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ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cele20

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To cite this article: Edward Thornton (2022) Unregulated Powers: The Politics of Metaphysics in French Post-Kantianism, The European Legacy, 27:2, 107-124, DOI: 10.1080/10848770.2021.1987849

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/10848770.2021.1987849

Published online: 10 Oct 2021.

THE EUROPEAN LEGACY
2022, VOL. 27, NO. 2, 107–124
https://doi.org/10.1080/10848770.2021.1987849

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Unregulated Powers: The Politics of Metaphysics in French Post-Kantianism

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ABSTRACT

For thinkers such as Foucault and Deleuze, it is not possible to engage with metaphysical questions without simultaneously considering other, more political problems concerning the power relations that are internal to thought. In this article I argue that, despite certain important ways in which this trend follows in the wake of Nietzsche's polemic against the tyranny of Truth, to understand the political nature of metaphysics in late twentieth-century French philosophy we must see these thinkers as dealing with an explicitly Kantian problem. After some introductory material in the first section, I lay out the problem of legitimacy in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and assess his own solution to this problem. In the third section I explain Nietzsche's critique of Kant's solution, while in the fourth section I explain how Foucault and Deleuze each return and respond to the political foundation of Kant's metaphysics in their own way.

KEYWORDS

Metaphysics; Politics; French Philosophy; Kant; Nietzsche; Foucault; Deleuze

1. The Politicisation of Philosophy

The overtly political nature of French philosophy in the latter half of the twentieth century is undoubtedly one of the factors that led to what Andrew Cutrofello has called the "mutual unintelligibility" that exists between those factions of the discipline respectively referred to as the "continental" and the "analytic."[1] To take one example, when a commentator like Mark Kelly writes of Foucault that "knowledge is from the beginning a political thing," some readers will accept this claim as a simple restatement of one of the basic tenets of philosophical work, while others will see it as anathema to the whole intellectual enterprise of the discipline.[2] This difference of approach is most pronounced in the context of metaphysics. Traditionally seen as being logically prior to any questions concerning the nature of human society, metaphysical problems have often been approached in terms which assume the apolitical nature of their subject matter. However, when we read the work of those thinkers that characterise French philosophy in the latter part of the twentieth century, such questions are political from the start.[3]

The most common explanation of this politicisation of all philosophy traces its history back to Nietzsche. This is a reasonable narrative to tell: Nietzsche certainly did attempt to carry out a thoroughgoing critique of the Western project of objective rationality, which he saw as bound up in an unhealthy Christian morality of guilt, and his work has had

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a great influence on the trajectory of philosophy in France in the twentieth century. The purpose of this article, however, is to trace the history of the politicisation of metaphysics one step further back, to the critical philosophy of Kant. In the sections that follow, I will look at the work of two of the most influential French thinkers of the late twentieth century, namely Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. My aim will be to show that both of these philosophers internalised a strictly Kantian problem concerning the grounds of knowledge, and that it is only by reading the work of these thinkers in the context of Kant's critical project that we are able to make sense of French philosophy's tendency to approach metaphysical problems with the expectation that they are "always already political."[4]

It is uncontentious to point out that French philosophy in the twentieth century is heavily Kantian *in some sense*. Having studied philosophy at the most prestigious universities in Paris, Deleuze and Foucault were both heavily schooled in the history of philosophy. Speaking of this training, Deleuze wrote: "I belong to a generation, one of the last generations, that was more or less bludgeoned to death with the history of philosophy," and that unfortunately, "many members of my generation never broke free of this."[5] Deleuze speaks of Kant as "fundamental," he defines his own metaphysical project of "transcendental empiricism" in direct reference to Kant, and regularly situates his later work in a strictly post-Kantian framework.[6] Take, for example, Deleuze's claim that *Anti-Oedipus* "was Kantian in spirit" because he and Guattari had "attempted a kind of *Critique of Pure Reason* for the unconscious."[7] Just as Kant had set out to avoid the dangers of transcendental illusion by distinguishing "the legitimate from the illegitimate uses of the syntheses of consciousness," *Anti-Oedipus* aimed at denouncing "the illegitimate use of the syntheses of the unconscious as found in Oedipal psychoanalysis."[8] Deleuze and Guattari's project is explicitly Kantian in the sense that it concerns the relationship between legitimacy and illusion: psychoanalysis is deemed illegitimate because it is based on a number of illusions that arise when we try to think about the unconscious.

Foucault's comments on his debt to Kant, and on the importance of legitimacy in philosophy, are no less striking. First, Foucault is happy to repeat the received wisdom that "since Kant, the role of philosophy has been to prevent reason from going beyond the limits of what is given in experience."[9] Like Kant, then, Foucault sees the discipline of philosophy as essentially an attempt to distinguish those uses of reason that are legitimate from those that are illegitimate. Furthermore, Foucault also suggests that philosophy *should* continue to keep this essentially Kantian problematic concerning the dangers of an illegitimate use of reason at its centre:

> I think that the central issue in philosophy and critical thought since the eighteenth century has always been, still is, and will, I hope, remain the question: *What* is this Reason that we use? What are its historical effects? What are its limits, and what are its dangers? How can we exist as rational beings, fortunately committed to practicing a rationality that is unfortunately crisscrossed by intrinsic dangers?[10]

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant had set out to mitigate the dangers that arise with the application of reason by determining the legitimate limits within which reason can be used. While Foucault and Deleuze do not necessarily follow a Kantian methodology in their respective attempts to overcome the inherent dangers of reason, they share with Kant the recognition that there are such dangers. In order to make this shared debt

to Kant clear, in the next section I will offer a reading of Kant's first critique, where I will show that one of the central problems that animates the work concerns the legitimate role of the different mental faculties. Here I will also outline Kant's legislative approach to solving this problem, in which a "tribunal of reason" is set up in order to regulate thought and to make judgements concerning its proper activities. Following this, I will turn to the work of Nietzsche in order to show that what makes Kant's legislative solution to the problem of reason so unpalatable for both Foucault and Deleuze is not his analysis of the faculties per se, but his analysis of power. In this section we will see that, while Kant's metaphysics concerns the regulation of thought, Nietzsche's work leads Foucault and Deleuze to consider the unregulated powers that give rise to thought. In the final section, I will return to the work of these two thinkers themselves. Here I will show how Foucault and Deleuze both share in the Kantian problem of the legitimacy of reason, and how their respective readings of Kant and of Nietzsche led them to the shared view that all philosophy, including metaphysics, is necessarily political.

