

***BERGSON AND PERSPECTIVISM***

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## Errata

p.109n1 should read: "VOLUME LII (1955)"

p!32

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## Summary

This study is an exploration of the place of perspectivism in the philosophy of Henri Bergson. His work is compared with that of Thomas Nagel in terms of the mutual concern of these two philosophers to reconcile our increasingly objectivist and impersonal understanding of reality with the perspectival apprehension of the world that living and conscious beings instantiate. It argues that Bergson's philosophy of time holds the key both to comprehending and to balancing the demands made upon us by these conflicting interests.

It is seldom that Bergson's name is thought of in this connection, his concerns more often than not being identified with some thesis about time, movement, or vital forces. One purpose of the present work, therefore, is to contest this interpretive slant, not merely by offering an alternative image of Bergson, but also by critically exploring his employment of perspectivism (both positive and negative). We pursue this goal through the double strategy of both unravelling the inconsistencies in Bergson's treatment of perspective and separating his own argument from the multitude of myths, opinions, and interpretations, sympathetic and unsympathetic, that have arisen around what is currently understood by "Bergsonism".

In retrieving his thought from such philosophical ghettos as "vitalism," "spiritualism," and "psychologism," we will argue for a Bergsonian perspectivism which ultimately resides in a thesis propounding the primacy of perception. One consequence of this is the demotion of memory's importance within his thought. Not that the orthodox image of Bergsonism that retains the privileged place of memory is wrong. Rather, we argue that there is enough in Bergson's peculiar picture of perception to obviate the need for memory in his philosophy, and, moreover, that it is actually more Bergsonian that memory should be so discharged.

## Abbreviations

- CE* *Creative Evolution*, translated by Arthur Mitchell, London: Macmillan, 1911 (*L'Evolution Créatrice*, Paris: Félix Alcan, 1907, in *Oeuvres*, pp.487-809).
- CM* *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by Mabelle L. Andison, New York: Philosophical Library, 1946 (*La Pensée et le Mouvant: Essais et Conférences*, Paris: Félix Alcan, 1934, in *Oeuvres*, pp.1249-1482). The paperback edition of this translation has a different pagination from the hardback and omits the endnotes. As it is more widely available than the hardback edition, references are given to both, the paperback's following the hardback's after a slash.
- DS* *Duration and Simultaneity, with Reference to Einstein's Theory*, translated by Leon Jacobsen, with an introduction by Herbert Dingle, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965 (*Durée et Simultanéité: A Propos de la Théorie D'Einstein* (1922), Paris: Félix Alcan, 1923, in *Mélanges*, pp.57-244).
- MM* *Matter and Memory*, translated by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1911 (*Matière et Mémoire: Essai sur la Relation du Corps avec l'Esprit*, Paris: Félix Alcan, 1896, in *Oeuvres*, pp.159-379).
- M* *Mélanges*, edited by André Robinet, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972.
- ME* *Mind-Energy: Lectures and Essays*, translated by H. Wilson Carr, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1975 (*L'Energie Spirituelle: Essais et Conférences*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1919, in *Oeuvres*, pp.811-977).
- Q* *Oeuvres*, edited by André Robinet, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959.



*TFW*      *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, translated by F.L. Pogson, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1910 (*Essai sur les Données Immédiates de la Conscience*, Paris: Félix Alcan, 1889, in *Oeuvres*, pp.1-157).

*TSMR*      *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, translated by R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton, with the assistance of W. Horsfall Carter, Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame Press, 1977 (*Les Deux Sources de la Morale et de la Religion*, Paris: Félix Alcan, 1932, in *Oeuvres*, pp.979-1247).

Throughout, the shorter common usage of publisher's names has been used, for example, "Blackwell" for "Basil Blackwell"; "p." for "page" and "n." for "note" are also used.

## *Introduction*

In 1901 the French Philosophy Society met to discuss the significance of Henri Bergson's philosophical treatment of the mind-body problem. At one point in the debate, Bergson's interlocutor, Gustave Belot, commented upon the purely hypothetical nature of the address Bergson himself had presented to the Society, each of his conclusions having begun with the conditional "if".<sup>1</sup> In a reply that has struck one commentator as "astonishing", Bergson countered Belot's observation by claiming that the conditional had nothing to do with any hypothetical nature of his argument.<sup>2</sup> He himself was "convinced" of its truth; rather, the conditionals were concerned with the nature of its presentation.<sup>3</sup> He had no right, he said, to speak as if he had convinced others; the "if" is one of what he calls "*politesse*", politeness rather than hypothesis. It is a *politesse* towards those who will eventually challenge his point of view, a recognition of this future difference.

This remark belies a significant philosophical point concerning more than just civility, for six years earlier Bergson had already delivered a speech on "*La politesse*" that gave it an application going far beyond its English equivalent of "politeness."<sup>4</sup> *La politesse* firstly concerns an equality of relation, of justice; it is the ability to show another "the regard and consideration which he deserves."<sup>5</sup> But it also goes beyond justice, being a love for the other that exists "almost before knowing him."<sup>6</sup> Such a love consists of handling the

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *M*, pp.464-465.

<sup>2</sup>It is André Robinet (*Bergson et les Métamorphoses de la Durée* (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1965) p.169n1), who finds the following response astonishing.

<sup>3</sup>*M*, p.473.

<sup>4</sup>The lecture was first delivered in 1885, then in 1892 in amended form; we will be referring to both versions as contained in *M*, pp.317-332. On p.319 civility and *politesse* are said to have little in common, for the former is often no more than a ceremonial varnish.

<sup>5</sup>*M*, p.320.

<sup>6</sup>*M*, p.322.

sensibilities and sufferings of others with care.<sup>1</sup> It is the faculty "of putting oneself in the place of others, of taking an interest in their occupations, of thinking their thoughts, of reliving their life in a word, and of forgetting oneself."<sup>2</sup> Yet this is not a matter of complete deference either. One must learn how to enter into the other's viewpoint without always adopting it. It is a question of "merit and recompense," a proportion between the other and oneself.<sup>3</sup>

The issue of the other's point of view also emerges in a speech given in 1895 on what Bergson now terms the faculty of good sense, "*le bon sens*."<sup>4</sup> While the other senses place us in relation with things, *le bon sens*, he observes, "governs our relations with people," orienting our attention "in the direction of life."<sup>5</sup> It is again the principle of social justice, though it is a justice "living and acting" rather than "theoretical and abstract".<sup>6</sup> *Le bon sens* is first and foremost a "strength of feeling" of which theoretical justice is a derivative form.<sup>7</sup> But it also has an intellectual role, demanding the sacrifice of our firmest convictions and best explanations and doing so in order to preserve us from "intellectual automatism".<sup>8</sup> Such beliefs must be made provisional if we are to remain open to the opinions and solutions of others. But yet again, this is not intended to license total deference to the other point of view and even less an indifference towards all positions. *Le bon sens* is equally the sense that demands that we take part and adopt a position that will always and necessarily be ours alone.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*M*, pp. 326, 328.

<sup>2</sup>*M*, p.322; cf. also, p.328.

<sup>3</sup>*M*, p.320; cf. also, p.322.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *M*, pp.359-372.

<sup>5</sup>*M*, pp.361, 363.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. *M*, p.364.

<sup>7</sup>*M*, p.371; cf. pp.364-365. Pierre Trotignon has pointed to the similarity between Bergsonism and the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Lévinas. According to him, the latter's prioritization of the proto-ethical over any theoretical ethics echoes themes from the fourth chapter of *TSMR*. Referring to that source, he writes: "Thus the ethical relationship between men is not a consequence of metaphysical theory. Completely the reverse, it is the ethical relation, as we have analysed it, which bears the weight of speculation. [...] So that Levinas saying that moral philosophy is first philosophy is in agreement with the Bergsonian analyses in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*." Pierre Trotignon, "Autre Voie, Même Voix: Lévinas et Bergson", in Catherine Chalié and Miguel Abensour, eds., *L'Herne: Emmanuel Lévinas* (Paris: Editions de l'Herne, 1991), pp.287-193; pp.291, 292. Lévinas remarks on the strong influence Bergson had upon him in Richard Kearney, *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers: The Phenomenological Heritage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p.49.

<sup>8</sup>*M*, p.362.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. *M*, p.362.

There are two themes that emerge from this somewhat neglected area of Bergson's thought. The first bears upon the point of view of the other. In both discourses, our own partiality is shown to stand in need of continual adjustment *vis-à-vis* either the actuality or the possibility of another's challenge. Indeed, if one turns to Bergson's writings on psychopathology, this seemingly marginal concern can be seen at work in one of his most important essays. In "Memory of the Present and False Recognition" he defines the abnormal, not as an absence or impoverishment, but as the enrichment of life with new ways of feeling and thinking.<sup>1</sup> Yet for all that, there remains little which is positive about these novelties. Mental disease is still a diminution, only it is so less in relation to the subject as much as the subject's relationship with the world. The very increase in one set of faculties actually upsets the "equilibrium" through which our continuous adaptation to the environment is maintained. Maintaining this equilibrium requires an effort that Bergson calls "attention to life."<sup>2</sup> And though this attention is very fatiguing, it is one which, simply by being "more complex" and "delicate" in the precision of its adjustment to reality, is necessarily "more positive".<sup>3</sup> Another name Bergson gives to this adjustment and attention to life is *le bon sens*.<sup>4</sup>

The second theme concerns our own perspective. While we may appreciate another's point of view, we must still retain our own individuality. This point is as important for Bergson as the first. Indeed, the retention of our individuality is exactly what allows us to truly sympathize with another perspective. Entering into another's world does not require the negation of our own. Nor does it necessitate the fabrication of some middle-

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *ME*, pp.151-2 [*Q*, p.909].

<sup>2</sup> *ME*, p.153 [*Q*, p.910].

<sup>3</sup> *ME*, p.155 [*Q*, p.911].

