind’? Is it in the sense of the identity of an object of experience, or thought, or perception, or knowledge, or history? Is it the contours of objects, ideas or bodies? Is it even the identity of relations? Is it the identity that we associate with any particular branch or tradition of philosophy? The rest of Chapter One aims to clarify just what is meant by identity in this thesis by describing how identity became a problem in the history of philosophy, then highlighting certain traces of that problem as philosophy unfolds through time. It is precisely the difficulty of assigning a simple definition to the concept of identity that is problematic. Furthermore, this problem is at the very nexus of metaphysical thinking and the philosophical task of formulating and evaluating concepts.4

Secondly, it should still be generally unclear at this point just what is to be gained in something like inverting the paradigm of identity over difference to that of difference

4 In *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that philosophy is simply the power to create concepts (multiplicities) as affective solutions to problems; concepts are virtual Ideas operating on, and providing the conditions for, actual solutions (science).
over identity. My claim, following Deleuze, is that privileging difference over identity
does not amount to a simple reordering of terms under the same structure with the same
effect, whereby difference becomes problematic and identity more conceptually simple
and negligible. Rather, a clear notion of difference itself is possible. Not only this, but
answering the question, ‘what is difference?’ in the way that Deleuze does makes the
answer to the question, ‘what is identity?’ less of a problem. Taking identity to be central,
we have only, really, ever conceptualized difference in the following way: as the
difference between identities. Inverting that paradigm seems to suggest a very radical
type of thinking: insofar as there is identity, it is only ever identity amid differences, that
is, as a product of differential forces and relations. As Deleuze puts it, “That identity not
be first, that it exist as a principle but as a second principle, as a principle become; that it
revolve around the Different: such would be the nature of a Copernican revolution which
opens up the possibility of difference having its own concept, rather than being
maintained under the dominion of a concept in general already understood as identical.”

1.2 The Philosophy of Identity

The question of difference implicates the question of identity, and Deleuze’s
indication that difference is to be approached at the intersection between the ‘essence of
repetition’ and the ‘idea of difference’ is more than an ironic reference to the two ancient
masters of philosophy, Aristotle and Plato. In the space between the two, Deleuze says,
something decisive in philosophy occurs. Between Plato and Aristotle, philosophy

5 Deleuze, Gilles. Difference and Repetition. Translated by Paul Patton. New York City, NY: Columbia
focuses its gaze on a type of identity that is at once conceptual and metaphysical, representational and essential. Before focusing on this moment, however, and the inferences Deleuze draws from it, it is necessary to trace a somewhat canonical outline of the history of philosophy. Only by doing this is it possible to see the history of philosophy as a history of the philosophy of identity. In no way is the history below complete or comprehensive. It would be offensive to present such a history as complete, ignoring the massive body of nuanced exegetical work in the history of philosophy that continues to grow. At the same time, this history should be one that is familiar and generally recognizable as our own. The purpose of laying out this brief sketch is to set up Deleuze’s account of a counter-history within this traditional account, and only by seeing the two side by side may one recognize the important relations and oppositions between the two. A soft line will become apparent between the overt philosophers of identity and the covert philosophers of difference. This does not represent an undertaking that can be considered work in the history of philosophy. Rather, what follows is the explication of a trace of identity in the history of philosophy to provide a frame of reference for the assertion of a philosophy of difference. Without describing what is meant by identity, a critique of identity and a positive account of a philosophy of difference would be utterly meaningless.

1.2.1 Pre-Socratic Thought and the Beginning of Western Philosophy

In Truth and Genesis, Miguel de Beistegui asserts that philosophy is inherently, since its inception, an endeavor simultaneously concerned with the natural world and its
first principles, as physics and as metaphysics. It is precisely the tension between the two that comes to the forefront in Aristotle’s philosophy. At this point, being becomes intimately associated with the natural or physical sense of presence, and the metaphysical sense of essence. “This originary twofold and constitutive sense of philosophy is one that has often been ignored or forgotten in its unity, and philosophy has all too often developed one of its senses at the cost of the other, ignoring its ‘other’ side, to which it remained bound nonetheless despite itself.”\(^6\) Really, the question should then be one concerned with how this situation came about. What was the philosophical milieu that produced those conditions under which Aristotle found himself with such concerns as he had in the *Physics* and the *Metaphysics*? Clearly, to answer the question one must examine Pre-Socratic and Platonic thought. Only through this can it become much clearer as to just how identity, which in some sense is bound up with presence and essence, became as implanted in the general philosophical trajectory as it did.

At first, the earliest philosophers were concerned with natural philosophy, the explanation of the natural world around them, formulating generally naturalist explanations for such a world. For thousands of years at least, humans had been thinking of their environment and any kind of consistency in it as the product of supernatural, animate powers. In general, any kind of regularity in that environment was thought to be a divine artifact, and outside of the realm of human understanding in anything other than narrative terms. *Physis*\(^7\) was for the Greeks the word used to denote nature, the world, its processes, or even its contents so long as they were not human artifacts. It is from their


\(^{7}\) The Greek φύσις is translated to Latin as *natura*; physis/physis; birth, essential qualities, innate disposition. From φύσις comes τὰ φυσικά, natural things. Eventually, in Boethius’ translation of Aristotle, the *Metaphysics* is derived from Τὰ Μετὰ Τὰ Φυσικά, after the physics.
sense of the world as *physis* that we come to get nature from the Latin *natura* and the
discipline of physics. Philosophers, however, were unique in that they began to think
about the world that enfolded them with different terms and concepts, *kosmos* and *logos*\(^8\) in
particular. With *kosmos*, Greek thinkers began to see the world not just in terms of
*physis*, but in terms of an ordered structure of parts, and with *logos* they came to believe
that an account of that structure was possible. Thus, philosophy really begins when the
narrative accounts that describe nature as a divine artifact outside of the realm of human
understanding are displaced; through human accounts, knowledge of the structure and
principles of the natural world is possible. From these early thoughts, much of philosophy
fell into place. Naturalist inquiries into *physis* became physics. Inquiries directed toward
the principles governing the *kosmos* as a structured whole became metaphysics.
Questions surrounding the nature of *logos* became epistemology. At the same time, the
groundwork for the distinction between the way that the world *seems* and the way the
world *is* was laid down, and not long after that the troublesome distinction between
appearance and reality became more articulate. At the same time, the ethical and political
inquiry into the good took hold through the newly appreciated value of understanding
itself as intrinsically valuable, not to reach its full expression until Socratic thought.
Overall, then, the idea that explanations did not necessarily require supernatural elements
began the proliferation of what we can consider the origins of Western thought proper, in

\(^8\) The Greek *λογία* translating to Latin as *logia*, the study of something; branch of knowledge; discourse.
The Greek *λόγος*, then, translated to logos, account, explanation, narrative; and the Latin *legó* as I say,
speak, converse, tell a story.
that the mythological meta-narrative which had governed human thought for so long was irrevocably displaced.⁹

1.2.1.1 Monism

Initially, these naturalist inquiries were monist in nature. As the first of these new types of thinkers, Thales offers perhaps the best example in the late seventh and early sixth centuries BCE. Fascinated with early geometry, cosmology and astronomy, Thales posited that the world was made of some kind of fundamental ‘stuff’, which, behind all of the diversity of nature, was responsible for nature’s orderliness.¹⁰ For Thales, nature was in every instance a variation of water.¹¹ Aristotle provides an account of Thales’ view in the *Metaphysics* thusly:

> Of those who first pursued philosophy, the majority believed that the only principles of all things are principles in the form of matter. For that of which all existing things are composed and that out of which they originally come into being and that into which they finally perish, the substance persisting but changing in its attributes, this they state is the element and principle of things that are. … For there must be one or more than one nature out of which the rest come to be, while it is preserved. … However, not all agree about the number and form of such a principle, but Thales, the founder of this kind of philosophy, declares it to be water.¹²

From this, a few things should be clear. Firstly, early philosophers began accounting for

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¹⁰ This impulse to find a basic “stuff” would, as will become clearer, amount to selecting a hypokeimenon (*ὑποκείμενον*), a foundational substratum which grounds all that is, and acts as a type of principle.
nature by positing one type of natural thing as a sort of primary substance that did not perish, but only underwent some sort of change, or attribution, accounting for the diverse types of things found in nature. This substance was a type of principle that governed nature itself. By the very nature of water itself, Thales thought, all of nature could be accounted for. This basic principle as a cause for ontological entities and operations was referred to as *arche* by the Greeks, and would continue to play a central role in the history of philosophy.13

As Aristotle indicates, Thales was not alone in this. Following him, philosophers also posited a primary kind of stuff which could form both the material and principles to account for nature as a structured whole. While they maintained Thales’ method, the particular kind of stuff which they privileged was different in each case. Anaximenes, for example, posited that air is the basic material out of which the rest of nature comes to be and perishes. Through changes in density, so his thought went, air goes through phase changes into water, earth and fire. Anaximander, in a telling move toward abstract generalization, posited that the basic stuff of nature is the “indefinite,” thereby introducing into philosophy the notion of a motionless, unified, and even boundless, supersensible reality. At the same time, both Anaximenes and Anaximander addressed what they saw to be a problem with Thales’ account: how opposite natures could give rise to one another. It was too counterintuitive to assume that something like fire was, at its core, water by another name. Furthermore, both Anaximenes and Anaximander maintained that divinity was still bound up with the natural world. For Anaximander, the indefinite was the basic stuff out of which natural things came to be and perished, while the cause for this process was a type of divine principle of justice internal to the indefinite

13 See section 1.2.3.2 for Aristotle’s notion of *Arche* (ἀρχή).
itself. For Anaximenes, air was itself a god. In this way, it is evident that the recourse to supernatural agency and narratives remains an operative part of philosophy, a trend that would persist throughout the history of philosophy.

It should be clear from these early philosophical thoughts, then, that philosophy may have began as a type of naturalist, physical inquiry and method, but it always kept a sense of the divine through its value of first principles, a metaphysical and even theological sensibility. Furthermore, from this beginning, the field of philosophy is set up in a decisive way. Tools for thinking are shaped, methods that would be taken up again and again. The domain interests are designated and delimited, interests whereby philosophical concepts begin to take on their shape and weight. Most importantly, perhaps, the problems of philosophy are laid out at this beginning. One in particular stands out: how are we to account for identity and difference? How can self-identical principles be established that provide comprehensive accounts of nature, accounts which are not up-ended by difference? How can water, in thought, be a primary principle and causal agent, while, in experience, fire is so disparate with water?

1.2.1.2 Pythagoreanism

No other Pre-Socratic thought took the idea of the world as kosmos as seriously as that of Pythagoras and his followers. For Pythagorean thought, emphasizing first principles meant extending epistemological certainty, grounded in mathematics, into the

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15 This twofold sense of philosophy as ontology and theology is what Heidegger indicated as the ‘ontotheological’ basis of the philosophical endeavor. Deleuze would find common ground in departing from this Heideggerian point, and just what Heidegger meant should be clearer in the following sections.
metaphysical and moral realm. Thus, there was a strict identity between the order of the world and what kinds of concepts one could have. Extending their concepts of geometry to the world, the Pythagoreans moved from using stones in the sand to represent ratios to applying those ratios to bowstrings, finding that certain tonal harmonies were necessarily consistent with certain mathematical ratios. From this, they thought that the world itself, as a *kosmos*, had a structure that was in some way isomorphic with geometry and mathematics. If we are to take Aristotle’s account seriously, then the Pythagoreans even thought of number as a kind of substance: “... not that the limited and the unlimited are distinct natures like fire or earth, or something similar, but that the unlimited itself and the One itself are the substance of what they are predicated of.”  

They extended the duality of even and odd numbers to a list of binary concepts, even connoting the unlimited, dynamic and plural, odd connoting the limited, static and singular, the One. They then extended this list to their metaphysical speculations, going as far as prescribing a moral code based on the divine goodness of contemplating the singular, and the earthly darkness of contemplating plurality.

The Pythagoreans, then, were the earliest philosophers to abandon naturalist thinking to this degree. Not only this, but their emphasis on mathematics, binary conceptualization, the identity of epistemological, metaphysical and moral concepts would prove decisively influential for later thinkers, most importantly, Plato. Their emphasis on ideas and mathematics provided an important counter-balance to the

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naturalistic, empirical tendencies of many early philosophers. Additionally, their moral prescriptions seem to have bled into Platonism and the privileged position that the identity of the singular, the One, as an object of contemplation, took on in their wake, especially considering their similar emphasis on the transmigration of the soul. At the same time, it is important to note that the Pythagoreans still took experience seriously, even though they represent a departure from the naturalism of monist thought. It was, after all, their experience of geometry, as stones in the sand and then bowstrings, that allowed them to apply those basic insights into larger, cosmological inquiries, even going as far as extending these into metaphysical and moral principles.

1.2.1.3 Heraclitus

Perhaps the most idiosyncratic philosopher of this time was Heraclitus. Furthermore, Heraclitus’ philosophy remains the ancient prototype of a philosophy of difference. Where the Pythagoreans saw in the bowstring an analogy to the kosmos as a harmonious organization with rational principles in mathematics, a singular identity worthy of contemplation, Heraclitus saw in the bowstring the condition for the unity of identity and kosmos itself: difference. “What is opposed brings together; the finest harmony is composed of things at variance, and everything comes to be in accordance with strife,” summarizes Aristotle in the Nicomachean Ethics. It is through strife, becoming, opposition, negation, contradiction and sheer difference that identity, being, unity, or anything derived from them, comes to be. Heraclitus’ thinking tends to be

obscure or contradictory, perhaps in order to make his point. To emphasize the frailty of something like the bold dividing line within the Pythagoreans’ list of binaries, Heraclitus says, “changing, it rests,” and “upon those who step into the same rivers, different and again different waters flow.”19 His intention seems to be that of providing a reaction against the monism of Thales and his imitators, as well as the self-certain, mathematical clarity of the Pythagoreans. Over empirical inferences and proofs of geometry, Heraclitus chooses the ironies of aphorism as an accurate view of any kosmos.

Heraclitus is a figure that can be understood in many regards. In one sense, he has a specific influence on his near-contemporaries, Plato in particular. With Heraclitus, difference, plurality, movement and becoming are reaffirmed as valuable philosophical concepts for contemplation, after their depreciation under the Pythagorean framework. His emphasis on their importance became, for Plato, the obviously diverse nature of the material world which we perceive. Plato goes to such lengths in rejecting the priority of the world of experience and appearance in favor of the divine world of the forms precisely because he found Heraclitus’ assertions so compelling. The world that we experience seems, in some sense, to be a world in a state of flux. For Plato, the question was one of reasserting knowledge proper given the Heraclitean worldview.

At the same time, there are clear, and possibly intentional, lacunas in Heraclitus’ account. His aphoristic method leaves no technical understanding of difference and its relationship to identity in anything other than analogical terms. When he does use some sort of technical terminology, he resorts to using the methods of his predecessors. He states behind physis, there is some type of principle making it kosmos. Following the

naturalist method, for Heraclitus, the basic stuff of nature is fire, and it provides a divine principle of judgment by which kosmos operates.\(^{20}\) Similarly, Heraclitus affirms that an account, or a logos, is possible, but only for divine thinking, not human.\(^{21}\) Overall, Heraclitus’ importance lay in his persistent call to remember difference, a call that would be, throughout the philosophy to come, increasingly lost amid others. C.D.C. Reeve remarks that this call is in support of the “elusive and contradictory” account of “stasis in movement, harmony in opposition, and creation in strife.”\(^{22}\) Not until thinkers like Nietzsche, Heidegger and Deleuze would the call to remember difference itself in the face of the privilege of identity become as acute as it was with Heraclitus.

### 1.2.1.4 Parmenides

If Heraclitus’ philosophy were to remain a peripheral rather than central interest to other philosophers, it is most likely because it came to rest in the shadow of Parmenides’ thought. Parmenides’ philosophy represents a pivotal moment in the history of philosophy in that it departs from thinking about physis as a kosmos based on any kind of empirical observations, be they naturalist or mathematical. Parmenides’ method was one of the first instances of using thought alone to infer philosophical conclusions. His purpose was primarily metaphysical. At the same time, his method was concerned with drawing logical inferences from a simple definition of being, granting thought itself a kind of power that extended its reach beyond the limits previously imposed upon it.

\(^{20}\) Heraclitus also describes war, strife, opposition, tension, et al., as primary, but they all seem to be strongly analogous to his naturalist conception of fire. Furthermore, his use of metaphor makes it difficult to determine what he really might mean by fire. The important point here is that, when it comes to making a technical point, Heraclitus borrows from the thinking of the monists.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., pages 9-11, paraphrased.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., page 9.
Parmenides’ account, his *logos*, provided an example of just how bold human thought could be. His famous poem was nothing other than an attempt to deduce the unity of all that is using concepts and definitions, a new monism without the influence of naturalism. Overall, then, in affirming unity to the extreme degree that he did, Parmenides asserts identity, as the self-identical, in a bold, and, as will become clear, influential, way.²³

Mimicking the epic meter of Homer, Parmenides begins his philosophical poem by evoking a goddess to describe the ‘way that it is’. “On this way there are signs exceedingly many - that being ungenerated it is also imperishable, whole and of a single kind and unshakable and complete. Nor was it ever nor will it be, since it is now, all together, one, continuous.”²⁴ From the initial concept of being as that which ‘it is’, Parmenides unfolds a series of inferences based on the basic self-identity of being. Crucially, with every inference, Parmenides is able to bar another series of terms from the possibility of thought or existence. Being, as what is, is logically necessary, while the existence, or even the thought, of what is not, non-being, is a contradiction if the chosen definition of being is to hold. Having settled on a certain notion of being, Parmenides is able to infer that non-being, what is not, is a logical impossibility. In order to develop an adequate, non-contradictory concept of what is, Parmenides must associate being with “unchangeable, immovable, indivisible, homogenous and eternally present.”²⁵

Parmenides’ thinking unfolds in the following ways. If being, as that which is, were capable of undergoing a change, it would necessarily have to pass into that which is not

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²³ Ibid., pages 12-15, paraphrased.
from that which is. If being, as that which is, were capable of motion, it would have to make that motion within a larger field, necessarily a space of non-being. If being were divisible or heterogeneous, it would require a larger and more general class than itself. That class would have to be non-being, since it is the only other one available, the only one that is not already under the class of that which is, of being. Finally, if being began, or ended, it would necessarily have to do so at a point of non-being, since any kind of temporal order requires diachronicity, plurality of moments. Being cannot begin, spatially or temporally, nor can it change in the same regards. Thus it must be one, atemporal, undivided, at rest.

Parmenides takes himself to have established the most basic and general principle of nature as a *kosmos*: what is, being. It is this extreme gesture toward generality that placed Parmenides’ philosophy in such high regard among the Greeks. His thinking laid down a series of obstacles; it was bold and compelling. The consequences of this philosophy seemed to indicate that the apparent plurality of *physis* was, in fact, an error of thought. “Thinking and the thought that it is are the same.”

26 For not without what-is, in which it is expressed, will you find thinking; for nothing else either is or will be except that which is, since Fate shackled it to be whole and unchanging; wherefore it has been named all things mortals have established, persuaded that they are true.”

27 At the same time, the notion of *kosmos* took on a startlingly simple order and governing principle: the structure of the world is self-identity, and the principle ordering it is logical necessity.

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26 Heidegger would draw from this quote time and time again in his assertion that there is a primordial relationship between *Dasein* and ontology, in the terms of *Being and Time*, or the identity between thought and Being, in the terms of Identity and Difference.

Parmenides goes on to finish his philosophical poem by warning against the error of dualistic, mortal thought, equating such thought with mere opinion. He asserts that all thought is thought of what is, since what is not is unthinkable. Thus the dualism of what is and what is not is, in reality, just a mistake in the tendencies of human thought. This leaves the question as to the possibility and method of philosophical *logos* rather open. For Parmenides, the answer seemed to be some type of divine contemplation of the self-identical comparable to that of the Pythagoreans’ contemplation of the One. Put simply, the solution to this problem became one of ancient philosophy’s primary motivations. Parmenides’ Eleatic followers, Zeno among them, would continue to work through Parmenides’ inferences; the Pluralists and the Atomists would reject many of his basic intuitions, while Plato, for his part, would try to find a way to make Parmenides’ thought consistent with a variety of seemingly exclusive philosophies.

1.2.1.5 Pluralism and Atomism

Two very similar philosophical views were quick to respond to the implications of Parmenides’ thought. Pluralism and Atomism should be seen as reactions to the Parmenidean assertion that *kosmos* is ordered as a self-identical unity of being, relegating the apparent consistency of change, motion, and difference in experience to just that: an appearance that does not correspond to the actual way of things. Pluralism and Atomism are attempts to accommodate some of Parmenides’ thoughts, while reasserting the legitimacy of reality as it is found, materialism, empiricism, the senses and experience. The general insight that both schools share is that change is a type of rearrangement, mixing or separating of some imperishable kind of stuff. As such, the Pluralists and
Atomists represent a return to the naturalistic tendencies of the earliest Pre-Socratic. Both schools influenced Epicureanism, but they remained overshadowed and ignored by their contemporary, Plato, and an object of critique to Aristotle, not to gain a great deal of traction until modern, scientific thought.28

Empedocles asserted that there were four basic kinds of stuff responsible for the plurality of *physis*: earth, water, air and fire. By asserting these four as basic, incorruptible, ungenerated types of matter, Empedocles intended to sidestep the problematic simplicity of his monist influences. Change, then, occurs as the four elements mix with one another according to the causes and principles of the opposing forces of love and strife. Love is a force that acts toward unity, accommodating Parmenides, while strife is the force that acts toward plurality, accommodating Heraclitus. Empedocles believed that these inferences were both sound, and that they were in accord with the senses, which he maintained as generally reliable. In this way, he wanted to state that the experience of plurality and the thought of identity were in some way compatible, with pure love as a type of undifferentiated Parmenidean oneness, and strife as the dissolution of that oneness.29 Similarly, Anaxagoras tried to accommodate the increasingly diverse viewpoints of early philosophy by asserting that change and identity were compatible, but only by asserting a kind of monism by which everything is already contained in everything else, if only by degree. “In everything there is a portion

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29 Ibid., pages 19-23, paraphrased.
of everything except Mind,” according to Anaxagoras.\textsuperscript{30} This holds \textit{ad infinitum} regarding scale. Simply, in any possible object, there is a portion of every other possible object. Identity is a product of one element in a possible object being proportionally dominant over the others. The force animating all of these differences in proportion is mind. In the beginning, everything was completely mixed as a homogeneity, except for mind, or \textit{nous}; everything then came to be through pure mind in the activity of thinking, which contains everything and is the principle which accounts for mixture and plurality. In this way, Anaxagoras accommodates Parmenides’ value of thought while accounting for change as more than a simple misunderstanding. At the same time, Anaxagoras moves away from believing in the reliability of the senses, stating that they are “feeble” and “unable to discern the truth.”\textsuperscript{31}

The atomism formulated first by Leucippus and further developed by his student, Democritus, stands in comparatively close relation to the pluralism of Empedocles and Anaxagoras in that it proposes an alternative to the Parmenidean framework. \textit{Physis} is itself composed of a multitude of un-cuttables, \textit{a-tomon}. These atoms are ungenerated, incorruptible and self-contained units of matter. Change is accounted for under this view in that any type of difference or plurality in the world is the product of a rearrangement of atoms into a different configuration. For Democritus in particular, atoms are infinite in number, each having a different, specific shape, and each is located in a discrete place in a surrounding void. Already, the notion of a void breaks with the Parmenidean injunction


that non-being is neither conceptually nor metaphysically possible. In this void, atoms are in motion; they strike each other and entangle to form a multiplicity of arrangements accounting for the plurality of the sensible experiences, which are paradigmatic of human experiences. Sense itself, under this view, is nothing but the repercussion of atomic collisions on sensory organs. Even soul itself, for Democritus, is a particular arrangement of atoms in the void.\textsuperscript{32} Atomism, then, represents the most stringent assertion of an exclusively materialist conception of \textit{physis} and \textit{kosmos} in ancient thought.