2. Discord, Illusion, and Kant's Legislative Solution

Kant's critical project can, at least in part, be characterised as an attempt to overcome the problem of the *veil of perception*, namely the recognition that all our experience of the world is mediated by the specific nature of our sensory and cognitive apparatus, such that direct and unmediated knowledge of the external world is impossible. To see how this problem operates for Kant, it is enough to show how closely it is intertwined with what he calls the "general problem of transcendental philosophy," namely "*how are synthetic a priori judgements possible?*"[11] Kant will claim that it is possible for us to make such judgements because our *a priori* knowledge of the structures of space and time do not concern things in themselves, but relate instead to the way that appearances are presented to us in intuition. We can examine the necessary forms of intuition, we can analyse the way in which the concepts of the understanding are applied to intuitions, and in this way it is possible for us to make judgements about the nature of the objects of phenomenal reality, and to do so in such a way that the truth of these claims can be "known with apodictic certainty."[12]

Thus Kant ultimately accepts the claim that underlies the problem of the veil of perception. That is to say, he accepts the fact that, while human cognition is capable of analysing itself, it can only do so from the perspective of human cognition. What Sebastian Gardner calls "the inescapably perspectival character of our cognitive situation" in Kantian philosophy is not, however, the dead-end that pre-Kantian philosophers expected it to be.[13] The brilliance of Kant's critique rests on the fact that his acceptance of the necessarily subjective nature of thought does not reduce his philosophy to a species of cognitive relativism. Instead, Kant shows that what we mean by objectivity can only be understood from the perceptive of the subject. As Theodor Adorno pointed out: "[T]he Kantian project … grounds objectivity in the subject as an objective reality."[14] Kant's central epistemological problem in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is therefore not the problem of gaining access to an external world, but of how to organise thought so that it will ward off the possibility of systematic illusions.

What concerns Kant in the first critique are the dangers of cognitive conflict. If the correctness of judgements cannot be assessed by comparing them to an objective world of things, then there is a danger that different people will have conflicting experiences of the world, developing alternative understandings of it, with no way of resolving their conflicts. What is more, this danger is not only apparent between individuals but between different aspects of the mind. I will turn to these conflicts in more detail in a moment, but first it is important to remind ourselves of the internal divisions that Kant recognises within cognition. As Peter Strawson explains, "Kant's idiom is psychological," and it is specifically the "idiom of departments or faculties of the mind."[15] Kant distinguishes between *sensibility*, through which we receive intuitions, the *understanding*, through which we grasp these intuitions according to concepts, and *reason*, by which we can guarantee the systematic organisation of conceptual thought into a non-contradictory whole. If the relations between these faculties are not carefully managed, then thinking will become disordered. For example, if concepts are not applied to intuition in a systematic way, then it will not be possible to compare different intuitions against a shared framework of understanding.

The problem of the veil of perception is essentially a problem of the possibility of error: if we cannot access the external world then there is no way to know if we are making cognitive mistakes regarding the nature of reality. Kant's transcendental approach, by which the question of objectivity is internalised, effectively overcomes the problem of error, but it can only do so by introducing a new problem, namely the problem of illusion: if the conceptual structure of experience is provided by the understanding, then how can we ever know whether these concepts are being applied legitimately? Might it not be the case that the conceptual schema of the understanding bears no relation to the world? The only way to make sure that the understanding is not applied illegitimately is to make sure that the faculty of reason keeps it in check. However, this does not fully overcome the problem because reason produces illusions of its own, namely the transcendental illusions. As Deleuze puts it: "Kant substitutes, for the traditional concept of error (error as product in the mind of an external determinism), that of *false problems* and *internal illusions*. These illusions are said to be inevitable and even to result from the nature of reason."[16] Kant's problem can therefore be restated in the following way: if cognition is in conflict with itself, and if a disordered relationship between the faculties can produce a series of cognitive illusions, then how is it possible to guarantee the correct organisation of the faculties and thus to avoid the dangers of such illusions?

The question that animates Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is therefore a legislative one, namely, *by what right* are the laws of reason applied to objects of experience? This is a pressing question for Kant because, if we have no right to apply such laws, then empirical knowledge will not be possible. Kant's primary aim is less to supply answers to specific metaphysical questions, than to use legislative methods to pass judgement on the very applicability of human thought to the world.[17] From the preface of the first edition of the first critique, Kant sets out his aim "to institute a tribunal which will assure to reason its lawful claims, and dismiss all groundless pretensions, not by despotic decrees, but in accordance with its own eternal and unalterable laws," clarifying that "this tribunal is no other than the *critique of pure reason*."[18] For Kant, metaphysics involves the regulation of the powers of thought.