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *ME*, p.125 [*Q*, p.892] (the English translation renders "bons sens" as "common sense" which, as we will see, actually muddies the waters we are trying to clear). In this respect, Eugène Minkowski's work (cf. *Lived Time: Phenomenological and Psychopathological Studies*, translated by Nancy Metzel (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1970)) on psychopathology shows its Bergsonian influences in a clear light. The concept of "syntony" is explained in terms of the equilibrium we maintain with our social environment (cf. p.73); where it is lacking, there will follow a lack in awareness of "the value and the existence" of others, they no longer being seen as "personalities which have their own particularity, autonomy, and individual worth" (p.359). This is more than a lack of appreciation, it is an elementary loss in the perception of the other.

world that neutralizes whatever individuality each separately possessed. Vladimir Jankélévitch emphasizes this point in his discussion of the Bergsonian conception of "point of view," observing that it is precisely what allows us to hold upon the absolute: it need not at all signify an inadequacy or lack.<sup>1</sup> A point of view is a part of the world simply because it is what "necessarily takes a position." It is a partiality which, simply by entering fully into its own point of view, raises itself towards a "superior impartiality."<sup>2</sup> It seems that one can sympathize with another perspective only if one has reclaimed one's own.

It is when *le bon sens* is addressed under the alternative designation of "common sense" that this notion enters the foreground of Bergson's thought. Now it is no longer only an attention to the sensibilities of human beings that defines it in full; it is an attention to otherness as such before the bifurcation between the enduring and the inert has been performed. An enduring reality, writes Bergson, is what is given immediately to our mind, and it is common sense which is said to endorse this truth.<sup>3</sup> The introduction to *Matter and Memory* openly equates the picture it will draw of the physical, that of an existence "placed halfway between a "thing" and a "representation"," with the common sense conception of the material world.<sup>4</sup> Of course, Bergson also writes much in condemnation of the illusions and false problems common sense can lead us into; our confusion of quantity for quality, simultaneity for succession, immobility for movement, and space for time are obvious examples.<sup>5</sup> Bergson's philosophy, therefore, is not a commendation of common sense pure and simple;<sup>6</sup> it endorses a return to one type of common sense. In fact, the type concerned is part and parcel of the Bergsonian project of reclaiming a pre-reflective vision of reality.<sup>7</sup> Common sense becomes a trap when it is no longer a good sense, but is instead what only emphasizes the common. By this we

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Henri Bergson* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), p.73.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Jankélévitch, 1959, p.30.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *CM*, p.222/188 [*Q*, p.1420].

<sup>4</sup>*MM*, pp.xi-xii [*Q*, p.161]; cf. also, p.80 [*Q*, p.219].

<sup>5</sup>The very first page of *TFW* castigates common sense for confusing quality with quantity. Cf. also: *CE*, pp.9-10 [*Q*, pp.501-502]; *CM*, pp.149, 150/126, 127 [*Q*, p.1363]; *TSMR*, p.272 [*Q*, p.1207].

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Françoise Fabre-Luce de Gruson, "Sens Commun et Bon Sens chez Bergson", in *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, VOLUME XIII (1959), pp.187-200; p.198.

<sup>7</sup>Jankélévitch (1959, pp.51-52, 17) describes it as a "learned naïvety" and "ingenuous simplicity."

mean that the good common sense, *le bon sens* directed to otherness as such, retains the proportionality required to balance its own perspective with that of the other, whereas the bad common sense enforces the sacrifice of its own position to the communal view.

In all this talk of perspective and point of view, we should be wary of arriving at any premature conclusions as to the status of the implied subject. Bergson's regard for the subjective is not an endorsement of the subject as substance nor of the subject as human. His process philosophy allies itself as uneasily with Humanism as it does with an essentialist conception of the ego. Indeed, it works hard at usurping both notions.<sup>1</sup> Neither is it an uncritical advocate of empirical psychology; refuting the charge of psychologism against his thought will be a matter for continued attention in these pages. Nor finally is Bergsonism the naïve promoter of liberal or romantic individualism. In fact, the Bergsonian subject, far from being a self-indulgent creator of value, is one that has learnt to balance its point of view with that of the other.

This issue will come out most clearly in one of Bergson's supposedly lesser works, *Duration and Simultaneity*, for we believe that it actually presents his thought with its essential intuition in its most explicit form. That intuition does not concern what a subject is, substance or process, essence or effect, but what it is to have a subjectivity, what it is to be this point of view. As such, it is concerned with what has been described as one of the problems peculiar to the second part of the twentieth century, one "keenly defined by Bergson. ...the problem of the existence of extra-scientific knowledge."<sup>2</sup> For "extra-scientific" we read "non-objective." One major difficulty Bergson himself sees for philosophy is that "of finding a place for personality" and "of admitting real individualities" in the world as science presents it.<sup>3</sup> Bergson's engagement with this difficulty will be plainly seen in the opening analyses of *Matter and Memory* where he

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<sup>1</sup>In regard to Bergson's rejection of a substantial subject, cf. Chapter Ten below.

<sup>2</sup>Edouard Morot-Sir, "What Bergson Means to Us Today", in Thomas Hanna, ed., *The Bergsonian Heritage* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1962), pp.35-53; pp.43-44.

<sup>3</sup>*M*, p.1052.

investigates the distinction between the world seen under its scientific image and the same world seen from the subjective point of view.

Not that his philosophy harboured any hostility towards scientific research. Bergson did not profess an anti-science so much as an "ante-science;" philosophy in the mould of an ante-room where the discoveries of the physical sciences could be placed within a wider context before being admitted to a place where it can speak of having learnt from *all* of reality: "philosophy ought then to follow science, in order to superpose on scientific truth a knowledge of another kind, which may be called metaphysical."<sup>1</sup> That wider context would be the fact that there exist living beings within what seems objectively and fundamentally to be an inert world, ones with "extra-scientific" but none the less real experiences of their own. Yet such a metaphysics of life must resist being appropriated by human interests. It has been said that Bergson's is a "broad perspective" returning us to "humanitarian concerns."<sup>2</sup> But if it is, then it is one that must be balanced with the non-human. Bergson's broader perspective is a philosophy of life and consciousness; it is not a philosophy of *man*: "philosophy should be an effort to go beyond the human condition."<sup>3</sup> We should seek experience, he writes, at its source, "or rather above that decisive *turn* where...it becomes properly *human* experience."<sup>4</sup> Bergsonism is a "problematic of nature", not of man.<sup>5</sup> Amongst their other vices, he complains, philosophical systems too often appear as though existing in a world where "neither plants nor animals have existence, only men."<sup>6</sup> Yet, as Jean Hyppolite tells us, it was exactly this wider view that helped to alienate his work from the young French thinkers,

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<sup>1</sup>*CE*, pp.209-210 [*Q*, p.664]. Thus the "meta" of "metaphysics" is not "anti" but "ante"; cf. P.A.Y. Gunter, "Bergsonian Method and the Evolution of Science", in P.A.Y. Gunter, ed., *Bergson and the Evolution of Physics* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1969), pp.3-42; p.36: "Bergsonism...is an anti-scientific mode of thought based on the serious study of science; it is a negation of science that is intended to affirm and strengthen scientific thought." The role of Bergsonian philosophy could appropriately be described, as it has been, as that of the "gadfly"; cf. Thomas Hanna, "The Bergsonian Heritage", in Hanna, 1962, pp.1-31; p.21.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Hanna, 1962, p.18.

<sup>3</sup>*CM*, p.228/193 [*Q*, p.1425], translation altered. Cf. also, *CM*, p.57/50 [*Q*, p.1292]: in a return to metaphysical experience, Bergson says, "philosophy will have raised us above the human condition" (translation altered).

<sup>4</sup>*MM*, p.241 [*Q*, p.321].

<sup>5</sup>François Heidsieck, *Henri Bergson et la Notion d'Espace* (Paris: Le Cercle du Livre, 1957), p.180.

<sup>6</sup>*CM*, p.9/11 [*Q*, p.1253].

including Hyppolite himself, who would succeed him: "It was more a philosophy of life than of human history."<sup>1</sup> What they wanted, on the other hand, were explanations that remained on the human level alone.<sup>2</sup> But as Gilles Deleuze has pointed out, this is exactly what one will not find in Bergson; his philosophy opens us up "to the inhuman and the superhuman."<sup>3</sup> Deleuze, moreover, is not alone in seeing Bergsonism go beyond the human life-world:

Bergson, at the beginning of this century, gave a solemn warning, too often misinterpreted at present: we must consider the striking paradox of man who has his roots in the animal kingdom and yet can rise above it. Too often, for the sake of convenience, we prefer to make a distinction between the two planes of the physical and the spiritual; we build separately a human biology and a human sociology, and as an extension of them, a medicine and a political philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

In explaining one human creation like society, for example, with another like economics or language, we consequently fail to grasp that the human is a creation of nature and not of itself. Bergson wants us to give biology "the very wide meaning it should have" so that the principle of the living should remain the realm on which we maintain our stance when attempting to explain the living.<sup>5</sup> The perspectives he endeavours to accommodate within his philosophy are not only human.

This thesis then, is about Bergsonism and "point of view". Not that Bergson was the first to prioritize this issue; various thinkers had already privileged perspectival thinking quite some time before him. A history of the subject could begin with Kierkegaard's idea that "truth is subjectivity"<sup>6</sup> or Nietzsche's argument for the "perspective character of

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<sup>1</sup>Jean Hyppolite, "Sens et Existence dans la Philosophie de Maurice Merleau-Ponty", in *Jean Hyppolite: Figures de la Pensée Philosophique*, two volumes (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991), volume two, pp.731-758; p.732.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Jean Hyppolite, "Du Bergsonisme à l'Existentialisme", in Hyppolite, 1991, volume one, pp.443-458; p.449.

<sup>3</sup>Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1988), p.28.

<sup>4</sup>Morot-Sir, 1962, pp.47-48.

<sup>5</sup> *TSMR*, p.101 [Q, p.1061]; cf. also, p.177 [Q, p.1125]: we must "consider man again in his place among living things".

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, two volumes, edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), volume one, pp.189-251.



existence."<sup>1</sup> Neither should we forget the work of Ortega Y Gasset and his "doctrine of the point of view."<sup>2</sup> Husserl's phenomenology too is duly famed for its descriptions of "'perspective" manifestations",<sup>3</sup> though it would be another phenomenologist, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who would raise this primarily epistemological tenet towards the ontological plane. (We will have call to examine the latter's relationship with Bergson at various points in what follows.) But Perspectivism is not only of historical interest. Today's studies in the philosophy of language, for example, are tending more and more to face the problems of linguistic perspective.<sup>4</sup> And of course, in the philosophy of mind it is probably Thomas Nagel who is most associated with the concern for reconciling the objective, scientific world-view with that of the subjective perspectives contained within it.<sup>5</sup> His relations with Bergson's work will also be a matter for further discussion.