1.2.1.6 Pre-Socratic Thought as the Departure of Identity

From the historical tracing carried out above, a few things should be clear. Firstly, Pre-Socratic philosophy seems to be built upon an internal tension between identity and difference. There is a nearly dialectical back and forth between assertions which privilege identity, and then assertions which reinscribe the importance of difference onto the philosophical discourse, the Monists, Pythagoreans and Parmenides toward the former, and Heraclitus, the Pluralists and Atomists toward the latter. This tension is also present in the very contrast between \textit{physis} as the plurality of nature which is true to sensory experience, and \textit{kosmos} as a reality ordered by supersensible, but intelligible, principles. The variety of accounts, the \textit{logos}, then, comes about as philosophers attempted to navigate through the seemingly problematic terrain laid out before them. Whether it is the assertion of identity in the form of a basic principle or a basic type of stuff, or the assertion of the limited legitimacy of difference in the form of an authentic concept of

change, the story stays the same. Most importantly, what should be clearer at this point, is that identity is always primary. In each of the preceding cases, as diverse as they seem, there is a common strategy adopted. Identity is privileged in a tripartite structure of a basic ontological, physical, natural concept; a correlating metaphysical, cosmological, theological principle; a certain approach to *logos* as an epistemological, rational, access point of which humans can have knowledge. In this sense, then, the history of philosophy already has the trajectory which will shape Platonic thought, and then be carried out fully after Aristotle’s philosophy: the philosophical task is one of finding, and providing an account of, the basic principles ordering *kosmos*, while attempting to find a place for the plurality of experiences that should be considered nature, *physis*. *Philosophy becomes the attempt to conceptually codify the tension between identity and difference.*

De Beistegui suggests that, within the Pre-Socratic period of philosophy, what occurs is “precisely the passage from a physics to a metaphysics.” He indicates that the Parmenidean moment is the one in which philosophy decisively turns from the examination of *physis* to an assertion of basic principles of a *kosmos*, metaphysical principles. “With the claim that it is *being* which is common to all beings and irreducible to them, Parmenides attains a pure metaphysical position, which is to say, one that would prove unsurpassable for any thinking setting out on the same course.” With the formulation of the concept of being, Parmenides hit upon a point where his predecessors fell short. He had found the concept that stood as the most general, basic principle for the world as a natural plurality or an ordered cosmos, one that could not be subsumed under any more general than itself, the common point of all that is. Here begins the storied

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34 Ibid., page 29.
distinction that would be of interest from Aristotle to Heidegger between being a thing of a particular kind and being in general. Not only that, but, making inferences from that concept, Parmenides brushed aside plurality in toto as both physically and logically impossible. He simultaneously surpassed the other thinkers of identity while taking the ground out from underneath those thinkers of difference. This move proved prophetic for the philosophy that was to follow. In equating being with the self-identical, incorruptible, unified generality of all that is, and further stating that this is the only thing of which philosophers can have knowledge, Parmenides laid out a course for philosophy that was explicitly hostile to difference.

Thus, from the start, the ontology of “that which is,” of being as a whole, culminates in the negation of the becoming which, because it contradicts being’s self-identity, is excluded from the outset as at once non-being and unthinkable (and we should perhaps recall how the goddess warns against pursuing such a path). The immediate result of all this is that the entire world of sensible experience, along with the perpetual transformations it harbors, has to be excluded from the order of being and referred back to that of appearance; or--in what amounts to the same, since we can only think what is--it has to be excluded from the order of true knowledge, that ontological or metaphysical knowledge Parmenides begins to chart.”

Even if Parmenides were attempting to account for physis like many of his contemporaries, his thinking takes him into the unmistakable territory of metaphysics. However, even after Parmenides, as we have seen, there were philosophers who attempted to reassert the order of difference into the philosophical discourse. They were, in the end, like Heraclitus, enveloped by Parmenides’ influence on Platonic thought. For Platonism, what becomes reified is the Parmenidean relegation of difference to a lower order under the primacy of the self-identical. What becomes emboldened in the Platonic

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Idea is the paradigm of identity over difference, and philosophy as the attempt to codify the tension between the two only manages to begin to articulate identity at the cost of difference.

1.2.2 Platonism

One of Plato’s greatest gifts as a philosopher was his ability to represent the philosophical milieu traced in terms that were as fairly evaluative to the views of those philosophers traced above as they were singularly formative of Platonism itself. He recorded philosophical history within the conversations of his dialogues while creating the philosophy that would be carried into the future with his nuanced emphasis on particular ideas and subjects. As previously stated, Plato’s criticism of difference amounted to a pejorative outlook upon the materialism and empiricism of the Monists, Pluralists and the Atomists, not to mention the flux of Heraclitus. He, more than anyone else, asserted the priority and superiority of identity at the cost of difference. In adopting a Pythagorean sentiment toward mathematics and the soul, and in placing a great deal of stock in Parmenides’ insights, Plato firmly established the philosophical trajectory as the paradigm of identity over difference. From Parmenides, Plato adopts the thought that “true or philosophical knowledge [is] opposed to mere opinion in the same way in which being is opposed to becoming and appearance.” Under the rubric of the good, beautiful

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36 Socrates tells his audience in the *Phaedo*, “How high I soared, how low I fell,” when he realized that there were no “valid” arguments put forth by his materialist predecessors. See 97E.
37 “Let none ignorant of geometry enter,” is, after all, traditionally held to have been the words over the door to Plato’s Academy.
and just, Plato would associate identity with ideas, intellect, knowledge and being in a way that would relegate difference to inferiority by associating it with material, sense, phantoms and lesser-being; the line between ontology and epistemology would become increasingly difficult to discern. Most importantly for the current undertaking, Plato’s influence on Aristotle cannot be underestimated, in that Aristotle articulated the problem of identity and difference in such a way that philosophy was irrevocably influenced by the Platonism within Aristotle. Even the most radical kinds of thinking today most commonly and directly refer themselves to Aristotle’s philosophy, which did more than any other in shaping the contours of philosophical thought.

However, and this point must be emphasized, Plato’s philosophy has been thrown into such contestation within the last century that it is, at the moment, not clear what ‘Platonism’ even means. The following overview of Platonism is strictly canonical, tracing Platonic thought in the way that a majority of the history of philosophy has generally taken it. Overall, this thesis will be concerned with the traditional account of Plato’s metaphysics, taken to be outlined primarily in the Phaedo, as these ideas have been appropriated by a majority of philosophers in the West for the last 2,000 years. This is not the place to determine whether or not Plato was primarily an ethical or political thinker over a metaphysical or epistemological one; nor is it the place to consider the vexed relationship between the Plato-Socrates couple, or if Plato meant what Plato said, or whether or not there is continuity throughout Plato’s early, middle and late periods. The purpose here is to briefly sketch Platonism as it influenced the history of philosophy in terms of generally metaphysical views and the specific paradigm of identity over difference. The legitimacy of the very credible and diverse exegetical work on Platonism
is not at issue here, nor is it within the present scope.

Explicitly, the *Phaedo* reconstructs the last hours of Socrates’ life, in which he describes how the care of the soul is related to philosophy itself. Amid arguments and discussions outlining the immortality of the soul, the soul’s problematic embodiment in material, and that knowledge is recollection, Socrates articulates a metaphysical view that establishes forms as unchanging, supersensible entities, and appearances as changing, sensible phantoms. Crucially, Socrates is able to determine that forms have an ontological status more properly able to be called being than appearances, which should be regarded as ontologically inferior types of being. What intensifies in Platonism is the Parmenidean insight that there is some type of division of being between that which is truly being, and that which is only nominally being. However, for Parmenides, the distinction was between all that is, being, and the error in thought and language referred to as non-being, the contradiction. For Plato, the matter is one of degree. There are beings that exist truly, what Plato designated as *ontos on* (ὄντος ὄν), and then the Medievals took as *vere ens*, which have the ontological status they are endowed with because of their characteristic incorruptibility and permanence. Then, there are beings that exist less-truly, appearances, the type of beings which have as their primary characteristic impermanence, change. The purpose of this distinction is to determine which beings the philosopher may justifiably call beings, and which are to be determined as unworthy of the title, which are worthy of contemplation and which are not. The Platonic “hunt,” then, is, in this case, between the real and the less-real types. The metaphysical problem of identity, as Plato determines it,

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39 De Beistegui remarks that, while the Medievals took *vere ens* to mean the true being, with theological import, it should be rendered as the beingly being, the being with the most full, legitimate, ontological being.
40 Ibid., pages 29-32, paraphrased.
is then more serious than it was in Parmenides’ hands, since the appearances do, actually, *have an ontological status*.

Plato-Socrates goes about this by first remarking that the soul desires freedom from its embodiment, because the body, as material, is by its very nature incapable of interacting with anything that truly is, i.e., the forms, without, in some sense, taking them to be in a corrupted way, a way that only produces opinions in thought via the faculty of sensations, rather than knowledge as truth via the faculty of intellect. Since the body only ever senses change, then sense, and any concepts derived from it alone, lack the kind of permanence and stability required for true knowledge. Socrates asks of Simmias,

“And would he [know the nature of each thing] most purely who should approach each with his intelligence alone, not adding sight to intelligence, or dragging in any other sense along with reasoning, but using the intelligence uncontaminated alone by itself, while he tries to hunt out each essence uncontaminated, keeping clear of eyes and ears and, one might say, of the whole body, because he thinks the body disturbs him and hinders the soul from getting possession of truth and wisdom when body and soul are companions—-is not this the man, Simmias, if anyone, who will hit reality?”

That the soul and the intelligence themselves should be left without the body to discern reality and truth as the essences of each thing as themselves leads Socrates to convince Simmias that the soul must have come from death into this life with the knowledge of forms already contained within it, accessible through the soul’s recollection of these forms. Socrates suggests a kind of ascetic removal from the influence of the senses if one, i.e., the philosopher, is to come into his or her most authentic relationship with

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41 “Know the nature of each thing” is the phrase used by Socrates in the preceding statement.
43 Ibid., 71A-76A, pages 473-481.
knowledge of the forms, accomplishing this by knowing the “essence” of each thing. This relationship is taken to be worthy of pursuit, since the soul, itself, is said to be of the world of the forms. Philosophy itself, here, is put forth as the preparation for death, training one to orient oneself toward the forms by developing a practice of the soul, a practice away from the body and senses.

Socrates then goes on to convince Cebes of this point, and in doing so contrasts form from appearance as that which is “unseen” against that which is “visible,” the former “always in the same state,” and the latter “always changing.” From this, Socrates infers that intellect must be the source of knowledge of the unchanging essences of forms, since sense only ever perceives that which is in flux as materiality, the experienced reality of nature, *physis*, phenomena. Socrates accomplishes this by convincing Cebes thusly,

“That the essence which we describe in all our questions and answers as existing--is it always in the same state or does it change? I mean the equal itself, the beautiful itself, everything which exists by itself, that which is--does it admit of any changes whatsoever? Or is it true that each thing that so exists, being of one form and itself alone, is always in the same state, and never admits of any change whatever in any way or at any time or in any place?”

“It must necessarily be always in the same state,” said Cebes. The gravity of Socrates’ question rests on Plato’s *αὐτὸ καθ αὐτὸ*, auto kath auto, “oneself as oneself,” that which is in virtue of ‘itself as itself’. It is precisely here where Plato brings being and identity into the relationship that Parmenides found. “The relation is one

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44 Essence here is derived from Plato’s use of οὐσία, ousia, a term that came to take on a great deal of weight for Aristotle. For the Medievals, the term would remain very important, taken up as *essentia*. It is still, as de Beistegui calls it, a “vexed” issue regarding Plato and Aristotle’s respective uses of the term.


46 Ibid.

of equality,” de Beistegui asserts. To be means to be oneself as oneself, nothing else. Socrates also relates the forms to oneness, *hen*. Identity then, as true being, is the equivalence of self-identity and singularity. Hence Parmenides’ insight that change and becoming contradict identity as *auto kath auto* (*αὐτὸ καθ ἑαυτὸ*); generation and corruption, change, difference and multiplicity are incompatible with identity, thus its characteristics as the homogenous, one, atemporal and changeless. Furthermore, the equality of the *ontos* on, with *auto kath auto*, the true being, or the beingly being, with the marker of being oneself as oneself, finalizes the Platonic notion that a form exists only insofar as it is itself as itself, with nothing extraneous, existing in virtue of its self-identity. The term that Plato would use to designate this kind of beingly being is *Idea* (*ἰδέα*), the Platonic Idea, what would become, for Aristotle, form and what would have such a massive influence on the history of philosophy as an endeavor concerned with identities, supersensible realities, and the moral endeavors tied on to those concepts.

Recalling that the *Phaedo* is a conversation about death and the soul, Socrates goes on to remark that, “When she examines by herself, she goes away yonder to the pure and everlasting and immortal and unchanging; and being akin to that, she abides ever with it….” Thus, Socrates posits the accord in kind between the soul, as the primary marker of the individual, and the real of the forms; they are of the same origin, and the soul is only ever at home in forms or Ideas.

Of course, this conversation immediately implicates one of difference, which Socrates describes as of particulars, the visible and the sensible, contrasted with

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48 Ibid., emphasis mine.
50 Ibid., 79C, page 484.
universals as forms and essences, of which there may be knowledge via intellect.

Following Cebes’s response above, that the essences must necessarily always be in the same state, Socrates asks another telling question:

“And what of the many particulars, men or horses or dresses or what you will, things equal or beautiful and so forth, all that have the same name as those essences? Are they always in the same state; or, quite opposite to the essences, are they not constantly changing in themselves and in relation to each other, and one might say, never keep in the same state?”

“That again is right,” said Cebes, “they never keep in the same state.”

“These, then, you could touch or see or perceive by the other senses, but those which continue in the same state cannot be grasped by anything except intellectual reasoning, and such things are unseen and not visible?”

“Certainly that is true,” he said.

“Shall we lay down, then, that there are two kinds of existing things, one visible, one unseen?”

“Yes,” he said.51

The really noteworthy aspect of the above interaction between Socrates and Cebes is that, as previously stated, appearances are not simply categorized as non-being, as Parmenides would have it, but granted an ontological status of their own, albeit as inferior. It is precisely this categorization of being as composed of two species, the unseen and the visible, that Nietzsche would later indicate as constitutive of metaphysics as such.52 De Beistegui asserts that it amounts to putting forth that “everything that is the same or self-identical is; everything that is other, or differs from itself, is not.”53 Here, the assertion that Heraclitus seemed to hint at, that something is only insofar as it differs from itself, is buried under the weight of the priority of the self-identical. That which is only insofar as

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51 Ibid.
52 See “The History of an Error,” from Twilight of the Idols. It is also from this point that ‘overturning Platonism’ takes its task to be that of a reevaluation of the values, or the hierarchy, of these two species.
it differs from itself is ontologically lost to thought, and very foreign to contemporary thinking. Socrates even goes as far as connoting the realm of the sensible, the realm of change and particulars, with a kind of Hell, like Hades, in which souls have become too bodily, making themselves visible as ghosts. The moral connotations should be clear. Overall, what presents itself in this aspect of Platonism is the relegation of particulars to ontological inferiority based on the presupposition of self as an ontologically self-sustaining feature of being, of true being.

Socrates’ points becomes even more nuanced in the final argument of the *Phaedo*, where he attempts to describe the relationship between forms and appearances, that is, how it could be that particulars may seem good, beautiful or just when they are not, themselves, the essences of the forms, but something embodied and sensible. He states, “What appears to me is, that if anything else is beautiful besides beauty itself, what makes it beautiful is simply that it partakes of that beauty; and so I say with everything.” In this way, Socrates takes the notion of ‘partaking’ to be a fine counterpoint to the materialists’ confused notions of principles as causes. In some sense, forms, then, are causes. Partaking as a type of cause is, even for Socrates, difficult to explain. “I hold to myself simply and completely, and foolishly perhaps, that what makes it beautiful is only that beauty, whether its presence or a share in it or however it may be with the thing, for I am not positive about the manner, but only that beautiful things are beautiful by that beauty.” Only by the presence of a type of share, or even portion, of beauty, or any of the forms for that matter, may a particular then be said to partake of that

55 Ibid., 100B, page 504; emphasis mine.
56 Ibid.
form, and then truly have the essence at hand as a characteristic of itself. Taking a more Aristotelian, and modern, approach, we could say that this relationship is one of predication. A form in its self-identical state has only its essence predicated of itself, thus the relationship is one of equality, or identity. A particular which partakes of a form is predicated of that form, thus it can be said to have the relevant characteristic of beauty, or whatever the term may be. Particulars with no predication, no partaking whatsoever, are simply differential, in flux, and, as such, are purely phenomenal, experiential, natural.\textsuperscript{57} Thus, no knowledge comes of them or by them.

Again, the Platonic point being made here is that the philosopher should discern which things may justifiably be called beautiful, good, just, etc., and which may not. Phaidon, convinced by Socrates’ reasoning, asserts that, “each of these ideal qualities has a kind of existence, and the particular things that partake of them get their name from them.”\textsuperscript{58} Meaning, we may only legitimately call those things beautiful, good, just, etc., when they properly partake of the forms relevant to those qualities; everything that doesn’t pass the selective test may not be rightly called such. The distinctions being drawn here develop into a threefold structure between the self-identical, ontologically independent and unseen forms; the things which may rightly be said to partake in those forms, having the essence somehow present in them, or related by predication, although they are still particulars; and those things which have no partaking relation to the form which they claim to, the illegitimate, differential phenomena. Finally, at the end of the arguments of the \textit{Phaedo}, having rejected that opposites could generate one another, Socrates takes it that he has proven the existence of unchanging entities, the things which

\textsuperscript{57} This type of thinking fully paves the way for Aristotle’s philosophy, the German Idealists’ subjectivization of substance, the contemporary, post-Nietzschean classification of model, copy, simulacra.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 102B, page 506.
partake in those entities, and the things which are confused for partaking in such entities. “Then it is possible . . . with some such things that not only the essence is thought worthy of the same name forever, but something else is worthy, which is not that essence but which, when it exists, always has the form of that essence.”

What unfolds in Platonism is the entrenchment of identity in the posited equivalence between auto kath auto and ontos on, between itself as itself and the true being. This is precisely the essence of the Platonic Idea. In doing such, Platonism asserts that there are two species of being: those that are self-identical and ontologically self-sustaining, and those that are characterized by change and dependence on the self-identical. In answering the metaphysical question concerning what kinds of beings there are, Platonism states that there are those beings that are beings, in the fullest sense of the term, and there are those beings that are only insofar as they partake in the being of the forms. Thus, Plato fully adopts the heritage of philosophy as the codification of the tension between identity and difference. His attempt to pass through that tension leads to the method of selecting, and we see this throughout a vast majority of the dialogues, between those legitimate types of beings which can be called such and those which can not. Platonism’s general tendency to give forms, essences, or Ideas equal weight as simultaneously ontological and epistemological directs philosophy toward the pursuit of knowing which identities exist, and how we can account for that knowledge. At the very same time, difference becomes fully subordinate to identity in not only a metaphysical sense, but a moral one. This is quite clear in that particulars are said to partake of forms’ essences, and the result is that difference is only thought insofar as it is thought of identity, the difference between identities. There are two lines of being: one as that which

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59 Ibid., 103E, page 508.
is discerned via intellect, the self-identical forms, and the other as that which is only sensible and in perpetual change, the different. There are beings that exist truly as models for the rest, and there are beings that exist as copies of models, or simply as differential phantoms themselves, simulacra. Platonism directs the philosopher to pursue only the models, only the self-identical and self-sustaining. “Such things he must sing like a healing charm to himself.”

1.2.3 Aristotle

If the above thesis is correct, that philosophy is characterized as the codification of the tension between identity and difference, then Aristotle’s philosophy represents the irretactable moment of the entrenchment of philosophy as such. “With Aristotle, philosophy posits itself as the science of the being lying ‘behind’ or ‘beneath’ beings, and as the science of being in motion.” Aristotle takes beings as types to be dependent on being in general as a ground and origin, rather than a privileged type of element within nature; being is seen as the foundation for nature. Aristotle discussed this notion of being in the *Metaphysics*, while works like *Physics*, *On the Heavens*, *On Generation and Corruption*, and all of his naturalist works on plants and animals represent his working through the characteristics and principles of types of beings. While, as has been shown

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60 Ibid., 114C, page 518.
61 The above indication that exegetical work on Platonism is complex applies just as much to Aristotle here. While what follows is somewhat of an orthodox view of Aristotle, there are specific exegetical stakes present in that I follow de Beistegui’s reading of Aristotle, who seems to follow Aubenque (*The Problem of Being*, my translation) for the most part.
62 Deleuze characterizes Aristotle’s philosophy as the “propitious moment” of a philosophy of identity. See *Difference and Repetition*, Chapter 1, “Difference in Itself.”
above, Deleuze locates the contemporary task of philosophy at the intersection between reevaluated concepts of difference and repetition, de Beistegui locates the condition for the history of philosophy as it developed at the intersection of metaphysics and physics, that is, at Aristotle. Both thinkers agree that the renewal of philosophy as ontology amounts to a transition from static identity and linear time to dynamic difference and decentered repetition as primary philosophical concepts. The intersection of metaphysics and physics is precisely the tension between identity and difference, thus my characterization. It is just this tension that is played out between Aristotle’s *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, which delimited the scientific, metaphysical and theological disciplines for thousands of years thereafter.

The most fascinating aspect of Aristotle’s role in all of this is that it was precisely by his attempt to move from a physics, which remained true to phenomenal experience as characterized by natural change and phenomena, to a metaphysics, which in some way accounted for a lack in physics, which shows that his physics was always already supplemented by the metaphysics of Parmenides and Plato, supplemented by identity. For Aristotle, metaphysics only ever presented a problem of identity, as a problem of *ousia*, insofar as the metaphysical underpinnings of a physics of movement and change already rested on an inherited problem of identity. While the *Metaphysics* is taken as an inquiry to be conducted after the *Physics*, it reveals the metaphysics of identity as internal to the *Physics*, in that the concepts of difference, change, and motion are already ones subordinate to variations of identity as a metaphysical concept. In order to show this, a more detailed examination of Aristotle’s *Physics* and *Metaphysics* is an order. If the above thesis is correct, it would show that Aristotle’s philosophy not only projects
philosophy toward a pursuit of first principles in the face of motion, but actually reifies
the paradigm of identity over difference emboldened with Aristotle’s teacher, Plato.

1.2.3.1 Physics

Aristotle’s Physics stands both dependent on and in contrast to his cosmology, put
forth in On the Heavens. The Physics is an inquiry into the kind of motion characteristic
of the imperfect, ‘sublunary’ realm of the Earth, while On the Heavens describes the
cosmological workings of the broader universe, the heavens. In both cases, movement is
taken as a central concept, movement understood as an internal principle of motion
belonging to substances, or bodies; this stands very much in contrast to the modern
conception of movement as bodies interacting with one another via force. “Every body
has its natural movement, which is not constrained or contrary to its nature,” Aristotle
tells us.64 For him, the cosmos, as a structured whole, is composed of perfect spheres
engaged in types of circular motion, the only kind of motion appropriate to their
substance.65 The Earth is the innermost sphere characterized by the natural world and its
four basic substances: earth, air, water and fire, which have a different type of motion
than that of the perfect spheres,66 hence the Physics as a companion description of the
natural type of movement found within the nature of the sublunary sphere.

Page 493.
65 Ibid., Book 2, Section 4, 286b10. “The shape of the heaven is of necessity spherical; for that is the shape
most appropriate to its substance and also by nature primary.”
66 Ibid., Book 2, Section 3. Pages 472-473.
“The Aristotelian cosmos is finite, differentiated, and hierarchical.”67 This means that the cosmos is a structure of vertically organized spheres, imperfect Earth at the center,68 with each sphere having a degree of perfection correlating to its movement in a qualitatively increasing fashion; the furthest spheres from the center are characterized as ontologically more and more perfect by degree, moving according to an inner telos or principle which is correspondingly perfect. This principle has its root in the highest sphere, itself the origin of motion. “The stars are spherical and are not self-moved,” Aristotle asserts.69 “For they do not attain the final end, but only come as near to it as their share in the divine principle permits. But the first heaven finds it immediately with a single movement, and the bodies intermediate between the first and last heavens attain it indeed, but at the cost of a multiplicity of movement.”70 Aristotle takes the Earth to be the most imperfect sphere and at a state of rest, but with a local motion peculiar to itself, while, with each sphere further removed from Earth, a higher and higher degree of perfection in movement, nature, and principle is attained by proximity to the most perfect sphere, the outermost. In moving itself by its own perfect “divine principle,” it so acts as the cause of motion in all of the other spheres internal to it, and thus occupies the most important place in the hierarchy of cosmological entities, in that it is ontologically and teleologically perfect in principle. It is the necessary principle, Aristotle believes, the only one that accounts for the movement of the others.