As David Tarbet points out, Kant's legal terminology does not disappear after the preface: "Words and phrases—such as tribunal, case, validity, legal title, claim, cross-examining, appeal to testimony, pass judgement, rule, law, evidence, justify, illicit, right, legislation, canon, law-giver—are distributed throughout the text."[19] Further to these uses of legal terminology, Kant regularly utilises legislative *techniques* in his argumentation. For example, Kant's use of the antinomies—in which two arguments are presented side by side—is drawn from seventeenth-century jurisprudence, where this form of argument was used to display points of disagreement between the laws governing different legal jurisdictions.[20] Kant's use of the term "deduction," which is central to the argumentative form of all three critiques, refers to the practice of Roman jurists, who "distinguish in a legal action the question of right (*quid juris*) from the question of fact (*quid facti*); and they demand that both be proved. Proof of the former, which has to state the right or the legal claim, they entitle the *deduction*."[21] Kant's distinction between the *constitutive* and the *regulative* uses of the faculties is also drawn from juridical practice. For Kant, the understanding's application of concepts to intuitions is constitutive, because by providing form to otherwise unintelligible intuitions, this activity constitutes objects of knowledge. However, the faculty of reason's use of transcendental ideas is purely regulative, because it simply conditions our theoretical activity, without making any guarantees concerning the objects under consideration.[22] These two terms—*constitutive* and *regulative*—are drawn from Roman law, where the term *constitutio* refers to an "imperial ordinance, decree or constitution … having its effects from the sole will of the emperor," while the term *regula generis* refers to "general rules which the courts promulgate from time to time for the regulation of their practice."[23] Thus the regulative use of the faculty of reason only holds sway over the activities of the tribunal of reason itself, whereas it is the constitutive use of the understanding which, like imperial decrees, determines the form that knowledge *must* take.[24] With this example in mind, we can begin to discern the inner workings of Kant's tribunal of reason—in which the faculties take on the character of the different powers of a political state—with reason setting itself regulative laws, imposing constitutive laws, and bringing order to the political state of the mind. Reflecting on the fact that both his aims and his techniques are drawn from legislative practice, towards the end of the first critique, Kant writes that "the critique of pure reason can be regarded as the true tribunal of all disputes of pure reason … in which our disputes have to be conducted solely by the recognised methods of *legal action*."[25]

This explains why, for Kant, metaphysicians who are discussing the nature of space or the existence of God must answer the question *quid juris*, and why it isn't enough to answer the question *quid facti*. Kant resorts to a juridical framework in his critical work because he sees philosophy as beset by a series of unresolved conflicts. First, there are those conflicts that dominate the *discipline* of philosophy. For Kant, philosophy is a kind of society in which monarchical power, once held by metaphysics as "the Queen of all the sciences," has collapsed due to the "intestine wars" of the "government," which "under the administration of the *dogmatists*," became despotic. This resulted in such "complete anarchy" that the "*sceptics*" were able to break up "all civil society."[26] For Kant, if we wish to have a philosophical discourse at all, we must find a way of resolving these conflicts, so that the monarch can be returned to her throne, and civil philosophical

dialogue can continue. The first task of Kant's tribunal is therefore to test the legal claims of these different philosophical factions, to give them each their due, and to restore peace.

The second level of conflict that characterises philosophy, and the one which is of most interest to us here, concerns not a struggle over thought, but a struggle that is internal to thought. Specifically, Kant argues that the different faculties of the mind regularly come into conflict. The essentially receptive faculty of sensibility, by which intuitions are given to the mind, and the active faculty of understanding, by which concepts are applied to intuition, are distinct from one another and must be put into the correct relationship if they are to facilitate empirical knowledge. The faculty of reason is required to unify the faculty of the understanding, but reason has a tendency to overstep its rightful bounds and produce transcendental illusions. A tribunal of reason is required to resolve the disputes that occur between the faculties, and to ensure that reason correctly governs the understanding, which in turn dominates the faculty of intuition. What is more, because "reason is involved in unavoidable self-conflict," reason must also submit to its own tribunal.[27] Thus, only when reason relates to the other faculties, and to itself, "like an appointed judge who compels witnesses to answer the questions he puts to them" can the mind find peace with itself.[28] The second task of the tribunal that Kant sets up in the first critique is therefore to test the legal claims of the faculties of thought, to put each in their rightful place, and to ensure a well-governed form of philosophical thinking.

This is not the place to assess the successes and failures of Kant's legislative project. However, I would like to discuss some of the assumptions that underlie Kant's belief that the conflicts internal to thought can only be resolved through the use of proper legal governance. As Howard Caygill reminds us: "The term faculty is ubiquitous in Kant's writings, and indeed underlies the architectonic of the critical philosophy."[29] While Kant gives his most elaborate analysis of the faculties in the Introduction to the *Critique of Judgement*, in the first critique Kant is most concerned with the three faculties of sensibility, understanding, and reason.[30] Kant's word for faculty is *Vermögen*, which is drawn from the Aristotelian notion of *dynamis*, which in turn specifies either a power or a potentiality of the mind. Kant follows the former of these two senses in his categorisation and treats the faculties as distinct powers of the mind, each of which has its own abilities and its own limitations. In brief, sensibility has a power of receptivity, but because it is passive it cannot bring order to thinking; the understanding has a power of grasping, and because it is active it can organise thought, but without the powers of receptivity, it can do nothing if it is not provided with some content by sensibility.[31] Reason is required to oversee the application of the understanding to sensibility, but if left unchecked then reason will begin to ask questions that lie beyond the scope of possible experience, which will lead the mind to generate transcendental illusions.

Kant makes two assumptions here. The first of these assumptions concerns Kant's decision to treat each of the faculties not only as a particular power, but also as something akin to an institutional body that is capable of wielding such a power. So, while understanding and sensibility are first described as nothing other than "the mind's power of producing representations" and "its power of receiving representations,"[32] Kant goes on to say that these faculties have obligations.[33] This ambiguity in Kant—in which it is not specified whether each faculty is merely a power or whether it is something invested with a power—is most striking with regards to the faculty of the understanding. Kant writes

that "the understanding is something more than a power of formulating rules through comparison of appearances; it is itself the lawgiver of nature."[34] Kant's assumption that the faculties, which have originally been defined in terms of powers, might also take the form of entities invested with such powers is also true in regards to the faculty of reason, which Kant regularly describes as having its own rights, possessions, and obligations.[35] Kant's assumption that it is possible for mental faculties to be the bearers of rights and obligations is part of his political reading of metaphysics. The tribunal of reason is characterised by Kant in terms which only make sense when one assumes that the faculties of the mind are akin to institutional bodies which can keep each other in check; reason is the monarch, who has ultimate power, but whose jurisdiction is bound by the limits of a constitution that is administered by the understanding. If the faculties were nothing other than powers, such a characterisation of thought would not be possible.