And yet it is seldom that Bergson's name is thought of in this connection, his concerns more often than not being identified with some thesis about time, movement, or vital forces. The purpose of the present work is to contest this interpretive slant, not merely by offering an alternative image of Bergson, but also by critically exploring his employment of point of view (both positive and negative). On the positive side we will examine the manner by which a return to individuality and subjectivity can also gain a hold for us on reality. In so doing, we will also investigate the reasons why for Bergson perspectivism is not synonymous with relativism, and the difference between a common sense that is only common and a superior common sense that is partial.

Bergson can also write negatively about "point of view:" the fixity of objects is said to participate in "the immobility of a *point of view*" and even the subject-object dichotomy is

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<sup>1</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974), pp.336-337.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. José Ortega Y Gasset, *The Modern Theme*, translated by James Cleugh (New York: Norton, 1933), Section X.

<sup>3</sup>Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, translated by W.R. Boyce Gibson (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931), p.134.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Simon Blackburn, *Spreading the Word: Groundings in the Philosophy of Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp.340-345.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. in particular, Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

said to be engendered by taking false points of view on a "single indivisible reality."<sup>1</sup> As regards the reconciliation of differing points of view, he can be equally found saying that sociability is one of "the real causes of the relativity of our knowledge," and that his work was in part a protest against "the socialization of the truth."<sup>2</sup> Sociability is part of a process that cleaves our consciousness in two; others help to form a point of view on ourselves that we take as our own, "a second self...which obscures the first".<sup>3</sup> Yet it is not any type of sociability that Bergson rejects, but the quite "special sense" of "social utility."<sup>4</sup> The sociability he reproves partakes in the manipulation of the world for objective ends while also pressuring each individual to exist solely for these ends. He describes our own role in this latter form as an unwillingness "to get back into ourselves" and a desire to live "for the external world rather than for ourselves."<sup>5</sup> Here then we see the condemnation of both the individuality of perspective and the socialization of this individuality. The value of "point of view" in Bergson's thought is in good need of examination.

One major cause for perplexity concerns the almost anti-philosophical role of perspective in Bergson's work. We have in mind here a particular passage from A.R. Lacey's recent commentary on Bergson.<sup>6</sup> As we will see, Bergson holds to what he describes as the "common sense" position that secondary qualities can be both subjective and objective at the same time: "matter exists just as it is perceived."<sup>7</sup> Lacey makes the following query in relation to this:

It is all very well to say that the object exists 'as we perceive it', but as who perceives it? If I perceive the wind as cold and you perceive it as hot, which is it? Common sense is not perturbed by this: one of us is mistaken. But it is here that naive realism starts to dissolve, and philosophy takes over. As soon as we consider such difficulties we are no longer naive. But Bergson...does not raise this particular problem, I think. He seems to regard common sense as not only methodologically justifying a starting-point but metaphysically justifying a position.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*CM*, p.220/187 [*Q*, p.1418]; *M*, p.1031. Cf. also, *CM*, p.208/176-177 [*Q*, p.1409].

<sup>2</sup>*CM*, pp.29, 103/28, 87 [*Q*, pp.1269, 1327].

<sup>3</sup>*TFW*, p.138 [*Q*, p.91]; cf. also, p.137 [*Q*, p.91].

<sup>4</sup>*CM*, p.29/27-28 [*Q*, pp.1269-1270].

<sup>5</sup>*TFW*, pp.240, 231 [*Q*, pp.156, 151].

<sup>6</sup>A.R. Lacey, *Bergson* (London: Routledge, 1989).

<sup>7</sup>*MM*, p.xii [*Q*, p.162]; cf. also, *CM*, p.222/188 [*Q*, p.1420].

<sup>8</sup>Lacey, 1989, pp.88-90.

In response to Lacey, one might wonder firstly why Bergson's valorization of common sense in particular should be picked upon; many contemporary philosophers take the criterion of "not being counter-intuitive" to justify numerous ontological givens, and surely intuition is used here in a manner analogous to Bergson's employment of common sense. But if Bergson had raised Lacey's problem of perceptual relativity and the origin of philosophy, what would he have said? At one level this thesis is an attempt to provide his answer to the question of naivety and philosophy. We will argue that it is indeed when we begin to "consider such difficulties" that philosophy has taken over. Having had our subjectivity pointed out to us and having thus submitted to the other's point of view *as a reflection on our own*, philosophy and relativism inevitably appear on the scene, the former oftentimes attempting to dissolve the latter while none the less, as Lacey points out, still receiving its sustenance from it.

In hoping to resolve these dilemmas our purpose will be aided both by unravelling the inconsistencies in Bergson's treatment of the matter as well as by clearly separating his own argument from the multitude of myths, opinions, and interpretations (sympathetic and unsympathetic) that have arisen around what is currently understood by "Bergsonism". In retrieving his thought from such philosophical ghettos as "vitalism", "spiritualism" and "psychologism", we will also be concerned with placing his own arguments within the context of contemporary debate. In particular, we will concentrate upon the mind-body question, taking the treatment of it in Bergson's central work, *Matter and Memory*, as an exemplary application of his perspectivism. We believe that the originality and profundity of his analysis will gain even further depth when read against the plethora of positions, reductive, eliminativist, anomalous, or instrumental, that forms the background to any current discussion of the topic.

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For any systematic examination of a philosopher's work, some simplification and even misrepresentation is unavoidable. In his discourse on *le bon sens* Bergson himself said that even the best expositions of a philosophy are unfaithful: by being inevitably more systematic and abstract, they lose what is personal and profound in the philosopher's original vision.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, our own search for a consistent meaning to the perspectival within Bergson's work really amounts to the hope for a systematic presentation of it. In this there is a good chance that we will be disappointed. Bergson's philosophy, so it is said, is itself "an analysis against analysis", one that can ultimately only suggest rather than demonstrate its truth.<sup>2</sup> So how can such a work be examined with an academic logic without at once having its content corrupted and its spirit betrayed? There was no tone of apology in his voice when Bergson himself denied having a "system."<sup>3</sup> And in fact he took great pride in never having begun a new work without also forgetting his previous positions and demanding a new effort of research.<sup>4</sup> As a consequence, he admitted that his works are not always coherent amongst themselves.<sup>5</sup> Each one is a whole and correlations made between different parts of his *oeuvre* would always be somewhat artificial. Yet Bergsonism is not a chaotic mass either; just as his own philosophy replaces the idea of an absolute and original disorder with a theory of different types of order, so there are varieties of order and levels of meaning that are recognizably Bergsonian. It will be these patterns we are thinking of when we refer to "his philosophy."

Connected with this problem is the disagreement between those who have said that Bergson's work will only be understood when it is read backwards against its own chronology,<sup>6</sup> and those others who say that such a retrospective reading will only ever

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *M*, p.370.

<sup>2</sup>V. Delbos, "Matière et Mémoire: Revue Critique", in *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* (1897), p.373, quoted in Heidsieck, 1957, p.90; cf. also, Heidsieck, 1957, p.175.

<sup>3</sup>*M*, p.940.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Jean de La Harpe, "Souvenirs Personnels d'un Entretien avec Bergson", in Albert Béguin and Pierre Thévenaz, eds., *Henri Bergson: Essais et Témoignages* (Neuchâtel: Editions de la Baconnière, 1943), pp.357-364, p.360: "I have produced each of my books in forgetting all the others"; cf. *M*, p.798.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. de La Harpe, 1943, p.360.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. for example, Norman Kemp-Smith, "Bergson's Manner of Approach to Moral and Social Questions", in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, VOLUME XLVIII (1947-1948), pp.1-18; p.2.

find a *post rem* unity.<sup>1</sup> We would agree with the latter, for any account of another's work must be systematizing and retrospective to some extent (even when following the order of publication). But in disagreement we would add that there still remains a certain truth to such accounts all the same, and in fact, we will see that Bergson himself believes that there are truths that can only emerge retrospectively.

In a similar vein, there are two other parallels that can be made between his arguments and our exposition. First, just as his own philosophy will assert that there are levels to reality, to space, and even to being, so there are also levels to Bergsonism itself; as one writer has commented: "we must always ask which image of Bergson is under consideration."<sup>2</sup> To think that there is just one image of Bergsonism, be it vitalist or spiritualist, positivist or metaphysical, speculative or critical, testifies as much to one's own reading as it does to his work itself. But, and this is the third parallel, just as Bergsonism is not at all relativistic, so the various images of Bergson are not all equal in value. They may all be real, but as we will see, there are increasing degrees to Bergson's picture of reality.

The image of Bergson for which we ourselves will be arguing is a Bergsonism without memory, a Bergsonism whose perspectivism ultimately resides in a thesis propounding the primacy of perception. Not that the orthodox image of Bergsonism that retains the privileged place of memory is wrong. To assert that in the face of everything he writes about pure and representational-memory would be foolhardy indeed. Rather, we will argue that there is enough in Bergson's peculiar picture of perception to obviate the need for memory in his philosophy, and, moreover, that it is actually more Bergsonian that memory should be so discharged.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Jankélévitch, 1959, pp.2-3, 28; Alain de Lattre, *Bergson, une Ontologie de la Perplexité* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990), p.21; cf. also, Henri Gouhier's foreword to *M.*, pp.vii-xxiii; p.xix.

<sup>2</sup>Sanford Schwartz, "Bergson and the Politics of Vitalism", in Frederick Burwick and Paul Douglass, eds., *The Crisis in Modernism: Bergson and the Vitalist Controversy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp.277-305; p.303.

Our own account is divided into two halves, each composed of six chapters. It would be futile to attempt an outline of the content of the second set of these chapters as they are mostly dedicated to applying the findings of the first part of the thesis to a reading of *Matter and Memory* and the mind-body problem. The synopsis of their subject-matter can be found in the introduction to Part Two. As for this first part, its objective is multiple. Beginning backwards (appropriately enough), its final two chapters, five and six, are concerned with establishing the pluralistic nature of Bergson's ontology and the essential role perspective plays in creating it. Chapter Five is a general discussion of this pluralism ending with an illustration of it in Bergson's analyses of Zeno's paradoxes, and an application of it to one current variety of physicalism. Chapter Six extends these elucidations by highlighting the multiple nature of Bergson's conceptions of truth and intentionality, again emphasizing all the while the intimacy between this diversity and perspectivism.

