

Habit as Mediating Time and the Now: Hegel's Response to Deleuze's Empiricism

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## **Abstract**

This research paper investigates habit and temporality in G.W.F. Hegel's philosophy, in response to recent Deleuzian criticisms that Hegel has misunderstood empiricism by simplifying the nature of sensations. The paper begins with an exegesis of Deleuze's critique of Hegel's view of empiricism namely that Hegel neglects the importance of non-conceptual difference for understanding the nature of sense-experience. It then shows that Deleuze's own empiricism remains incomplete without positing habit as a principle of relations, and, in turn, that habit on Hegel's account mediates difference at the organic level. This means that habit shows how something prior to the establishment of consciousness is operative in experience, and, for the purpose of this paper, this aspect of habit helps to explain how it is possible that consciousness can experience time. More broadly, I contend that this pre-conscious operation of habit is key to understanding Hegel's views on sense-experience and empiricism, which subverts the idea that Hegel has "reduced" sensations to their conceptual articulation.

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this project to my father. Thank you for teaching me what it means to take life seriously, for showing me the importance of learning and education, and instilling in me the passion to flourish in all my scholarly interests. Your spirit is still very much alive.

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## i. Introduction

The problem of immediacy or presence is key in the scholarship on Hegel in relation to Deleuze. Bruce Baugh, in *Transcendental Empiricism: Deleuze's response to Hegel*, writes that Deleuze opposes Hegel by searching for “conditions of real experience” where the “concrete richness of the sensible” is the goal of knowledge. This stems from Deleuze’s argument that Hegel has misunderstood empiricism because, as Daniel Smith writes, “for Hegel, empiricism itself was almost a non-philosophy, because it tried to grasp “this,” “that,” “here,” and “now” in an immediate manner, whereas such indexicals are universals that can never grasp sensible experience in an unmediated way.”<sup>1</sup> Deleuze’s point is that the sensible’s nature, and in turn empiricism, is more complex and ‘richer’ in being than what concepts and mediation can tell us about the sensible. Thus, Deleuze posits irreducible difference as the condition of knowledge and experience and claims our goal is to try and think the sensible even if we understand that it cannot be known or that it is irreducible to concepts.

Key to Deleuze’s account is how relations that arise out of the sensible or given come to have seemingly necessary connections at all. This is because Deleuze posits a pluralistic, irrational given where the given itself does not join its separate elements into a whole.<sup>2</sup> Deleuze thus argues that there is no inherent justification in maintaining certain relations between some terms over others, precisely because these relations do not exist prior to us forming them. In other words, Deleuze argues that all relations that constitute or are contained within concepts have equal validity insofar as all ideas, impressions, and terms arise from the given. If the given cannot account for the presence of these relations, then Deleuze must explain how relations arise at all. Here Deleuze draws on Hume and argues that these relations come from the principle of

habit, as habit forms a structure of retention and anticipation where previously encountered terms are collected and expected to arise again. Thus, habit as a principle that explains how terms are related is an integral part of Deleuze's empiricism.

Catherine Malabou notices that the problematic of habit is strikingly similar in Hegel and Deleuze. Both philosophers converge around the problem of how the single process of habit can explain both how terms relate in new, creative ways and how these relations become mechanistic, thereby precisely subduing or blocking the possibility of novelty. Habit as a principle of relations is in turn founded upon habit as a principle of the organic. The main claim here is that habit provides the relating of elements that would otherwise remain separate. Hegel's analysis of habit formation at the organic level, that is, at the level of life prior to reflection and self-conscious decision or thinking, shows exactly how habit makes possible this relating. The main thesis of this paper is that habit provides a passivity and kind of relating that is crucial to the constitution of time and experience of the present. On this account, we demonstrate, with the addition of habit, a further way to understand the problematic of immediacy and empiricism in Hegel.

The structure of the paper is as follows: we begin by explaining Hegel's articulation of the problematic of empiricism followed by Deleuze's critique of this. Deleuze provides the following imperative point: that even if Hegel is correct that we cannot know difference if we only assume sensations or diversity as given, we must still attempt to think empirical diversity. Taking cue from Deleuze's own philosophy, we show that habit in Hegel's philosophy is both a principle of relations and that it allows us to think the constitution of sensibility and time. Habit explains how discrete, diverse elements are related, and provides the type of continuity that is required to experience presence. (Our textual strategy here is to analyze and draw on Hegel's

*Encyclopaedia*, to inform our reading of the “Sense-Certainty” chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, to show how Hegel’s view of actual experience of sense-certainty is more complicated than the empiricist view of sense-certainty that is his philosophical target in the *Phenomenology*.<sup>3)</sup>

ii. Sense-Certainty, Empiricism, and Deleuze

Hegel begins the *Phenomenology of Spirit* with a critique of empiricism, or more precisely, a critique of the empiricist claim that knowledge is primarily apprehended by or begins from the senses. Even more precisely, Hegel’s refutation of empiricism is a refutation of the ability to communicate or grasp immediacy *qua* immediacy. This refutation comes out of Hegel’s description of the nature of immediacy or presence. Immediacy perhaps first strikes us as absolutely necessary for experience to take place, since it seems that for anything to be happening it must be available to someone experiencing what is here and now. Indeed, it seems that for any experiencing to be going on, our being there or being present would be necessary, a universal requirement. Taking up this position of describing what is immediately present elicits a description of things pertaining to their ‘nowness,’ ‘hereness,’ or ‘thisness’. One might say that “now I am writing, and I am writing here, on this desk.” Hegel writes that implicit in this description is the attitude that what one is experiencing is the “existence of *external* objects, which can be more precisely defined as *actual, absolutely singular, wholly personal, individual* things, each of them absolutely unlike anything else; this existence, they say, has absolute certainty and truth.”<sup>4</sup> The first move of sense-certainty is to claim to know the unique individuality of reality immediately through pure apprehension, or, put differently, without the aid of concepts or other possible preconceptions on behalf of the subject.