This mention of monarchy leads us on to Kant's second major assumption, namely that the peace of any political state is dependent on the existence of a monarch who unifies the body politic. In the *Transcendental Dialectic*, Kant argues that without the faculty of reason's power to unify the concepts of the understanding, systematic knowledge would not be possible. Kant's critical philosophy attempts to move us from a state of "complete anarchy" to a situation in which "reason would begin a rule of lasting tranquillity over understanding and sense."[36] Onora O'Neill is one of many commentators to point out that "Kant compares the constitution of reason with the Hobbsian Social Contract."[37] Kant's political metaphors are explicit and he refers to Hobbes by name, claiming that the ultimate goal of his philosophy is to provide reason with "a limited but undisputed patrimony."[38] To call Kant's belief that a unifying power of reason is necessary for the possibility of empirical knowledge an assumption may be unfair, and another way of reading the first critique would be as a long and detailed defence of this claim. However, all I aim to point out here is that, first, Kant characterises philosophical thought as being constituted by a series of faculties, each of which is not only a power, but an institutional body invested with power, and that, second, in order to bring peace and order to thinking, to avoid transcendental illusions, and to allow for the possibility of empirical knowledge, it is necessary for the correct power relations to be set up between these faculties.

3. Power, Contest, and a Nietzschean Genealogy of the Mind

Foucault and Deleuze were not only working in a post-Kantian framework, they were also grappling with a series of profound critiques of Kant, not least those put forward by Nietzsche. While Nietzsche often engages directly with Kant, and while he offers a series of scathing attacks on Kant's moralism, if we want to understand the particular historical tenor of French philosophy in the late twentieth century, it will be necessary to pay closest attention to Nietzsche's original conception of *power*. With this in mind, we will be well placed to see why Foucault and Deleuze—each in their own way—retain a Kantian understanding of a politically conflictual metaphysics and, crucially, why they both distance themselves from Kant's understanding of the faculties as institutions invested with rights and duties. In brief, we will see that both Foucault and Deleuze accept the Kantian problem of contest that grounds metaphysics but reject Kant's legislative solution to this problem.

Before considering the specifics of Nietzsche's influence on the two French philosophers under consideration, it is worth highlighting the fact that these thinkers were some of the first to be working in an intellectual milieu in which both Kant and Nietzsche were considered major players in the philosophical canon. Nietzsche is somewhat atypical for a post-Kantian in the sense that he was writing in the interregnum between the early post-Kantians of the first half of the nineteenth century—such as Hegel, Schelling, and Fichte—and the more analytic post-Kantians working around the turn of the century—such as Frege. It is also likely that Nietzsche read very little of Kant's work directly and relied heavily on the version of Kant that was presented in the work of Schopenhauer, among others.[39] Perhaps for these reasons, Nietzsche was not well studied in the years after his death, only rising to prominence again in the French speaking world in the 1960s. Deleuze's own book on Nietzsche, published in 1962, was important in this regard, as was Pierre Klossowski's highly influential *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* in 1969 and the translation of Heidegger's two-volume *Nietzsche* in 1971. Foucault and Deleuze both comment on the fact that it was their readings of Nietzsche that allowed them to respond to the history of Kantian philosophy. Foucault speaks of using the "challenge of Nietzsche" in his attempts to deal with the "time-honoured university traditions,"[40] and Deleuze, also speaking of the weight of Kant's influence, writes: "It was Nietzsche, who I read only later, who extricated me from all this."[41] In what remains of this section, I will show that it is Nietzsche's analysis of power that allows Foucault and Deleuze to extricate themselves from Kant's reliance on an institutional understanding of the faculties, while holding on to his claim that the possibility of metaphysics rests on a power struggle that must be understood politically.

Nietzsche's direct appraisals of Kantian critique vary across his career, ranging from moments when Nietzsche sees his work as a continuation of his predecessor's tragic project to moments when he characterises his work as an attempt to dismantle the entire Kantian enterprise.[42] The driving force behind Nietzsche's various attacks on Kant stems from what he sees as Kant's conservatism and his moral religiosity. His most trenchant criticism of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is that Kant fails to question the values on which his own project relies. This is Nietzsche's assessment of Kant's analysis of the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgements:

> The time has finally come to replace the Kantian question 'How are synthetic judgments a priori possible?' with another question, 'Why is the belief in such judgments necessary?'—to realize, in other words, that such judgments must be believed true for the purpose of preserving beings of our type; which is why these judgments could of course still be false![43]

Here Nietzsche seems to agree that the possibility of human experience presupposes synthetic *a priori* judgements, but he simultaneously refuses to accept them as unproblematic. According to Nietzsche, the fact that such judgements are necessary for us does not make them true. On the contrary, their necessity only shows that they serve our particular way of life. As Michel Haar points out, Nietzsche carries out something like a "genealogy of metaphysics" which involves "laying bare the forces which elicit and are satisfied by the values metaphysics promotes."[44] Nietzsche argues that Kantian metaphysics serves to uphold the specific values of a conservative and Christian way of life, and that to break free from such a morality it will be necessary to transform its metaphysical ground.