The seeds for this exposure of Bergson's pluralism are sown in Chapters Three and Four. They are mostly taken up with a discussion of the various ambiguities to be found in Bergson's critique of the concept of possibility and its ambivalence towards the value of point of view in relation to what is sometimes the "illusion", other times the "truth" of possibility. To explain why we come to discuss his treatment of possibility at all entails a leap back to our first chapter. There, we discuss the aforementioned *Duration and Simultaneity* and the central part perspective plays in its anti-reductionist arguments against Einstein's relativistic theory of time. Emerging from this work, we will argue, is the identification of the fundamental significance of point of view with the primacy of perception.

Yet this move towards perception and away from memory may well prove controversial for some, in that Bergson has traditionally been taken as a philosopher of the past, the metaphysical, and supersensuous intuition. None of these lie well with perception and its accompanying categories of the physical and the spatial. We do not tackle memory directly until Part Two, but Chapter Two in this part sets the scene by putting certain

myths to rest concerning Bergson's use of intuition, his conception of metaphysics, and, in particular, his "condemnation" of space. It will be seen that while his earlier work may have indeed been less than favourable towards these latter categories, his later work greatly attenuated this attitude. Indeed, when a negative stance towards the spatial is at all evident, it will often be in virtue of *one form* of space whose culpability seems more correctly attributable to the activity of possibility than anything else. So we come full circle to the need for an analysis of Bergson's understanding of possibility.

In all of the following a certain level of familiarity with Bergson's texts will have to be presumed, as lack of space restricts the degree of exposition we would otherwise deem necessary. However, whether for reasons of presentation, the intricacy of the argument, the crucial nature of the point being made, or the use of less familiar source material, we will sometimes lapse into expository mode.

***PART ONE: REMAKING THE BERGSONIAN IMAGE***



## *Chapter One:*

### *Reciprocal Subjectivity*

Bergson's last major work, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, has been described as an attempt to counter Durkheim's "group mind" that draws greater attention to the role of the individual.<sup>1</sup> As such, what Bergson saw as two symptoms of this group mind, closed society and static religion, "were the last entries in a column of partial negatives, beginning with mathematics and science generally."<sup>2</sup> We will go further and argue that Bergson's struggle against the group mind was present in all his analyses and is to be seen primarily in his constant desire for a balance between the subjective and the objective. In our introduction we described his picture of philosophy as an "ante-science" balancing the claims of the living against the encroaching evidence of the objective physical sciences. The group mind is another aspect of the one phenomenon: objectivity incurring into the subjective, the detrimental reduction of a self to another's point of view on it. Our first chapter concerns this issue of subjectivity and reduction, beginning with an attempt at clarifying the aims of the reductionist's project as such and then applying the result to what Bergson writes of the physicist's reduction of subjectivity in *Duration and Simultaneity*.

#### *Reducing the Subjective*

According to Bergson, modern, social and mechanised existence has cleaved our consciousness in two. We live now at two levels, to some extent for ourselves but even more so for others; unfortunately it is this latter "superficial self" which is gaining ground:

The greater part of the time we live outside ourselves, hardly perceiving anything of ourselves but our own ghost, a colourless shadow.... ..we live for the external world rather than for ourselves; we speak rather than think; we "are acted" rather than act ourselves.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Ben-Ami Scharfstein, *Roots of Bergson's Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), pp.104-105n10, 125-126; *TSMR*, pp.104-105 [*Q*, pp.1063-1064].

<sup>2</sup>Scharfstein, 1943, pp.125-126.

<sup>3</sup>*TFW*, p.231 [*Q*, p.151].

Bergson's distinction between the "profound" and the "superficial" ego is his own theory of the unconscious in its first form.<sup>1</sup> The division between the two is formed where self and world, the qualitative, heterogeneous and indivisible on the one hand, the quantitative, homogeneous and divisible on the other, come into an original contact with one another. Whatever subjectivity comes into contact with the objective world is shaped into the image of the latter. These subjective states, facing inward, transmit this dissecting, objectifying action to deeper strata, though they meet with an increasing resistance as they progress. It is at the profound self where they are finally brought to a halt.

This objective world is composed of more than just inert objects, the social world is also a part of it, as Bergson points out:

in proportion as the conditions of social life are more completely realized, the current which carries our conscious states from within outwards is strengthened; little by little these states are made into objects or things; they break off not only from one another, but from ourselves.<sup>2</sup>

The ideas which we take most readily from society are those which are ready-made by others. They are the ones most easily communicated to and understood by everyone, and are consequently the ones belonging to us least. Society splits the ego and drowns our true self in its symbolism.<sup>3</sup> A part of our subjectivity has been lost through lives that have been lived out in the public, objective arena. Having lost the will "to get back into ourselves",<sup>4</sup> we would rather live an objective life than be alone with our own subjectivity.

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<sup>1</sup>This first discussion of the ego occurs at *TFW*, pp.124-139, 167-170 [*Q*, pp.82-92, 110-112]. The later examinations of *MM* drop the language of "surface" and "depth", "inner" and "outer", replacing it with a temporal terminology; cf. *MM*, pp.13, 43-44, 191-193, 288 [*Q*, pp.176-177, 196, 290-291, 350]. Cf. also, A.D. Lindsay's *The Philosophy of Bergson* (London: J.M. Dent, 1911), pp.5, 91-92, 156-157, 168-169, which makes a good deal of this development.

<sup>2</sup>*TFW*, p.138 [*Q*, p.91].

<sup>3</sup>However, Bergson's intention is not to divorce any part of our personality irreconcilably from the other (cf. on this, Bernard Gilson, *L'Individualité dans La Philosophie de Bergson* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1978), p.14). His theory of the unconscious is closer to a theory of selective inattention. Cf. *TFW*, p.169 [*Q*, p.112], where he speaks of different parallel processes in the different strata of the self. The deeper ones go "not unperceived, but rather unnoticed." We live even in the deepest of these levels, indeed, they are most ours. Cf. also, *M*, p.810 for a rejection of an unconsciousness that is opaque to and inaccessibly cut off from consciousness.

<sup>4</sup>*TFW*, p.240 [*Q*, p.156].

But by what process does consciousness let itself be so reduced? The solution lies in a prophecy: "the very mechanism by which we only meant at first to explain our conduct will end by also controlling it. ...we shall witness permanent associations being formed; and little by little...automatism will cover our freedom."<sup>1</sup> The answer is that we have reduced ourselves. But Bergson thinks of this modern consciousness as but the latest, though perhaps most extreme phase of a process having its origins in primal modes of thought.<sup>2</sup> Primitively, we see a kinship between ourselves and matter and thus we naturally tend to animate it with our own intentions. But after a physical science has evolved to divest that matter of all such animation, there still remains that earlier association, from which fact it follows that the reductive gaze of science will inevitably turn back on us and de-animate our own subjectivity. By a "kind of refraction", men become machines through making nature mindless and men natural.<sup>3</sup> The desire to abandon subjectivity is overrun when the objective itself turns back on the subject to objectify it even further.

Bergson provides a number of names for this reducing subjectivity: movement, duration, qualitative multiplicity, pure memory, the *élan vital*. What is noteworthy is how each term is connected with a specific area of the objective's incursion into the subjective: Zeno's paradoxes (movement); determinism and psychophysics (duration); logicism (qualitative multiplicity); mind-body reductionism (pure memory); neo-Darwinian mechanism (the *élan vital*). It has been said that Bergson's interest in these areas of incursion is philosophical: "His attitude is metaphysical... given true duration, how does it come about that we so distort it?"<sup>4</sup> Some go further; given the continuous encroachment of the objective upon the subjective, Bergsonism forwards a moral imperative: "There is an ethical quality in Bergson's thought on this, since it becomes an

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<sup>1</sup>*TFW*, p.237 [*Q*, p.155].

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *TFW*, pp.211-215 [*Q*, pp.138-141].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *TFW*, p.217 [*Q*, p.142], cf. also, p.223 [*Q*, pp.145-146]. Heidsieck (1957, p.115) tells us that "Man invents the machine. But the machine mechanizes man."

<sup>4</sup>Scharfstein, 1943, p.38.

imperative to retain as great a degree of consciousness and freedom of action as possible."<sup>1</sup>

Can we be more precise as to what is generally involved in reduction outside of the Bergsonian context?<sup>2</sup> In the introduction to a recent collection of essays on the topic, reductionist accounts are described as aiming "to show that where we thought we had two sets of concepts, entities, laws, explanations, or properties, we in fact have only one, which is most perspicuously characterized in terms of the reducing vocabulary."<sup>3</sup> For these writers, reduction is primarily a question of conceptual education. Another examination of the matter finds the motivation for "reductive analyses" to be a contrast between concepts in one vocabulary appearing problematic and those in another avoiding the problem. An analysis represents the incursion of concepts from the latter into those of the former.<sup>4</sup> But the epistemological motives these two explanations underline have been interpreted less positively by Robert Nozick. Seeing our times aptly represented by the title "the Age of Reductionism", he views its prevalence as part of an increasing tendency to deflate the point of view of others. While it is obvious that there have always been reductionist theories, materialism in Ancient Greece, the ideas of Hume and La Mettrie, more recently, Nozick observes,

such theories have moved to the center of the intellectual stage. These views, undermining, unmasking, and denigrating people's attachments, principles, motivations, and modes of action, have now come to shape people's own view of themselves. [...] Cultural patterns composed by individual actions can be explained, as can people's most personal actions and relationships...*in disconnection from the reasons people offer.*<sup>5</sup>

Such theories need not all be modeled on the materialist paradigm of a "bottom up" reduction (with lower-level entities deemed more fundamental than the entities they are

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<sup>1</sup>A.E. Pilkington, *Bergson and his Influence: A Reassessment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p.165.

<sup>2</sup>According to John Searle (cf. *The Rediscovery of the Mind* (Cambridge, Mass./London: MIT Press, 1992), pp.112-116), a distinction can be made between a number of different types of reduction: property ontological reduction; theoretical reduction; logical or definitional reduction; and causal reduction. These four, however, all aim at a fifth type: ontological reduction. In what follows it is primarily what Searle calls "ontological reduction", real or aspired, that we have in mind.

<sup>3</sup>David Charles and Kathleen Lennon, "Introduction", in David Charles and Kathleen Lennon, eds., *Reduction, Explanation, and Realism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp.1-18; p.2.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Blackburn, 1984, pp.152-153.