Hegel studies the position of immediacy and finds that “sense-certainty is not merely this pure immediacy.”<sup>5</sup> Hegel’s study of immediacy takes the form of questioning the “truth” of immediacy. This means Hegel examines whether it is possible to grasp immediate experience via the terms that immediate experience itself provides. Hegel writes that there are “countless differences” that occur in this first position of sense-certainty, that gives us what is present, and we find that the crucial distinction is that immediacy always “splits up” into the “‘This’ as ‘I’, and the other ‘This’ as object.”<sup>6</sup> This is the first mediation that sense-certainty attempts to refute by taking up the position that it is not the ‘I’ that is essential to this experience, as the ‘I’ may or may not know this object while the object remains and knowing falters if there is no object. In other words, it seems that for there to be something present what is required is the presence of the object, as the object’s presence would seem to persist even while the knowledge of it, a subject knowing the object that is, may not. To test the truth of this claim we take up the phenomenal experience of how the this as object appears in sense-certainty i.e. how the object appears to us from the perspective of someone ‘stuck’ in the flows of immediacy, of what is only present.

When we account for what is present, we notice that what is immediately there always appears in the twofold form of the Here and Now. That’s to say, I, as someone actively experiencing, notice that objects always appear within the flows of space and time and I take up how they appear in this flow, not as they may be understood through concepts or other forms of mediation.<sup>7</sup> I will focus on the Now. Hegel notices that in grasping the Now it slips away and another Now takes its place; I take up the Now, but, in grasping it, it slips away and becomes another Now that no longer resembles the first. Hegel argues that sense-certainty or experience itself shows the object to be other than as it appears; when we follow the Now it never stays still

but continually negates itself, showing itself to constantly change. However, in differing from itself the Now does not cease to exist but endures and this is the character that the Now shows itself to have. The Now is not simple and immediate but that which “in its otherness, remains what it is: a Now which is an absolute plurality of Nows.”<sup>8</sup>

Deleuze’s objection to the ‘sense-certainty’ chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is that Hegel generalizes the nature of sensations, meaning that Hegel’s conception of sensations and the sensuous ‘Now’ do not follow from grounds of actual experience. Rather, they follow from what experience would be if it accorded with the possibilities expressed by Hegel’s epistemic generalizations. What is at stake in Deleuze’s objection is that Hegel’s formulation of sense experience lacks an account of how one’s experience is individuated. Expressed differently, Deleuze argues that the “singular here-now-this is indeed not captured in the abstract universals” of sense-certainty but is “stripped of all its concrete richness and determinations.”<sup>9</sup> Deleuze’s concern for the nature of the sensible is in part an attempt to articulate a ‘superior’ empiricism that is the “search for conditions of real experience... which can only be sensed and encountered rather than known or recognised.”<sup>10</sup> The most general character of Deleuze’s objection, then, is that conceptual difference is not the same as *real* difference and that Hegel reduces real difference to conceptual difference.

Deleuze’s critique stems from a disagreement that Deleuze has with Hegel’s construal of empiricism, “according to which whatever does not make a difference *to knowledge* makes no difference.”<sup>11</sup> For Deleuze, Hegel understands correctly that sensible particularity is an essential part of concepts and knowing. However, Hegel reduces empirical content to what it would be if it accorded with the possibility expressed by the concept. Deleuze’s critique is that Hegel focuses too much on how the singularity of sense-experience cannot be known without concepts and

mediation. This makes it wrongly seem as if it is mediation and concepts that are fundamental to what the empirical is, whereas Deleuze argues that the empirical is fundamental to the conceptual in two different ways. First, the empirical conditions the possibility of repeatability and, as such, the empirical conditions concepts and universality. As well, the empirical is the condition of actuality or real experience.

Baugh explains that the empirical is the reason for non-conceptual differences between multiple instances of representations, such that there can be multiple instantiations of the same concept. A given concept itself cannot specify or differentiate between multiple instantiations of it. Deleuze identifies empiricism with “pluralism” because the empirical is the foundation of multiplicity, “an external and non-conceptual relation between instances.”<sup>12</sup> Deleuze’s critique is that Hegel focuses on the ‘internal’, conceptual relation between things and that this presupposes the multiplicity and empirical actuality that, according to Deleuze, remains unaccounted for in Hegel’s writing. For example, the “Now of many Nows” that is established as the temporal form of experience in ‘sense-certainty’ is arrived at by noticing that moments in time are not simple and immediate but related due to the persistent passing of the now. What Hegel construes as essential to our experience of time is thus not just that we live in the present but that the present passes and that ‘moments’ of time are related insofar as they share, and are connected through, their passing. Deleuze’s critique is that what is essential in this description of time is the mediation of this passing. However, this relation can only be noticed if one presupposes empirical actuality, “the effect of causes which contain no more and no less reality than it does, causes which are immanent and wholly manifest in the effect through which they are experienced.” Empirical actuality is “first given in sensory consciousness, a receptivity which grasps what comes to thought from “outside,”” and is the reason for the “non-conceptual

differences between one instance of a representation and another.”<sup>13</sup> This means that empirical actuality is what makes possible conceptual analyses since the concept is a “rule of synthesis that applies over different instances,” whereas the sensible, as the being of empirical actuality, is the “non-repeatable basis for the difference *between* actualizations.”<sup>14</sup> When Hegel takes up the empiricist tenet that knowledge is derived from sense-experience he aims to investigate things in their individuality, or how one can know sense-objects without the use of concepts. However, Deleuze’s claim is that all Hegel can end up saying about the nature of sense-experience is what can be known, that the “Now,” “Here,” “This” are universals. By focusing on what can be known or what can be said about the nature of sense-experience Hegel neglects something else, *viz.* irrepeatable difference prior to repeatable knowing or conceptual claims.