Concerning Kant's analysis of the relations between the faculties of the mind, and his claim that a tribunal of reason is required in order to restore peace to thought, Nietzsche is no less polemical. He argues that, according to the relation between the faculties which Kant seeks to defend, the faculty of the understanding is nothing but an invading force that colonises and dominates the faculty of sensibility in a way that is politically illegitimate.[45] Rather than an affirmation of the power of sensibility, such an act would be nothing other than a refusal of the power of the mind. The peace that Kant supposedly restores by legislating for this invasion is really nothing other than the peace that reigns under the power of a tyrant. At this point it is worth remembering that, as Douglas Burnham points out, for Nietzsche, "political organization tends to be a symptom rather than a cause of things."[46] While Kant aims to use a legislative mechanism to restore order, for Nietzsche the expression of power subsists in the exact opposite: "*Not* contentedness, but more power; *not* peace but war; *not* virtue but prowess."[47] Once again, this point returns us to the question of genealogy: while Kant aims to find philosophical support for the effective operation of the mind, Nietzsche is less interested in how to maintain a form of the *status quo* and more interested in uncovering the forces that have produced the *status quo*.[48] We will see in a moment that Foucault's use of genealogy and Deleuze's transcendental empiricism both rely to some extent on the way in which Nietzsche shifts the terms of debate away from what is merely necessary for the possibility of experience to what is necessary for the genesis of our particular mode of life. However, what is key to the further politicisation of the field of metaphysics is not only Nietzsche's shift to the questions of value and of genealogy, but his analysis of the nature of power.

While Nietzsche does not directly attack Kant's conception of the faculties as agents or institutions of the mind, it is Nietzsche's work in this area that will ultimately make Kant's characterisation of the relation between the faculties lose favour in French philosophical circles. Put bluntly, while Kant first characterises the faculties as nothing other than powers, he quickly starts to treat these powers as subjects, or as institutions, which can be understood as the agents behind the particular form of mental activity that they perform. As was previously noted, this shift can be seen as soon as Kant begins to ascribe obligations, rights, and duties to faculties. This kind of slippage, in which an apparent analysis of power relations begins to smuggle in a set of agents who wield such powers is anathema to Nietzsche.

Nietzsche's word for power is either 'Macht' or 'Kraft'. While these two terms are not entirely interchangeable, they are both used to speak of power in the sense of a force or an energy.[49] As Burnham points out, for Nietzsche, "power is not simply a social or political concept of influence or the having of certain rights."[50] Instead, power is a capacity for action which by definition must be expressed or invested in a particular direction. For Nietzsche, the effect of our common misunderstandings concerning the nature of power have led to a recurrent problem in the history of philosophical thought concerning the nature of the subject. He writes that "our 'understanding of an event' has consisted in our inventing a subject which was made responsible for something that happens and for how it happens."[51] For Nietzsche, the framework of understanding which seeks an explanation of effects in their causes makes the fundamental error of looking for a "doer" behind the deed. In an attempt to explain the error that so regularly occurs in our analysis of powers, Nietzsche writes: "If I think of the muscle apart from its 'effects', I negate it."[52] This is effectively what Kant

does with the faculties: to think of intuition, but to think of it as dominated by the understanding, and thus to think of it as separate from its essential activity of intuiting, is to fail to understand intuition at all.

Another way to clarify Nietzsche's specific conceptualisation of power is to say that it does not denote mere potentiality. If a potentiality is a kind of power which is held by a subject, but which is not expressed, then—as we have already seen from Nietzsche's analysis of the illusion of the "doer" behind the "deed"—this kind of power will have no place in Nietzsche's philosophy. As Donovan Miyasaki clarifies, if we understand a potentiality as "an unexercised ability or capacity belonging to an efficient causal agent," and if Nietzsche argues that "agent and act are one," then "there can be no unactualized possibility" and "no substantial agent capable of not acting whenever, and to the fullest extent, that it has the power to act."[53]

While Nietzsche's analysis of political relations and his underlying conception of power challenge Kant's legislative solution to the problem of the contest of the faculties, nothing Nietzsche says conflicts with Kant's basic claim that the practice of metaphysics is necessarily tied up with this contest. A philosopher heavily influenced by Nietzsche can still accept Kant's claim that in order to answer questions concerning the nature of time, space, God, or causation, one is also required to offer an account of the power relations between intuition, understanding, and reason. Whether one is a Kantian—interested in determining the necessary preconditions for the possibility of experience—or whether one is a Nietzschean—interested in exploring the genealogy of these conditions in order to bring to light the values that they contain—in either case it is not possible to answer metaphysical questions without simultaneously finding a way of organising the powers of the mind so that they do not lead us into illusion. However, Nietzsche offers an explicit critique of Kant's political motivations: he attempts to show that Kant failed to complete a genuine "*critique* of moral values" because he dogmatically accepted a given morality and failed to see that "*the value of these values should itself, for once, be examined*."[54] Nietzsche also offers an implicit critique of Kant's analysis of the causal powers wielded by the faculties: because we make the mistake of seeking "a doer for every event," we characterise the faculties not only as powers, but as subjects or institutions invested with powers. This is the state of play in which both Foucault and Deleuze are operating. Metaphysics is inherently political because, as Kant had shown, any attempt to answer metaphysical questions is to offer a solution to the problem of the power relations between the faculties. However, according to Nietzsche's conception of power, these problems cannot be solved by way of a tribunal of reason. What we will see in the following section is that Foucault's and Deleuze's respective interventions in metaphysics constitute a new way of tackling the essentially Kantian problem of the contest of the faculties, but from the perspective of a Nietzschean conception of power.

4. French Philosophy and the Politics of Metaphysics

When speaking of the nature of truth, Foucault claims that we must pay close attention to the relationship between Kant and Nietzsche: "we need," he says, "to compare the two philosophers and note all of their differences."[55] In this section I offer a brief analysis of the specific way in which Kant and Nietzsche come up against one another in Foucault's work and attempt to show how the political nature of Foucault's metaphysical positions are

conditioned by his reading of Kant as much as by his reading of Nietzsche. Following this analysis of Foucault, I will then turn to similar assessments of the role of Kant and Nietzsche in setting the political tone for Deleuzian metaphysics.