<sup>5</sup>Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp.629-630, my italics.

supposed to compose); Plato's Theory of Forms is cited as one deflationary view operating from the "top down" direction.<sup>1</sup> However, Nozick argues that much of contemporary reductionism does depend on the microscopic, inhuman and general realms of impersonal psychic forces, dumb economic laws or invisible neurological processes. In that it is usually towards a realm that is commonly held to be one of less value, then, it can be seen that hand in hand with the reductionist's epistemological motive there comes a moral aim as well: to devalue. As Nozick remarks: "Reductionist views reduce the more valuable to the less valuable, the more meaningful to the less meaningful; the reduction is a reduction in value, in worth."<sup>2</sup>

Simply leaving aside the negative connotations of the word "reduce" (why can't "reveal" or "revalue" be used instead?), the normal strategy in reductionist texts is to talk of "x being *no more than* y," "*merely* y," "*only* y," and so on. There is also talk of "higher" levels being derived from "lower" levels.<sup>3</sup> The intent is not simply to debunk the opposing explanation, but to devalue the realm in which that explanation resides. Some may now prefer to use the word "explain" instead of "reduce", but if the *explicanda* are still explained in terms of what is universally held in lower esteem, then the word "explain" will eventually gain the same deflationary connotations presently associated with "reduce".

According to Nozick, however, not all reductions are necessarily deflating. When light was understood to be electromagnetic radiation it was not deemed any less valuable for all that.<sup>4</sup> But even here one could amend Nozick's qualification, for surely what science seeks is to reduce or explain via a realm that is general, objective, predictable and, ideally, controllable. There is no space here to conduct a complete psychological analysis

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Nozick, 1981, p.633.

<sup>2</sup>Nozick, 1981, p.628. Cf. also, p.627. Now obviously the sub-atomic realm can be a meaningful and valuable one to the physicist, but surely Nozick is still correct here; if it is a meaningful one, it is only in a very specific epistemological manner. Even the physicist has to live as a non-physicist and as such he has to interact with opinions and values, both of his own and others, that seem to run counter to the reductive explanations (and implicit re-evaluations) he conducts in the laboratory.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Charles and Lennon, 1992, p.5.

<sup>4</sup>Nozick, 1981, p.628.

of value, but it is not too difficult to see how unsuited these terms are to a description of something supposedly regarded with respect. If the theory of electromagnetic radiation is at all valuable to us it is primarily because it allows us to control the phenomenon it describes. Yet Bergson's argument in the first chapter of *Time and Free Will* is precisely that the individual, subjective and unforeseeable qualities of light *as experienced* are irreducible to any medium beyond the "immediate data of consciousness". Bergson is looking for respect and value to be shown to these immediate data; predictable and controllable light-waves miss this mark by a long way.

### ***Subjectivity and Reciprocity: A New Context for Duration and Simultaneity***

We see then in what way a reduction can disregard the subject's point of view; it is conducted "in disconnection from the reasons people offer" as their explanation of the phenomenon. We can also see how intimately the notion of value is related to reduction; if the realm to which we were to "reduce" a particular phenomenon was itself resistant to quantification, prediction and control, it would be no surprise to find many thinking it hardly worth calling a reduction at all. Ultimately, a reduction of value comes hand in hand with a reduction of the individual to the general and of the subjective to the objective. It is on this relationship between reduction and the deflation of subjectivity that we will concentrate. One proponent of this intimate relation is Thomas Nagel. A recurrent theme of his work concerns the reconciliation of an objective description of the world with the fact that there can exist such things as "(a) oneself; (b) one's point of view; (c) the point of view of other selves, similar and dissimilar; and (d) the objects of various types of judgment that seem to emanate from these perspectives."<sup>1</sup> As our objective knowledge advances, it seems that this first person perspective is left further and further behind. But for Nagel such a neglect is actually a loss of knowledge:

A great deal is essentially connected to a particular point of view, or type of point of view, and the attempt to give a complete account of the world in objective terms detached from these perspectives inevitably leads to false reductions or to outright denial that certain patently real phenomena exist at all.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Nagel, 1986, p.27.

<sup>2</sup>Nagel, 1986, p.7.

Given a complete description of the world from no particular point of view, including all the people in it, one of whom is Thomas Nagel, it seems on the one hand that something has been left out, something absolutely essential remains to be specified, namely which of them I am. But on the other hand there seems no room in the centerless world for such a further fact.<sup>1</sup>

Nagel's earlier distinction between "oneself" and "one's point of view" comes out here when he discriminates between the denial of the existence of "certain patently real phenomena" particular to the subject's point of view, and the redundancy of that very subject's existence as such. Bergson's *Duration and Simultaneity* will make the same distinction, in that it tackles both the problem of what it is to be a subject of experience *per se* as well as the theme most characteristic of his work: the subjective experience of time. And it is interesting to note in this respect that Nagel connects the problem of perspective with that of the reality of subjective time: "The temporal order of events can be described from no point of view within the world [an objective view], but their presence, pastness, or futurity cannot. [...] The tenseless description of the temporal order is essentially incomplete, for it leaves out the passage of time."<sup>2</sup> It is not surprising then, to find Richard Rorty linking Nagel's name with Bergson's on precisely this matter:

For Bergsonians and other process philosophers, the sheer *whooshiness* of motion is simply ignored by modern science, just as for Nagel the sheer what-it-is-to-be-likeness of consciousness is ignored. In the end, Bergson thought, motion can only be understood from the first-person point of view - by actually whooshing about a bit, in order to remind oneself what it is like. Whereas Aristotle had contrasted natural and violent motion, Bergson made his point by contrasting absolute with relative motion. [...] ...Bergson applies the same relative-absolute distinction to express Nagel's distinction between third- and first-person points of view.<sup>3</sup>

Given Bergson's current low-standing in many philosophical quarters, Rorty is probably engaged here in a strategy of condemnation-by-association against Nagel. But leaving the nature of his argument aside, in that Rorty links Nagel's argument solely with the common understanding of what Bergsonism is about ("*whooshiness*"), he actually provides us with the opportunity of showing just how close Bergson's own ideas come to Nagel's thesis concerning subjectivity and reduction.

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<sup>1</sup>Nagel, 1986, p.54-55.

<sup>2</sup>Nagel, 1986, p.57n1.

<sup>3</sup>Richard Rorty, "Comments on Dennett", in *Synthese*, VOLUME LIII (1982), pp.181-187: p.182. Remember that for Bergson, movement is almost a synonym for duration.

*Duration and Simultaneity*, which sets out the differences between Einstein's and Bergson's theories of time, characterizes the Special Theory of Relativity (STR) as an attempt to give a representation of the world "independent of the observer's point of view."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, seeing that STR's attempt to eliminate the observer is also an attempt to provide "*absolute relations*"<sup>2</sup> for the experiences of all possible observers, the title of "relativity theory" is actually a misnomer; its account of individual differences is motivated by the desire to give the *absolute* account for all difference: to be "everywhere or nowhere".<sup>3</sup> Not that Bergson rejects STR out of hand; it cannot express all of reality, but as he admits, "it is impossible for it not to express some."<sup>4</sup> It is its ambition to account for every level of time that Bergson wants to curb. Physical systems may confirm its predictions, but real time or duration is beyond its range.

At the heart of his disagreement with STR is a difference in attitude towards the "twins paradox" first put forward by the physicist Paul Langevin. Peter sends his twin brother Paul off in a rocket at a speed just less than that of light. After a year the rocket turns around and heads back to earth at the same speed. Paul gets out after his two year journey in the rocket only to discover that Peter has aged two hundred years whilst waiting for him on earth. This paradox represents one of the hypothetical outcomes of STR's thesis concerning multiple relativistic times and what are called the "Lorentz transformations". We can thankfully dispense with any of the technical details. What is relevant is that STR assumes that it is possible to position oneself arbitrarily within different reference frames; thus, in the twins paradox, as well as experiencing our own time here on earth with Peter, we can also imagine the experience of another's time such as that of Paul, the hypothetical space traveller.

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<sup>1</sup>*CM*, p.301n5 [*Q*, p.1280n1].

<sup>2</sup>*CM*, p.301n5 [*Q*, p.1280n1]. In this note (which Bergson uses in *CM* to clarify his argument with STR) he says that the absolutist tendencies of STR should ward off any possible confusion between it and any normal philosophical relativism. However, we will see that in both *DS* and other works, the connection between relativism and absolutism is maintained, even in its philosophical version.

<sup>3</sup>*DS*, p.184n1 [*M*, p.237n1].

<sup>4</sup>*DS*, p.64 [*M*, pp.117-118].



But Bergson's commitment to the absolute of a lived time challenges the position that says that there are no privileged reference frames and that all can be imagined. In his mind, the paradox is predicated upon an impossibility: that of one person fully imagining the experience of another. There is more to Paul's movement than how it is seen from Peter or the physicist's perspective; experience is more than the imagination of experience:<sup>1</sup> "whenever we shall wish to know whether we are dealing with a real or an imaginary time, we shall merely have to ask ourselves whether the object before us can or cannot be perceived."<sup>2</sup> If we can perceive it ourselves, then it is real, if we cannot, then it is imaginary. For one to fully imagine another's lived time one must experience it in every detail. As one commentator puts it: "[Bergson's] assumption is that to "know" is to recapitulate an experience actively."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, in another context Bergson himself says that "one knows, one understands only what one can in some measure reinvent."<sup>4</sup> But in the case of another's experience, this is impossible without being that other person: "If I want to actually measure Peter's time, I must enter Peter's frame of reference; I must become Peter. If I want to actually measure Paul's time, I must take Paul's place."<sup>5</sup> Images and representations, being symbolic, are necessarily more general and less individual. Symbols will not suffice to fully imagine another's experiences; one must become the other. But as we will see, in becoming the twin in space, some startling results ensue.

Bergson's complaint is that STR does not go far enough; it, or some interpretations of it, still hold on to an absolute point of reference, thus leaving STR as a "half", "single" or "unilateral" relativity:

his gaze [the physicist's] never leaves the moving line of demarcation that separates the symbolic from the real, the conceived from the perceived. He will then speak of "reality"

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<sup>1</sup>"Paul" may actually represent a prophecy of Peter about *himself* at a future date.

<sup>2</sup>*DS*, p.65 [*M*, pp.118-119].

<sup>3</sup>Mari Reiss Jones, "Some Thoughts on the Relevance of Bergson to Contemporary Psychology", in Andrew Papanicolaou and P.A.Y. Gunter, eds., *Bergson and Modern Thought: Towards a Unified Science* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic, 1987), pp.250-270; p.252.