Aristotle’s assertion that there is a significant difference between the types of

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69 Ibid., Book 2, Section 9, 291a26. page 482.
70 Ibid., Book 2, Section 10, 292b20-24. Page 482.
movement and principles found in the cosmos as a hierarchy of spheres and those found in the sublunary sphere demands two separate accounts of each specific type. Entities on the cosmological scale are described in On the Heavens, while the Physics attempts to describe those of the sublunary type. It is Aristotle’s commitment to beginning with sensible experience that creates this division, since the heavens do seem to behave much differently than natural things on Earth. The type of movement which the heavens exhibit most clearly is regular and circular, hence Aristotle’s description of cosmological movement and bodies as spherical by principle. Earthly nature, on the other hand, seems to involve a more nuanced type of movement that is neither modern nor in line with Aristotle’s cosmology; it is movement in the broader senses of change and becoming in growth, generation, corruption, presence and absence. As such, Aristotle takes becoming seriously, like many of his predecessors. His detailed treatment of becoming provides a much more comprehensive account of change and difference when compared with Plato. Yet, as will become clearer, it still follows from the same paradigm of identity over difference, which presents a serious problem for Aristotle and the history of philosophy, which follows from his thought. The problem would, in the end, take on the sense of an aporetic moment between reconciling knowledge as fixed, first principles with experiences of change, motion, generation, and corruption.

Most central to Aristotle’s Physics is his early conception of matter as central to nature. “My definition of matter is just this—the primary substratum of each thing, from which it comes to be, and which persists in the result, not accidentally.” Matter is the

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71 φύσις.
primary “substance” of each thing, the aspect of each natural thing that is maintained through change, so long as that thing is maintained. Matter is different than privation, which is an aspect of a thing that is accidental, that may come to be or perish without the thing of which it is attributed to coming to be or perishing.\textsuperscript{73} Aristotle determines nature to be a type of cause for natural things, in that natural things are said to be such as they are by their very nature.\textsuperscript{74} He makes this claim based on the insight that movement is a common principle of natural things, and movement is itself a principle of nature. “For each of them has within itself a principle of motion and of stationariness (in respect of place, or of growth and decrease, or by way of alteration).”\textsuperscript{75} Crucially, Aristotle describes this principle in terms of “an innate impulse to change.”\textsuperscript{76} Thus, Aristotle’s fundamental principles laid out in his description of nature set up a view of nature as composed of matter, as a substance acting as a necessary foundational substrate, privation, as accidental attributes, and nature as an internal principle to natural things, a principle which determines their modality of existence as one of change, motion. “Nature is a principle or cause of being moved and of being at rest in that to which it belongs primarily, in virtue of itself and not accidentally.”\textsuperscript{77}

Aristotle goes on, taking motion as the central object of inquiry in determining the principles of nature. He indicates that motion is a principle that is particular to the mode of each being which it is a principle of. More specifically, motion is particular to the

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., Book 1, Section 9. Pages 327-328.
\textsuperscript{74} Aristotle’s refers to animals and their parts, plants and simple bodies (earth, air, water, fire) as examples of natural things. He then contrasts those things to artifacts, things made by humans (chairs, tables).
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., Book 2, Section 1, 192b13-16. Page 329.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 192b18. Page 329.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 192b 21-22. Page 329.
singularity, the individual.\textsuperscript{78} “Hence, there are as many types of motion or change as there are of being.”\textsuperscript{79} Further, he indicates that movement is the actualization of some type of capacity particular to each individual. “The fulfillment of what is potentially, as such, is motion,”\textsuperscript{80} which occurs in the movable individual actively as a mover, or on the passively movable individual as moved.\textsuperscript{81} In either case, motion is an actualized potentiality of an individual thing. Most importantly, perhaps, movement always requires a form as a principle acting on the individual material substrate’s possibilities. Aristotle states, “The mover will always transmit a form, either a ‘this’ or such or so much, which, when it moves, will be the principle and cause of the motion.”\textsuperscript{82} All of this rests on Aristotle’s four causes: the material cause is that which an individual is made of; the material substrate which delimits the general set of conditions of possibility for movement in that particular thing; the formal\textsuperscript{83} cause which acts as the specific model for the actualization of any potentiality under a general set of possibilities; the efficient cause which is the actual source of motion acting between matter and form; the final cause which acts as the end\textsuperscript{84} towards which the motion or change is directed.\textsuperscript{85} Thus, Aristotle shifts the emphasis in the \textit{Physics} from a discussion of matter and form to that of potentiality and actuality, where potentiality connotes, for an individual, a kind of latent power to become, whereas actuality connotes the fulfillment of a potential capacity in action, through an active process of actualization. These four causes represent different

\textsuperscript{78} In this instance, an individual is to be taken as a \textit{tode ti}, a this.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., Book 3, Section 1, 201a7-8. Page 343.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 201a11-12. Page 344
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., Book 3, Section 3, 202a29-31. Page 345.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., Book 3, Section 2, 202a9-11. Page 344.
\textsuperscript{83} Aristotle outlines formal cause as “the definition of the essences,” importantly, relating form, as we have seen above, to concepts of \textit{logos} and \textit{essentia}.
\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Telos}.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., Book 2, Section 3, paraphrased. Pages 332-334.
modes of the process of nature and natural things in becoming, in motion. This, Aristotle states, is precisely the core account of movement for nature, and natural things.

[Motion] is the fulfillment of this potentiality by the action of that which has the power of causing motion; and the actuality of that which has the power of causing motion is not other than the actuality of the movable; for it must be the fulfillment of both. A thing is capable of causing motion because it can do this, it is a mover because it actually does it.\textsuperscript{86}

Thus, matter is what acts as the substantial substrate for motion as the actualization of potentiality through its engagement with forms, and this is precisely what accounts for the type of motion, becoming and change characteristic of the natural, sublunar realm, in which difference seems very much real.

De Beistegui asserts that, “The science of φύσις [(physis)], as designating one sphere of the real, and not the universe as such, is the science of beings in their becoming,” specifically.\textsuperscript{87} The separate accounts provided in On the Heavens and the Physics already limit the scope of a description of nature to the sublunar realm, accounted for in the latter work, leaving the larger cosmological types of movement to the account provided in the former work. At the same time, it must be stressed that both accounts take movement to be central. Whether movement as a concept connotes perfection, as is the case in On the Heavens, or it connotes becoming and a comparative imperfection, as is the case in the Physics, movement as a concept is always movement as a metaphysical concept. The accounts provided in both cases are not in any way accounts that we would consider modern in their approach, that is, as mathematical-scientific. These accounts are based on sensible, common experiences as starting points which are

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., Book 3, Section 3, 202a13-18. Page 344.
coupled with metaphysical concepts to explain natural phenomena. Additionally, the *Physics* remains slightly unclear on matter as a type of substrate. If matter is to act as a type of primary substance, is it capable of generation or corruption? If it is necessary, how do things, as individuals come to be and perish? If matter is a secondary substance, can it truly act as a substrate of any kind? The problem is one of squaring the accounts that our senses present to us, where becoming seems paradigmatic, and the account, most relevant to the intellect, that rests on the ability to describe how identity is possible amid becoming. Additionally, in saying that ‘there are as many types of motion as there are of being’, Aristotle has already left open serious questions regarding definitions as generalities (categories of genera and species) that may somehow account for particular individuals (*tode ti*) without subsuming their particularity under the general, or, in the opposite move, simply providing a list of particulars with no explanatory power. Such questions go into developing the tension between physics as an exhaustive science, or physics as an incomplete science, demanding a broader science of being in general rather than types of being with types of motion.

Most importantly for the present task, running throughout these Aristotelian texts is a persistent thread of first, divine principles. This is, Aristotle refers to often, and not only in the *Metaphysics*, what prompts the inquiries of a ‘first philosophy’, a theological type of enterprise bound up with being in general. Furthermore, this philosophy’s relationship to the respective pursuits of cosmology and natural philosophy, or even the other pursuits Aristotle engages in for that matter, always remains an open type of question. In what sense is it first philosophy? In *On the Heavens*, as we have already

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88 In the *Categories*, Aristotle explains that primary substances are ones that take on certain attributes, accounting for the different types of being that are possible.
seen, the outermost sphere is said to be the divine sphere that acts as mover to all of the rest by moving itself. “For the prime mover must cause motion in virtue of its own natural movement, and the other bodies, moving without constraint, as they came to rest in their proper places, would fall into the order in which they now stand.” Without this specific characterization of the outer sphere as such, the entire cosmological edifice constructed by Aristotle falls apart. In a similar way, and this still requires attention, the Physics itself leads to a divine sense of first principles. This is evident in two clear ways. First, in the very beginning of the Physics, we are presented with a path that the Physics will not take. Aristotle tells us, “The accurate determination of the first principle in respect to form, whether it is one or many and what it is or what they are, is the province of first philosophy; so these questions may stand over till then. But of the natural, i.e. perishable, forms we shall speak in the expositions which follow.” That ‘first’ path is, presumably, precisely the path which the Metaphysics shall take up ‘after’ the Physics.

Secondly, first philosophy creeps back into the Physics at the very end. After providing an account of motion, bound up with form, matter, potentiality and actuality as primary to nature, Aristotle, in a move that mirrors the one made in On the Heavens, refers to the necessity of the unmoved as the source of motion. He first provides an argument which concludes that all things in motion must be moved by something.

If then the motion of all things that are in motion is either natural or unnatural and violent, and all things whose motion is violent and unnatural are moved by something, and something other than themselves, and again all things whose motion is natural are moved by something—both those that


are moved by themselves and those that are not moved by themselves … then all things that are in
motion must be moved by something.\textsuperscript{91}

He then goes on to argue that there is one primal cause of all motion that must itself be
unmoved. This argument rests on a distinction between rotary motion and rectilinear
motion as two types of locomotion, the former necessarily being prior, “because it is
more simple and complete.”\textsuperscript{92} Locomotion is said to be primary to all other types of
motion, and that includes motion throughout the entire account of motion provided in the
\textit{Physics}; rotary motion is described as eternal and continuous, without need of another
motion as its cause, self-sustaining. These two principles, that all things are moved by
something, and that there must be a type of motion that is itself unmoved, lead Aristotle
to conclude that all motion is caused by an unmoved mover. Aristotle states, “We have
argued that there always was motion and always will be motion throughout all time, and
we have explained what is the first principle of this eternal motion; we have explained
further which is the primary motion and which is the only motion that can be eternal; and
we have pronounced the first mover to be unmoved.”\textsuperscript{93}

What these examples from \textit{On the Heavens} and the \textit{Physics} show is the thread of
first principles, first philosophy, and even theology as the divine, permeating Aristotle’s
works in a way that indicates that the \textit{Metaphysics} is not just located after the \textit{Physics},
but that metaphysics as a mode of thinking acts through and supports Aristotle’s natural
and cosmological inquiries. Metaphysical concepts are supplements to Aristotle’s
philosophy, and he cannot point to nature or the cosmos without pointing past them to
something else. De Beistegui asserts that, “We cannot even begin to speak of the

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., Book 8, Section 4, 255b32-256a3.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., Book 8, Section 9, 265a17. Aristotle provides a great deal of attention in proving that this type of
motion is indeed primary, throughout Section 8 and 9 of Book 8 especially.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., Book 8, Section 9, 266a6-266a-10.
Aristotelian conception of the physical realm without implicating the metaphysical, and this despite the fact that metaphysics as first philosophy addresses a specific kind of reality, the being of which differs from that of natural beings.\footnote{Beistegui, Miguel de. \textit{Truth and Genesis: Philosophy as Differential Ontology}. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004. Page 36.} It is this kind of reality, this kind of being, which we now must turn to in order to see a more complete picture of the metaphysical underpinnings of Aristotle’s broader philosophy. Only then is it possible to see the complex way in which Aristotle passed through difference and becoming to arrive back at the identity, which he inherited.

Physics, for Aristotle as for today, is always “supplemented and illuminated” by metaphysics.\footnote{Ibid.} Perhaps it is such today because of Aristotle. De Beistegui argues throughout \textit{Truth and Genesis} that Aristotle’s philosophy is at its core always “ousiology,” an account of \textit{ousia}. Furthermore, within and after Aristotle, \textit{ousia} connotes essence over substance, which commits philosophy to the path of a philosophy of identity. Not only this, but philosophy as a metaphysical enterprise can be characterized in a very specific way based on the priority of \textit{ousia}:

\begin{quote}
As a first and highest principle of generation and movement, beyond which there is nothing, \textit{ousia} will lead to a science of the divine, or to theology. Insofar as it designates the whole of beings in their being and raises the question of being as such, it is ontology. In both instances, it is \textit{meta}-physics, not just in the sense in which in the chronological order of Aristotle’s text, it comes after the investigation of “nature,” but in the sense of a science of being beyond beings, beyond beings in their mere becoming.\footnote{Ibid.}
\end{quote}

Here, de Beistegui invokes Heidegger’s indication that philosophy as metaphysics is ontotheology, a philosophical account that rests on highest principles and a commitment
to describing being in general. “Western metaphysics, however, since its beginning with
the Greeks has eminently been both ontology and theology…. To those who can read,
this means: metaphysics is onto-theo-logy.\(^{97}\) Heidegger reads the history of philosophy
ontotheologically beginning with Aristotle, and the Parmenides in Aristotle, as
committing philosophy to an inquiry based on divinity, as first principles, and the
question concerning being in general. This indication is critical for the current project in
that de Beistegui and Deleuze view philosophy through this Heideggerian lens. If this
reading of the motivation and modality of metaphysics is correct, and the assertion that,
even before Aristotle, identity is the bedrock of metaphysics is correct, then the
theological principle involved in metaphysics is one bound up with self-identity. This is
already evident in the previous indication that both Aristotle’s cosmology and his natural
philosophy rest on the self-identity of a self-sustaining and self-subsistent unmoved
mover. This is even clearer in that Aristotle worked within the heritage of the Platonic
Idea, and the Parmenidean insight into being as a self-identical whole. De Beistegui, then,
is correct in describing Aristotle’s philosophy not just as onto-theo-logical (following
Heidegger), but as onto-tauto-logical, since the highest principle at hand is that of self-
identity, \(\textit{to auto} (τὸ \textit{αὐτό})\), the same. Uncovering just how it is that this principle of self-
identity and sameness enters into the Aristotelian body of work, then, requires an
examination of Aristotle’s \textit{Metaphysics}.

1.2.3.2 Metaphysics

\(^{97}\) Heidegger, Martin. “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics.” \textit{Identity and Difference.}
Aristotle resembles Parmenides most in his conception of being as that which is common to all beings, in general, as a “community” of beings. Furthermore, he finds that it is possible to provide an adequate account of being in general. The task set for the *Metaphysics* is to establish the possibility of a science of being *qua* being, a science of being in general *as* being, without falling into the domain of all of the other sciences, which are too specific to define being itself as a generality.

There is a science of being which studies being as being and the attributes which belong to this in virtue of its own nature. Now this is not the same as any of the so-called special sciences; for none of these others deal generally with being as being. They cut off a part of being and investigate the attributes of this part--this is what the mathematical sciences for instance do. Now since we are seeking the first principles and highest causes, clearly there must be some thing to which these belong in virtue of its own nature. If then our predecessors who sought the elements of existing things were seeking these same principles, it is necessary that the elements must be elements of being not by accident but just because it *is* being. Therefore it is of being as being that we also must grasp the first causes.

The specific sciences depend on the use of genera and species to describe phenomena in a way that yields knowledge. It is only through the process of generalizing individuals into classes of species and then larger classes of genera above species that individuals can be brought into a system of relative terms used to describe them meaningfully, a system of predication. Describing entities in their identity, their singularity, is the process of defining their essence, which implicates using the resources of the identities of genera in a formal sense. Otherwise, the only possibility for description is providing a list of

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individuals with no descriptive power, an empty nominalism.\textsuperscript{100} Aristotle, however, claims that a science of being \textit{qua} being must not behave like the other sciences. “There are many senses in which a thing may be said to ‘be’,” Aristotle reminds us.\textsuperscript{101} So in what way can we speak of being in general, a way that is not limited to speaking of beings as objects of particular discourses, like the sciences, which partition beings and add understanding to them extraneously? In the above passage, he refers to the way in which the sciences take specific parts of being as a whole, specific categories, and apply definitions to individuals according to the genera and species relevant to those categories. However, for a science of being \textit{qua} being, there is a problem in that being is not a genus, for “if unity or being is a genus, no differentia will either be one or have being.”\textsuperscript{102} This already poses a serious issue for Aristotle given his emerging commitment to unity and being as paradigmatic for existing things. This problem develops from Aristotle’s question regarding principles: are principles to be found in the most general, the universals or highest genera, or are principles predicated directly of individuals? Having barred the second route already, which leads to as many principles as there are individuals, Aristotle finds that developing a general science of being \textit{qua} being is difficult. The \textit{aporia} opened by the seemingly incompatible nature of sciences as based on genera and species and the possibility of a general science that requires being and unity to be genera, which is not possible since being and unity are features of individuals first, not genera, leads Aristotle to posit a different course for the most general science of being \textit{qua} being.

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{100} In which case, Aristotle remarks, the \textit{Iliad} would be a description/definition (\textit{Metaphysics}, 1030a5-15).
\item\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 1003a33. Page 1548.
\item\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., Book 3, Section 3, 998b25-27. Page 1577.
\end{itemize}
“There are many senses in which a thing may be said to ‘be’,” Aristotle’s
continues, “but they are all related to one central point, one definite kind of thing, and are
not homonymous.” While being may be said in many ways, and each of those ways
has a discrete meaning, “being” is the homonym. In other words, the ways in which being
is said are not homonymous with each other, but being is the universal predicate, it is the
homonym with everything of which it is said. De Beistegui remarks on this point, “The
universality of being corresponds to the plurivocity of beings.” While individual
singularities are just that, singularities and particulars, all beings participate in the
community of beings. Then, how can we talk about them as a whole, as a science of
being must? What are the features of this community of beings as a community, being
qua being? At this point in the Metaphysics, Aristotle begins to assert that the term
designating this homonymy is, as was crucial for Plato, ousia. He also continues to
tightly associate this term with being, unity, and essence. Thus, the task of a science of
being qua being turns out to be an investigation of substance. This investigation is taken
to be one that involves selecting a certain concept of a foundational substrate as a
principle, a hypokeimenon, as a common denominator for being in general as a
community of beings; hypokeimenon designates that by which beings may be said to be.
Aristotle increasingly uses ousia as this hypokeimenon throughout the Metaphysics,

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103 Ibid., Book 4, Section 1, 1003a33-34. Page 1548. This quote begins the long tradition of debate over
homonymy, analogy, univocity, etc., in Aristotle scholarship.
104 Beistegui, Miguel de. Truth and Genesis: Philosophy as Differential Ontology. Bloomington, IN:
105 “There are many senses in which a thing is said to be, but all refer to one starting point; some things are
said to be because they are substances [(ousia)], others because they are affections of substance [(ousia)],
others because they are a process towards substance, or destructions or privations or qualities of substance,
or productive or generative of substance, or of things which are relative to substance, or of negations of
some of these things or of substance itself” (Metaphysics, 1003b5-11).
106 “... [U]nity is nothing apart from being.... [T]he essence of each thing is one in no merely accidental
way, and similarly is from its very nature something that is...” (Metaphysics, 1003b30-33).
especially in Book Zeta. In Section 1, we are told, “That which is primarily and is simply (not is something) must be substance.”¹⁰⁷ In Section 2, Aristotle surveys the various types of substances philosophers have described: whether or not it is form (Plato), number (Pythagoras), the sensible (Materialists), and in what ways substance is said of these types of being. In Section 3, Aristotle remarks that substance is said in four main ways: of essence, of universals, of genus, and of an underlying substratum, or even subject.¹⁰⁸ “Now the substratum is that of which other things are predicated, while it is itself not predicated of anything else. And so we must first determine the nature of this; for that which underlies a thing primarily is thought to be in the truest sense its substance.”¹⁰⁹ It is from Aristotle’s clear commitment to metaphysics as first philosophy, the type of philosophy which takes its task to be that of indicating first principles, without which Aristotle’s description of motion would collapse, as an inquiry concerning substance, that prompts de Beistegui’s indication that this ontological endeavor is an ousiology.¹¹⁰ Ousia is the first and most fundamental category of beings. As such, the individual sciences themselves are incapable of exhaustively describing nature, the world, the cosmos, etc., or even ground an understanding of their particular object of inquiry, for that matter, without the aid of a fundamental ontology, a general metaphysics.

At this point in our understanding, what should be perfectly clear is that the concepts of self-identity, being, unity, substance and essence are becoming increasingly bound up with one another to the degree that they may no longer be able to be said to

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., Book 7, Section 1, 1028a30-31, page 1623.
¹⁰⁸ Ὑποκείμενον, ὑποκείμενον, here, designates that substratum most clearly and explicitly as involved in the subject of predication, ontologically or logically subject.
¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 1028b38-1029a1.
have meaning outside of the terms of this group. What still needs to be clear is one thing: de Beistegui’s assertion that, while *ousia* connotes substance-presence and essence, Aristotle’s use of *ousia* connotes essence specifically, and this commits the history of philosophy, following Aristotle’s lead on the matter, to thinking identity first and foremost. This privileging of identity begins first with the very notion of *hypokeimenon* itself. In the *Physics*, even, Aristotle already commits to conceiving of *hypokeimenon* as *ousia*,¹¹¹ let alone his persistence on this point throughout the *Metaphysics*. *Hypokeimenon*, crucially, has two different senses to it. First, it stands for that which is present before us, and, second, as that which grounds and sustains that which is present. It is only by using *hypokeimenon* thusly that Aristotle is able to characterize both the lunary and sublunary, the divine and the natural, as falling under the jurisdiction of being in general. Regarding the first sense, emphasizing the connotation of presence in *hypokeimenon*, Aristotle’s regards *ousia* as sustaining the phenomena that is the “individual present thing” in its sensible, knowable and experiential substance.¹¹² “Οὐσία ([*ousia]*)], the substantive formed using the participle of the verb *einai* (εἶναι), means the actuality of what is, the realization of what is given in the unfolding of presence.”¹¹³ However, given that presence seems to entail becoming, *hypokeimenon* must have another connotation to account for its ability to act as a ground, which guarantees its subsistence through change.