While Foucault is often seen as producing "a political philosophy which is consciously developed as a response to the end of metaphysics," at another level, and as Bernard Flynn has shown, his work can be seen as "nonetheless, at its deepest level determined by metaphysics."[56] Foucault was also a close reader of Kant, having translated Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, and having written extensively on Kantian issues across his career, from *The Archaeology of Knowledge* in 1969 to his lecture "What is Enlightenment?", presented in 1983, which assessed Kant's text of the same name.[57] In *The Order of Things*, Foucault considers Kant's conception of metaphysics directly, arguing that Kant's critical philosophy destroys pre-critical metaphysics, but that "it opens up at the same time the possibility of another metaphysics."[58] Because Kant had shown that all claims to knowledge also entail certain supplementary claims concerning the necessary preconditions for such knowledge, the impossibility of knowing constitutive metaphysical truths does not do away with metaphysics altogether, but merely shifts the focus of metaphysical work. Across his career, Foucault attempts to show how knowledge and power relate to one another. As such, Foucault must consider the necessary preconditions for such knowledge, and so he must continue—in a certain sense—Kant's critical metaphysical project. What distinguishes Foucault from Kant on this matter is that, while Kant aimed to give an account of the necessary preconditions for the *possibility* of knowledge, Foucault was trying to assess the necessary preconditions for the *existence* of various kinds of knowledge. As Mary Beth Mader puts it, "when we consider Foucault's thought on knowledge in the light of Kantian epistemology," we see his frustration with the fact that Kantian philosophical inquiry "concerns the conditions for the possibility of knowledge and not the conditions for the existence of knowledge."[59] Foucault's method for discovering such preconditions is a historical one, first cast as a practice of *archaeology* and then as one of *genealogy*. A brief analysis of these two stages of Foucault's thought will show how, despite their Nietzschean character, they must be understood as responses to an essentially Kantian problem.

Foucault's archaeological method, by which he set out to uncover not the formal or logical rules that condition ahistorical knowledge but the material and political rules that determine the boundaries of thought at a particular historical moment, can be understood as an extension of Kantian critique into history. Foucault accepts Kant's claim that all knowledge rests on a question of legitimation, but he seeks to show that the institutions of such legitimation are historically produced. As Joseph Rouse explains, in his work in the 1970s, Foucault was concerned less with the objective legitimacy of specific bodies of knowledge and more with "the epistemic context within which those bodies of knowledge became intelligible and authoritative."[60] According to Foucault, knowledge and power are always related in a specific discursive formation—or *episteme*—and it is this formation which offers legitimation to some knowledge claims, while withholding it from others. Thus, through his archaeological method, and through his introduction of the concept of the "historical a priori," what Foucault seeks to articulate "is not a condition of validity for judgements but a condition of reality of statements."[61] For Foucault, the question of the legitimacy of knowledge is not located in individual statements. Instead, knowledge is distributed

across a field of discourse, and specific kinds of knowledge are possible at different historical moments depending on the seriousness or "reality" of the statements that compose that discourse.[62]

Foucault's later work turns from *archaeology* to *genealogy*. At this stage, Foucault's historical analysis of discursive formations becomes more heavily inflected with a Nietzschean conception of power.[63] As we saw in the previous section, Nietzsche argues that the powers which condition thought of must not be thought as institutions, somehow constituted as agents with the power to legislate our thinking. Instead, we must see that institutions—whether these are institutions of the mind or historical and political institutions—are the result of power relations, rather than the source of them. This is a key lesson that Foucault takes on when he begins his work in genealogy. He is still concerned with the question of how knowledge and power are related, and he is still concerned with an analysis of the historical states of affairs that act as the preconditions for knowledge, but now Foucault is highly attuned to the fact that the institutions of legitimation should be considered as the effects of power relations. This is how Foucault puts it:

> I wish to suggest that one may analyze institutions from the standpoint of power relations, rather than vice versa, and that the fundamental point of anchorage of the relationships, even if they are embodied and crystallized in an institution, is to be found outside the institution.[64]

It is not by chance that Foucault's language here is so reminiscent of Nietzsche. The former's conception of power is explicitly drawn from the work of the latter, and it was Foucault's reading of Nietzsche that allowed him to analyse the dynamic power relations that pre-exist claims of legitimation, rather than the political regimes that follow from them. Just as Foucault had used his archaeological work to analyse the emergence of different historical discourses as the precondition for the reality of statements, and thus as the precondition for the legitimacy of knowledge, in his genealogical work Foucault set out to analyse the power relations that precondition the emergence of political institutions. In an interview in 1975, Foucault is explicit that in this regard he owes a debt to Nietzsche:

> It was Nietzsche who specified the power relation as the general focus, shall we say, of philosophical discourse. … Nietzsche is the philosopher of power, a philosopher who managed to think of power without having to confine himself within a political theory in order to do so.[65]

When reassessing the nature of power along Nietzschean lines, it becomes clear that Kant's treatment of the mental faculties as the grounding institutions of the legitimation of knowledge is incomplete. In a striking analogy, Foucault's self-critique, and his move from an archaeological to a genealogical method, can be seen as a corrective to his previous assessments of the historical *a priori* conditions of any specific discursive formation, based on the recognition that these institutional conditions rely on a contest of powers. As such, Johanna Oskala is only half right to claim that "Foucault politicized his archaeological nominalism in his genealogical texts of the early 1970s by explicitly linking it with Nietzsche."[66] She would be more correct to say that Foucault *further* politicised his work in this way, but on the recognition that Foucault's archaeological work was already political in a Kantian sense.