<sup>4</sup>*CM*, p.102/87 [*Q*, p.1327].

<sup>5</sup>Henri Bergson, "Fictitious Times and Real Times", translated by P.A.Y. Gunter, in Gunter, 1969, pp. 168-186; 174 [*M*, pp.1437-1438].

and "appearance," of "true measurements" and "false measurements". In short, he will not adopt the language of relativity. But he will accept its theory.<sup>1</sup>

In terms of the twins paradox then, what Bergson queries is whether we on earth imagining the flight of the twin through space should take our frame of reference as *the* immobile point of reference. Why is the earth's frame of reference privileged? If we take relativity theory to its full extent, we would find that the twin in space should reciprocate our actions and take his frame of reference as the static one. But if that were the case, then it would be us who are travelling at near the speed of light relative to him, and it would be us who have aged two years as compared to his two hundred years.

Bergson's project therefore, is to relativize relativity. But doing so lets Bergson emerge at the other end with a "full relativity" that actually reinstates an absolute time. For if each perspective takes its own frame of reference as the absolute one, then everyone, *relative to the other's point of view*, travels and ages at the same altered rate, which is to say that everyone ages and travels at the same rate. Thus a new absolute time is restored: "the hypothesis of reciprocity gives us at least as much reason for believing in a single time as does common sense."<sup>2</sup> But this is unlike the absolute of half-relativity, for the latter alters the temporal conditions only for the perspective of the other as we imagine him or her. Bergson's new absolute takes account of the other's own tendency to repeat the very same operation on us, that is, imagining a half-relativity that would alter our experience of time. Taking account of the other's mirroring of our own intolerance, so to speak, actually offsets the activity of both; our equal unequal treatments of each other balance themselves out.

Bergson's absolute is grounded on the recognition of our tendencies to selectively reify only our own point of view as we *live* time. The plurality of STR's half-relativity is a spurious one: "[it] looms up at the precise moment when there is no more than one man or group to *live* time."<sup>3</sup> In contradistinction to this, Bergson's plurality recognizes, in the

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<sup>1</sup>*DS*, p.109 [*M*, p.163].

<sup>2</sup>*DS*, pp.77-78 [*M*, p.131].

<sup>3</sup>*DS*, p.80 [*M*, p.133].

modern parlance, "the otherness of the other" by not reducing it to the convenience of one point of view's mathematical and symbolic representation of it. It recognizes the possibility, as Jankélévitch puts it, of "a system superior to all reference".<sup>1</sup> While Bergson's is a real pluralism, the multiplicity of times posited by STR is but a mathematical fiction existing in its own imagination. Of course, the physicist may deny that he does ever reify his own frame of reference, but Bergson refutes this:

But when the physicist sets his system of reference in motion, it is because he provisionally chooses another, which then becomes motionless. It is true that this second system can in turn be mentally set in motion without thought necessarily electing to settle in a third system. But in that case it oscillates between the two, immobilising them by turns through goings and comings so rapid that it entertains the illusion of leaving them both in motion.<sup>2</sup>

It might sound here as if Bergson himself is trying to imagine another's experience, in this case, the physicist's. But this is exactly what he is not doing. It is impossible to measure Peter's time without being Peter. Bergson is only imagining how others *imagine* the experience of others, and this image, being symbolic, is thereby more general than the totality of another's experience (which is primarily non-symbolic for Bergson).<sup>3</sup> He takes as given the definite distinction between conceived and perceived, symbolic and real; what he rejects is the strategy of STR which pretends to undo such oppositions where in actual fact it maintains them in a relativism that only selectively reduces the real to the symbolic; it reduces the experience of the other alone.<sup>4</sup> Bergson maintains these distinctions but only by taking relativity to the limit. It is as though the sceptic, being sceptical even about his or her own scepticism has created a non-dogmatic place for faith.

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<sup>1</sup>Jankélévitch, 1959, p.52.

<sup>2</sup>*DS*, p.41 [*M*, p.95].

<sup>3</sup>We should say "less symbolic." We will see in Part Two that Being itself is representational for Bergson; however, there is still a difference of degree great enough between perception and imagination to warrant treating the two as qualitatively different.

<sup>4</sup>Of course, there are arguments from Einstein's General Theory of Relativity (GTR) that purport to undo Langevin's paradox. Einstein's incorporation of force (acceleration and gravity) into relativity theory shows why the twin travelling in space could not reciprocate and take his own frame of reference as absolute, in that only he goes through the various physical forces of deceleration and acceleration as his rocket turns around to head back to earth. However, Bergson rejected these arguments as presented in examples concerning forces experienced on moving trains or cars (cf. *DS*, pp.173-176 [*M*, pp.225-229]; Bergson, 1969, pp.179-182 [*M*, pp.1443-1446]). His response was that they tend to conflate one system of reference, a person's body or the point of view of an objective observer outside the car, with that of another: the subject's. The nature of the body that Bergson seemingly separates so easily from the subject will be explored in Part Two. Cf. also Herbert Dingle's introduction to *DS* (pp.xv-lxii) for a modern defence of Bergson against GTR's supposed final settlement of the matter.

Giving the experiences of the other their due regard is part of what it is to understand and reclaim one's own subjectivity. Rather than an isolation, such subjectivity is a genuine sociability for it balances its own acts with those of the other. This is another parallel with the views of Thomas Nagel. Linking the problems of subjectivity and other minds, he writes:

Each of us is the subject of various experiences, and to understand that there are other people in the world as well, one must be able to conceive of experiences of which one is not the subject: experiences that are not present to oneself. To do this it is necessary to have a general conception of subjects of experience and to place oneself under it as an instance.<sup>1</sup>

But Nagel warns that such a conceptualization of subjectivity, being itself an objectification, will inevitably lose something of that subjectivity.<sup>2</sup> In relation to Bergson's "full relativity", we must also ask how sympathetic should we be to the point of view that attempts to reduce our own point of view. Indeed, Bergson realizes that our ability to immobilize our own frame of reference or point of view can become hindered with a growing cognizance of the scientific symbolization of our frame of reference as a moving reality. "[L]ooking at things from the social point of view," it is possible that we might endorse what STR predicts of our experiences.<sup>3</sup> But even then, we might add that such an endorsement could only be effected in our imagination; our "profound" self and perhaps ultimately nature itself would always resist the total objectivization necessary to verify the outlandish predictions STR supports.

Against Bergson's analysis, various experimental results can obviously be cited: experiments with light propagated through water, or electrons moving at various velocities. All of them purport to show that relativity effects do act on the objects in question and do alter the rate of time passing for that system. But Bergson rejects the traditional interpretation of these results, proposing in response that if you were to adopt the point of view of the propagated light-wave or moving electron you would immobilize

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<sup>1</sup>Nagel, 1986, p.20.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Nagel, 1986, pp.21, 25.

<sup>3</sup>Bergson, 1969, p.180 [*M*, p.1444].

your system of reference, make the experimenter mobile, and so relativize his time in relation to yours.<sup>1</sup> Not that Bergson means to imply that light-waves and electrons have points of view; rather, he is saying that *if they had*, then the experiences they would report at the end of an experiment would not tally with what was objectively observed. In other words, a point of view is not reducible to its objective appearance. This is a point that Christopher Ray, for example, fails to grasp in his recent reassessment of Bergson's argument.<sup>2</sup> He talks of mu-mesons travelling at .99 times the speed of light, with their atomic half-life consequently lasting nine times longer than normal. Another experiment involved clocks on planes compared to clocks on land. The results from these researches are said to be valid in relation to the twins paradox "since a person is, in an important sense, no more than a biological clock."<sup>3</sup> "Clocks" and "people" are used interchangeably in Ray's discussion.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, Bergson got it wrong on relativity theory:

Bergson argued that the travelling twin would be no more than a phantom in the physicist's imagination and that on his or her return to Earth ages and clocks would all agree. We can now see why STR does not support such a view.<sup>5</sup>

But the problem is that, firstly, Bergson would not see a person as *no more than* a clock in any sense, and secondly, even if that were all a person is, a clock is still not time, it is a measurement of time. A person's time is not the measurement of time by a clock. To reiterate Bergson's point: "If I want to actually measure Peter's time, I must enter Peter's frame of reference, I must become Peter."<sup>6</sup> Ray's account misses this entirely. Referring to one of the mathematical tools of relativity theory, the "Lorentz Transformations" (LT), he writes:

The LT enable us to explore without distinction all events and motions within the spacetime of STR. They provide a mechanism by which we can overcome our locally bound perspectives. They help us to give to distant objects and events the same concrete

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Bergson, 1969, pp.182-183 [*M*, pp.1446-1447] ("Fizeau's experiment"), 183-184 [*M*, p.1447-1448] ("Bucherer's experiment").

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Christopher Ray, *Time, Space and Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), pp.25-26, 44-45.

<sup>3</sup>Ray, 1991, p.24.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Ray, 1991, p.25.

<sup>5</sup>Ray, 1991, p.44.

<sup>6</sup>Bergson, 1969, p.174 [*M*, pp.1437-1438].

status as those in our own locality. Bergson's phantoms [the imagined experience of the physicist's travelling twin] are as solid and real as Bergson (was) himself.<sup>1</sup>

Thus we see how STR should be re-titled Absolute Theory: it allows us to explore "all events and motions". But while Ray does admit that the twin in space may reciprocate our claims about his status, he adds that: "I may not say that a person in motion relative to me is a phantom, just because we may both make the same claim about each other."<sup>2</sup> But Bergson's claim was never that this person is imaginary; on the contrary, because he or she is real, the physicist's account of his or her experience is all the more unreal, and it is unreal in the same degree as they are disconnected from directly perceiving one another.

Ray goes on to assert that all that can be concluded from the fact of reciprocity is that neither account, the earth-bound physicist's, or the space-travelling twin's, is the correct one. But after this nod to true relativism, he immediately states that we can "appeal to geometry to resolve the 'paradox' - to the geometrical ideas of spacetime paths and world lines which present the motion of objects in the only way possible in STR: within the union of space and time."<sup>3</sup> Thus, after admitting that different points of view cannot be reduced to each other, he posits a true "view from nowhere" that will resolve the paradox. He appeals to space (geometry) to provide the "mechanism by which we can overcome our locally bound perspectives". But such an appeal only ignores the very level at which the paradox occurs for Bergson: that of perceiving, living subjects, not that of the space they traverse or the movement of their vehicles.