Regarding the second sense of *hypokeimenon*, that it connotes that which grounds or sustains that which is present, this is precisely the sense of *ousia* as what maintains

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¹¹¹ “Things have a nature which have a principle of this kind. Each of them is a substance; for it is a subject, and nature is always in a subject,” (*Physics*, Book 2, Section 1, 192b32-34).  
¹¹³ Ibid.
itself through change and difference. De Beistegui asserts that this sense of ousia is what
indicates that Aristotle’s commitment to materialism is always supplemented by an
eidetics, that is, a metaphysical system of concepts oriented toward ideas, forms,
essences, principles.\textsuperscript{114} Again, in \textit{Metaphysics} Zeta, Aristotle states, “There are several
senses in which a thing may be said to be…. [F]or in one sense it means what a thing is
or a ‘this’, and in another sense it means that a thing is of a certain quality or quantity or
has some such predicate asserted of itself. While ‘being’ has all these senses, obviously
that which is primarily is the ‘what’, which indicates the substance of the thing.”\textsuperscript{115}
Firstly, then, substance is most closely related to what a thing is, a ‘this’, or ‘the what it
was to be’.\textsuperscript{116} What it is to be a this as a substance is known through an essence, which
acts as an origin of identity through change and a principle of identity known by
definition.\textsuperscript{117} “By essence, we need to understand an irreducible core of being to which
any number of qualities and events can be attributed, but which remains untouched in its
fixity and identity.”\textsuperscript{118} This is precisely the way in which hypokeimenon connotes
substance as the substratum and ground that persists through change and allows essence
to be regarded as the definable form of substance, as the principle by which the
underlying identity, an individual, is known. Insofar as substance acts as a ground, it can

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., page 43.
\textsuperscript{115} Aristotle. “Metaphysics.” Book 7, Section 1, 1028a10-14. \textit{The Complete Works of Aristotle, volume two.}
Page 1623. “Whatness” would be translated into Scholastic philosophy as quiddity, hence the einai of de
Beistegui’s above statement.
\textsuperscript{116} A this, as \textit{tode ti}, and \textit{to ti en einai} as the what it was to be.
\textsuperscript{117} De Beistegui connotes essence with \textit{ἀρχὴ} (arche), principle, origin, cause. “The Science of beings in
their beingness, or their presence--regardless whether the latter is already fully constituted, as is the case for
celestial realities and the Prime Mover, or whether it is in a state of becoming and so drawn toward its
motionless state--is also and indissociably the science of the first and highest principles. In other words, it
is also the science of beings in their essence,” (43).
\textsuperscript{118} Beistegui, Miguel de. \textit{Truth and Genesis: Philosophy as Differential Ontology}. Bloomington, IN:
only be thought of as such by virtue of its essence. Aristotle’s insight follows the general conviction that things may change while remaining, in an indisputable sense, the same. This sameness is possible, on this account, only because substance acts as the substratum, the subject of predication, that which is necessary, over, and above (or under, as a ground) the accidents attributed to it.

The serious problem that Aristotle encounters at this point in his approach is determining whether the substratum is of material or form in type.

Aristotle’s answer is well known: insofar as matter is precisely that which in becoming is grounded, it cannot designate the thing in its being; insofar as generated and corrupted, it cannot be identified with pure, essential being. Only the form can. By substance in the second sense, then, we should understand form. And it is only as such that it can become the subject of a proposition and exceed the predicates to which it is accidentally bound. The process of logical attribution, like that of ontological constitution, clearly distinguishes between the (essential) subject and its (accidental) predicates, or between substance and attributes. It is only as the science of substance thus understood that ontology becomes possible. Since every science presupposes a stable and self-identical object, there cannot be a science of accidents and change as such. More specifically, there can be a science of accidents, or matter in its state of becoming, only as subordinated to the science of forms.\footnote{Ibid., page 45. This is precisely why metaphysics is referred to as first philosophy so consistently throughout Aristotle’s other, motion-centered works.}

This, really, is the crux of the current discussion: the subordination of difference to identity is fully enacted with Aristotle’s decision to identify being with the hypokeimenon of ousia as essence primarily. There can be no autonomous science of accidents, becoming, movement, difference or contingency since science, in this schema, needs definitions, genera and species to be tightly associated with identity. Difference, as has been pointed out above, then, is only difference between definitions, genera and species,
that is, difference with regard to identity. In this sense, we find ourselves in a similar situation as was the case with Platonism: there is a distinct ontological status attributed to that which is capable of grounding itself and there is a distinct ontological status to that which cannot ground itself, but requires self-identity as its own ontological basis, if it is to be said to be at all. The ontological status of the self-grounding and self-identical is considered in some sense to be of a higher qualitative order and value than that of which cannot ground itself as the same. Hence, a similar privileging of identity is in play for both Platonism and Aristotelianism.

While Plato appears to have dealt with any problem posed by difference or becoming via the peculiar relation between forms and appearances as partaking, albeit with a moral connotation in mind, Aristotle recognizes a similar problem in having to account for becoming while privileging identity. ¹²⁰ For Aristotle, the problem is that of accounting for, or describing, that which becomes. Definitions rest on identity, through essence, but that which becomes has by definition dynamism rather than stability. Once we posit that something which is in a state of becoming or motion has certain characteristics, there is nothing to prevent that thing from no longer having any of those same characteristics, thus nullifying the potency of the definition. Put simply, in the state of becoming, there is no necessity other than a kind of substratum underneath the change, which already has its own account in terms of identity, essence and definitions. As de Beistegui pointed out above, there seems to be a kind of isomorphism between thought/logic and being/ontology, evident in the structure of subject and predicate applicable to both logic and ontology. Given this ontological division that persists even

¹²⁰ One would be justified in wondering if the moral pretensions of Plato’s ontological commitments does not also bleed over into Aristotle’s thinking, since knowledge requires definitions, which require predication based on identity as essence, and knowledge is said to be a good in the cultivation of virtue.
for Aristotle, he is left with the task of explaining, in the terms of his own system, change and difference in some way that is minimally dismissive of them, given his commitment to sensible experience and the perpetual phenomena of life, which do seem to become. We do, naturally, desire to know things in their singularity somehow, and this is one of the most central modes of knowing Aristotle is concerned to trace from the opening line of the *Metaphysics*, where we are told that, “All men by nature desire to know.”¹²¹ Within the gap between the generalities of the genera/species/definition structure and the particular singularities of experience and phenomenal occurrences of becoming, Aristotle attempts to open a space to meaningfully talk about the significance of particulars, “through a widened conception of essence and definition.”¹²² This conception attempts to survey a way for essences to meet accidents; some accidents are incredibly meaningful.

To understand how the commitment to doing justice to singularity itself is such a problem, understanding Aristotle’s conception of difference is crucial. The first kind of difference is the largest and strongest claim to difference: that difference is sheer heterogeneity, otherness, plurality, multiplicity.¹²³ This type of difference is not meaningful in Aristotle’s philosophy. It is regarded as the opposite of sameness, and of which “nothing can be said.”¹²⁴ Philosophically determining difference in this regard is impossible for Aristotle’s philosophy, since determination itself already presupposes a prior identity. Aristotle makes the point thusly, “… [T]hat which is different from anything is different in some respect, so that there must be something identical whereby

¹²² Ibid., page 46.
¹²³ This is precisely the type of difference Deleuze wants to assert as primary, that is, originary and productive.
¹²⁴ Ibid., page 49.
they differ.”¹²⁵ A third term is necessary, a middle term, in order to determine the relationship between two things, a common point by which they can be meaningfully thought of relative to each other. Even if that relationship is one of difference, there must be a common characteristic between the two things supposed to be different to bring them into close enough of a relationship to talk about with regard to one another. Otherwise, again, we only have a list. Aristotle continues, “This identical thing is genus or species; for all things that differ differ either in genus or in species, in genus if things have not their matter in common and are not generated out of each other… and in species if they have the same genus.”¹²⁶

A few things follow from this. Firstly, there can be no difference between genera, because there is no genus above genera by which they can be brought into relation.¹²⁷ This immediately limits the scope of difference, and, by extension, becoming. Secondly, two other types of difference should be clear from the above passage, the first being specific difference, that is, the difference between species under a common genus, and the second being material difference, or the difference between singular configurations of matter. The first is formal; the second is material. For Aristotle, it is just as difficult to define material difference in a meaningful way, since singularities are too particular, as it is to define any difference between genera, since universals are too general.¹²⁸

The type of difference that Aristotle affirms most is that of specific difference, the difference between species under the formal, shared terms of a genus. The greatest type of

¹²⁶ Ibid.
¹²⁷ Recall Aristotle’s assertion that neither being nor unity are genera.
¹²⁸ Kant seemed to be suggesting something similar, in asserting that concepts without intuitions are empty and intuitions without concepts are blind. See Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason, Part 2, “Transcendental Doctrine of Elements,” (B76/A52).
difference for Aristotle works in that space between genera and species. Aristotle calls
this type of greatest difference “contrariety.” “Things which differ in genus have no way
to one another, but are too far distant and are not comparable; and for things that differ in
species the extremes from which generation takes place are the contraries; and the
distance between extremes--and therefore that between the contraries--is the greatest.”129
Contrariety is a product of “specific difference,” the difference which partitions genera
into their respective species. It is a purely methodological difference with no basis in an
ontological principle. Specific difference, the kind of difference Aristotle takes as
paradigmatic for the Metaphysics, does not actively account for becoming or
individuation. It is an empty abstraction, an abstraction, nonetheless, that would be
incredibly influential in that difference would take on the sense of “quiddity,” or the
whatness of a thing. Difference becomes the “inseparable” aspect internal to a thing’s
essence, relative to its genus, accounting for its placement among a class of species.130
Difference, in this sense, would be a difference in essence and attributes, already
delimiting the former as identity and the latter as the differential.

The aporia entrenched in Aristotle is, then, the impasse between accounting for
individuals as tode ti, a this, and the method of providing an account which presupposes
the essence, form, and terms of genera which are already too general to apply to a
singularity in its singularity. It is even this same impasse working at a methodological
level in Aristotle’s own philosophy that demands that physics and cosmology are in
themselves incapable of providing exhaustive accounts of their objects of inquiry,
motion, be it natural or cosmological, thus creating the necessity, which was already

129 Ibid., 1055a5-9.
130 Beistegui, Miguel de. Truth and Genesis: Philosophy as Differential Ontology. Bloomington, IN:
determined by Aristotle’s inherited approach, of a metaphysics of first principles, the
unmoved. Aristotle’s attempt to break out of this impasse led him to simultaneously
assert substance as the foundational substratum of being, that notion of substance
emphasizing essence over presence, while maintaining difference as limited to
contrariety. Thus, again, we have the paradigm of identity over difference fully enacted
through Aristotelian philosophy. Insofar as there is difference, it is only ever difference
subordinate to identity. The ramifications of Aristotle’s philosophy, and the problems
carried through it, became the problems of the Medieval, Western philosophers, the
modernists, the German Idealists, and the Phenomenologists. For the Medieval
philosophers and the Phenomenologists, identity would remain as complex as it was for
Aristotle. For the Moderns, substance is taken to its limits. For the German Idealists,
however, substance would pass into subject, and identity would acquire an unprecedented
gravity as absolute identity.

1.3 Identity and Indications of an Aristotelian Heritage

Medieval philosophy would be forged in the Aristotelian problematic, and
Western philosophy would follow from Medieval thinking. Regardless of any upheavals,
the problem of identity, which, it should now be clear, always entails a diluted problem of
difference, would persist. The history of philosophy lends itself to being read as an
attempt to work through the implications of settling on certain concepts of identity and
difference for good reason. From the early work of Porphyry to Boethius in the early-

131 This occurs via Ancient and Medieval Islamic thought.
middle of the first millennium, the difficulty of providing an account of identity and
difference, no matter what terms are used to represent the two, remains the central
problem for their Medieval inheritors. Aristotle’s indication that substance is primary,
and associated with divinity, identity, essence, unity and being was maintained, while the
difficulty of accounting for accidents, attributes, changes, and difference would maintain
an emphasis on specific difference, *differentia specifica*. An entire debate over the
ontological status of universals and singulars, their relation, and how to account for them
would erupt in the early-middle portion of the second millennium.

Primarily, the difficulty, as indicated by Duns Scotus, was accounting for
singularity within the purview of specific difference. Specific difference accounts for
differences in species under a common genus, but getting to an account of individuals is
not the same. The difference between an individual and its species is neither the same nor
analogous to the difference between a species and its genus. “The individual is not a
species of the species.”\(^{132}\) The Medieval philosophers developed a concept that was
intended to pass through this difficulty and allow for some type of adequate concept of
singular individuals: *principio individuationis*, the principle of individuation. This
concept was meant to encompass a description of individuals in the way in which they
were significantly different and present, in their ‘haecceity’ or thisness. The way that the
principle of individuation played out among various Scholastic thinkers was different; for
some it was a principle grounded in forms or universals; for others it was grounded in
matter; for others, as for Scotus, it was grounded in a difference much like specific
difference. De Beistegui remarks that even this attempt remained, to the hilt, grounded in
a principle of noncontradiction related to identity. While a singular individual may have

\(^{132}\) Ibid., page 54.
haeceity and a principle by which it is individuated, it may not contradict its own
copyright or definition, which already presupposes its essence, and then its substance per
Aristotle. Scotus stated that being was univocal, rather than analogous, plurivocal or
homonymous. By this conception of being said in a singular and same sense of all that it
is said, he intended to show that there was a single field of being on which discourses
concerning finite individuals and infinite entities (God) were able to be described using
the same set of terms in a single discourse, a single science of being applied to both
ontology and theology. Still, his conception of individuals and essences was entirely
dependent on the presupposition of identity.

With Ockham, the entire project of philosophy was blow open. For Scotus and
Aquinas, as was the case for their Aristotelian and Platonic predecessors, Philosophy was
connected to developing a realist ontology of universals; universals, as essences or forms,
in some way are said to exist, and the ontological standing of other entities is bound up
with that of the universals. Ockham’s nominalism indicated an ontology of singularities
only. Universals are dependent on individuals, and all that exists are singularities.
Universals are a matter for thought, language and logic. With this, Ockham’s nominalism
began a process in philosophy back toward physics, after its Aristotelian metaphysical
preoccupation. Philosophy, for those who would adopt the Ockhamist position, would
become an epistemology concerned with sensible intuitions of singularities of which we
may develop concepts and signs. Universals are predicable of singularities, and a matter
for logic, not metaphysics, to discern. Thus begins philosophy’s long dissolution into
physics. However, it should be noted that within all of Ockham’s nominalism there is still

133 Hegel, much later, would provide an account of identity that incorporated contradiction in a radical way.
134 All that would be required for metaphysics to be eclipsed by physics is the entrenchment of
mathematical-empirical sciences.
the cornerstone of the singularity as substance. Ockham developed the Aristotelian notion of substance as the singularity past what Aristotle himself would allow given his commitment to definition as resting on universals which were tied on to an ontology of self-identical subsistence via substance.\textsuperscript{135} Specific difference gives way to the material difference indicated by Aristotle, only for the same conceptual framework to be applied as the division of classes under a larger class. Ockham attempted to develop Aristotle’s list into a list with explanatory power. As inheritors of the Medieval tradition, the modern thought of Spinoza and Leibniz seems to carry through with substance as central. Whether it is the atomistic monad of Leibniz which is the very archetype of the self-contained substance, or the monist God-as-substance of Spinoza, with its various modalities and attributes, the thinking seems remarkably similar in its commitment to simple substances as self-identical substrata.\textsuperscript{136} Spinoza and Leibniz would then pass this commitment on their inheritors, albeit as radically changed.

The same tension between the singular and the universal, as embedded in a larger framework privileging identity, is apparent even in modern philosophy. With Cartesian philosophy. Even amid philosophy’s new preoccupations with science and mathematics, the unity of substance persists. The very same conceptual structure privileging identity over difference appears. As it was with specific difference, where a genus is divided into species, so it would become with the Cartesian worldview. The world itself is seen as a thing, \textit{res}, which is itself divided into two classes: \textit{res cogitans}, thinking things, and \textit{res extensa}, extended things. Accompanying this conceptual division within a metaphysical

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., pages 52-58, paraphrased.
\textsuperscript{136} Importantly, while Spinoza and Leibniz are glossed over here, that should not lead the reader to understand them as simple footnotes. They are, especially for Deleuze, complex and massively influential thinkers worthy of a great deal of attention today. Additionally, Deleuze, utilizes a great deal of Leibniz and Spinoza’s philosophies throughout his project of formulating a philosophy of difference.
view is the primacy of substance. Each species of thing, whether it thinks or is extended, is a type of substance. Substance is the community of being, it is still ousia as the trait of being, only now it is separated into two classes, thinking substance and extended substance. As such, its self-identity is its primary feature. Additionally, Descartes advances Aristotle’s notion that substance is a subject into the realm of contemporary subjectivity, a thinking thing and its object of thought, that which is extended.¹³⁷ It would be left for German Idealism to develop this notion of substance as subject into its most fully expressed form, absolute identity, and the unity of thinking, substance and subject, the pinnacle of the self-identical.

For modern metaphysics, after Descartes, the concept of hypokeimenon takes on a new sense. Along with substance as the underlying substratum, now understood by separating nature into a material, extended class and a logical, thinking class, come the addition of a third term, the subject, the I. For Kant and all of his inheritors, the question became one of grounding the extended world, and our knowledge of that world, in subjectivity, in the ‘I think’. As such, objects of knowledge fully take on the sense of existing as representations that are dependent on the self-identity of the thinking thing. The I becomes the absolute principle by which all other principles are secured. Nature, and its ability to be known, becomes possible through a reading of the structure of human subjectivity. Philosophy, with German Idealist thought, turns from substance to subject, and, as such, becomes transcendentially self-reflexive. Philosophy thinks itself just as the I thinks itself. The transcendental conditions of thought are the conditions of philosophy, and everything else for that matter. The primary task of philosophy turns from metaphysics in the Aristotelian sense to a search for the transcendental conditions of

¹³⁷ Ibid., page 58-59 paraphrased.
possibility for any object of knowledge within the very laws of human subjectivity itself. The conditions of experience are the conditions of nature, both of which are possible only by the rules of the structure of subjectivity, explicated philosophically by the transcendental, internal critique of thought turned back to itself. The model of human subjectivity is taken to be the model of beingness. Things are only insofar as they are held up to the self-positing of the I, that is, things are either self-identical thinking things, or are posited as other by a self-identical thinking thing, a subject, a transcendental I behind the empirical I.

Crucially, and especially apparent in Hegel, philosophy reconciles itself with becoming through privileging the process of positing undertaken by the I. Identity is a process. Specifically, identity becomes the product of a process of its own becoming. Hegel shifts the emphasis away from contrariety as the greatest difference to contradiction as the productive difference. The I, or thought, now through positing itself and its objects as other, determines identity as relational, while the entire edifice of its productions are exhausted in the identity of the Concept, the totalized product of thought in which all relations and possibilities are actualized; nature itself, in the end, is thought as the absolute concept thinking itself.\footnote{Ibid., pages 77-80, paraphrased.} What stands out most remarkably with German Idealism, taking Hegel to be representative here,\footnote{The question over Hegel and the degree to which he ‘consummates’ German Idealism, and, if we are to take him in his own words, the project of philosophy itself, is an entirely open one. Some commentators (Beiser) suggest that Hegel’s only talent as a philosopher is in his power to synthesize the ideas of his peers and represent them as his own. Still, he stands as an important moment, and representative, of the current historical tracing. See the “Preface” to Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit, and Frederick C. Beiser’s German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, “Introduction,” Section 4: ‘The Troublesome Hegelian Legacy’ in particular.} is the way in which it attempts to resolve the impasses of the Classically Aristotelian framework by resting on an incredibly enhanced notion of subjectivity in a modern, that is, Cartesian, sense. The result claims to
have broken through the impasse of identity and difference by incorporating difference into identity as the identity, that is, equality, or sameness of co-relation, between identity and non-identity via non-contradiction. As such, this project represents an essential moment in the history of philosophy for the current thesis. For Aristotle, contrariety was the greatest difference, and pure heterogeneity was a violation of non-contradiction. Non-contradiction was always taken to be indisputable, and it acted as the principle of identity. Substance could only be self-identical because it was barred from contradicting itself while remaining itself, which is why movement was always subordinated to self-identical substance or a principle of identity. Hegel, in a revolutionary move, eliminated contrariety as the greatest difference, and asserted contradiction, a greater difference, at the center of identity. A substance has identity only in its capacity to posit itself as other, to contradict. As such, substance becomes subject, and movement is inserted into the concept of identity itself. However, it should remain uncertain at this point whether or not contradiction provided an adequate concept of difference. While the Hegelian paradigm offers a radical transformation of the Classical paradigm by shifting the emphasis from substance and predication to the centrality of subjectivity, even though difference enjoys a greater power, it still maintains the Hegelian paradigm as one inheriting the problems of the Classical paradigm, where difference (contradiction) is only possible through the status of the identical (the ‘I think’). As such, substance, even if it is subject, still has the privileged place based on presupposing it as central. In the final analysis, for Deleuze, Hegel’s incorporation of contradiction as difference and relation as productive of identity comes close to a philosophy of difference, but fails in its commitment to subjectivity, representation, and the Classical usage of substance under a different name. Additionally,
the consolidation or exhaustion of all possibilities in the singular Absolute Concept, even if it is a complex, is not compatible with a philosophy of difference itself. It merely represents a philosophy where difference is an adjunct to representation and subjectivity, which amounts to saying that difference is an adjunct of identity.

Phenomenology, primarily the early philosophy of Husserl, offers another instance of the Aristotelian heritage, perhaps the clearest one. Husserl’s task, especially in *Ideas*, was to develop an ontology from the structures of consciousness. As such, Husserl stands as a rereading of the Aristotelian problematic through the lens of modern, that is, subject-centered, metaphysics. He reiterates the Aristotelian twofold sense of *ousia* as *hypokeimenon* connoting first principles on the basis of which things can be said to be and as addressing things in their whatness, as they present themselves: essence and presence. For early Husserl, being *is* as either consciousness or as what presents itself in consciousness. Nature and our experiences of it, our way of partitioning it, unfold from consciousness as a necessary, transcendental precondition for experience. A such, experience reflects the structure of consciousness back to itself. Phenomena are for consciousness. Thus, phenomena are the consciously experienced essences of things as objects of experience, as visions. The singularity for Husserl, the individual thing in its difference, in its whatness, is ultimately a matter for investigating *ousia* as the essence of phenomena. The point is to allow phenomena to present themselves as themselves in their becoming, without any textural additions on the part of the understanding.

“Transcendental consciousness—as the origin or primal horizon within which the world is constituted—and the essence of any given phenomenon both share the structure of self-

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140 Tode ti.
141 To ti en einai.
identity. Both are exclusive of heterogeneity and differences." As such, phenomenology represents a synthesis of Classical and Modern metaphysical attitudes while retaining what is common to both, the self-identical. Even if consciousness acts in or as the horizon of temporal presentation of presence, as a finite site of temporal, phenomenal unfolding, the site itself, even if it is considered transcendentally formal consciousness, maintains itself in its self-identity as the transcendental precondition for all that follows.

What should be generally clear from the brief sketches above, then, is that throughout the history of philosophy, the Aristotelian problem of reconciling difference with identity is reiterated throughout pinnacle moments in the evolution of philosophical thought. What remains the same is the priority given to identity. This seems to play out in two consistent ways regardless of the historical instances at hand. First, philosophers within this Aristotelian heritage have focused mainly on working through various adaptations of the centrality of identity. Whether as the Aristotelian notion of substance, essence and universals that erupted into debate in the Medieval period, and even the modern thought of Spinoza and Leibniz, conceiving of identity as atomic or monist, respectively; the centrality of the self-identical subject which dominated Cartesian thought, German Idealism, and Phenomenology; the story seems strangely to reflect Aristotle’s commitment to identity as prior to difference. As it was for Aristotle, however, taking identity to be central is not easy, and each of the thinkers doing such would be left with the task of explaining just how identity can be so foundational. This is precisely what I mean by a “problem of identity” as a consistent feature of the history of

142 Ibid., page 60.
143 Ibid., pages 58-62, paraphrased.
philosophy. The inadequacies of privileging identity would lead to its various senses that
the history of philosophy attributed to it, but it always remained identity, and the decision
was reiterated with every instantiation of the self-identical.