Deleuze’s greatest achievement, according to Baugh, is making empirical actuality thinkable without reducing it to indeterminate non-being. If indeed the empirical is prior to the conceptual then it must be thought even if it cannot be known. As Baugh writes, “because the concept does not include within it its own empirical actualization, what empiricism requires is not an eternal or timeless *a priori*, but “the conditions under which something new is produced.””<sup>15</sup> This means that if what is given in empirical actuality is the new or different as such, it cannot be explained through rules or concepts, but is “*empirically constituted* through a chance concatenation of forces, of converging and diverging series.”<sup>16</sup> The production of empirical actualities is not simply the repetition of the same, the repetition of a universal principle or concept, but nor is it the presentation of something completely aleatory. The production of empirical actualities is the production of the new, where prior forces enter into “new relations through chance encounters, where those encounters are nevertheless the extrinsically determined effects of previous encounters.”<sup>17</sup> Accounting for the individuality or

singularity of empirical actualities, what makes them unique, is not something determinable in advance of their presentation. Each empirical actuality, as a singularity, “has a determinate content in virtue of its actual genesis, the history of its coming into being.”<sup>18</sup> This difference may not be phenomenal, however, and as Baugh notices, from this perspective Hegel’s critique of empiricism is valid. Nevertheless, Deleuze accounts for the difference between actualizations by appealing to their different causal histories, “which makes each “this” a singular “virtual multiplicity.””<sup>19</sup> Determining what makes each “this,” “now,” or “here” unique, then, is a matter of appealing to whatever forces happen to be at play in a way that does not reduce them to a pre-established rule but instead relates them to the forces that comprise their causal genesis.

Deleuze’s critique, as formulated by Baugh, is an objection to the formalization of the being of the sensible [*l’être du sensible*], where empirical actualities are encountered as applications of a rule or concept. Hegel’s formalization explains the sensible in terms of the possible (the possibilities expressed by concepts), whereas Deleuze’s point is that it is empirical actualities and the sensible that condition and are prior to concepts. Understanding the nature of the empirical is thus a matter of harnessing the powers of intuition, where by intuition Deleuze means “an interpretive insight capable of relating an empirical actuality to its causal history or “genealogy”... creatively, in such a way that differences and singularities can be grasped in their uniqueness”.<sup>20</sup> Here Deleuze seems to differ quite dramatically from Hegel, as intuition for Deleuze is the goal of knowledge and is its richest form.

We have seen that Deleuze objects to Hegel’s construal of empiricism in sense-certainty because Hegel neglects the non-repeatable difference that is prior to concepts and knowing. Thus, Deleuze argues that Hegel subsumes the irreducible difference of sense experience to the identity of the concept, or to what can be known about sensations. This distinction has important

epistemological consequences, specifically when it comes to thinking about how we justify maintaining certain concepts over others, or for thinking about how terms in concepts relate to each other.

For Deleuze, the importance of giving an *a posteriori* account of the empirical is to recognize the spontaneity, contingency, and complexity of what is given as the given. Deleuze opposes the idea that there are necessary principles which govern the relations of terms in a knowing subject. Instead, Deleuze argues that the main problem of empiricism is to understand how “a subject that transcends the given can be constituted in the given.”<sup>21</sup> And as we have seen, for Deleuze, we cannot presuppose any concepts, relations, or principles to exist necessarily between the terms of the multiplicity that is given. Thus the sensible is an important concept for Deleuze because the richness of its being accounts not only for “the given [which] must contain both the ideas to be related” but also “that which will eventually do the relating, or the difference between the given as distinct ideas and that to which they are given.”<sup>22</sup> The relatedness of terms then just happens to be their fortuitous conjunction, which means that there is no inherent justification for terms being related in one manner over another.

Positing irreducible difference as the condition of concepts and experience lets Deleuze subvert the priority of relations that are knowable between terms. However, Deleuze still needs to explain why we maintain certain relations between terms despite these terms not having any inherent justification, according to his empiricism. To clarify, Deleuze argues that all relations are equally valid insofar as all ideas, impressions, and terms arise from the given. The given, as Deleuze writes, “never joins its separate elements into a whole”, meaning that the given itself is the source of all relations but it itself does not do any of the relating.<sup>23</sup> Thus, even though

Deleuze has shown that mediation is not required for experience, he still has to show how terms that do arise out of the given are related at all.

Deleuze argues we maintain certain connections between terms, or prefer certain concepts over others, due to the expectations that are formed from previously encountered relations between discrete terms of the given. The mind, according to Deleuze, refers simply to a “particular set” of the given that is collected and retained, and as such, mind does not yet have a nature except that, through experience, it can collect, retain, and link together discrete terms. Jim Vernon writes, “whenever an experiencing mind is given in the given, its experience of discrete ideas inevitably leads habit to enter the mind as a principle, relating previously experienced ideas into present expectations that anticipate future connections between similar ideas.”<sup>24</sup> This is the first sense of habit in Deleuze, where habit mechanistically relates discrete parts of the given that ‘blocks’ creativity and novelty by maintaining the ideas derived from previously experienced empirical content to what is wholly new, the different as such.<sup>25</sup> However, Deleuze indicates that there is a ‘good’ sense in which habit does not just mechanically relate terms. Deleuze writes, “habit *draws* something new from repetition: difference (first posited as generality)”.<sup>26</sup> By this I take Deleuze to mean that there is a sense in which habit does not just reinforce the relations between terms, but brings about a relation or “difference” that is not contained in the terms that constitute it. The problematic of habit is how can one process be both that which mechanically relates and that which produces novelty?