Bergson alludes elsewhere to such a reduction of subjectivity to geometry when he discusses the "hypnotic" power of abstraction. Whatever is abstracted from perception is deemed almost necessarily more real on account of it: "we accept the suggestion that some, I know not what, marvellous significance is inherent in the mere motion of material points in space, that is to say, in an impoverished perception."<sup>4</sup> And again, this

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<sup>1</sup>Ray, 1991, p.45.

<sup>2</sup>Ray, 1991, p.44.

<sup>3</sup>Ray, 1991, p.44.

<sup>4</sup>*ME*, p.252 [*Q*, p.973].

echoes Thomas Nagel's characterization of reduction as a process that moves from a description of something in terms of the impressions it makes on our senses to a description of it in terms of those of its properties detectable, not merely by the one "impoverished" perception as Bergson would have it, but by means completely different from the human senses: "The less it depends on a specifically human viewpoint, the more objective is our description."<sup>1</sup>

Despite Bergson's own careful nuancing of the differences between the philosophical variety of relativism and Einstein's,<sup>2</sup> his unearthing of latent absolutist tendencies in STR is not without precedent in his work on its philosophical forms. For Bergson, there is a definite connection between relativism and absolutism, or rather, between relativism and absolutism of a particular sort. He regards the motive behind Kant's Copernican Revolution as itself a symptom of an absolutist intellect having failed in its attempt to totalize or subsume the world and turning instead to a humble relativism that dismisses the possibility of finding any absolutes whatsoever.<sup>3</sup> In fact, one could look upon his own entire philosophy as a reversed Kantianism, and he has quite often been presented as the "*adversaire de Kant*."<sup>4</sup> But if Kant banished metaphysics and with it the absolute, Bergson sees it as his task to reinstate them both, only not in the manner in which Kant thought of them, but in a new re-vitalized form. His new absolute is not lost or found through a Kantian intellect or the geometry of STR. We will argue that Bergson's absolute is simply perception. As Merleau-Ponty realized, the basis for Bergson's own full relativity is not conceptual, it rests on "the mystery of perception."<sup>5</sup> From quite early on in *Duration and Simultaneity*, it is clear that Bergson's guiding principle in moderating the absolutist ambitions of STR will be "seeing clearly where experience ends and theory

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Nagel, "What is it like to be a Bat?", in *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp.165-180; p.174. But one might still wonder just how different those means might be and whether in fact they mistake an impoverished, indirect impression for an "objective" one.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *CM*, p.301n5 [*Q*, p.1280n1].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *CE*, p.216, 379-380, xi [*Q*, pp.669, 798-799, 490-491].

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Madeleine Barthelemy-Madaule, *Bergson, Adversaire de Kant: Etude Critique de la Conception Bergsonienne du Kantisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966); Jankélévitch, 1959, pp.47, 225; Heidsieck, 1957, p.90.

<sup>5</sup>Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Bergson in the Making", in *Signs*, translated by Richard C. McCleary (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964), pp.182-191; p.186; cf. also, "Einstein and the Crisis of Reason", in Merleau-Ponty, 1964, pp.192-197; pp.195-197.

begins,"<sup>1</sup> and that the criterion for distinguishing experience from theory will be perception. *Duration and Simultaneity* is essentially a thesis concerning the primacy of perception. As Bergson himself puts it: "in the present study, we require the property of being perceived or perceptible for everything held up as real."<sup>2</sup>

From this beginning we are going to contend that the true significance of point of view in Bergson's philosophy, is a question of perception. What is perceived is always perceived by a subject, and though we do talk about illusions and the corrigibility of perception, we will see later that recourse to other supposedly corrective categories always begs the question of the inadequacy of perception.

But if Bergson wants to rehabilitate metaphysics, it might well be thought strange to do so by recourse to something like perception. In expositions of his work, the metaphysical is often thought to be some supersensuous reality; a realm to which spirit, memory or intuition alone can be elevated. But this common conception is in neglect of much that Bergson writes on the physical, metaphysical, and intuitional. We turn now to this material.

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<sup>1</sup>*DS*, p.45 [*M*, p.99].

<sup>2</sup>*DS*, p.66 [*M*, p.120].



*Chapter Two:*  
*Towards the Primacy of Perception: What Bergsonism Does*  
*Not Entail*

The object of this chapter is straightforward: to highlight the multifarious nature of a number of Bergsonian concepts in the face of a common understanding that sees them predicated under one form only: some non-spatial, imperceptible, spiritual mode of existence. The first part deals with what are supposedly for Bergson the ethereal categories of metaphysics and intuition. The second part acts as a corrective against taking Bergson's pronouncements against space uncritically, there being a range of qualifications to be made to the view that he simply condemned it outright. The purpose of both parts is to open up a space in which an alternative interpretation of Bergsonism can be prepared.

*Metaphysics and Intuition*

We have already looked at Bergson's metaphysics as a counterbalance to a science which ignores the claims of the subjective and living. But now we will see that this metaphysics has its own empirical properties as well. In the "Introduction to Metaphysics," Bergson talks of the object of perception as the "metaphysical object."<sup>1</sup> He goes on as follows:

But a true empiricism is the one which purposes to keep as close to the original itself as possible, to probe more deeply into its life, and by a kind of spiritual *ascultation*, to feel its soul palpitate; and this true empiricism is the real metaphysics.<sup>2</sup>

He adds that this real metaphysics would be as equally distant from the "transcendent speculations of certain German Pantheists" as it would be from the "so-called" empiricism of Hyppolite Taine, the two being in actual fact far closer to each other than either would think.<sup>3</sup> It is obvious then that both Bergson's metaphysics and his

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<sup>1</sup>CM, p.197/167 [Q, p.1401].

<sup>2</sup>CM, p.206/175 [Q, p.1408].

<sup>3</sup>CM, p.206/175 [Q, p.1408].

empiricism are entangled in the peculiarities of his own individual philosophy. These ambiguities are born out among the critical appraisals of his work. For Milič Čapek, Bergson practised a "radical empiricism" before William James had even coined the term,<sup>1</sup> yet others describe him as both mystic and empiricist, or as a spiritual realist.<sup>2</sup> But we should resist the temptation to allow these latter appellations re-enforce our prejudices concerning Bergsonism. Mystical experience is as open to empirical investigation as any other according to Bergson,<sup>3</sup> and the spiritual is, as we will see in Chapter Ten, perfectly perceptible. If we are to interpret these terms correctly, we must take them in the context of the vocabulary in which they are set, not in *our* general understanding of them. Indeed, the need for such an awareness is exemplified in *The Creative Mind* when Bergson contrasts the clear, distinct and abstract ideas of science with what have been deemed the images, comparisons, and metaphors of his own metaphysics.<sup>4</sup> Yet he claims that when the sciences take abstraction into the realm of life, it is they that are left floundering in metaphor.<sup>5</sup> Bergson's description of *durée* may appear to some as only metaphorical; for Bergson, it is the only *precise* manner in which we can express it.<sup>6</sup>

Pinning down the meaning of intuition is another instructive task. At first, it may seem impossible. Both intuition and instinct are described as a sympathy that seems to imply some type of immediate consciousness;<sup>7</sup> yet intuition, for Bergson, is not an immediate

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<sup>1</sup>Milič Čapek, *Bergson and Modern Physics: A Reinterpretation and Re-evaluation* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1971), p.193. P.A.Y. Gunter (Gunter, 1969, p.34) also points to Bergson's "thoroughgoing empiricism". He has equally described him as a positivist (cf. "The Dialectic of Intuition and Intellect: Fruitfulness as a Criterion", in Papanicolaou and Gunter, 1987, pp.3-18), as had Merleau-Ponty once before (cf. *The Visible and the Invisible: Followed by Working Notes*, translated by Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p.196); however, Gunter meant it as a compliment, Merleau-Ponty as a criticism. Jankélévitch also commends what he calls Bergson's "superior positivism" (1959, p.190).

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Hanna, 1962, p.2; Jacques Chevalier, *Bergson*, translated by Lilian A. Clare (London: Ryder, 1928), p.177.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *TSMR*, pp.244-252 [*Q*, pp.1183-1190].

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *CM*, pp.48-49/42-43 [*Q*, p.1285].

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *TFW*, p.58 [*Q*, p.41] where he brands the view that a sensation can be equidistant from two other sensations, metaphorical.

<sup>6</sup>We will return in Chapter Twelve to the positive role of metaphor and other linguistic devices in Bergson's writing.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. *CE*, pp.185,186 [*Q*, pp.644, 645]; *CM*, pp.190, 35-36/161, 32 [*Q*, pp.1395, 1273].

knowledge, but a search for duration requiring great amounts of effort.<sup>1</sup> It is a power of negation over erroneous speculation.<sup>2</sup> It can be "supra-intellectual" or "ultra-intellectual;"<sup>3</sup> Bergson might even have adopted the term "intelligence" instead.<sup>4</sup>

And yet by about the year 1911, there is a significant harmonization of views in Bergson's writing, its broad import being that "in order to reach intuition it is not necessary to transport ourselves outside the domain of the senses."<sup>5</sup> The "superior intuition" that Kant thought necessary to ground any would-be metaphysics, Bergson (unlike Kant) does hold to exist. But it exists, he says, as the "*perception* of metaphysical reality."<sup>6</sup> It is only because Kant pictured this intuition as "radically" different "from consciousness as well as from the senses,"<sup>7</sup> that he dismissed its likelihood so quickly. Bergson not only accepts its reality, he bases it on the primacy of perception. Every concept, he says, "has its starting point in a perception."<sup>8</sup> Rather than attempt to "rise above" perception as philosophers since Plato have wished, sensuous intuition must be "promoted."<sup>9</sup> He encourages us to to "plunge" and "insert our will" into perception, "deepening", "widening" and "expanding" it as we do.<sup>10</sup>

But if intuition becomes a type of perception, then the object of this faculty, metaphysical duration, must be visible in our world. Thus, Bergson's work could be described as an endeavour at setting down "thick descriptions" whereby a supposedly singular physical phenomenon is given a multitude of further metaphysical nuances.<sup>11</sup> But Bergson would probably disagree with this characterization in terms of "thick description," for it is

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *CM*, pp.103, 33-34/87-88, 30 [*Q*, pp.1328, 1271].