Second, no matter the type of identity posited by philosophers, difference always
amounted to a problem to be explained within the limits of choices made regarding
identity. The problem of identity formed the conditions, and therefore the possibilities,
for any following problem of difference. Whether it is the difference posited by the
Medievals as specific difference, or as the difference of singularities in their singularity
as individuated; the difference internal to monads for Leibniz or the different attributes
and modalities of the one substance to Spinoza; the difference between subject and object
for Descartes; the introduction of otherness and contradiction as productive of, and
possible only on account of, a central identity for Hegel; the notions of difference
provided are always already accountable to the preconceptions of identity present in each
case. This is precisely the thread I have tried to trace above. What is shown is that
philosophy is constructed as the paradigm of identity over difference, and it seems
entirely plausible to view philosophical activity as reducible to the codification of the
tension between identity and difference in its various manifestations, all maintaining the
central conviction that identity is primary, and, insofar as there is difference, it is only
ever difference with regard to identity.
Chapter 2

From Identity to Difference

Moving from identity to difference means overturning the paradigm, which the history of philosophy has traditionally upheld. Identity has reigned for over two millennia. Yet, philosophy still finds itself in an aporia in codifying the tension between identity and difference. It stands to reason that this is precisely the motivation behind philosophy’s insistence that metaphysics be abandoned, a process which began centuries ago and contemporary philosophy has attempted to carry out at almost every moment for the last century. Whether philosophy critiques subjectivity, turns to language, turns to the sciences, turns to art, turns to mind or turns to politics, all signs point to a flight from something by our increasing specialization. The trajectory of this flight seems to be swiftly away from metaphysics as a science of being in general and the highest principles above disciplines, a flight away from the metaphysical tradition. This seems warranted in that philosophy dominated by identity as a central concept has been so problematic. In another sense, however, the flight from metaphysics may be premature. It must be emphasized that the dominant tradition of metaphysics has not exhausted all of the possibilities of metaphysics. Nietzsche and Heidegger seem to agree on the point that, with an inherently Platonic and Aristotelian heritage, the metaphysical tradition of
philosophy is at a close: its history is exhausted and language bars the way forward.\textsuperscript{144} This point, however, only refers to metaphysics in its canonical sense. Using ‘metaphysics’ to refer to the history of ontology and using ‘ontology’ to refer to contemporary metaphysics seems to be the trend today. Either way, metaphysical/ontological thinking seems to take place, that is, a discourse fundamentally concerned with determining the nature of existence as a whole. For Deleuze, the question regarding the exhaustion or the impossibility of metaphysics in the historical sense only demands a reading of the history of philosophy as inclusive of an ontology of difference. Through thinking difference in itself, metaphysics is resuscitated as compatible with all of the hyper-specialized discourses which dominate thought today. Metaphysics as a contemporary pursuit demands a definitive break with identitarian ontology, and this break is done by finding the difference internal to the history of philosophy all along. In this sense, what is required is a positive account of an ontology of difference. This Chapter will begin to chart a path through this account, taking Heidegger to be central to the formation of a philosophy where difference gains a voice of its own. In the end, however, Heidegger’s thought will be presented as insufficient for a philosophy of difference.

2.1 From Substance to Event: Heidegger

Ultimately, Hegel does the most to bring difference out of the shadow of identity by making contradiction, as negation, central to identity. Hegel’s philosophy still rests on

\textsuperscript{144} Both thinkers attempted to forge a new way forward in ontology via aesthetics, after indicating that the necessary point of exhaustion for Western metaphysics is nihilism/technology.
the unity of thought and being, and substance as subject does little to change philosophy from its course of ontotautology, and the centrality of sameness, identity, unity or equality. In the final analysis, all contradiction, for Hegel, is subsumed under the absolute concept, that is, as the self-identical, albeit self-differentiated, substance as subject thinking itself. Twentieth century thought attempts to push difference even further, to push difference past identity as substance, and this is evident in Heidegger and Deleuze in particular. This requires, de Beistegui asserts, a more radical break with the Aristotelian approach than the history of philosophy had previously managed.

Differences are only ever material, and make sense only in relation to the species and genus under which they are subsumed. And so, were we to rehabilitate differences in philosophical discourse, we would need to overcome the primacy of ontology as ousiology or, more specifically, overcome the punctual character of substance, and the conception of discourse as propositional. We would need to begin with differences, and with matter, and to show how they themselves are generative of identities and substances. We would need to consider them no longer as accidents, not even as accidents propter se, since accidents always presuppose a substance to which they occur, but as events, and as events constitutive of our world. In doing so we would begin to move from an ontology of substance and essence to an ontology of events.145

Eventfulness, as it is understood today, finds its first and fullest expression in Heidegger, in his thought that being is, itself, eventful.146 His influence on the current project needs to be made explicit. For Heidegger, the task was precisely a type of historical critique, which is encapsulated in his assertion that, in order to come to a better understanding of being, we must undergo a “destruktion” of the tradition of ontology. In Heidegger, the tenor of metaphysics shifts decisively to “differential ontology,” over identitarian

146 Ereignis is the term Heidegger uses for this eventful coming into presence, as the intonation of being with itself.
ontology, and thought itself comes to be seen as the eventful site of the unfolding of being as difference. Ultimately, however, Heidegger’s thought will act as a ladder to be left behind after it is ascended. For Deleuze and de Beistegui alike, Heidegger’s philosophy ultimately proves too exclusive in its privileging of aesthetics as the mode of thought proper to a differential ontology, and it remains too close to an anthropology based on an identity (of ‘belonging’), even given Heidegger’s assertions to the contrary.

In the final analysis, both thinkers reject Heidegger’s equation of science with technology, and seek a way to determine science as compatible with thinking of being as differential. Art and science both provide adequate modes of thought with regard to being as difference, but in respectively specific regards. Deleuze would ultimately critique Heidegger in the additional sense of remaining too anthropocentric, and he seems to take issue with Heidegger’s appropriation of Nietzsche on the Eternal Return. Broadly, this represents a general trend in twentieth century European philosophy, where displacing fundamental concepts, like identity in all of its guises, is the common denominator between the many seemingly different pursuits in philosophy. Deleuze states very early in Difference and Repetition that the philosophy of difference is “manifestly in the air,” and this trend is described by de Beistegui as a move away from ontotautology to

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147 Ibid., pages 109-111.
148 Deleuze is curiously silent when it comes to Heidegger. Some commentators have gone as far as saying that the two thinkers have little or nothing in common philosophically. This, however, is not the interpretation undertaken here, where an intimate philosophical relationship is taken to be in place between Deleuze and Heidegger regarding their respective projects with regard to the history of metaphysics. Both thinkers seem to take the Aristotelian legacy as central, and, while Deleuze often writes employing different methods targeting different fields of thought, his work in Difference and Repetition seems very much in the tradition of Being and Time. It seems more than coincidental that the two thinkers chose titles that reflected their respective concepts on ontology (being/difference) and temporality (time/repetition). De Beistegui’s Truth and Genesis seems to follow as a third in line. Overall, while Deleuze never wrote a book on Heidegger, his explicit references to Heidegger, coupled with their implicitly shared concerns, are more than enough to draw a significant relationship between the two.
ontoheterology.\textsuperscript{149} Firstly, understanding Heidegger as a philosopher of difference is essential, because between the account of being through the concept of the same (Aristotle) and the genesis of being as difference (Deleuze), is Heidegger’s account of being through a concept of difference.

Heidegger represents an important figure for the current discussion in that he stands as a modern, and incredibly influential, representative of the tradition of philosophy as ontology. His assertion that being is central to philosophy leads him to reexamine the history of philosophy as ontology in terms of a \textit{destruktion}, a displacement of historically given metaphysical concepts with the aim of understanding the necessary as a historical reification of the contingent. For Heidegger, by displacing these inherited ontological concepts, philosophers could actually rehabilitate the field of problems in which those concepts operate, and pass through the aporia which had been in place because of previous decisions, such as making identity primary as substance. Heidegger indicates that reexamining the meaning of the question of being requires a ‘loosening up’ of the history of ontology to reach the original experience of being in it historically undetermined state.\textsuperscript{150} This, Heidegger emphasizes, is not a negation of the history of ontology, but a positive critique, a critique which results in a new ontology centered on the relation between being and human-beings. Even more, in Heidegger’s late work, history itself comes to connote the ontological field of originary being in becoming; history is the event of being.


In *Being and Time*, however, Heidegger’s primary task was mobilizing Husserl’s Phenomenology in a way that provided a methodological path toward reappropriating a concept of being that would better account for being in a less aporetic way than the history of ontology had previously formulated it. Simply, the emphasis was initially on the notion that behind every object of experience as a representation there is a *lived* phenomenon that is experienced by *us*. The philosophical tradition had mistaken being for that which is, leading to the objectification of being as a thing, leading to its connotation as some sort of entity. With representational thinking as based on predication and proposition, the question of being always resulted in an answer that proposed some sort of substrate of simple subject, substance as the locus of legitimate being. Heidegger proposed rethinking this approach centered on thinking of being as a type of noun/subject in representational and traditionally ontological, that is to say, predicative, language.

“Before being a noun, before having been reified by the inevitable and long since legitimized impulse of representational thought, *sein* [being] is an adverb. And an infinitive. And verbs, particularly in the infinitive, refer to events, first and foremost.”

The target here, for Heidegger, and Deleuze, who follows his thinking on this point, is to begin thinking of being as beyond subject, substance, and accident, and begin to think substance as a product of an originary event, a pre-individual, subjectless happening which takes place without agency. De Beistegui asserts that, “Events escape the grasp of metaphysics, for they are without essence: their very essence is not to obey the law of essence understood as quiddity.” Historically, being has always been thought with

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152 Ibid., pages 113-114.
regard to the question of ‘what it was to be’,\(^{153}\) which commits metaphysics to thinking being in regard to essence, substance and substrate, requiring the corresponding thought to be representational, and the language or logic used to be propositional. As has been shown, this commits metaphysical thought to privileging identity at the cost of difference. Heidegger proposes a radical rethinking of being as event, which requires a mode of thought that is entirely other than representational thought; events can not be described like essences, as verbs can not be described like nouns.\(^{154}\)

### 2.2 Dasein

Heidegger describes thought as the site of the eventfulness of being. He describes this site most frequently as *Dasein*, as being-there, indicating that this site is a site of spatial and temporal significance. *Dasein* most commonly in Heidegger’s work is taken to mean the human being as the site for understanding being as that which presents itself and conceals itself. The mode by which *Dasein* understands beings spatially and temporally is both within an attitude of a world, in which meaningful entities have characteristics determined by *Dasein*’s particular moods, projects and modes of being, and being as the event of entities coming into presence and fading into absence. *Dasein* is the being which understands itself in its event of becoming. “In determining itself as an entity, Dasein always does so in the light of a possibility which it *is* itself and which, in

\(^{153}\) Take quiddity here to refer to ‘whatness’, *to ti en einai*.

\(^{154}\) Ibid., pages 109-118, paraphrased.
its very Being, it somehow understands.” As a “possibility,” Dasein’s mode of being already stands at a remarkable distance from that of the actually substantive subject of Classical metaphysics. Dasein is marked by its status as relational and temporal. Firstly, it is relational in that it is spatially at the nexus between everyday things as entities in an ontic, thing-ly, or given, sense, and being as the event of the unfolding of entities in the ontological understanding of Dasein. Secondly, it is temporal. As Heidegger says, echoing Husserl, time is the very horizon for Dasein’s understanding of itself; it is the border of the world of entities understood by humans as present or disclosed.156 Heidegger describes Dasein as the possibility that is constituted as the difference between ontic entities and ontological thought. Ontico-ontological difference, then, characterizes Dasein as a unique entity.

Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it. But in that case this is a constitutive state of Dasein’s Being, and this implies that Dasein, in its Being, has a relationship towards that Being—a relationship which is itself one of Being. And this means further that there is some way in which Dasein understands itself in its Being, and that to some degree it does so explicitly. It is peculiar to this entity that with and through its Being, this Being is disclosed to it. Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein’s Being. Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it is ontological.157

Understanding itself as both ontical and ontological is Dasein’s mode of being-in-the-world, or being there within a structure of entities, beings and projects. Dasein sits between the ontical, as entities in a world with characteristics, and the ontological, as the thinking of being in general and as such. Dasein understands this situation through moods.

156 Ibid., page 39.
157 Ibid., page 32.
which are determined both in relation to the meaningful projects it engages in, a system of which is a world delimited by the horizon of time, and in terms of its own sense of finitude, its concern and care for the maintenance and meaning of those projects in the face of death, in its temporality. *Dasein* is the being capable of raising the question of the meaning of being in general through thought, *logos*. As such, it is ontological. In Heidegger’s early works, like *Being and Time*, *Dasein* represents the fundamental unit of analysis for any philosophical treatment of being. Additionally, being itself begins to take on a sense of dynamism and dependency on becoming. Any concept of being itself must be reached by a prior inquiry into the nature of *Dasein*, being-there, the human-being. *Dasein* as being-in-the-world means that this site of thinking beings and being is situated in a meaningful, structural whole, a whole which *Dasein* is always already thrown into. In this sense, Heidegger’s early work is primarily concerned with tracing the history of ontology, breaking with Classical metaphysics, inserting *Dasein* as the central concept, and understanding Man as a singular, historically individuated entity capable of thinking itself as the event of being in its becoming.

Through a unique appropriation of phenomenology, Heidegger intends to insert *Dasein* into the ontological tradition of philosophy as an alternative to the Aristotelian tradition.

Being, as the basic theme of philosophy, is not class or genus of entities; yet it pertains to every entity. Its ‘universality’ is to be sought higher up. Being and the structure of Being lie beyond every entity and every possible character which an entity may possess. *Being is the transcendens pure and simple*. And the transcendence of Dasein’s Being is distinctive in that it implies the possibility and the necessity of the most radical individuation. Every disclosure of Being as the *transcendens* is transcendental knowledge. *Phenomenological truth (the disclosedness of Being) is*
The sense in which Dasein becomes the fundamental unit of analysis for Heidegger means that, while Aristotle’s assertion that being is not a genus is affirmed, it is only affirmed at the cost of leaving substance in ontology and subject in logic behind. Dasein is the eventful site of the disclosure of being, which is knowledge, understood as truth through the disclosure of eventful being in every phenomenal experience. Heidegger would work through this philosophical framework in the decades following his initial publication of *Being and Time*.

### 2.3 Metaphysics, Truth, Art and Technology

Heidegger asserts that the most fundamental mood by which *Dasein* experiences a world of entities is anxiety, anxiety in the face of nothingness, or the possibility of the elimination of *Dasein* as a possibility: death. Nothingness characterizes the external otherness that is outside of the everyday world of entities for *Dasein*. *Dasein* acts as the site for the unfolding of being as beings, but this process is itself only possible on the condition of otherness as nothingness. *Dasein* exists as the tension between its own initial thrownness into a world of worlds and things and its impending death, its dissolution into no-thing-ness. “For human existence, the nothing makes possible the openedness of beings as such. The nothing does not merely serve as the counter-concept of beings; rather, it originally belongs to their essential unfolding as such. In the Being of beings,

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158 Ibid., page 62.
159 Ibid., Section 40.
the nihilation of the nothing occurs.”\textsuperscript{160} This is precisely why de Beistegui can characterize Heidegger’s metaphysics as a radical phenomenology of the “inapparent,” since that which is behind presence and grounds it has just as much priority as phenomena.\textsuperscript{161} The event of being is the coming into presence and the fading into absence of entities. As Heidegger’s work develops, its emphasis shifts to the increasingly significant role that otherness, that which is outside of thought and the world, takes on for metaphysical thought and being as event. Additionally, it should become clearer that internal tension takes on a productive power for Heidegger. In the coming into presence and fading into absence of entities, being in general is implicated as that which presents itself only to conceal itself. This oscillation, this turning, \textit{is} the event of being.

To characterize otherness as bound up with events, Heidegger must reformulate conceptualization, thought and truth. From Aristotle to Kant, truth generally rested on a notion of correlation between thought and object in judgment. Heidegger, in proposing \textit{Dasein} as the site of eventful being coming into being as beings or entities, asserts that the very presence of entities requires \textit{Dasein} as an opening for that presence. \textquotedblleft\textquoteleft Truth’ is not a feature of correct propositions that are asserted of an ‘object’ by a human ‘subject’ and then ‘are valid’ somewhere, in what sphere we know not; rather, truth is disclosure of beings through which an openness essentially unfolds.\textquotedblright\textsuperscript{162} \textit{Dasein} is this openness for beings to come into presence in their presence. Yet, every presence requires an absence, which implicates an originary ground, or reserve, from which beings come into being:

nothing (no-thing). Things are only framed in structural worlds, while no-things are of the extra-worldly realm of absence, what Heidegger calls, the “earth.” As such, concealment plays just as much of a role as unconcealment; coming to presence implicates withdrawal into absence. Heidegger proposes truth as the event of the disclosedness of phenomena as beings in their being. Truth is not the agreement between a concept and an object in judgment, but is the knowledge provided by a clearing for the eventfulness of being, as a test of the relation between Dasein and being, and to test it in a way that would furnish a more authentic relation between the two, that is, in the ‘primordial’ mode, before the distortion undertaken throughout the framing of world-history and thought.\(^{163}\) The essence of truth, in the final analysis, is in allowing beings to come into presence from their originary concealment as themselves, without being transformed by historically determined, representational thought. Moreover, this process, as individuation of phenomena, always implicates the more general tendency of concealment indicative of earth and the event.

Heidegger takes art, and poetry in particular, to be paradigmatic of truth as unconcealment, and concealment, the turning between the two as the event. Art is the very process that encapsulates truth as unconcealment/concealment. Indeed, “Art is the setting-into-work of truth.”\(^{164}\) Heidegger states that an authentic understanding of art yields an authentic understanding of being. To do this, understanding the artwork as a ‘thing’ requires critique. The history of metaphysics determines understanding the

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\(^{163}\) In the Note added to the end on “The Essence of Truth,” Heidegger states, “Being appears primordially in the light of concealing withdrawal. The name of this clearing is aletheia.” And, concerning the revised notion of truth, “The course of the questioning is intrinsically the way of a thinking which, instead of furnishing representations and concepts, experiences and tests itself as a transformation of its relatedness to Being.” Ibid., pages 137-138.

artwork as a thing in terms of a substance with accidents, or a subject with predicates, or as a type of composite of form and matter. In this sense, Heidegger states, the artwork is thought of as a thing in the same mistaken and inauthentic sense that being is considered a thing, in a way which objectifies it for use as equipment within the contextual framing of a world-project. To understand being in an eventful way means to understand the artwork as an event. As such, artworks, and by extension all entities, have a two-sidedness in which they are entities characterized by a meaningful world of Dasein’s projects in presence, as well as a side which is not exhausted by the characteristics of entities in a world: a side which speaks to their being as itself, as a dynamic event which is not only in the world, but is extra-worldly, and comes from elsewhere. The artwork is the encapsulation of the actual eventful process of presence and absence; it captures being as event in its moment of becoming, which is its mode of existence. Works of art come into presence, create a world by their relations with other entities, especially Dasein, and maintain that world so long as their presence remains. Heidegger states, “The work opens up a world and keeps it abidingly in force.” In essence, Heidegger indicates a reformulation of the Greek notion of physis, and attempts to recentralize nature, as becoming and movement, at the center of a metaphysics of the event. All becoming, all coming into presence, which is characteristic of nature and the world, is made possible by a fundamental process of grounding and ungrounding, of which earth plays the role of both. He states, “The Greeks early called this emerging and rising in itself and in all things physis. It illuminates also that on which and in which man bases his dwelling. We call this ground the earth…. Earth is that whence the arising

165 Ibid., pages 146-155.
166 Ibid., page 169.
brings back and shelters everything that arises as such. In the things that arise, earth
occurs essentially as the sheltering agent.” Worlds are the environments in which
Dasein consists relationally, whereas earth is that which is outside of any world, the
foundation from which worlds and Dasein first become possible. It is precisely in the
artwork that this state of affairs reveals itself.

That into which the work sets itself back and which it causes to come forth in this setting back of
itself we call the earth. Earth is that which comes forth and shelters. Earth, irreducibly
spontaneous, is effortless and untiring. Upon the earth and in it, historical man grounds his
dwelling in the world. In setting up a world, the work sets forth the earth. This setting forth must
be thought here in the strict sense of the word [sic]. The work moves the earth itself into an open
region of a world and keeps it there. The work lets the earth be an earth.\textsuperscript{\textit{sic}}

The work of art is that which exhibits the tension between coming into presence,
unconcealment, and absence, the concealed, withdrawn origin of presence. The work of
art literally embodies the turning, the strife, between world and earth.

Truth, described above as \textit{aletheia}, or as unconcealment, consists in the artwork
such that the artwork is the precise way in which the tendency in being to withdrawal
from presence finds its counter-move in the clearing which the artwork provides for its
unconcealment in presence.\textsuperscript{169} Truth consists in the opposition between clearing and
concealing as an event, which is the occurrence of the artwork itself. Through creation,
the “strife” between world and earth sets forth a place for the truth of being as event to
subsist. Heidegger takes poetry to be paradigmatic of this process since language
provides the means for being to come forth into presence as truth.\textsuperscript{170} Language is the

\hfill
\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{167} Ibid., page 168.
\item \textsuperscript{168} Ibid., pages 171-172.
\item \textsuperscript{169} Ibid., page 181.
\item \textsuperscript{170} Ibid., pages 165-182.
\end{enumerate}
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disclosure of being in a world, while poetic language courts the earth. Poetic thought and art provides the clearing and embodies the tension between concealment and unconcealment. “Language alone brings beings as being into the open for the first time;” it is the primordial clearing that then provides for being as an event to occur. Art provides both the original space for the creation of being as an event out of the opposition between world and earth, and the means by which that tension, as the most profound truth, is preserved in human history. It is just this opposition that Heidegger finds so compelling about the Greek sense of physis, so much so that he attempts to make this notion of ontological becoming central to his philosophy via Dasein’s creation of a space for presentation.

Heidegger contrasts the work of art to technology. While both are ways of being-in-the-world, basic, historical attitudes that direct projects, each is different with regard to the way in which it relates to being as an event. As has been indicated, in the artwork, the tension between the unconcealment of the world and the concealment of earth gives rise to and preserves a clearing for truth to consist as eventful being, as a happening. Technology, on the other hand, is a mode of “enframing” the world in which the totalization and manipulation of all entities is undertaken. Technology, as a mode of thought and being, Heidegger remarks, is meant here in the broadest sense of the destiny of Western metaphysics, and as the more precise worldview that has come as a consequence of the scientific revolution. In technology, the kind of authentic relationship with the strife between world and earth and the clearing for concealing which Dasein provides through poetry is consumed by the absolute tendency to structuralize the order of beings under a single, technological schematic. The eventfulness of being is arrested

171 Ibid., page 198.
for production and profit.

The essence of technology lies in enframing. Its holding sway belongs within destining. Since destining at any given time starts man on a way of revealing, man, thus under way, in continually approaching the brink of the possibility of pursuing and promulgating nothing but what is revealed in ordering, and of deriving all his standards on this basis. Through this the other possibility is blocked—that man might rather be admitted sooner and ever more primarily to the essence of what is unconcealed and to its unconcealment, in order that he might experience as his essence the requisite belonging to revealing.  

In this regard, technology offers an inauthentic mode of being-in-the-world in which *Dasein* is alienated from its ownmost mode of providing a clearing for the fundamental tension of the coming to being of the truth of presence and withdrawal, as the productive power of strife between world and earth. In technology, the mystery and spontaneity of the fundamental withdrawal and concealment which is one half of the essence of truth in being as event is lost. This poses a serious ‘danger,’ in Heidegger’s mind, for the destiny of human beings seems to run into a mistaken relationship with being, misunderstanding it fundamentally, and, in doing so, misunderstanding itself. It is precisely this technological mode of revealing and ordering being that Heidegger finds to be the necessary consequence of Western metaphysics. From Plato’s Idea to Aristotle’s substance and all that followed, technology as the endpoint of metaphysical thought seems necessary. Hence, Heidegger’s assertion that this history undergo a displacement. Metaphysics, then, is for Heidegger a matter of protecting access to being as unconcealment in events of presence and withdrawing into concealment. Whether metaphysics is consummated in knowing as Hegel and technology would have it, or it

simply develops into nihilism or its own closure, the task for thought is to preserve the eventfulness of being.

2.4 Identity and Difference as Ontological Difference

What has preceded is a brief tracing of Heidegger’s thought in light of his attempt to philosophically break away from the paradigm of identity over difference. Chiefly, the way in which Heidegger attempts to do this is by asserting that being is eventful, that being is a dynamic process of becoming. Heidegger attempts to foster a type of metaphysical stance that is based on being as an eventful happening over being as a type of basic substance or substrate. This required Heidegger to reformulate thought as eventful, that is, as the site of being’s dynamic presence and absence. Being refers to the very event of presence and withdrawal. This marks a significant departure from the Classically informed conception of truth as the correspondence between concept and object in representational thought and propositional language. Language itself is the disclosure of eventful being in thought, and truth is authentic unconcealment. In this way, Heidegger’s philosophy represents a remarkable instance in the history of philosophy. Yet, Heidegger did not explicitly, or consistently, frame his own work in light of the current project bound up with basic notions of identity and difference. The question concerning identity and difference, and what becomes of them in Heidegger’s philosophy, still requires detail.