It should be noted that Hegel and Deleuze’s divergence around empiricism is routinely recognized throughout scholarship on Deleuze. One exception is Levi R. Bryant’s book *Difference and Givenness*. According to Bryant, Hegel and Deleuze *converge* around the

problematic of empiricism. While explaining why Deleuze moves away from a traditional empiricism Bryant writes:

The philosophical position of empiricism assumes nothing but diversity as given, but for this very reason it finds itself unable to provide determining differences for that which it seeks to account for. In other words, empiricism is unable to account for the internal unity or essence of a phenomenon... It is unable to account for the distinctive features or determinations making up phenomena. Here Hegel perhaps expresses matters best.<sup>27</sup>

Bryant then proceeds to quote Hegel's *Science of Logic* where he argues that Hegel expresses that empiricism "seems to be the perfect embodiment of a philosophy of difference". The problem is that the empiricist assumes *only* diversity, such that each 'unit', entity, or sense datum is utterly different. As Bryant writes, "each entity just is what it is." What defines diversity is always unique and 'self-contained', meaning that its difference is unique unto it. However, the problematic that arises is how exactly to construe terms capable of expressing this difference. Bryant continues, "At what level do we locate these self-identical terms? Are they systems: biological, ecological, cosmological? Simple objects: chairs, balls? Qualities belonging to objects..." and so on. Although the empiricist position appears to celebrate difference it inevitably ends up not being able to account for what makes everything different. This is essentially Hegel's argument in "Sense-Certainty".

While Deleuzian scholarship looks toward Deleuze for his account of a "transcendental empiricism", this paper seeks to provide an answer to the problematic of empiricism from Hegel's perspective. We contend that Hegel's account of organic habit explains how presence is possible. The problematic of empiricism shows that assuming only empirical diversity leads the empiricist to not be able to articulate what makes objects unique, or what is the difference that counts. This problem framed in the language of the Now, as Hegel analyses it, is that we cannot articulate what the Now is because it is already another Now. This continual replacement of the

now, its continual extension outside of itself, subverts our ability to properly define its nature. Taking heed of Deleuze's critique, we should try to think the Now even if we cannot know it.

Our thesis is that habit at the organic level performs the synthesis of hitherto separate elements providing a continual relating. Hegel emphasizes that this means that habit, through its power of relating, gives this multiplicity of elements, sensations, etc. the appearance of an immediacy.<sup>28</sup> As we shall see, his point concerning the Now is that the Now extends outside of itself into 'more Now' (as Lampert puts it) precisely because it was never single and immediately all there to begin with – habit only made it appear so.

### iii. The Problematic of Habit in Hegel

It is here that a space opens for Hegel to respond. In this section our aim is to explain how Malabou's analysis of habit in Hegel allows us to understand how habit relates mechanistically and how habit allows novel relations. Habit as a principle of relations is predicated on an organic sense of habit i.e. the formation of habits at the organic level explains the circularity and duality of habit that is at the heart of habit as a principle of relations. The problematic of habit is brought out by Hegel's analysis in the *Philosophy of Mind* because he focuses on habit's duplicity. However, his discussion of habit in the *Philosophy of Nature* precedes this and lays down the groundwork for the characteristics of habit that are discussed in the *Philosophy of Mind*. As such, our analysis of Hegel's account of habit will begin with his study of how the living organism forms habits in *The Philosophy of Nature*, before moving to habit's defining features, or the concept of habit, in the *Philosophy of Mind*. It should also be noted that Malabou's analysis of habit in Hegel begins from what Malabou takes to be Deleuze's presuppositions concerning habit, i.e., Malabou begins with "Deleuze's analysis of the fundamental role played by habit within the living being."<sup>29</sup> Thus, Malabou reads Hegel from the

perspective of *Difference and Repetition*, which in turn allows her to respond to Deleuze from Hegel's philosophy.

#### Contraction in habit: inorganic to organic

Hegel's analysis of habit begins from an initial 'situation' where the living being is both different and identical to its inorganic surroundings. The organism differentiates itself from the inorganic when it is "subjected to an immediate contraction" where the initial elements that compose it are condensed and reduced, pulled and contracted together so as to enable this differentiation.<sup>30</sup> As Deleuze writes, "we are made of contracted water, earth, light and air – not merely prior to the recognition or representation of these, but prior to their being sensed."<sup>31</sup> Contraction is the reduction and condensation of inorganic elements "from" and "in" these same elements. From this we can see that contraction is how the organism interacts with the inorganic world. The result of contraction is what Hegel calls a *habitus*: "the connection (*Zusammenhang*) which determines how all parts are constructed."<sup>32</sup> Malabou cites Ravaisson's *On Habit* where Ravaisson writes that "habit does not simply introduce mutability into something that would otherwise continue without changing; it suggests change within a disposition, within its potentiality, within the internal character of that in which the change occurs, which does not change."<sup>33</sup> Contraction is thus an important part of habit because it explains both the constitution of the organism, what the organism is made of, and also the disposition and internal character of the organism which is derived, in the first place, from the inorganic material that the organism comes from. Further, habit as *Zusammenhang* indicates the link that frames and connects all the parts of the organism. In this sense habit gives the organism an internal disposition or character from which it fluctuates. For instance, when we refer to habits that animals have, we discuss patterns of behaviour that signify the animal's specific manner of inhabiting, eating, migrating,