Unlike Foucault, Deleuze was happy to refer to himself as a "pure metaphysician,"[67] and at the point of writing *Difference and Repetition*, he was explicitly engaged in a project to extend and correct Kantian metaphysics. Furthermore, Deleuze was one of the few philosophers to take Kant's theory of the faculties seriously, writing that, "despite the fact that it has become discredited today, the doctrine of the faculties is an entirely necessary component of the system of philosophy."[68] What Deleuze finds problematic in Kant's work is not the faculties per se, but the genesis and regulation of the faculties. If Kant's transcendental idealism had given an account of the way in which the faculties provide the "conditions of possible experience," then Deleuze wanted to give an account of the "subjacent conditions of real experience" by explaining the way in which the faculties come into being and enter into relation with one another.[69] In a certain sense, this attempt to think through the conditions of actual experience is similar to Foucault's historical analysis of the conditions of knowledge. However, what interests Deleuze is not the way in which socio-political conditions determine what is taken to be necessary and *a priori*. Instead, Deleuze is concerned with the way in which experience is generated from pure sensation *prior to* the organisation of the faculties. It is for this reason that Deleuze ultimately sees transcendental idealism as doomed and sets out to replace it with what he calls "transcendental empiricism."[70]

Deleuze's analysis of Kant in *Difference and Repetition* extends a series of comments he made in his earlier work *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Here Deleuze praised Kant's recognition that any truly critical philosophy must not rely on external conditions for its justification and must be based on what he calls an "immanent critique." However, according to Deleuze, "Kant lacked a method which permitted reason to be judged from the inside without giving it the task of being its own judge"—leading to what Deleuze calls the "Kantian contradiction" which makes "reason both the tribunal and the accused; constituting it as judge and plaintiff"—and for this reason "Kant does not realise his project of immanent critique."[71] Here Deleuze identifies Nietzsche's theorisation of power as the key which will allow him to complete the Kantian project, writing that "only the will to power as genetic and genealogical principle . . . is capable of realising internal critique."[72] It is this project that he will return to in *Difference and Repetition*.

Deleuze also produced his own book-length study of Kant's work, titled *Kant's Critical Philosophy*. Here Deleuze presented a rigorous, if idiosyncratic, reading of Kant's critical project through an analysis of the different ways in which the faculties relate to one another in each of the three critiques. According to his analysis, in the first *Critique* it is the faculty of the understanding that is dominant, while in the second *Critique* it is the faculty of reason that governs. In his analysis of the third *Critique*, however, Deleuze argues that Kant points to the possibility of "an unregulated exercise of the faculties."[73] Combining the insights from his book on Nietzsche and his book on Kant, in *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze concludes that what ultimately held Kant back from offering an account of the genesis of the faculties was his "implicit presupposition" of the transcendental subject. By taking the subject of experience to pre-exist experience, "Kant traces the so-called transcendental structures from the empirical acts of a psychological consciousness."[74] The problem for Deleuze is essentially that, while the differentiation between the faculties is drawn out from experience, Kant treats the existence of such faculties as a necessary precondition for experience.

Once again, Deleuze's critique of Kant on this point is carried out with reference to Nietzsche and follows the two critiques that Nietzsche himself brought against Kant. First, Deleuze questions the values that lie behind Kant's metaphysical work. Noting the way in which Kant's distinction between the faculties allows him to produce a conservative political philosophy, he writes, "Kantian Critique is ultimately respectful: knowledge, morality, reflection and faith are supposed to correspond to natural interests of reason, and are never themselves called into question."[75] At this point in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze also quotes Nietzsche directly. He repeats Nietzsche's mocking analysis of the way in which Truth serves the status quo and presents itself as that "modest being from which no disorder and nothing extraordinary is to be feared."[76] Second, however, and perhaps more importantly, Deleuze relies on a Nietzschean analysis of power to ask how it is the case that the faculties came to take on their current form. If the faculties are nothing other than powers—the power of receptivity, or the power of grasping—then these powers cannot simply be held together and regulated by a set of legislative rules and must instead be understood as being connected to one another by relations of force.

In essence, Deleuze argues that the power that gives rise to experience, and which must be taken to be the transcendental condition of experience, is what he calls the "being of the sensible."[77] According to Deleuze, the force which logically pre-exists either the subject who receives a sensation or an object being sensed is, what he calls, a "difference in intensity."[78] While such a difference is never experienced directly by a subject, it is the transcendental precondition for the genesis of any particular, spatio-temporally extended, experience. The "being of the sensible," which Deleuze also refers to as "the peculiar limit of sensibility" and even "the imperceptible," is the transcendental field of force which accounts for the separation of the subject from the object of experience and thus also for the disarticulation of the Kantian faculties.[79] Deleuze's transcendental empiricism can thus be understood as a careful combination of Kant's recognition that all metaphysical claims rely on a question of political legitimation and Nietzsche's recognition that this legitimation cannot be understood as arising from a concord between the faculties understood as institutions and must be sought in an analysis of the unregulated powers that give rise to those faculties.

Ultimately, Foucault and Deleuze both share an appreciation for Kant's recognition that metaphysics, where it is possible at all, is a discipline concerned with the legitimation of knowledge claims that go beyond the bounds of experience. As such, the basis for the political nature of metaphysics in the work of these two thinkers can be traced back to Kant. What Kant showed, and what Foucault and Deleuze swallowed whole, was the idea that metaphysics is a question of power. The reason that this fact so often remains hidden is that many thinkers working in this period, including Foucault and Deleuze, follow Nietzsche in criticising Kant's picture of the faculties as political and legislative institutions, capable of upholding civil contracts with one another. They accept the claim that metaphysics is a study of power relations, but they see that the regulation of these powers cannot be taken for granted. The regulation of thought is the *explanandum* of metaphysics and not the *explanans*. Foucault and Deleuze, each in their own way, then set out to analyse the active relations of force—be they historical or empirical—that give rise to the structure of experience. In doing so, these thinkers move from a Kantian interest in the regulation of the powers of the mind into a Nietzschean analysis of the unregulated powers that underlie any such regulation.