Heidegger’s most clear and explicit interaction with identity and difference comes in his 1957 lecture “The Principle of Identity,” and in another lecture from the same year.
titled “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics.” In the latter, Heidegger indicates that difference, as has been the line of thinking in this thesis, is only ever difference as determined by the history of metaphysics as a derivative of identity. He proposes an alternative conception of difference where difference is the difference between being and beings, the ontological difference that is constitutive of metaphysics and thought as such. This alternative conception of difference demands that Heidegger propose a new conception of identity, which he indicates in the former lecture through a reformulation of Parmenides’ indicated relationship of identity between thought and being as the “same,” understood by Heidegger to be a unity based to some degree on an internal difference. As indicated above, Heidegger believes that Western thought is entirely determined by Western metaphysics, to the degree that language itself is inextricably bound up with the metaphysical heritage. At the heart of Heidegger’s thought is the idea that thinking of being, and man, in an appropriate manner involves first and foremost a ‘step back’ to the beginning of that tradition. The two essays analyzed below represent a clear example of Heidegger’s attempt to make that step back, in such a way that Joan Stambaugh remarks that it was Heidegger’s view that these essays represent his most important publications after Being and Time.

In “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics,” Heidegger defines difference as a product of the history of metaphysics. “We speak of it, tentatively and unavoidably, in the language of the tradition. We speak of the difference between Being

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and beings.”¹⁷⁵ Difference as such is simply unthought in philosophy; it is a point of “oblivion” in that philosophy, since its early inception, has had a trajectory which passed difference, and any question it may pose, by. Heidegger, perhaps for the first time in philosophy, gives a gravity to difference in asking this simple question: “What do you make of the difference if Being as well as beings appear by virtue of the difference [between the two], each in its own way?”¹⁷⁶ If the difference itself is what determines being and beings, then an alternative notion of difference is necessary, one that does not presuppose identity, since in this case it is entirely formative of it. This task requires a radical type of thought, one that can not fit into the framework of representational thought, since that framework is already endowed with, and made possible by, the priority of identity.

“We think of Being rigorously only when we think of it in its difference with beings, and of beings in their difference with Being. The difference thus comes specifically into view. If we try to form a representational idea of it, we will at once be misled into conceiving of difference as a relation which our representing has added to Being and to beings. Thus the difference is reduced to a distinction, something made up by our understanding.”¹⁷⁷ Thus, difference must be conceptualized in a very new way, a way that does not have its root in thinking of difference in an Aristotelian sense, by which difference is thought of as a ‘distinction’ between given concepts in relation to one another, as is the case with propositional, predicative thought, the genus-species relation, and the subject-predicate relation, whereby being in general and beings in their whatness are conceived of first,

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., pages 63-64.
¹⁷⁷ Ibid., page 62. Deleuze, begins Difference and Repetition from a this exact insight, but proceeds along an entirely different path of thinking about the topic.
which is the whole problem of identity.\textsuperscript{178} Heidegger suggests that thinking of this
difference requires wiping away its oblivion by conceptualizing “perdurance” as central
to ontological difference. Perdurance, for Heidegger, means thinking of being in general
as “unconcealing overwhelming,” and beings as such as those entities in which being in
general “arrives.” The unconcealing indicates the presence of being to though, that both
are proper to one another, reaching out to one another, as it were. The overwhelming, on
the other hand, implies the inherent excess of earth and the event, the otherness as surplus
of the earth. Heidegger states that being in general is manifest in beings by a transitive
relation between the two: “The Being of beings means Being which is beings.”\textsuperscript{179} It is
this precise point of Heidegger’s thinking of the ontological difference between being in
general and beings as, in some sense, a point if identity, that is to say, equality, that is of
interest here. Ontological \textit{difference} means being \textit{is} beings. He elucidates the above
concepts here:

Being in the sense of unconcealing overwhelming, and beings as such in the sense of arrival that
keeps itself concealed, are present, and thus differentiated, by virtue of the Same, the
differentiation. That differentiation alone grants and holds apart the “between,” in which the
overwhelming and the arrival are held toward one another, are borne away from and toward each
other. The difference of Being and beings, as the differentiation of overwhelming and arrival, is
the perdurance (Austrag) of the two in \textit{unconcealing keeping in concealment}. Within this
perdurance there prevails a clearing of what veils and closes itself off--and this its prevalence
bestows the being apart, and the beings toward each other, of overwhelming and arrival.\textsuperscript{180}

\textsuperscript{178} In the final section of “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics,” Heidegger alludes to the
possibility that language is so thoroughly bound up with its metaphysical history that it may be impossible
to think of being in the way that he is searching out, whence Derrida’s claim that, in Heidegger, what is
most striking is the erasure of being. See Jacques Derrida’s \textit{Of Grammatology}. Gayatri Spivak’s extensive
introduction sheds light on this very problem and operation of erasure (pages xxxviii-xlv, in particular).
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid., page 64.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., page 65.
Taking being in general to mean that which is perpetually grounding and presenting beings as such (earth), Heidegger asserts that the “Same” is exactly what maintains ontological difference. One can easily see the tension which Heidegger presented concerning artwork as that which presents and maintains the tension between world and earth in this presentation of ontological difference as the tension between being and beings though their differentiation in the same. However, just what Heidegger means by the “Same” requires serious elucidation, given that this sameness seems so central, and that is such even amid an emphasis on difference. In what sense can sameness and difference be co-dependent, or even two aspects of the same ontological difference?

Since the Classical metaphysics of Greece, identity had always been bound up with some kind of sameness and unity. As was the case for Plato, in order for something to be fully, it had to be itself as itself. The relation was generally thought to be one of equality. The principle of identity has its root in this early conception of sameness as being itself as itself. Even as far into modern thought as Leibniz, whose influence on logic was immense, the principle of identity maintained this sense. His principle of the identity of indiscernibles is just that: if two entities share all of their predicates, they are identical. For German Idealist thought, the tenor of identity resounded the self-identical subject in its relationships with objects, which turned out to be aspects of the subject in its sameness. For Heidegger, however, the meaning of sameness takes on a new sense, one that reflects his commitment to ontological difference as the difference between being and beings.\(^1\)

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\(^1\) See the preceding section on Plato and Aristotle for an exact description of how equality is a central tenet of their notion of identity, and this sense of equality seems equivalent to sameness.
Early in “The Principle of Identity,” Heidegger already embarks on a different course regarding identity and sameness. “The formula A = A speaks of equality. It doesn’t define A as the same.”\(^{182}\) In the case of equality, his thinking goes, two terms or entities are needed in order to present the relation of equality as such. A = A means A is self-identical with A. This is the line of thinking for Leibniz, for example, and the German Idealists took Fichte’s transformation of A = A into I = I as an axiom. For Heidegger, however, sameness is something entirely different. He looks, as is always the case with Heidegger, to the earliest thoughts on the matter for insight. Heidegger states that Parmenides’ assertion that thinking and being are the same was a neglected thought in the history of philosophy.\(^{183}\) He indicates that identity had always been considered as belonging to being. This is consistent with everything said above in that identity is the most fundamental way of describing being. There is being, and being has identity as its primary marker. Heidegger describes this relation as belonging; he reads sameness as an essential belonging in all cases. In the case of traditional metaphysics, identity belonged to being. What Heidegger finds so important in Parmenides’ insight is that it asserts something which he finds more proper and prior: “thinking and being belong together in the same and by virtue of this same.”\(^{184}\) At this point in Heidegger’s thought, he indicates that the entire history of Western thinking about being comes down to two ways of emphasizing the phrase “belonging together.” Traditionally, the emphasis has been placed on ‘together’, whereby “‘to belong’ means as much as: to be assigned and placed into the order of a ‘together’, established in the unity of a manifold, combined into the

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\(^{183}\) Heidegger reads what was rendered above (Section 1.2.1.4) as Parmenides “thinking and the thought that it is are the same,” as “for the same perceiving (thinking) as well as being,” Ibid., page 27.

\(^{184}\) Ibid., page 27.
unity of system, mediated by the unifying center of an authoritative synthesis.” This perfectly circumscribes the way in which the history of metaphysics has taken identity to belong to being. This is, however, not Heidegger’s approach.

In taking the second option, in emphasizing the ‘belonging’ of “belonging together,” Heidegger asserts that the relationship is determined by the manner of belonging, not by the features of the philosophical system which unifies the two terms in the same conceptual structure. Yet, thinking and being are said, in Heidegger’s own terms, to “belong together in the same.” This sameness refers not to any kind of conceptual framework or historically determined mode of thought. For Heidegger, the “same,” here, means the “event of appropriation.” Heidegger takes the belonging together of thought and being to mean, essentially, the belonging together of Dasein, here described as “Man,” and eventful being in terms of their “destiny,” that is, necessary relationship. This is put forth in the sense that Dasein’s unique feature is that it is ontological. As a being, it is the only being that is capable providing a clearing for being as a presence, for thinking being as such, and this unique status of Dasein has major implications for Heidegger.

Man is essentially this relationship of responding to Being, and he is only this…. A belonging to being prevails within man, a belonging which listens to being because it is appropriated to Being…. Let us think of being according to its original meaning, as presence…. [I]t is man, open toward Being, who alone lets Being arrive as presence. Such becoming present needs the openness of a clearing, and by this need remains appropriated to human being. This does not mean that Being is posited first and only by man. On the contrary, the following becomes clear: Man and Being are appropriated to each other. They belong to each other. From this belonging to each other, which has not been thought out more closely, man and Being have first received those

185 Ibid., page 29.
determinations of essence by which man and Being are grasped metaphysically in philosophy.\textsuperscript{186}

Thus, the sameness at the root of ontological difference is the sameness of the relation, as co-relational, between \textit{Dasein} as the site of a clearing and eventful being as that which presents itself to \textit{Dasein}. Identity \textit{is} this relation of sameness, not equality, but belonging together in the same. \textit{Dasein} and being are co-dependent as well as co-relational; they are simultaneously the necessary conditions for the existence of one another and the sufficient conditions for any mode of being which each exists through a co-responding mode of relation. For Heidegger, the task of thinking is to adequately affirm this relation of sameness as the event of appropriation, by a ‘leap’ out of historical, representational thought. Heidegger always remains ambivalent concerning the possibility of such a leap. However, he does indicate something important regarding being as an event in his description of the event of appropriation. In recognizing that \textit{Dasein} and being belong to one another, and appropriate one another, Heidegger remarks that this event is not just a simple historical occurrence, but an event that is entirely unique, unprecedented and singular in its happening. “The event of appropriation is that realm, vibrating within itself, through which man and Being reach each other in their nature, achieve their active nature by losing those qualities with which metaphysics has endowed them.”\textsuperscript{187} The question for Heidegger, in the end, is whether or not language could allow such an event to occur, an event that would break metaphysical language itself. When Heidegger answers yes to this question, which is not always his answer, he indicates that art, and poetry in particular, is the precise mode by which this leap out of representational thought

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., pages 31-32.
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., page 37.
and metaphysics into the event of appropriation as that most authentic relation of belonging together between *Dasein* and being is achieved.

### 2.5 The Limits of Difference in Heidegger

One can see in Heidegger’s work a certain transformation. The centrality of *Dasein* that the early works exhibited and rested on began, in the late works, to give way to an openness regarding difference itself. De Beistegui suggests what is at hand in the progression of Heidegger’s work is a movement from ontico-ontological difference to a conception of difference as originary. What stands out most regarding Heidegger and his relationship to the current project is, firstly, his formulation of being as a type of event, which represents a significant departure from Classical metaphysics and its heritage. Secondly, Heidegger’s philosophy marks a moment in the history of philosophy in which difference begins to be spoken of itself, in which difference gains a level of importance that had hitherto been lacking. Yet, the stake of this thesis is that, while Heidegger’s philosophy does a great deal in terms of thinking difference, it does not develop an adequate notion of difference. For Deleuze and de Beistegui alike, Heidegger’s philosophy is simply too limited in its ability to think difference in itself.

Firstly, Heidegger’s philosophy seems, no matter which period of his thought one takes as an example, to be too anthropocentric to allow a concept of difference to come to the forefront. Heidegger’s entire philosophy rests on the centrality of *Dasein*, or man, to such a degree that there can be no difference without difference as an appropriation of the human being. As has been made clear above, without *Dasein* there can be no clearing,
and without clearing, there can be no presentation of eventful being. The relationship of belonging which originates *Dasein* and being as such leads Heidegger to posit that appropriation is the mode of relating which is most fundamental, and this seems strikingly close the relationship consisting of objectification, implying an active subject. Simply, can a relation of appropriation, where each is the property of an other, provide an account of the way in which difference is the metaphorically exhaustive originary event? Presupposing the identity, even if it co-relational, of the two poles on either end of that relation is still a difference as the same between two self-same identities. In an additional sense, Heidegger consistently places *Dasein* in the fatalistic position of being ‘destined’ to act as the site of eventful being. For the above reasons, it should seem clear that Heidegger, by making *Dasein* so central, already commits himself to having to take language, logos, and appropriation as fundamental aspects in the process of being in its presentation, hence de Beistegui’s characterization of Heidegger’s thought as ontoheterology. It is precisely this feature of Heidegger’s thought that commits him to thinking of technology as such a force in *Dasein*’s being-in-the-world; technology necessarily accompanies the possibility of the event of appropriation at the hands of *Dasein*’s mode of being in the world. Overall, Heidegger’s thinking means that without man, there is no being. If the two are truly as co-dependent as Heidegger makes them out to be, then they cannot be meaningfully separated. It follows that if man were simply erased from the entire ontological field of existence, that being would become a void, a nothing in the emptiest sense of the word. In the sense that *Dasein* is a completely necessary feature of there being anything at all rather than nothing, Heidegger’s thought
remains too anthropocentric; it presupposes Dasein, and, in doing so, it cannot start with
difference, because it has already started with Dasein.

Secondly, where contrariety was the greatest difference for Aristotle, and
contradiction was the greatest difference for Hegel, ontological difference is the greatest
difference for Heidegger. The difference between the being which is ontological, Dasein,
and being in general is always a difference held together in the sameness of the
permanent relationship between the two. Insofar as there is difference, it is only ever the
same difference: ontological difference. This is difference with an identity. Here,
ontological difference has the same logic of identity as the Idea or substance as essence.
“Difference” is a word that Heidegger uses to designate the sameness of the relation that
constitutes the identity of ontological difference. Even granting that the difference is the
primary trait, even if it is not the equality between an A and an A, but the sameness of
belonging together, in the sense of an A and a B, the relation is fixed as an identity; it
only ever remains the same, and produces the same. Furthermore, difference, in this case,
cannot be an originary, productive difference since it is preceded by Dasein, which has a
“pre-ontological” understanding of its relationship to being. Deleuze, puts the issue
thusly,

[Heidegger] retains the primacy of the Same, even if this is supposed to include and comprehend
difference as such…. Heidegger does not abandon what we called above the subjective
presuppositions. As can be seen in Being and Time, there is in effect a pre-ontological and implicit
understanding of being, even though, Heidegger specifies, the explicit conception must not follow
from it.188

Heidegger’s thinking can never account for difference in itself, since it presupposes a

188 Deleuze, Gilles. Difference and Repetition. Translated by Paul Patton. New York City, NY: Columbia
type of subjectivity, which will always relate to representation and identity, even if that identity is understood as sameness in the Heideggerian sense. Heidegger himself struggled to articulate precisely what thought without representation would be like, outside of language and the tradition of metaphysics. In the end, plurality itself, the plurality of beings in heterogeneity can only be accounted for in regional ontologies of worlds, and fundamental ontology is concerned with one identical difference. Deleuze, to the contrary, quite literally attempts to explain everything on the basis of difference as perpetually productive of identities, not the difference between any kind of entities or concepts, but difference alone, between nothing, as everything.

It should be understood that Heidegger’s philosophy is in no way a failure on the grounds that its commitment to the centrality of \textit{Dasein} and difference within the same limits its conception of difference, since Heidegger did not intend for his philosophy to develop an adequate concept of difference in itself primarily. Following Deleuze, this thesis intends to trace a way out of the priority of identity to thinking of difference in itself. Deleuze distances himself from Heidegger, primarily, by setting himself apart from Heidegger on subjectivity and Nietzsche. He asks, “Does [Heidegger] conceive of \textit{being} in such a manner that it will be truly disengaged from any subordination in relation to the identity of representation? It would seem not, given his critique of the Nietzschean eternal return.”\footnote{Ibid., page 66.} For Deleuze, developing an adequate notion of difference in itself involves taking Nietzsche’s eternal return to be central, and this represents a significant difference between Deleuze and Heidegger. Heidegger understands the eternal return of the same in terms of the sameness between \textit{Dasein} and being, the sameness that constitutes the ontological difference. As Deleuze remarks, “This interpretation neglects
all that Nietzsche fought against. Nietzsche is opposed to every conception of affirmation
which would find its foundation in Being, and its determination in the being of man.¹⁹⁰
Thus, while Heidegger represents a crucial moment in the philosophy of difference, his
thought does not pass through identity enough. The thought that the philosophy of
difference must make a complete break from Classical metaphysical concepts proposes a
kind of radicality that we must now turn to Deleuze to elucidate. In Deleuze, difference
itself, that which is only in its ability to differ from itself, is presented outside of the
limitations of representation, language, being and man. For Heidegger, the difference is
relational, in that Dasein is always individuated and individuating with regard to being.
For Deleuze, difference is at the very heart of concepts and singularities as a completely
pre-individualized multiplicity.

Chapter 3

Difference

This thesis began with the question, ‘what is identity?’ and proceeded to examine the way in which philosophy has answered this question throughout its long history. Having located a metaphysical type of identity at the heart of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy, it became clear that, as entirely conditioned by its Platonic and Aristotelian heritage, philosophy’s historical development was furnished by its commitment to identity as a central principle. This posed a serious problem for philosophy, since, the more ardently it valued identity, the more it found itself at an impasse with regard to balancing general principles and concepts of identity with particular entities and experiences of difference. Thus, philosophy developed as the codification of the tension between identity and difference, always privileging identity over difference as a paradigm for thinking. It is in virtue the early entrenchment of this paradigm that a problem of identity persisted throughout the history of philosophy, a problem which entailed developing an adequate concept of identity which would both account for, and be impervious to, difference. Philosophy, as the philosophy of identity, has traditionally, and at the very least implicitly, privileged beginning with the things which are most metaphysically real and stable in themselves, the concepts which adequately define or
describe those things, and the principles which account for the primary status of those objects and concepts. In every case, identity was taken as central via some variation of defining an essence of a thing, an essence which is in principle self-identical. As such, difference only ever reached the status of a secondary problem, a problem which only could be solved in a way which was preconditioned by the answer to the primary question, ‘what is identity?’

Taking the trends of twentieth century thought to be indicative, the impasse of the problem of identity seems to have resulted in the exhaustion of the question, ‘what is identity?’ itself. Contemporary philosophy is seemingly marked by the failure to develop an adequate concept of identity because of the sheer immutability of difference itself. Are we as philosophers, after over two millennia, any closer to developing an adequate concept of identity than we were at any point during that history? It would seem not, given that our tradition is determined as a nearly dialectical series of turns between identity, difference, and back to a revised identity. If it is true that the twentieth century is marked by the failure of identity, then the history of philosophy begins to resemble the aporetic elenchus, whereby we are no longer sure how to even re-ask the question, ‘what is identity?’ In the face of a modern, more humble, if not downright irreverent, stance toward asserting identity, difference, in the twentieth century, has enjoyed a more detailed analysis, or at least flirtatious consideration. As has been shown, this is clear in Heidegger’s work in particular. Ontological difference, for its part, inserted difference as a relationship between Dasein and being in general; Heidegger explicitly focused on that relation of difference as just that: a relation of difference. However, understanding difference in this regard does little to articulate difference itself, since the difference is as
fixed as specific difference is for Aristotle: the difference between two under the same. If Aristotle’s notion of difference was limited to specific difference, which means it is limited by identity, then Heidegger’s notion of ontological difference ultimately fails to articulate difference itself, taking ontological difference to be the genus over the species Dasein and being. Is there a way to articulate pure difference, pure heterogeneity, and absolute becoming, rather than absolute identity? This is precisely Deleuze’s project in Difference and Repetition. For Deleuze, there is really only one question, one problem: ‘what is difference?’ What is difference such that we can speak of it without implicating, that is, presupposing, a prior identity?

### 3.1 The Minor Difference Internal to Major Identity

Deleuze can ask, and answer, this question due to his indifference toward the notion that language will somehow remain in the tradition of identity. For Heidegger, the possibilities of language were a constant point of concern, in that language may not be capable of breaking from its metaphysical tradition. The contrast, here, between Heidegger and Deleuze is in their respective interpretation of history. Heidegger turned to the past to gain insight into the possibilities of the future, from which he concluded that language may be shackled by its metaphysically determined history. Thus, the real question for Heidegger was concerning an outcome: which force would come to dominate language, techne or poesis? Deleuze, on the other hand, read history as a text with a major/minor split throughout it. Regarding the history of metaphysics, the major aspect of that history is thoroughly identitarian. However, every major tradition has its
foil, and the minor aspect of the history of philosophy is thoroughly differential. For Deleuze, within the very history of identitarian metaphysics itself, difference operates under the surface. Difference is the ungrounding to the grounding of identity. My indication that philosophy is the process of codifying the tension between identity and difference finds its basis in this insight that identity is itself grounded on the ungrounding of difference; the tension that persists between the two provides the momentum of the history of philosophy. This is not to say that the tension itself is everything. Rather, difference is everything. Deleuze’s engagements in the history of philosophy are made precisely to read this minor history of differential ungrounding as, at the same time, internal and subversive to the major history itself. “All identities,” Deleuze emphasizes, “are only simulated, produced as an optical ‘effect’ by the more profound game of difference and repetition.”

3.2 Deleuze contra Aristotle

The entire project of Difference and Repetition can be understood as asserting difference as primary over, or foundational under, identity via radically mobilizing the basic philosophical concepts of difference and repetition themselves in the history of philosophy, finding the difference that accounted for identity all along, emphasizing the minor difference internal to the major identity and utilizing it to subvert identity as primary. Deleuze’s first move in this strategy is confronting Aristotle as the “propitious

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191 Deleuze and Guattari outline this major/minor distinction in Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature, where they upset the traditional literary persona of Kafka to create a completely idiosyncratic, but compelling, view of Kafka’s writing.

moment” of Greek philosophy, the one which would, as has been shown above, determine to a large degree what is to become of philosophy, thought and language overall.