etc. Habit within human life is found on many levels from the usual way we have of brushing our teeth to the more complex psychological patterns of thought.<sup>34</sup> From this we can see why Hegel thinks only an organism that can “preserve within itself the unity of the self” can be a being of habit. If contraction results in this “connection” that refers to and explains the relationship between parts in the organism, then habit is the mechanism by which the organic being maintains itself, through its “synthesis of differences”, once the organism is given this “internal disposition” from contraction.<sup>35</sup> For the being of habit these differences are “difference between the organism and its environment and the difference between the heterogeneous elements which make up the organism.”<sup>36</sup>

The organism’s ability to contract from its surroundings allows it to unite what is normally considered external to the organism to an internal quality that it has for the organism, and as Malabou writes, quoting Hegel, “contraction is intimately connected to the formation of *habitus*... ‘Organic individuality exists as *subjectivity* if the specific exterior of the figure is *idealized* in its elements and the organism in its external process maintains itself in its own unity.” Further, Malabou notices that there is no direct translation for contraction in German (in this usage concerning habits, see endnote 28) and so Hegel uses the notion of idealization, which signifies for Hegel both a drawing together and concentration. This expresses well the sense in which contraction pulls together myriad elements into a specific feature, aptitude, or quality of the organism. Of course, these organic syntheses are unconscious, and organisms are passive to them insofar as organisms continually produce these changes, constantly uniting the multiplicity of elements that compose their environment under one need or function.

#### Habit as passive/active structuration

The ‘initial situation’ described in the previous paragraph shows that the living being is both identical and different from its inorganic starting points. The living being is identical because it consists of no more elements than its surroundings, however, it differentiates itself because it maintains a form or unity in its assimilation of these elements. Due to this primordial relationship between “alterity” and “sameness”, where the living being is both different and identical to its environment, habit is a function of adaptation in a double sense. In the first sense the living being can contract its surroundings thereby “absorbing” and “passively lending itself to what is given”.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, the living being contracts and synthesizes its surrounding elements into a form that it maintains. In this sense, the living being develops an active relationship to its environment as it appropriates what it is given, to suit its organic functions, i.e., to help maintain the specific requirements of its habits. Malabou exemplifies this passive and active structuration through the animal’s formation of the habit of sight:

An animal will form the *habitus* of sight by determining how luminous stimuli, otherwise scattered and diffuse, are reproduced on the privileged surface of its body. ‘The eye binds light, it is itself bound light.’ The activity of binding difference (in this case, the perception of light) is dual. On the one hand it is contemplative, for vision is achieved only by seeing, hence by submitting the eye to the action of the sensible. But on the other hand, it is also active: for it is by submitting itself that the eye paradoxically acquires its form and exercises itself.<sup>38</sup>

Malabou describes the eye as contemplative to signify that it is passive insofar as the eye receives light. In developing this passivity, contracting the light onto the “privileged surface” of the retina, the eye becomes capable of activity or sight. In this sense contraction represents not only a relationship of mediation where the organism passively mediates what it is given, but also represents what Malabou calls an “explosion”, a rupture, break, or change from passivity to activity. The habit of sight thus represents a continuation of the inorganic (light) in the animal, where the animal preserves the changes that came from ‘outside’, but also represents an

adaptation where the animal reacts to what it is given by acquiring new abilities with what it receives.

### Conservation of change and reversibility of energy

Habit and contraction make possible this “law of alteration” where what is initially given as passive can become active (and vice-versa). Habit makes it possible for the organism to develop its response to its environment. McCumber, on the topic of habit in Hegel’s philosophy, uses the example of becoming inured to external sensations, particularly the cold. McCumber explains that the body is not only passive, or does not simply undergo frigid temperatures, but begins to develop a generalized response to all situations involving cold, which we can see in the body’s “toughened epidermis” and “weather-beaten skin”. The body thus develops a reaction to the specific passivity through developing a “change in the nature of the agent.”<sup>39</sup> On the reversibility of passivity and activity Malabou writes that the organism has a twofold propensity: “a receptivity towards excitation coming from outside the organism, and, inversely, a reaction towards this excitation.”<sup>40</sup> The initial receptivity towards sensation diminishes and “spontaneity” increases. This means that through the formation of habit the organism becomes further familiar with its environment and its unique demands. Passivity becomes an ability of the organism to not only accept and receive the demands of its environment, but also to adapt and take on these demands with increased ease.

### The Problematic of Habit in Hegel

The reversibility of passivity and activity leads us directly to the ambivalence and circularity of habit. Hegel recognizes that the concept of habit is difficult to determine because of its duplicity, however, he also notes that its dual nature is essential for many modes of life:

Habit is often spoke of disparagingly and taken to be a lifeless, contingent and particular thing. Entirely contingent content can of course, like every other

content, take the form of habit, and it is the habit of living which brings on death, or, albeit in a wholly abstract way, is death itself. Yet at the same time habit is the most essential feature of the *existence* of all mental life in the individual subject, enabling the subject to be *concrete immediacy*... religious content, moral content, etc., to *belong* to it as *this self*, as *this* representation, nor as abstract inwardness, cut off from action and actuality, but in its very being.<sup>41</sup>

The ‘disparaging’ side of habit is that it gives our actions the appearance of something mechanical, meaning that seems as if it wasn’t really us freely willing to perform a certain action. Rather, we were carried along by the force of habit such that we were destined to act in that fashion anyway. Whether the habit is a good or a bad one, when it is ingrained enough into our existence, it seems that we can be absolved of guilt from performing it precisely because it has become so mechanical. Malabou comments on this aspect of habit in Hegel’s analysis:

Impressions, Hegel insists, lose their force to the degree that they are reproduced. Under the action of habit, ‘immediate feeling is treated as indifferent’. From this arises the power to become ‘inured against external sensations’. Desire and impulses are ‘by the *habit* of their satisfaction deadened’.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, when sensations are repeated, their force fades. When we become too familiar with certain actions the pleasure or pain of doing them can become reduced to a neutral state. However, this ‘deadening’ aspect of habit is only one side of habit’s concept.