If Foucault and Deleuze can be taken as representative of the tenor of French post-Kantianism in the late twentieth century, then this analysis has shown us that, below the many discussions of power that circle around in the metaphysical discourse of this time, and below the celebratory Nietzscheanism that characterised this philosophical era, is an essentially Kantian problem concerning the regulation of the powers of thought.

Notes

1. Cutrofello, *Continental Philosophy*, 24.
2. Kelly, *Political Philosophy*, 23.
3. While these thinkers are often associated only with the death of metaphysics, this view is slowly being corrected. See Moore, *Modern Metaphysics*, 512–80. For the relationship between the politicisation of metaphysics and ontology in French philosophy, see Oskala "Foucault's Politicization of Ontology."
4. Lyotard, "Nietzsche and the Inhuman," 84.
5. Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 5. Picking out Kant as the cornerstone of this shared education, Derrida adds: "For many of 'us' ('us': the majority of my supposed readers and myself), the authority of Kantian discourse has inscribed its virtues of legitimation to such a depth in our philosophical training, culture, and constitution that we have difficulty performing the imaginary variation that would allow us to 'figure' a different one" (Derrida, *Who's Afraid of Philosophy?*, 49).
6. Deleuze, "On Nietzsche," 140; Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 180.
7. Deleuze, "Michel Foucault's Main Concepts," 309.
8. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 83.
9. Foucault, *Power*, 298.
10. Ibid., 358.
11. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B73.
12. Ibid., A46/B64.
13. Gardner, *Kant and the Critique*, 304.
14. Adorno, *Kant's Critique*, 2.
15. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, 9.
16. Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, 25.
17. "The critique is a treatise on method, not a system of the science itself" (Bxxii). See also Altman, *Companion to Kant*, 34.
18. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Axi–xii.
19. Tarbet, "The Fabric of Metaphor," 265.
20. Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary*, 75.
21. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A84/B116.
22. Ibid., A834/B862.
23. Black, *Black's Law Dictionary*, 384.
24. Tarbet, "The Fabric of Metaphor," 269.
25. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A751/B779.
26. Ibid., Aviii–ix.
27. Ibid., Bxix.
28. Ibid., Bxiii.
29. Caygill, *The Kant Dictionary*, 191.
30. In *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant also mentions the faculties of imagination, judgement, and apperception (see A81, A95, and A124, for example), but Kant's concern throughout the book is to discern the proper relation between sensibility, understanding, and reason.
31. The relative powers of these faculties are summed up in Kant's famous dictum that: "thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind" (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A51/B76).
32. Ibid., A51/B75.

33. Ibid., Bix, A487/B515.
34. Ibid., A126.
35. Ibid., Bxxxv; A669/697, A752/B780, A776/B804; A710/B738, A811/B839, A826/B854.
36. Ibid., Aix; A465/B493.
37. O'Neill, *Constructions of Reason*, 18.
38. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A752/B780; A768/B796.
39. Doyle, *Nietzsche's Metaphysics*, 102.
40. Foucault, "Critical Theory/Intellectual History," 33.
41. Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 6.
42. Brusotti and Siemens, *Nietzsche's Engagements*, 9.
43. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 13.
44. Haar, *Nietzsche and Metaphysics*, xi.
45. Cutrofello, *Continental Philosophy*, 18–19.
46. Burnham, *The Nietzsche Dictionary*, 264.
47. Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, 4.
48. Another way to highlight Kant and Nietzsche's divergence here would be to reflect on their different approaches to anarchy. Kant characterises *Critique of Pure Reason* as an attempt to ward off anarchy and to institute reason's "undisputed patrimony" (A768/B796). For Nietzsche, while anarchy is to be avoided, the question of which form of political organisation is best suited to the task is left open. It is interesting here to consider how Nietzsche's attack on Socrates could have been applied to Kant (Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, xxviii).
49. The most important use of this concept is probably Nietzsche's analysis of the *will to power*, where 'Macht' is used, but Nietzsche uses 'Kraft' in this context too. For example, where Nietzsche writes "Vor Allem will etwas Lebendiges seine Kraft auslassen – Leben selbst ist Wille zur Macht." Here Judith Norman translates 'Kraft' as 'strength' and 'Macht' as 'power': "Above all, a living thing wants to discharge its strength—life itself is will to power" (Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 15).
50. Burnham, *The Nietzsche Dictionary*, 342.
51. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 296.
52. Ibid.
53. Miyasaki, "Nietzsche's Will to Power," 259.
54. Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, 7.
55. Foucault, *Power*, 13.
56. Flynn, *Political Philosophy*, 4.
57. See Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 203–4; and *What is Enlightenment?* 32–50. For a more comprehensive account of Foucault's response to Kant, and of the role that Nietzsche played in meditating this interaction, see Djaballah, *Kant, Foucault, and Forms of Experience*. For a detailed account of the shift in Foucault's reception of Kant between his early and later works, see Louden "Foucault's Kant."
58. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 264.
59. Mader, "Knowledge," 228.
60. Rouse, "Knowledge/Power," 96.
61. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 127.
62. Ibid.
63. For Foucault's own description of the relationship between his use of the word 'genealogy' and that of Nietzsche, see "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History."
64. Foucault, "How is Power Exercised?" 222.
65. Foucault, "Prison Talk," 53. For a more detailed account of the influence of Nietzsche's conception of power on Foucault, see Ansell-Pearson, "The Significance of Michel Foucault's Reading of Nietzsche," 268–69.
66. Oskala, "Foucault's Politicization of Ontology,' 45.
67. Deleuze, "Responses to a Series," 42.
68. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 180.
69. Ibid., 291.

70. Ibid., 180.
71. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 91.
72. Ibid.
73. Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, xi.
74. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 171.
75. Ibid., 173.
76. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 137; quoted in Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 171.
77. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 68 and 296.
78. Ibid., 296.
79. Ibid.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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