To rescue difference from its maledictory state seems, therefore, to be the project of a philosophy of difference. Cannot difference become a harmonious organism and relate determination to other determinations within a form—which is to say, within the coherent medium of an organic representation? There are four principal aspects to reason in so far as it is the medium of representation: identity, in the form of the undetermined concept; analogy, in the relation between ultimate determinable concepts; opposition, in the relation between determinations within concepts; resemblance, in the determined object of the concept itself. There forms are like the four heads or the four shackles of mediation. Difference is ‘mediated’ to the extent that it is subjected to the fourfold root of identity, opposition, analogy, and resemblance. On the basis of a first impression (difference is evil), it is proposed to ‘save’ difference by representing it, and to represent it by relating it to the requirements of the concept in general. It is therefore a question of determining a propitious moment—the Greek propitious moment—at which difference is, as it were, reconciled with the concept.193

Understanding difference itself means first understanding the way in which representational thought took difference from the unground into that which is grounded in identity. The presupposition of conceptual identity, and hence the difficulty in accounting for it, is precisely an assumption needed for representational thought to work at all, hence its seemingly obvious presence coupled with its utterly elusive nature in philosophy. The undetermined concept is nothing other than the form, Idea, or essence. Between the most general concepts, representation utilizes analogical judgment to unify a single manifold of thought by uniting disparate and foundational concepts as principles of reason only by their likeness, a likeness asserted using arbitrary criteria, since the unification of a

193 Ibid., page 29.
manifold cannot work without presupposing criteria by which it is analogically unified in
the first place. \textsuperscript{194} Under concepts within a unified understanding, representation proceeds
to define and understand in terms of superficial differences as oppositions between
predicates belonging to a subject, differences that are such only insofar as they are
primarily brought into a larger relation of sameness by which difference can be said to be
attributed in the form of predicates. Finally, with the inclusion of an empirical sensibility
or experiential intuition, the world itself comes to be partitioned and measured by sheer
resemblance of phenomena as objects to the concepts which act as the subject. In
describing representation thusly, Deleuze intends to answer the question above, “can
difference be thought in itself under such a schema?” in the negative. Difference must be
thought without these features, or shackles, of representational thought, if it is to be
difference at all. As should be apparent from the above sections on Plato and Aristotle,
the paradigm of identity is deeply ingrained with the mode of representational thought to
the degree that they are, in most respects, the same thing. Thus, Deleuze begins
\textit{Difference and Repetition} with a treatment of these very thinkers and their deep
consequences. Beginning with Aristotle, Deleuze works to break loose from the
Aristotelian limitation of difference to contrariety under specific difference, asserting a
revision of the limitation by opening a path to what Aristotle, in his commitment to
representational thought, could not think: the prohibited difference of pure multiplicity
and otherness, immutable difference. In doing such, Deleuze, perhaps counter-intuitively,
returns to Plato. In the \textit{Sophist}, the philosophical project that would influence Aristotle’s

\textsuperscript{194} Kant worked through this very problem in the Schematism in a way that oscillates between privileging
imagination and reason as the mediating agent.
own briefly ruptures and presents an image of a philosophy of difference. In this Platonic moment, the Idea is swallowed by simulacra.

3.2.1 Out of Representation, Past Specific Difference

To break free from the shackles of representation is to move past the limits of specific difference. This means taking Aristotle as the propitious moment, that Aristotelian thought must be somehow dealt with. In this task, Deleuze focuses on Aristotle’s idea of specific difference and contrariety as the greatest difference, and, ultimately, attempts to think a greater difference. Taking specific difference to be the differentiation between species under a shared genus, Deleuze indicates his way past Aristotle, and Heidegger, for that matter, and toward Heraclitus. “The difference ‘between’ two things is only empirical, and the corresponding determinations are only extrinsic. However, instead of something distinguished from something else, imagine something which distinguishes itself—and yet that from which it distinguishes itself does not distinguish itself from it.”

In this sense we can begin to see Deleuze assert difference as a type of event of differentiation; the only event, in fact, is the event of differentiation, and it is eternal.

For Aristotle, contrariety, as the ability to bear opposites while remaining substantially or essentially identical, was located within specific difference, and

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195 Ibid., page 28.
196 For Heidegger, the event of being through ontological difference was an event of codetermination (co-relation, co-respondance, co-appropriation), not pure differentiation. The codetermination of Dasein through being and being through Dasein, in an exchange between Dasein as the site of unconcealing/concealing and being as presenting/withdrawing, is merely a difference in the same as the same relation of co determination; the difference is an identity of belonging between the two, in the same sense that Man is a rational animal. The difference that Deleuze wants to articulate is more radical.
represented the only kind of difference that Aristotle could define within his system of
definitions and essences. It represents the closest that Aristotle could come to difference
in itself, because pure heterogeneity was without an essence (too large), and the material
difference of individuals was merely an accidental modification of its quiddity (too
small), leaving essence intact, which was never up for debate. The difference that
transpires under a genus between species, or, in what amounts to the same order viewed
from below, contrariety as a feature of individuals, represents the greatest difference.
Deleuze describes this feature of Aristotle’s thought thusly:

The determination of species links difference with difference across the successive levels of
division, like a transport of difference, a *diaphora* (difference) of *diaphora*, until a final
difference, that of *infima species* (lowest species), condenses in the chosen direction the entirety of
the essence and its continued quality, gathers them under an intuitive concept and grounds them
along with the term to be defined, thereby becoming itself something unique and indivisible
* [atomon, adiaphron, eidos]. In this manner, therefore, the determination of species ensures
coherence and continuity in the comprehension of the concept.\textsuperscript{197}

In Deleuze’s view, it is specific difference itself, and the reiteration of its division from
just below genera to just above individuals, that keeps the Aristotelian framework intact,
and is responsible for the stability of essence itself. This already grants a kind of power to
specific difference that was not granted before, and implies a way in which difference is
at the root of Aristotle’s notion of identity.

Deleuze goes even further than specific difference, however. Aristotle’s
commitment to representation, via his epistemological, logical, and metaphysical tenets,
maintains specific difference as the greatest difference only in relation to presupposed

\textsuperscript{197} Ibid., page 31.
concepts of identity. Identity makes difference work, and, Deleuze suggests, difference is such that it is a supplement to identity. Heterogeneity and multiplicity are still greater, only untenable for Aristotle, as are contradiction and generic difference. In making specific difference the greatest, because of the formal identity of genera or the substantial identity of individuals are respectively too large and too small, Aristotle has arrested difference’s becoming.

Here we find the principle which lies behind a confusion disastrous for the entire philosophy of difference: assigning a distinctive concept of difference is confused with the inscription of difference within concepts in general—the determination of the concept of difference is confused with the inscription of difference in the identity of an undetermined concept. This is the sleight of hand involved in the propitious moment (and perhaps everything else follows: the subordination of difference to opposition, to analogy, and to resemblance, all the aspects of mediation). Difference can be no more than a predicate in the comprehension of a concept. Aristotle constantly reminds us of this predictive character of specific difference, but he is forced to lend it strange powers such as that of attributing as much as that of being attributed, or of altering the genus as much as of modifying its quality. All of the ways in which specific difference seems to satisfy the requirements of a distinctive concept (purity, interiority, productivity, transportivity) are thus shown to be illusory, even contradictory, on the basis of this fundamental confusion.199

In its central meaning, the above quote is the crystallization of what this thesis has so far attempted make explicit: the propitious moment in Greek philosophy, in Aristotle, is precisely the moment in which the paradigm of identity over difference is entrenched in the philosophical practice to the degree that it would be irretactable. Insofar is difference is thought, it is thought only in relation and subordination to identity. Further, difference

198 Deleuze: “Only in relation to the supposed identity of a concept is specific difference called the greatest,” Ibid.
199 Ibid., page 32.
is a part of the mechanics of the philosophy of identity to such a degree that it is not
difference at all. It is, rather, an adjunct enlisted in the service of identity.

As has been shown, however, Aristotle himself indicates different types of
difference, but discounts them in that they are incompatible with his philosophical
system. At the same time, Aristotle indicates that differences are.\(^{200}\) Recall Aristotle’s
assertion in the *Metaphysics*: “If unity or being is a genus, no differentia will either be
one or have being.”\(^{201}\) Deleuze indicates that Aristotle's assertion that being is not a genus
is, “an argument borrowed from the nature of specific difference--which allows him to
conclude that generic differences are of another nature.”\(^{202}\) What is the nature of generic
difference such that it is not just an extension of the operation of specific difference into a
higher category of genera? The difference between genera is said to be an analogical
difference in being. Being is the next highest plane above genera. Yet, as being cannot be
a genus itself, the difference that differentiates categories between genera in being is
analogy, which relates the difference of genera together in a type of identity of likeness
via judgment in representation. Deleuze indicates that this entire division, from being in
general to genera via analogy, then to species within genera and further down, is only
made possible as a feature of representational thought. “In effect,” Deleuze states,
difference allows the passage from similar neighboring species to the identity of a genus
which subsumes them--that is, the extraction or cutting out of generic identities from the

\(^{200}\) Ibid.
Page 1577.
\(^{202}\) Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Translated by Paul Patton. New York City, NY: Columbia
flux of a continuous perceptible series."\(^{203}\) From the stance of specific difference, it is representation that allows for the generalization in concept to be determined from a milieu of experience. Genera are consolidations of experiences in representation. From the other direction, from the most general to the most specific, “[representation] allows the passage from respectively identical genera to the relations of analogy which obtain between them in the intelligible.”\(^{204}\) Representation is incapable of providing a concept of difference in that it always already presupposes a kind of subsisting, essential, or substantial identity. For Deleuze, shifting from the paradigm of identity to the paradigm of difference means overcoming representation, and propositional thought, through adopting a “non-representational ontology of transcendental empiricism.”\(^{205}\)

### 3.2.2 Univocal Being

Deleuze states, “There has only ever been one ontological proposition: Being is univocal.”\(^{206}\) For the tradition of ontology, the account took being to be centered on a type of substantiality, sameness and essence, which was accounted for in representational, propositional thought through definitions. Deleuze attempts to break out of this tradition of ontotautology in thinking of being in two significantly different ways. First, in place of sameness, Deleuze asserts that being is qualified by active differentiation as multiplicity, or heterogeneity. Second, in place of a *logos*, an account,

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\(^{204}\) Ibid., page 34.


Deleuze asserts that being is best articulated through a genetic account of its becoming. The account of being as difference does not rest on considering resemblances in essential sameness, but dissimilarities in repeated series of differentiations. This, seemingly foreign, non-representational ontology consists of partitioning reality, or being, into a virtual and an actual aspect. In order to understand the meaning of this, we need to come to a better understanding of the way that Deleuze actually distances himself from Plato, Aristotle, and the Aristotelian tradition.

Within the history of philosophy, Deleuze attaches himself to one concept in particular: the univocity of being. Univocity of being is first attributed to Duns Scotus in the Medieval Scholastic period of philosophy. For Duns Scotus, the univocity of being was introduced into a broad debate in theology and metaphysics regarding being. Following Aristotle, if metaphysics is concerned primarily with being *qua* being, and any first principles regarding being *qua* being, then what can be said of God with regard to being? For Aristotle, Duns Scotus, Heidegger and Deleuze alike, being is considered that which is common to all beings as a community. For Medieval thought, if being is what all beings have in common as their most general character, then does God partake of being on the same plane, or in the same mode, as His creations? The concern was describing how God could exist without contradicting His transcendence. The concept of analogy was introduced in this case to argue that God and His creations have being in common only in an analogical, related, way, not in the same way, which would be univocal, nor in completely different ways, as equivocal. Overall, the concern was over how to account for the possibility of knowledge of both God and nature. For equivocity, the difference between the two is unbridgeable; the being of God and the being of nature are not, in any
way, coextensive. This would pose a problem for philosophers who wanted both theological certainty and natural certainty. Univocity, on the other hand, put God and nature on the very same plane; being is said in the same way of God as it is of natural things, which seems to pose a heretical problem for Christian doctrine. Additionally, these stances take their cue from Aristotle’s indication that, when things share a name but not a communal essence, they are said to be homonymous, and, when things share the same name in the same community of essence, they are said to be synonymous. Analogy, then, is when things are related in a type of similarity in judgment. The middle way, analogy, states that while both God and natural things are said to be, they are only said to be. The way in which God and natural things are both said to be is only conceptual and nominal, not metaphysically immanent or on the same ontological plane. In this way, analogy is intended to limit the knowledge of God in metaphysics while securing the possibility of the knowledge of natural things.

Duns Scotus was replying to this type of analogy, because he found that it placed an unacceptable division between metaphysics and theology, a division which he intended to erase with the concept of univocity. Scotus’ concept of univocity applies to the unity of a concept of being in logic. Being, if it is to maintain both its meaning and the principle of non-contradiction, must be said in the same sense of God as of natural things and their concepts. Scotus suggests that being is said of all that is, including God and His creations, but with different qualifications. Being is said in the same sense of all intelligible things, but only with regard to the identity of their essence as predicated quiddity, or whatness. De Beistegui states, “The concepts of species and genus are

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univocal for the physicist and the metaphysician. Likewise the concept of being that
transcends all kinds is univocal in that it allows a quidditative predication, and is included
in the subjects under consideration.” 208 This means that being is univocal only in such a
way that, as a predicate, it is already contained in its subjects. In this way Scotus intended
to unify the ontological field in such a way that the theological object of understanding is
compatible, in the same logos, with the metaphysical or natural object of
understanding. 209 Being is said univocally of God and natural things because they have
respective senses of being related to a single, immanent field of being and can be talked
about meaningfully in a unified discourse concerning that community of being in general.

Deleuze does not take up Duns Scotus’ idea of univocity at face value, but he
does find something profound in it, something worth maintaining and mobilizing.
Aristotle took being to be between a homonym and a synonym. Difference between
genera was too great to be called difference fully; it was unthinkable alterity. Thus being
was too broad to be called a synonym, too broad to be the same name applying to the
alterior essences of genera. Being, as has been shown above, is said to be homonymous in
the sense that it is said differently of that which it is said but always with respect to a
similar ground of substance. In this way, it is most like analogy. Deleuze takes Scotus as
his guide past Aristotle on this point, having indicated that Aristotle’s notion of being
with regard to categorical division into genera as said analogously limits difference to
specific difference and particulars to identities in representation. Firstly, Deleuze takes
univocity in a broader sense than its Classical or Medieval formulation. More than
indicating a sameness between God and natural things, Deleuze wants to indicate that all

208 Ibid., page 233, emphasis mine.
209 It seems that Kant had this line of thought in mind when he asserted that being is not a predicate.
things are, in a specific sense, ontologically the same, not identical, but with a common origin. “A single voice raises the clamour of being,” Deleuze states.\footnote{Deleuze, Gilles. \textit{Difference and Repetition}. Translated by Paul Patton. New York City, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994. Page 35.} By this, he means that the plurality of entities in being are not related in an analogical sense in judgment, but in a univocal sense in that they have the same process of differentiation, which \textit{is} at the same time their mode of individuation, their cause and their sustained process.

In effect, the essential in univocity is not that Being is said in a single and same sense, but that it is said, in a single and same sense, of all its individuating differences or intrinsic modalities. Being is the same for all these modalities, but these modalities are not the same. It is ‘equal’ for all, but they themselves are not equal. It is said of all in a single sense, but they themselves do not have the same sense. The essence of univocal being is to include individuating differences, while these differences do not have the same essence and do not change the essence of being—just as white includes various intensities, while remaining essentially the same white. There are not two ‘paths’, as Parmenides poem suggests, but a single ‘voice’ of Being which includes all its modes, including the most diverse, the most varied, the most differenciated [\textit{sic}]. Being 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 \textit{difference itself}.\footnote{Ibid., page 36, final emphasis mine.}

Difference is not the difference between identities. Rather, difference is the process and \textit{cause} by which entities are individuated. Being is univocal only in the sense that it is said of difference \textit{as} being \textit{qua} being. The force of individuation as differentiation and determination is central here.\footnote{This refers to ontological, not conceptual, determination. The notion that all determination is negation will, in the end, be transfigured into the notion that all determination, be it ontological or conceptual, which amounts to the same thing for Deleuze, is differentiation, not determination.} Being cannot be referred or grounded to some privileged site, like substance or \textit{Dasein}, but to the event of differentiation itself. Something is only in that it becomes, and this sense of univocal being as a common event of differentiation
is what unites all entities in a community of being. Deleuze postulates this univocal sense of being to surpass the aporia which Aristotle’s thought had implanted in the history of philosophy: the impossibility of bridging the gap between the most general and the most particular individual. “[Analogy] must essentially relate being to particular existents, but at the same time it cannot say what constitutes their individuality. For it retains in the particular only that which conforms to the general (matter and form), and seeks the principle of individuation in this or that element of the fully constituted individuals.”

Understanding univocity in place of analogy, in Deleuze’s thinking, means understanding difference not as an attribute given certain concepts of identity or identities of concepts, but understanding difference itself as determining and individuating. Individuals cannot be considered sites to ground, determine, or define being in any way. Rather, individuals themselves require a genetic account of their becoming such. “Univocity of being, in so far as it is immediately related to difference, demands that we show how individuating difference precedes generic, specific and even individual differences within being; how a prior field of individuation within being conditions at once the determination of species of forms, the determination of parts and their individual variations.”

What Scotus’ thought opens the way for, then, is understanding being as immanent. By mobilizing the concept of univocity in difference, the gap between the general and the particular is dissolved. The field of individuation is the plane of immanence on which differentiation individuates identities as “optical effects.” Hence, Deleuze’s philosophy as ontoheterogenesis: the genesis of being as difference. The philosophical method for such a philosophy is what Deleuze terms, perhaps paradoxically, transcendental empiricism.

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213 Ibid., page 38.
214 Ibid. Here, recall that generic difference is ruled by analogy, specific difference by contrariety, and individual difference by generation and corruption.
Before describing this transcendental empiricism with more detail, however, it is worth understanding the way that Deleuze sees this idea of the univocity of difference play out at some key moments in the history of philosophy. In the sense of a minor history of philosophy, one which is internal to the major, identitarian history, Deleuze marks Duns Scotus, Spinoza and Nietzsche as thinkers who grapple with a philosophy of difference broaching the univocal sense of being. Deleuze views Scotus as opening the way for an ontology that is simultaneously immanent and differential, so much so that he considers Scotus’ *Opus Oxoniense*, “the greatest book of pure ontology.” He emphasizes that Duns Scotus’ idea of univocity neutralizes the distinction between finite and infinite types of being to the degree that it presents a view of being as completely indifferent or neutral toward that distinction, bringing types of being into an immanent relation with one another. Scotus reasoning here was not in line with Deleuze’s own project. Making being neutral and indifferent was his way of escaping the heretical view of pantheism. At the same time, Scotus’ univocity, on its own terms and within the parameters of his project, stays, primarily, in the realm of thought. However, Deleuze finds a space opened for difference in Scotus’ philosophy that would pave the way for Spinoza through two concepts of difference: formal and modal distinctions. Formal distinctions are those which persist in individuals with essences, the formal distinction between essences which allows a thing to persist in its unity through attributes. Modal distinctions are those which consists of the difference between being with attributes and “intensive variations,” by which being differentiates itself into different individuals as a modal modification of the immanent. Deleuze states, “Formal distinction and modal

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215 Ibid., page 39.
distinction are two types under which univocal being is related, by itself, to difference in itself,” fully appropriating Scotus’ view into his own project.216

Spinoza takes Scotus’ insight one step further, in that the sense of being in Spinoza becomes “affirmative” rather than indifferent or neutral. Spinoza seems take up the immanent sense of being without any kind of fissures in it, in that he describes being as deus sive natura, God with nature. God is an infinite substance, and everything else follows as a type of individuation of that substance from the one substance dividing into essential attributes, like thought and being, and then modalities of particular, individuated entities. Pierre Macherey explains Spinoza’s thought thusly, “[F]or Spinoza there are not two orders of reality, one substantial and infinite and the other modal and finite, but one single and same reality, continuous and indivisible, determined by one unique law of causality, through which the finite and infinite are indissolubly linked.”217 In this sense, Deleuze sees Spinoza’s ontology of substance, essential attributes, and modes as indicating a way to describe an ontology of immanent differentiation.

[Spinoza] shows that real distinctions are never numerical but only formal--that is, qualitative or essential (essential attributes of the unique substance); and conversely that numerical distinctions are never real, but only modal (intrinsic modes of the unique substance and its attributes). The attributes behave like real qualitatively different senses which relate to substance as if to a single and same designated; and substance in turn behaves like an ontologically unique sense in relation to the modes which express it, and inhabit it like individuating factors or intrinsic and intense degrees.218

In this way, there is a strictly univocal sense of being in Spinoza, in which being is said

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216 Ibid., page 40.
of a single substance, but in its different essential expressions of attributes, or its different expressions in modality. Either way, being is expressive, affective, not indifferent or neutral. “With Spinoza, univocal being ceases to be neutralized and becomes expressive; it becomes a truly expressive and affirmative propositions.”\textsuperscript{219} Deleuze finds in \textit{natura naturans}, nature naturing, Spinoza’s closest concept to his own, to the concept of difference as the event of differentiation internal to individuation. This expressiveness is precisely what Deleuze indicates as difference in its differentiation. Furthermore, Macherey indicates that Spinoza’s conception of knowledge in regard to \textit{natura naturans} is thoroughly genetic, in inverting the principle of sufficient reason, whereby nothing is without its cause, to the principle that no cause is without its effect. Spinoza elaborates this “genetic conception of knowledge” as “\textit{causa seu ratio, ratio seu causa}.”\textsuperscript{220} Machery suggests that this means that the order by which things are produced, genetically, is the order of ideas, and this is precisely at the heart of Deleuze’s conception of the virtual in differentiation as a \textit{cause} of individuation. Finally, Deleuze finds in Spinoza a principle that this genetic account of the differentiation of a single, infinite substance is purely one of affirmation over negation. Differentiating causes of substance are always affirmations of the principle of difference in the infinite substance, affirmation of the \textit{power of production in the force ideas}. Spinoza’s \textit{conatus} is nothing other than this insistence internal to the event of being, this insistence to persist in being. Deleuze takes this persistence to be the affective expression of the eternal return of difference itself; only that which differs returns.

\textsuperscript{219} Ibid.
This is precisely where Deleuze first mobilizes Nietzsche: Spinoza’s concept that all determination is negation, *omnis determinatio est negatio*, is just what a philosophy of difference must surpass.\(^{221}\) “In its essence, difference is the object of affirmation or affirmation itself. In its essence affirmation is itself difference.”\(^{222}\) The univocity of being for Deleuze finds its fullest expression in Nietzsche’s concept of the eternal return.

Eternal return cannot mean the return of the Identical because it presupposes a world (that of the will to power) in which all previous identities have been abolished and dissolved. Returning is being, but only the being of becoming. The eternal return does not bring back ‘the same’, but returning constitutes the only Same of that which becomes. Returning is the becoming-identical of becoming itself. Returning is thus the only identity, but identity as a secondary power; the identity of difference, the identical which belongs to the different, or turns around the different. Such an identity, produced by difference, is determined as ‘repetition’.\(^{223}\)

The eternal return is the operation of repetition according to a selective test: only that which differs returns; only that which affirms itself as difference returns in a series of becoming. Difference is said to return through repetition as an alternative to identity persisting through changes over successive instantiations on the part of some self-grounding principle. Differentiation operates as a power of affirming the most divergent possibilities in individuation. This is the essence of Nietzsche's eternal return for Deleuze. It is, simply put, univocity. “In the eternal return, univocal being is not only thought and even affirmed, but effectively realized. Being is said in a single and same sense, but this sense is that of eternal return as the return or repetition of that of which it

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\(^{221}\) The idea that all determination is negation would become the fulcrum of Hegel’s relationship with Spinoza.


\(^{223}\) Ibid., page 41.
To say that difference is the principle by which the selective test of returning is said to operate does not mean that negation is the motor of difference, as would be the case for Hegel in the self-positing of substance-become-subject. Negation is a surface effect of the ungrounding of difference in affirmation. The differential elements at the center of the process of individuation are positive and productive; negation only produces on the basis of opposing prior identities, and, if it produces anything new at all, it is in a way that requires the synthetic activity of subjectivity and representation. Underneath the negation of identities is the affirmation of difference in itself, at an entirely pre-individual, that is, pre-subjective, or even pre-substantial, for that matter, level. Deleuze indicates that, with regard to differentiation as the force within individuation, “Difference must be shown differing.” The eternal return is the concept that Deleuze, initially, uses to present this process: nature, as difference, naturing, or differing. What Deleuze finds most compelling, taking Nietzsche’s eternal return as a metaphysical stance, is that Spinoza’s infinite substance as Deus sive natura is left behind. Nature without God is what remains: nature naturing according to its own internal principle, which, even for Aristotle, was the principle of motion. To show difference differing means that a closer look at Deleuze’s philosophy of difference is an order, but he indicates one place in the history of philosophy where difference differing can be glimpsed, and that is in Plato’s Sophist.