The strength of Hegel’s analysis is in his willingness to recognize the duplicity of habit: “in *habit* our consciousness is at the same time *present* in the matter-in hand, *interested* in it, yet conversely *absent* from it, *indifferent* towards it.”<sup>43</sup> That is, when we form habits we ‘heighten’ our response to sensations by developing a generalized practical response to situations that involve similar sensations or feelings. However, to the extent that habits let us develop such a response they also reduce our awareness of or desensitize us to the intensity of these sensations. That is, becoming accustomed to sensations involved in the formation of habits means we become increasingly passive and less conscious of these sensations.<sup>44</sup> Although Hegel recognizes

both sides of habit, habit's emancipatory effects seems to hold more importance for his analysis. Through the repetition of acts, habit allows actions to become more efficient, increasing the ease and skill with which we can perform them. Reading and writing is a difficult task if it is not made a daily routine, and Hegel notices as much when he states that "deficient habituation and long continuation of thinking cause headaches".<sup>45</sup> Thus, although habit can cause us to become mechanical in response to impressions, sensations, and feelings habit, perhaps more importantly, allows us to build up and engage in certain tasks that we often consider highly valuable and are only possible because habit can allow us to become increasingly familiar and achieve "higher degrees of adequacy" that would otherwise be unobtainable.<sup>46</sup> Hegel shows that this duality is at the heart of the concept of habit and that there is no surmounting its duality. Habit allows us to achieve higher modes of thought and action that were perhaps unobtainable without its emancipatory effects, however, to the degree that we become used to something and achieve higher efficacy we equally become unaware of how affected we are by habituation.

#### iv. The Habit of Now

We have seen that there is a possibility that Hegel and Deleuze diverge definitively over the question of how to construe the immediacy of being. Hegel follows the path of experiential immediacy, leading to a logic of contradiction, mediation, and thought. Deleuze opposes this construal of the immediacy of being with a logic of external relations, which, we have shown, leads Deleuze to posit habit as a principle of how seemingly necessary relations appear at all. Further, Deleuze makes a distinction between the sense in which habit mechanizes our thought from the habit that "draws a difference" from repetition i.e. Deleuze differentiates between two senses of habit, one that blocks novelty and creativity, and another sense where habit brings about the new and unexpected *as such*. We have shown that Hegel's account of habit mirrors

Deleuze's insofar as Hegel's conception of habit includes both its mechanizing and emancipatory effects i.e., Hegel recognizes that habit allows novelty but also can act as an impediment to novelty – mechanizing our actions and ideas.

The problematic of habit shows us something important about immediacy or presence and the problematic of empiricism. With regards to the latter, Deleuze draws our attention to the given as irreducible difference and the importance of characterizing the given as that which conditions both experience and concepts. However, Deleuze's critique, as part of his construal of his own empiricism, remains incomplete without positing habit as a principle of the relations that do arise out of our experience of the given. The problematic of habit draws our attention to the idea that difference necessarily becomes mediated whenever it enters this structure of habit, and habit works on many levels, i.e., from life in general, to organic life, to operating as a principle of relations between ideas. Thus, although difference does not necessarily have to be rendered mediated for it to be thinkable, it seems that its mediation is an inescapable part of experience, or at the very least with regards to language and knowledge. Hegel's point in "Sense-Certainty" is that difference on its own terms turns out to be mediated, and that this mediation is essential if we want to express what we can know about our experience of immediacy. Deleuze's point, in turn, is that difference does not necessarily have to be mediated and that if we focus too much on this mediation then we will be inclined to limit our understanding of experience to what can be known about it. Deleuze's imperative to think empirical difference even if it cannot be known leads us to notice something further about the character of the Now in Hegel's philosophy.

Hegel's account of organic habit reveals how important the contraction of elements or sensations into an immediacy is. Habit's emancipatory powers are important because they make actions easier, allowing our movements and practices to become more efficacious. However,

here we want to draw attention to how contraction can be understood as the “very constitution of time as such. Before the movement of habitual contraction, there can be no relation among separate elements.”<sup>47</sup> Hegel writes, “the universal to which the soul relates itself in habit is, however... only the *abstract universality* produced by *reflection* from the *repetition of many individualities*.” Further, Hegel explains that habit is a “*second nature*” and “assumes the shape of *immediacy*”.<sup>48</sup> What we take Hegel to mean here is that the formed habit represents a completed movement, where this movement contains myriad elements that only come to appear collected and together because of the relating that habit performs. Habit gives things the appearance of something simple, immediate, and natural, which makes us forget that there is a history of syntheses embedded in all our practices from brushing our teeth to the manner of our speech. As Jay Lampert writes, “we are used to thinking of habit as an activity we learn as a result of our own endeavours rather than a synthesis that takes place for us in the objects themselves.”<sup>49</sup> The claim here is that these syntheses are responsible for our ‘organic selves’. Further, the formation of habit at the organic level allows us to think how the organism can produce its own temporality.

