The previous chapter postulated organization as a process by which the given is articulated into a nature, an assemblage into an organization. It was argued that the given (ideas, bodies) is different, a pure multiplicity. But where does the given come from and how is it generated? What is difference and how are things different? We need to address these fundamental questions as part of a materialist approach to organization in order to ground it in a materialist ontology. To understand Bergson’s ontology of difference, we first need to understand something about the position Bergson writes against, which is Hegel’s legacy of the negative dialectic.

4.1 Hegel’s logic of determination

Although Deleuze’s (1991 [1953]) Hume study introduces many of the distinctive themes to be developed in his later work, it is not until his first Bergson study (‘La conception de la différence chez Bergson’, 1956) that he gives full voice to his critique of the Hegelian dialectic. It is arguably from this point on that Deleuze recognizes the breadth and depth of his own philosophical project (GD xviii). In ‘La conception de la différence chez Bergson’ Deleuze develops the concept of efficient difference which first appeared in Empiricism and Subjectivity. Bergson presents efficient difference as the internal dynamic of being. Deleuze

1 ‘What I detested above all was Hegelianism and the dialectic’ [‘Lettre a Michel Cressole’ 1977], p. 110; quoted in Hardt (1993) Gilles Deleuze, p. x.
2 I have relied upon Hardt’s (1993) translations from ‘La conception de la différence chez Bergson’. Although Hardt locates the inception of Deleuze’s theory of difference in this work, it is in fact traceable to his earlier (1953) Hume study, as I have argued. For other developments of the theme of difference, see e.g., Derrida, Speech and Phenomena (1973); and Irigaray, ‘Equal or different?’ (1991a).
mobilizes this conception of difference against the Hegelian negative dialectic to argue for an affirmative and materialist ontology. In *Bergsonism* (1988 [1966]) Deleuze returns to the attack on the dialectic with a renewed vigour, but whereas his earlier essay chiefly addresses Hegel’s conception of ontological determination, *Bergsonism* widens the attack to address Hegel’s dialectic analysis of the One and the Multiple. This development allows Deleuze to explore the implications of Bergson’s work for a positive theory of organization.

Hegel’s approach to the question of being has been a dominant influence in modern continental thought. It is, paradoxically, based on his reading of Spinoza. Hegel takes a phrase from one of Spinoza’s letters, ‘Omnis determinatio est negatio’ [Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 113], all determination is negative. Turning the meaning of this phrase against Spinoza’s own philosophy, Hegel adopts it as the central maxim of his logic. Deleuze does not take issue with the negative character of determination, he rather disputes Hegel’s apprehension of being as needing to be determined at all. Hegel’s *Logic* apprehends being as undifferentiated in itself, having no immediate qualities or distinctions. In this immediate state, being is equivalent to nothingness. In order to become different, being must first distinguish itself from nothingness. For Hegel, therefore, the difference between being and nothingness defines the real differences and qualities that constitute determinate being in its reality.

Hegel’s ontological determinism has two aspects: a static contrast between finite qualities, and a dynamic conflict or antagonism between differences (*GD* 3). A static contrast refers to a passive negation of one limited quality by another: the quality of red negates the quality of blue because they are mutually exclusive; each marks the limit of the other by their difference. A dynamic conflict refers to an active negation between things which interact with one another. Active negation means that the prevalence of one thing over another is never permanent but requires continual confirmation, as for example in the sense that a dominant class, sex or race must continually assert its dominance over a subordinate class, sex or race in order to maintain its privileged position. For Hegel, therefore, being has no intrinsically positive qualities (differences): for him (in contradiction to Spinoza), being is qualified only by its active negation of nothingness, otherwise it remains in an indifferent and indistinguishable state equivalent to nothingness (*GD* 3–4).

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3Letter 50 from Spinoza to Jarig Jelles. The part in question reads: ‘*Quia ergo figura non alid, quam determinatio, & determinatio negatio est; non poterit, ut dictum, aliud quid, quam negatio, esse*’. [cf. *GD* 125, n. 1].