3.2.3 Overturning Platonism

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224 Ibid., pages 41-42. It is said of difference itself.
225 Ibid., page 56.
Taking Nietzsche’s concept of the eternal return so centrally commits Deleuze to taking Nietzsche's program of ‘overturning Platonism,’ indicated in Twilight of the Idols, as his own. This is the case because, if the eternal return states that only difference returns in repetition, then Platonism after Aristotle was taken to be the moment in the history of philosophy when difference was initially arrested. Plato’s subordination of appearances to the status of ontological dependency on self-identical forms is the moment when becoming takes on the sense of a secondary process made possible in a larger field dominated by the power of self-identical objects. The eternal return acts precisely as a counter-concept to the primacy of identity in emphasizing that becoming is primary, is the only power, and identities are only productions of becoming. De Beistegui asserts that, in this sense, the eternal return represents the overturning of Platonism in that it reconciles philosophy with becoming, and, hence, temporality in a way that presupposes neither the identity of substance nor the synthetic mediation of a subject.\(^{226}\)

Deleuze emphasizes that overturning Platonism does not mean rejecting Platonism, but displacing it and mobilizing Platonic concepts in a new way.\(^{227}\) In particular, Deleuze wants to draw out the most Heraclitan concepts internal to Plato’s philosophy. “The Heraclitan world still growls in Platonism,”\(^{228}\) he says, but Platonism represents the definitive subordination of the world of becoming and centrality of difference which Heraclitus affirmed and advocated against the world of the self-identical. Deleuze indicates that the Aristotelian moment is the one in which difference is truly made into a feature of identical concepts, and in which representation, operating

\(^{226}\) In doing this, de Beistegui argues that philosophy is reconciled with science. See Truth and Genesis, pages 324-325.

\(^{227}\) “That this overturning should conserve many Platonic characteristics is not only inevitable but desirable.” Difference and Repetition, page 59.

\(^{228}\) Ibid., page 59.
through analogy in judgment, identity in the concept, opposition in predicates, and resemblance in perception, makes difference in itself the un-thought. However, “With Plato, the issue is still in doubt: mediation has not yet found its ready-made movement. The Idea is not yet the concept of an object which submits the world to the requirements of representation, but rather a brute presence which can be invoked in the world only in function of that which is not ‘representable’ in things.” Regarding the Platonic Idea, Deleuze thinks that Plato hesitates to rule out the possibility that Ideas, as ontologically self-sustaining and causally productive, are incompatible with difference, that difference cannot be an Idea in the Platonic sense, or at least have an important role to play in itself. Deleuze describes the eternal return itself as the form of difference in repetition, and this seems to be what he intends to pick out of Plato: the possibility that difference and Ideas are, in fact, deeply interconnected, or, at very least, not as mutually exclusive as they seem.

Deleuze understands Aristotle to have indicated what may be most striking regarding difference in Plato; he makes that aspect of Platonism the center of his criticism of Plato. Aristotle correctly regards the process of dialectic in Plato to be a method of division. However, Aristotle regards this method of division to be lacking mediation, lacking a middle term by which that which is divided can be brought into an intelligible relation in judgment and reason. From Aristotle’s standpoint, this is a justified criticism, one based on the identity of concepts capable of acting as middle terms. Yet, “Our mistake lies in trying to understand Platonic division on the basis of Aristotelian requirements.” For Aristotle, Plato fails to adequately describe how division can

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229 Ibid.
230 Ibid.
determine identities on the basis of dividing a larger class, a genus, into opposing species. Without a middle term, there is no way to determine if the object or concept in question belongs in one species or its opposing species. However, Deleuze suggests, it is unclear that Plato intended for the method of division to establish a system of categories like genera and species. Rather, the method of division is intended to be a selective test to determine, not identities, but the authentic from the inauthentic. Division does not descend the path that generalization ascends; its goal is entirely different. Rather than establish differences between categories, division as a method is meant to draw a line within a disjointed class of claimants to authenticity. The Statesman uses a line of division to determine the true shepherds of men from the false ones; the Phaedrus intends to determine the true lover from the false lover; the Sophist intends to determine the philosopher from the sophist, and so on. “The one problem which recurs throughout Plato’s philosophy is the problem of measuring rivals and selecting claimants. This problem of distinguishing between things and their simulacra within a pseudo-genus or a large species presides over [Plato’s] classification of the arts and sciences. It is a question of making the difference.”

Making the difference, Deleuze indicates, is the difficulty for Plato, since it is not mediation that makes the difference. Rather, Deleuze suggests, myth makes the difference. By importing myth as a structural foundation for division, Plato is actually able to develop the selective criteria by which he is able to divide between false claimants and authentic types. Utilizing myth as the foundation for selection is the process by which Plato asserts participation as a type of relation or cause. Only the ground, as Idea, possesses anything, lays claim to anything authentically, and the Idea claims itself most, possesses itself fully. After the Idea, everything else is said to exist.

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231 Ibid., page 60.
participate in that self-possession by degrees of separation. “Laying claim is not one phenomenon among others, but the nature of every phenomenon. The ground is a test which permits claimants to participate in greater or lesser degree in the object of the claim. In this sense the ground measures and makes the difference.” Thus, division does not establish a system of categories between which difference operates between species or identities, but a series of tests, beginning with an unparticipating possessor, and a series of removals from that Idea to that which makes a claim to possess and participate in that of which it has no relation, simulacra; it is a dialectic of divisions. Platonism is the attempt to draw a distinction between the thing in itself (Idea) and the simulacra. The Idea as the thing in itself is taken to be the authentic model by which the dialectic of division draws its lines. With each line, a degree of removal from participation in that which the model possesses, itself most fully, comes to characterize copies of models. At the furthest degree of separation are simulacra, those which can not even be said to copies of model in a relation of participation, but which still claim to, be it as the arguments of the sophist, or sensible images without intellection.

“Overturning Platonism, then, means denying the primacy of original over copy, of model over image; glorifying the reign of simulacra and reflections.” It means taking the dialectic of division as the event of differentiation itself, and this is only accomplished by removing the hierarchy of model, copy, simulacra, and, thus, the motive of Platonic division. The overturning of Platonism means establishing simulacra as copies of copies ad infinitum in the eternal return of difference. The selective test no longer involves series of divisions between the authentic and false claimant, but series of

232 Ibid., page 62.
233 Ibid., page 66.
productions based on the criteria of that which differs most. Univocal being is the eternal return of difference; being is said in the same sense of all that it is said because being is simulacra: singularities in differentiation. Deleuze remarks that, “The sophist is not the being (or the non-being) of contradiction, but the one who raises everything to the level of simulacra and maintains them in that state.”

In the *Sophist* itself, Plato presents a glimpse of the sophist raising simulacra past contradiction to the point where Socrates and the sophist are indistinct, in that both appear in the same mode of presenting arguments as though they knew the true forms, compelling their audience to contradict, yet never fully presenting the model, remaining, for all appearances in simulacra of opinions. Sophists, like philosophers, are ironic in that they present arguments in such ways that they provoke contradictions and uncertainty, while remaining uncertain of their own degree of removal from the model. The Eleatic Stranger says to Theaetetus, “I’m catching sight of one who’s capable of being ironical before multitudes in public and with long speeches, and one who in private and with brief speeches compels his interlocutor to contradict himself.”

Seth Benardete describes this Platonic moment thusly: “While suspecting that he does not know, [the sophist] has an air or figure of one who knows, for he forces his interlocutor to contradict himself; but since Socrates does the same, he too arouses the suspicion in others that he knows. Regardless of the difference in their private opinions, Socrates and the sophist are indistinguishable in appearance.”

At this moment, philosophy still sits undecided between difference and identity. Deleuze takes overturning Platonism to be making the decision that philosophy, in its tradition, did not

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234 Ibid., page 68.
make: formulating a philosophy of difference in itself at the cost of identity, forgetting the imposed difference between Sophists and philosophers.

### 3.3 Transcendental Empiricism

What has preceded is an explanation of how a philosophy of difference sets itself apart from a philosophy of identity. Still, if the task is to be able to think difference, then a description of how such a thought is possible, in philosophical terms, is required. For Deleuze, thinking difference requires the methodology of a transcendental empiricism, a methodology which is, at the same time, a metaphysical position. He asks, “What is the being of the sensible?” Following the overturning of Platonism, if appearances are the fundamental ontological stratum, then forms no longer have being in the primary sense, but the sensible itself is the *vere ens*. “Given the conditions of this question, the answer must designate the paradoxical existence of a ‘something’ which simultaneously cannot be sensed (from the point of view of the empirical exercise) and can only be sensed (from the point of view of the transcendental exercise).”

Plato indicates that the being of the sensible consists of being contrary in quality, in that becoming always includes contrary qualities held together in the subject. For example, becoming taller than one was implicates one being smaller initially in the process of becoming in question. Deleuze indicates that underneath contrary qualities are *intensive* differences in becoming. Becoming is a matter of individuating as force, power and degree. That which difference

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individuates is only done by affirmation of power. Deleuze’s commitment to empiricism means that the task of thinking difference involves experiencing the sensible in its singularity, of experiencing individuated entities without the mediation of representation or the generality of concepts. It is an empiricism that demands that experience find sensibility itself meaningful, without any identities. Deleuze further qualifies this empiricism as transcendental. To prevent the seeming paradox that this would entail, two things are important to understand. First, that it is univocity that allows Deleuze to assert that the being of the sensible is the intensive individuation of material reality in motion and becoming. In collapsing the distinction between the sensible and the intelligible, between created things and God, Deleuze is able to affirm that an empiricism of the sensible can, at the same time, be a transcendental empiricism.

Second, Deleuze qualifies the transcendental in specific way, a way that only univocity of being allows. Univocal being means immanent being. As such, transcendental means, for Deleuze, a transcendental field of immanence, a singular level on which all singularities are individuated from pre-individual differentiations. Deleuze takes pains, throughout his works, to distance transcendental empiricism from the kind of transcendental project that might be association with Kant, or any of the neo-Kantian or post-Kantian strands of philosophy. For Kant, the transcendental exercise was supposed to be an abstraction from experience into the structure of consciousness itself, resulting in the determination of the necessary rules by which any possible object of experience may be represented. Deleuze thinks of this kind of transcendental method as guilty of a fundamental error: the ground cannot resemble that which it grounds. In the Logic of Sense, Deleuze states, “We do not, for all this, escape the vicious circle which makes the
condition refer to the conditioned as it reproduces its image.” Deleuze’s concern, here, is that there is no possible way for the structure of consciousness to provide anything like a real genesis of actual individuation, because it can only ever be limited to mapping itself onto its object. The conditions for the possibility of experience are limited to possible objects, not actual processes; transcendental critique, for Kant and his followers, cannot account for actual becoming and movement. The form of thought remains only in the realm of describing consciousness with the formal, conceptual generalities indicative of representational thought. What is required is a unique principle of foundation and the ground which does not extend to its object and then back to itself. As de Beistegui puts it, “[The form of possibility] is altogether incapable of generating what it is actually supposed to ‘found’. As a result, the conditioned is in no way ‘affected’, by the condition, which is merely an abstract doubling of itself.” Deleuze indicates that the condition requires a uniqueness which cannot be mapped onto the conditioned, which changes the impetus of propositional thought from predication, or denotation, to sensation: “Thus the condition of truth would be defined no longer as the form of conceptual possibility, but rather as ideational material or ‘stratum’, that is to say, no longer as signification, but rather as sense.” It is in this way that Deleuze emphasizes the need for a method that allows the real to be explained genetically over the possible as explained abstractly, and this is precisely Deleuze’s notion of the transcendental in contrast to Kant’s.

Overall, Deleuze uses the term ‘transcendental’ in a way that connotes immanent,
univocal *experience*, rather than any type of consciousness, deity, substance, or subject, and that also means object. “Transcendental empiricism is concerned with isolating the genetic and immanent condition of existence of the real. And metaphysics is the sole instrument for understanding what is real within the real, the only access to its inner movement, rife with novelty.” The transcendental field which Deleuze insists is immanent and pre-individual is composed of singularities, differences, intensities. It is a field of individuation, in which intensities are determined by difference alone. Deleuze states that transcendental empiricism is a ‘science of the sensible,’ an aesthetics. He fully recognizes that a non-representational empiricism based on transcendence, even if it connotes univocal immanence of experience directed toward the ‘being of the sensible’, is a difficult method to grasp.

It is strange that aesthetics (as the science of the sensible) can be founded on what can be represented in the sensible [as in Kant]. True, the inverse procedure is not much better, consisting of the attempt to withdraw the pure sensible from representation and to determine it as that which remains once representation is removed (a contradictory flux, for example, or a rhapsody of sensations). Empiricism truly becomes transcendental, and aesthetics an apodictic discipline, only when we apprehend directly in the sensible that which can only be sensed, the very being of the sensible: difference, potential difference and difference in intensity as the reason behind qualitative diversity. It is in difference that movement is produced as an ‘effect’, that phenomena flash their meaning like signs. The intense world of differences, in which we find the reason behind qualities and the being of the sensible, is precisely the object of a superior empiricism. This empiricism teaches us a strange ‘reason’, that of the multiple, chaos and difference (nomadic distributions, crowned anarchies).

It is through apprehending the reason of difference, as the sufficient reason for the

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individuation of all phenomena, that transcendental empiricism is capable of thinking difference, in seeing difference as the ungrounding ground. Phenomena only have significations in a differential system, and that system is not composed only of phenomena. The system is a system which has as its boundary the horizon of the event of ungrounded differentiation grounding all individuation. The differential system at hand, which transcendental empiricism intends to articulate, is the system in which actualization takes place, but which is itself unactualized; it is not even marked as potentially actualizable as a whole. Actuality is the individuated intensities of the pre-individual plane of immanence which is difference itself. This field is what Deleuze refers to as the virtual multiplicity, and it is task of philosophy to articulate such a field.

As indicated above, the “strange reason” that transcendental empiricism teaches us is that of the “multiple.” It is in the being of the sensible that difference consists; it is in sensation that difference is experienced as a series of differential phantoms or phenomena. In transcendence, we remain in the immanence of the virtual as a field of Ideas, which are singularities waiting for their internal complexity to actualize in differentiation.

3.4 Virtual Multiplicity

Simply put, Deleuze offers the concept of virtual multiplicity as an alternative to Aristotle's ousia. The virtual multiplicity is, for Deleuze, the immanent field of pre-individual singularities. The actual, then, is the collection of empirically given individuations which is differentiated from the ground of the virtual. Deleuze refers to
this complex of virtual-actual as synonymous with a problem-solution complex, in which
the virtual is related to the Idea. Deleuze derives this idea from Kant’s indication in the
first Critique that Ideas are generated from reason and in need of solution. The conditions
of possibility in the structure of consciousness are the field from which actual objects are
formed. The difference, however, is that, for Deleuze, the field of problems, or Ideas, is
ontologically whole and independent of any consciousness.244 This is also the sense in
which Deleuze, especially in What is Philosophy?, determines philosophy’s task as
determining questions (virtual multiplicities), science’s task as determining solutions
(functions in mathematics and theoretical formulations in natural science), and art’s task
as determining modes of sensation (empiricism and creation of sensible events); the three
disciplines are co-dependent. In the case of philosophy, however, the virtual multiplicity
is the object of inquiry, and the question is itself conceptual, a pre-subjective Idea
dissociated from its formal identity, discernable only as a virtual complex populated with
capacities.

Deleuze explains the Idea as a virtual multiplicity, as the fundamental ground
from which all of reality follows, in the following way:

Ideas contain all the varieties of differential relations and all the distributions of singular points
coeexisting in diverse orders ‘perplicated’ in one another. When the virtual content of an idea is
actualised, the varieties of relation are incarnated in distinct species while the singular points
which correspond to the values of one variety are incarnated in the distinct parts of this or that
species.245

The Idea is precisely the pre-individual singularity which undergoes individuation

244 “We must investigate the manner in which questions develop into problems within Ideas, how problems
are enveloped by questions within thought,” Difference and Repetition, page 196.
245 Deleuze, Gilles. Difference and Repetition. Translated by Paul Patton. New York City, NY: Columbia
through its differentiation. Deleuze uses the term “perplicated” to convey that, within the
Idea, the outside, as that which is actualized, is contained internally within its singularity
in the sense that it is the virtual, singular ‘fold’ of the outside. The field of Ideas is the
virtual multiplicity. In this sense, the assertion that Deleuze is comparable to
Spinoza without substance, Leibniz without theology, begins to clarify. Without
substance, Spinoza’s system is a purely affirmative one, a state of sheer immanence in
modification ruled by the cause, at the same time a power, for entities in becoming to
persist in their being. If being is difference, as it is for Deleuze, then the *conatus*
represents the will to difference, or Nietzsche’s will to power. God as nature naturing is
replaced with chaos as difference differing. Similarly, Leibniz system without theology is
a world of monads with nothing over them, a universe of singularities with no internal
characteristic other than to become, to relate, and to compose complex systems of
difference; the monad is the differential singularity with the outside folded into itself.
Virtual singularities are intensive in the monadic sense, they are windowless.
Actualization, through the principle of difference in repetition, composes these
singularities in complex structures of becoming. This is why Deleuze terms singularities
as nomads, because they are entirely differential and in a system of displacement.

Deleuze’s concept of multiplicity is derived from his reading of Henri Bergson,
and the geometry of Bernhard Riemann. Riemann defined multiplicities as things
determined by their dimensions or independent variables. He divided multiplicities into
two types: the discrete and continuous. Discrete multiplicities have their identity internal
to them as their metrics are determined by the measurements and numbers of elements
within their boundaries. Continuous multiplicities are determined by something becoming
in them, in the sense that the multiplicity has an internal dynamism. Bergson adapted the idea of a continuous multiplicity as a simply quantitative, spatial determination toward a purely qualitative one, in which a multiplicity is determined temporally, in its becoming. Bergson’s philosophy was most concerned with utilizing this concept of multiplicity in regard to consciousness and evolution. His primary intention was to assert that philosophy and science traditionally operate in a spatially quantitative fashion, lacking the ability to determine the qualitative, durational, and temporal aspects of mind in development and nature in evolution. The most important aspect of Bergson’s thinking for Deleuze is that, while he takes temporality to be the primary aspect of human existence just as Husserl and Heidegger do, Bergson attempts to locate temporality outside of the conditions of the human itself; he attempts to determine duration as the real. For Bergson and Deleuze, the question is not one of determining the conditions for the possibility of actual material states of affairs, but of the real, and at the same time, non-actual, genetic conditions of actual material states. That is to say, Bergson and Deleuze both think of the virtual as real, just as real as the actual.246

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze remarks, “The virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual. *The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual.*”247 The virtual is not to be confused with the possible. The difference between the two is a very significant one. The possible is marked specifically as that which is not real, but only possible as a potential capacity to be actual. It has no effect, and only waits to be acted upon. The virtual, by contrast, is fully real, and productive in itself. The possible is non-existent in

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that it is only contained in the identity of a concept; it has non-being in the Ancient sense of the term. The virtual, however, “is the characteristic state of Ideas: it is on the basis of its reality that existence is produced, in accordance with a time and a space immanent in the Idea.” 248 Thus, Deleuze takes the virtual multiplicity of Ideas to contain within themselves, in a differential sense, the genetic origins of actual spatial and temporal determinations themselves, and all of the diverse entities individualized with spatial and temporal qualifications. Deleuze adds a division within differentiation itself, one that accommodates the immanent structure of reality as divided into the virtual and actual. However, this division is perforated. The virtual and actual are coextensive to the degree that they are immanently overlapping. There is no point at which a virtual, intensive singularity definitively becomes an actuality. Virtuality and actuality are two aspects of both objects and the immanent field of becoming.

We call the determination of the virtual content of an Idea differentiation; we call the actualisation of that virtuality into species and distinguished parts differentiation. It is always in relation to a differentiated problem or to the differentiated conditions of a problem that a differentiation of species and parts is carried out, as though it corresponded to the cases of solution of the problem. It is always a problematic field which conditions a differentiation within the milieu in which it is incarnated. 249

In essence, Deleuze utilizes the concept of differentiation to designate the demarcation of differences within multiplicities as the most basic, immanent and pre-individual level of virtuality, at the level of pre-individual singularities. As these Ideas are individuated into more and more complex units and systems of differential relations, the entire world of sensible experience takes shape through the differentiation of actual, material bodies in

248 Ibid., page 211.
249 Ibid., page 207.
becoming and movement. Deleuze indicates that differenciation itself a process of individuation which is grounded in the process of intensities of power as an order of operation. “Beneath the actual qualities and extensities, species and parts, there are spatio-temporal dynamisms,” and these dynamisms are the very differential forces, the intensities under extensities, in play, operating according to the selective test of the supreme form of difference, the eternal return of differenciation of that which differs.\textsuperscript{250}

It is through the process of differenciation in the virtual domain and differenciation in the actual domain that multiplicities of singular, pre-individual Ideas compel particular modes of individuation into the actual compositions of bodies, parts, wholes, complex structures, phenomena, sensibles, things, and individual entities. The motor of this entire process is the perpetual becoming-other of differenciation itself. At the virtual level of the Idea, spatial and temporal dynamisms act as essential characteristics of each singularity. Through repetition and force, these virtual traits of singularities, as intensities, increase in magnitude and actualize as material, spatial, and temporal distinctions familiar to phenomenal experience and complex consciousness. The temporal and spatial features of sensation and materiality are actual features in becoming, themselves with an origin in the virtual multiplicity of Ideas.

Thus, Deleuze’s philosophy represents a type of synthesis of idealism and materialism, but not by offering a type of Cartesian, of any derivative thereof, solution. Rather than seat the duality of thought and being in any subject (substance, God or consciousness), Deleuze collapses the distinction between ideality and materiality. Ideas are singular, intensive multiplicities with infinite possibilities contained within themselves, existing as completely real, affective, causal entities in the virtual. Material,

\textsuperscript{250} Ibid., page 214.
on the other hand, is a complex of bodies in flux, having been actualized to the degree of participation in networks of sensation. Force and the power of differentiation, which is a metaphysical constant, are responsible for Ideas expanding into complex material-ideal systems and contracting back to singularities in series of spatial and temporal difference. Actual spatial series, caused by virtual, spatial dynamisms, are material structures of complex bodies in differential relations. There is no real distinction between bodies’ internal relations and external relations in a system. Actual temporal series, caused by virtual temporal dynamisms, are temporal structures of complex repetitions in series of differentiation. Time is not grounded in a subject. Rather, time is identical to the force of differentiation in repetition. There is no default state, no point zero; the entire system is a perpetually chaotic system of differentiation, exhibiting tendencies which necessarily dissolve as difference dissipates series. There is no agency other than difference and repetition.

As stated above, Deleuze’s view implicates a type of panpsychism. As it is with the essential attributes of space and time, having their expression in both virtual and actual modes of the immanent plane of existence, consciousness has its virtual and actual aspects in its own series.

Actualization takes place in three series: Space, time and also consciousness. Every spatio-temporal dynamism is accompanied by the emergence of an elementary consciousness which itself traces directions, doubles movements and migrations, and is born on the threshold of the condensed singularities of the body or object whose consciousness it is. It is not enough to say that consciousness is consciousness of something: it is the double of this something, and everything is consciousness because it possesses a double, even if it is far off and very foreign. Repetition is everywhere, as much in what is actualized as in its actualization. It is the Idea to begin with, and it runs through the varieties of relations and the distribution of singular points. It also determines the
reproductions of space and time, as it does the reprises of consciousness. In every case, repetition is the power of difference: because it condenses the singularities or because it accelerates or decelerates time, or because it alters spaces.\footnote{Deleuze, Gilles, \textit{Difference and Repetition}. Translated by Paul Patton. New York City, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994. Page 220.}

Deleuze views consciousness in a way that can be said to mirror parallelism, whereby consciousness and extended reality are two separate, but contiguous causal planes. However, Deleuze places both of these planes together on a place of immanence dominated by difference and repetition themselves. The principle of repetition, whereby the force of becoming is coordinated by the injunction to differ in a series, is the causal agent for virtual multiplicities, actual material and consciousness. Consciousness has no agency; it is the fly in the coach. Furthermore, consciousness is as omnipresent as Ideas; it is the actualized structure of ideas in series that always coexists alongside spatial and temporal material series, its double. It does not belong to objects, nor is it a product of objects. By nature, as difference, consciousness is just another complex series of non-material bodies in relational structures.
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