Hegel’s use of contraction, or idealization (in the German), as essential to the formation of organic habits supports this claim. By contracting and preserving the elements that are repurposed in the formed habit the organism retains the changes that it undergoes. In this sense habit ties us to a history of syntheses, a connection to the past insofar as habit leaves a trace at the organic level. The formation of habits also leads organic life to ‘expect’ these changes to reoccur and so shapes the organism according to these expectations, thus continually developing a connection, path, or predisposition towards the future. Jay Lampert calls Hegel the “philosopher of the vanishing present” and describes the problematic of presence or the Now as

follows: “it is of value to note Hegel’s reason for not taking [the Now] seriously: namely, that what makes a Now be another is not that it vanishes, or simply is not there, but that *more* Now extends it into something else.”<sup>50</sup> Here we propose that embedded in the Now is this structure of habit. The reason why the Now keeps extending into more is because it is entangled in habit’s structure. The present or Now never fully presents itself, it can never simply be all there, because its appearance is the completed movement of habit, whereas the formation of habit reveals that we are always already being carried along by our organic selves.

This means that habit allows us to mark the Now as present, and the structure or process distinctive of habit is in fact foundational to and enabling of all other sorts of Now markings. The present always shows up as the time *of* a habit which allows us to recognize that we were involved in the performance of that habit, or, put differently, that it was precisely habit that was required for us to be present. Habit performs the conjunctive synthesis that allows for our actions to appear as a temporal instant - to appear before us as the singular phenomenon of the Now. Thus, what appeared before as a ‘completed’ instant is really a folded or contracted multiplicity. On the one hand, habit lets the present show up and count as a singular phenomenon that does not vanish but ‘count’ as one i.e. counting in the sense that it makes a difference and distinguishes itself. On the other hand, the very process of the Now standing out as a singular phenomenon means that it stands out from a background or structure of habit, which means that it belongs to a topology or schema that is precisely greater than the present time of the Now. The duplicity of habit is that the very marking out of the Now as a singular present is such that the Now differentiates itself from its background, thereby both distinguishing itself and vanishing back into a schema of habit that conceals the Now as singular.

#### v. Conclusion

In *Deleuze's Philosophical Lineage*, Bruce Baugh revisits the question of Deleuze's indebtedness to Hegel.<sup>51</sup> He writes, "in making primal origin into a goal, Deleuze seems to enact the 'circular' movement of return that he denounces in Hegel", further, "Deleuze seeks the differentiation of difference, fragmentation rather than unity, the dissolution of identity through difference returning to itself." Although Deleuze's teleology or 'finality' differs from Hegel's it is "no less circular and teleological", and "to that extent, it represents the persistence of Hegel in this most anti-Hegelian philosopher."<sup>52</sup> We have seen here that Hegel and Deleuze converge over the problematic of habit. This raises the question of what difference Deleuze's critique of sense-certainty makes if the principle that explains the relation between empirical actuality and concepts ends up being so similar in Hegel and Deleuze. As Baugh writes in his first article on this relationship between Hegel and Deleuze, Deleuze "describes his philosophy as an experiment" whereby he means "does it let us do new things?" Deleuze subverts what he sees in Hegel as the subordination of empirical actuality to the concept in order to subvert old institutions and ways of doing things.<sup>53</sup> This means, in the sphere of habit, that Deleuze privileges the creation of new habits through the continual subversion of previously acquired habits.

The preliminary answer to Hegel and Deleuze's divergence around immediacy is that Hegel does not write on the place of irreducible difference and its importance as a condition of experience and concepts. We can infer, however, that Hegel does consider the importance of difference but that he focuses on what can be said and known about this difference. Yet, the problematic of habit reveals an astonishing proximity between the two philosophers not only over their willingness to recognize habit's duplicity, but also the integral place of habit in philosophy. For Deleuze, becoming aware of how habit mechanizes our thought allows us to

become good philosophers insofar as we can ‘undo’ those relations and ideas formed out of pure habit, thereby recognizing the priority of difference and the new over those already formed and ingrained ideas. Hegel, on the other hand, recognizes that the mechanizing aspect of habit is essential if we want to engage in more demanding, complex activities. For example, Hegel notices that “once the activity of writing has become a habit with us, then our self has so completely mastered all relevant individual details... that they are no longer present to us as *individual* details and we keep in view only their universal aspect.”<sup>54</sup> In other words, it is only when habit allows us to abstract from the great intensity of differences that lie in all our actions and behaviours that we are even able to engage in certain activities.

Sense-certainty is often seen as a main point of divergence amongst Hegel and Deleuze, however, this paper suggests that their arguments for what it takes for something to be present, what it takes for us to encounter the Now, reveals a much closer proximity than scholarship admits – although an analysis of how Deleuze construes habit and the Now is beyond the scope of this paper. Habit introduces a world of passive syntheses that allow the present to appear as ‘one’ or a whole. Hegel’s account of organic habit formation allows us to think why the Now slips and reveals a much more complex account than appears in Deleuzian scholarship. Hegel may describe empirical difference as “this,” “now,” “here,” but he has compelling reasons for why we can only know this. Further, this is far from the sum of the resources that Hegel has for thinking the nature of empirical difference, or why the Now has the character it does.

## Endnotes

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1 Daniel W. Smith, *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 62.

2 Gilles Deleuze, *Empirisme et subjectivité : Essai sur la nature humaine selon Hume* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1953). Cited as *ES*. « Le fait est que le donné ne réunit jamais dans un tout ses éléments séparés. » (*ES*, 152)

3 In “Sense-Certainty” Hegel frames his critique of empiricism as a response to empiricists (esp. in the tradition of British empiricism) who argue that knowledge is primarily derived from sense-experience. In the *Phenomenology* Hegel thus pursues his critique to develop a philosophical response to empiricism as a philosophical position and his focus is the question of sensation’s significance for a theory of knowledge. Hegel’s dialectical treatment of the Now in “Sense-Certainty” leads to him to realize that sensation could not itself offer up knowledge or conceptual content, so it is absurd for empiricist philosophy to claim that it can do so. This is the very sort of absurdity that Deleuze points out in his critique of Hegel. But Deleuze’s aim is to claim that Hegel is missing something crucial about the importance of sensation and this absurdity for philosophy, since Deleuze takes Hegel to be excluding sensation, especially its intensity, from philosophy, as something that is precisely prior to knowledge and concepts. Importing Hegel’s points about habit from the *Encyclopedia* is a textual strategy I pursue to respond to Deleuze’s critique. In the *Encyclopaedia* Hegel studies how habits are formed organically, prior to the establishment of consciousness. This is important for us, because habit is crucial to explaining how it is possible that consciousness can experience the Now in the first place—and that shows how something prior to consciousness is also operative in experience, in Hegel.

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4 G.W.F Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), A. I., “Sense-Certainty: Or the ‘This’ and ‘Meaning’.”; reference to the Miller translation will be given first, as *Ph* followed by section number. G.W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Mind*, trans. W. Wallace and A.V. Miller, revised with introduction and commentary by Michael Inwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), M110. Hereafter referred to by *Pm* followed by section number.

5 *Ph* M92.

6 *Ph* M92.

7 *Ph* M95.

8 *Ph* M107.

9 Bruce Baugh, “Transcendental empiricism: Deleuze’s response to Hegel.” *Man and World* 25.2 (1992), :130.

10 *Ibid.*, 142.

11 *Ibid.*, 135.

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Ibid.*

14 *Ibid.*, 134.

15 *Ibid.*, 138.

16 *Ibid.*, 139.

17 *Ibid.*

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18 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*. Translated by Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 46. Bruce Baugh, “Transcendental empiricism: Deleuze’s response to Hegel.” *Man and World* 25.2, 146.

19 Baugh, “Transcendental Empiricism,” 138.

20 Ibid., 141.

21 “Voici le probleme : comment, dans le donné, peut-il se constituer un sujet tel qu’il dépasse le donné? » (*ES* 91-92)

22 Jim Vernon, “Deleuze and Hegel on the Logic of Relations,” in *Hegel and Deleuze: Together Again for the First Time*, eds. Karen Houle and Jim Vernon (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2013), 116.

23 « Le fait est que le donné ne réunit jamais dans un tout ses éléments séparés... Dans le donné, nous établissons des relations, nous formons des totalités; celles-ci ne dépendent pas du donné, mais de principes que nous connaissions pas. » (*ES*, 152)

24 Vernon, “Deleuze and Hegel on the Logic of Relations,” *Hegel and Deleuze*, 118.

25 Habit is also the first synthesis of time in *Difference and Repetition*, however, a study of habit how it appears throughout all Deleuze’s philosophy is beyond the scope of this project. The importance of habit here is how it appears as a principle to explain the relations between discrete terms.

26 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 101.

27 Levi R. Bryant, *Difference and givenness: Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism and the ontology of immanence* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2008), 24.

28 *Pm*, §409.

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29 Ibid.

30 Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality, Dialectic* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 211. Malabou writes, “The German verb closest in meaning to contraction is *zusammenziehen*: draw together, reduce, concentrate. Even if it is not possible to say in German ‘contract a habit’, the meaning of *zusammenziehen* (literally ‘to contract’, ‘pull together’) expresses precisely the economy of the process analysed here.”

31 Ibid., 74.

32 G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §368.

33 Félix Ravaisson, *De l’habitude*, ‘*Corpus des œuvres de philosophie en langue française*’ (Paris : Fayard, 1984), p.9.

34 Clare Carlisle, *On Habit* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 13.

35 Catherine Malabou, “Who’s Afraid of Hegelian Wolves?” in *Deleuze A Critical Reader*, ed. Paul Patton, 114-138 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 132.

36 Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, 58.

37 Ibid., 61.

38 Ibid.

39 McCumber, *Hegel on Habit*, 158-9.

40 Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, 62.

41 *Pm*, §410.

42 Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, 63.

43 *Pm*, §410.

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44 More generally, the duplicity of habit is that habit combines both activity and passivity. It is this double-sidedness, or its dual effects, that we designate by “duplicity.” Hegel points out that under the effect of habit we become accustomed to certain sensations and impressions such that their intensity weakens – this is habit’s first effect. To the degree that these sensations become weaker, habit strengthens our movements, increasing the precision and efficacy of certain actions – this is habit’s second effect. In Hegel’s treatment of habit these dual effects are conjoined under the single process of habit.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Tano Posteraro, “Habits, Nothing But Habits: Biological Time in Deleuze,” *The Comparatist* 40, 1 (2016):94-110.

48 *Pm*, §410.

49 Jay Lampert, *Deleuze and Guatarri’s Philosophy of History* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 20.

50 Ibid., 27-8.

51 Bruce Baugh, “G.W.F. Hegel,” in *Deleuze’s Philosophical Lineage*, eds. Graham Jones and Jon Roffe (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 130-147.

52 Bruce Baugh, “G.W.F. Hegel,” 144.

53 Baugh, “Transcendental Empiricism”, 143.

54 *Pm*, §410.

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