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *CM*, pp.129-130/109-110 [*Q*, pp.1346-1347].

<sup>3</sup>*M*, p.1322; *CE*, p.380 [*Q*, p.799].

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *M*, p.1322.

<sup>5</sup>*CM*, p.151/127 [*Q*, p.1364].

<sup>6</sup>*CM*, p.164/139 [*Q*, p.1374].

<sup>7</sup>*CM*, p.165/140 [*Q*, p.1375].

<sup>8</sup>*CM*, p.156/133 [*Q*, p.1369].

<sup>9</sup>Cf. *CE*, p.380 [*Q*, p.799].

<sup>10</sup>*CM*, p.158/134 [*Q*, p.1370].

<sup>11</sup> The phrase "thick description" is Gilbert Ryle's. Cf. "The Thinker of Thoughts: What is 'Le Penseur' Doing?", in his *Collected Papers*, two volumes (London: Hutchinson, 1971), volume two, pp.480-496, where he contrasts an action that, under the thinnest description possible, appears simply to be the swift contradiction of the eyelid of the right eye, with, under any of a number of thicker descriptions, what could be seen anew as a twitch, conspiratorial wink, or parody of another's twitch.

taking the phenomenon in its singular form which is the *thin* description. Bergson wants to restore the metaphysical attributes to the physical, not in the sense of projecting a mental quality onto a physical quantity, but by allowing each state the individuality that makes it *this* response to *this* moment and not just a response to any moment whatever. It is not Bergson who is being metaphysical, adding excess to what already is, but rather the materialist who is being "pro-physical", so to speak, refusing to acknowledge what is really there all the time and confining it to verbal imagination. The world of physical quantity is actually a diminution of the really physical. Bergson is not projecting on to reality; the truly creative imagination is not an idiosyncratic faculty creating *ex nihilo*, it reveals what is hidden *from us all*.<sup>1</sup>

What we call our subjective secondary qualities cannot be discounted as unreal. Secondary qualities belong to the objective every bit as much as primary qualities do. What needs to be explained is how secondary qualities come to be so apparently "secondary" or "subjective" in the first place. The answer in *Matter and Memory* is that their subjective status, what makes them seem so different from primary qualities, is due to the fact that our perceptual organs *delete* their original and *objectively* existing complexity in different and so apparently subjective ways. This point makes more sense when seen in the light of Bergson's theory of perception in *Matter and Memory*.<sup>2</sup> According to his account, perception is not an emergent faculty that adds some sort of subjective accretion to the perceived object. It is a subtraction, an omission. It may seem that perception adds to the objective, that it conditions or categorizes the raw manifold, but in actuality it consists in a removal of what is of no interest to our vital functions. Moreover, intellect is for Bergson an extension of the synoptic power of perception, and is consequently at a further remove again from the real. It deletes whatever else is of no practical use to it. Therefore, providing thick "metaphysical" descriptions of the real is not an imaginative projection but rather an attempt to recreate the whole of the real, to refill the gaps created in it by both our perception and our intellect. It is the general,

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, translated by Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (London: Macmillan, 1911), pp.150-157; Pilkington, 1976, p.16.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *MM*, pp.26-31 [*Q*, pp.185-188].

abstracted conceptions of science which provide the unobjective, thin or prophysical account.

So again, Bergson's metaphysical, like his intuition, is at no distance from physical reality. But surely, it will be said, advocacy of the primacy of perception cannot withstand what Bergson writes about space. In that it is given the onus of being at the heart of so many of our illusions, philosophical and non-philosophical, how can perception, which he himself describes as the "*master of space*," assume any priority?<sup>1</sup> It is surely *time* that is Bergson's special category.

### ***Bergsonian Space***

Whatever his standing today, there can be little doubt that Bergson was once the foremost philosopher of time. Wyndham Lewis' scathing critique of the time-philosophers, *Time and Western Man*, characterized Bergsonism as "the creative source of the time-philosophy" adding that: "Bergson has played this supreme part in the launching of 'Time' as we have it to-day in philosophy."<sup>2</sup> Contemporary philosophers of time bear this out. Samuel Alexander, for example, states that it was probably "Bergson in our day who has been the first philosopher to take Time seriously,"<sup>3</sup> while Whitehead thought Bergsonism to be possibly the most characteristic philosophy of his era.<sup>4</sup> For Bergson time is indeed the special category, but his understanding of it is not the concept of time we ordinarily understand. Our philosophical notion of time, according to Bergson, is a part of our Kantian heritage, although its roots go back as far as Plato.<sup>5</sup> What that heritage has given us is a constant tendency to ignore the difference between space and time and to treat time as essentially no different from space. Thus, when we attempt to oppose space

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<sup>1</sup>*MM*, p.23 [*Q*, p.183].

<sup>2</sup>Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927), pp.166, 434.

<sup>3</sup>Samuel Alexander, *Space, Time and Deity*, two volumes (London: Macmillan, 1966), volume one, p.44.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. A.H. Johnson, *Whitehead's Theory of Reality* (New York: Dover, 1962), p.133.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *DS*, p.145 [*M*, p.200].

to time or say what is characteristic about time, in each case we oppose space only to itself and speak only of what is characteristic about space:<sup>1</sup>

All through the history of philosophy time and space have been placed on the same level and treated as things of a kind.... [...] Real duration was systematically avoided. Why? Science has its own reasons for avoiding it, but metaphysics, which preceded science, was already doing so without having the same excuses.<sup>2</sup>

The reason why even philosophy has confused space with time is shown elsewhere as a problem concerning our very conceptualization of the issue; thinking and talking about time distorts it: "we cannot measure time, we cannot even talk about it, without spatializing it."<sup>3</sup> Thought about time inevitably becomes "lodged in concepts such as duration, qualitative or heterogeneous multiplicity, unconsciousness - even differentiation."<sup>4</sup> The reason for this pessimism is because of the nature of concepts. According to Bergson, "our concepts have been formed on the model of [spatial] solids", and it is consequently impossible to think conceptually about time in any authentic fashion.<sup>5</sup> But this must remain a matter for later discussion.

With this confusion between real time and space comes the promotion of one type of differentiation of the simplest sort possible: homogeneous and quantitative difference. With it also comes the confusion of the measurable with the non-measurable, simultaneity with succession and immobility with movement.<sup>6</sup> The notion of velocity, for example, implies that time is a magnitude. But for Bergson, the so-called "measuring" of time with the moving hands of a clock cross-sectioned with the activity to be measured, is no more than the counting of simultaneities. In homogeneous space there is only one position

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *TFW*, pp.232-234 [*Q*, pp.151-153].

<sup>2</sup>*CM*, p.13/14 [*Q*, p.1256].

<sup>3</sup>*DS*, p.150 [*M*, p.205]; cf. also, *TFW*, p.122 [*Q*, p.81], as well as *CE*, p.171 [*Q*, p.633]: "The intellect is not made to think *evolution*...that is to say, the continuity of a change that is pure mobility," and *CM*, p.12/14 [*Q*, pp.1255-1256] where Bergson speaks of *durée* as a continuity beyond unity and multiplicity, fitting none of our "categories of thought."

<sup>4</sup>*CM*, p.39/35 [*Q*, p.1275].

<sup>5</sup>*CE*, p.ix [*Q*, p.489]. And yet Bergson did talk and think about time, leaving us with the problem of the very possibility of his own philosophy of time, a problem that has been aptly called "the Bergson paradox"; cf. Helmut R. Wagner, *Alfred Schutz: An Intellectual Biography* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p.275; cf also, pp.25-26, 33-34, 273-276. We return to this paradox in Chapter Twelve.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. *TFW*, pp.100-117 [*Q*, pp.67-78].

given of an object at any one time; the past, by which one might be able to picture and compare previous positions with the present one, is not retained. Velocity is therefore only a measurement of immobilities in comparison; it indicates the extremities of movement, not the intervals.<sup>1</sup> Intervals of time cannot be measured because they cannot be superimposed upon each other, they *succeed* each other, and as such, can never enter into a relationship of simultaneity.

In place of these views Bergson proposes a new philosophy of time and the priority of an alternative category of difference. Essential to it is the realization that each and every moment brings with it something "radically new".<sup>2</sup> This is opposed to a conception of time as simply a re-arrangement of the pre-existing, which is, in Bergson's opinion, the scientific definition of time that consists in actual fact in the "elimination" of real time.<sup>3</sup> On Bergson's very different understanding, however, time must be creative: "*Time is invention or it is nothing at all.*"<sup>4</sup> Each new moment is *qualitatively* different from the last, possessing "an effective action and a reality of its own."<sup>5</sup>

Bergson's philosophical motivation, then, is said to be one endeavouring to heighten the differences between space and time, with the latter gaining all its approval at the former's expense. So it is only natural to infer from this that perception, which must needs be a perception of space, cannot be entered into the Bergsonian foreground.

And yet, despite these appearances to the contrary, Bergson is as equally unstraightforward in his conception of space as he is in his understanding of metaphysics and intuition. The common opinion that he is unremitting in his hostility towards it can certainly be taken from his work. A case in point comes from *Time and Free Will*:

Thus, within our ego, there is succession without mutual externality; outside the ego, in pure space, mutual externality without succession.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *TFW*, pp.117-119 [*Q*, pp.78-79]; cf. also, *TFW*, pp.194-197 [*Q*, pp.127-129].

<sup>2</sup>*CM*, p.40/35 [*Q*, p.1276].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *M*, p.766. Our "habitual, normal, commonplace" understanding is also said (*CM*, p.34/31 [*Q*, pp.1271-1272]) to enact the "elimination of time."

<sup>4</sup>*CE*, p.361 [*Q*, p.784].

<sup>5</sup>*CE*, p.17 [*Q*, p.508].

<sup>6</sup>*TFW*, p.108 [*Q*, pp.72-73].

No doubt external things change, but their moments do not *succeed* one another...except for a consciousness which keeps them in mind. [...] Hence we must not say that external things *endure*, but rather that there is in them some inexpressible reason in virtue of which we cannot examine them at successive moments of our own duration without observing that they have changed.<sup>1</sup>

Various criticisms have followed in response to this apparent Bergsonian agoraphobia, one highly unfavourable instance being Maurice Boudot's article on the matter. In it he argues that whatever Bergson says of *durée* and its non-measurability can equally be said of space: Bergson's points concerning its non-measurability, for example, "apply equally to the extensive."<sup>2</sup> If duration is peculiarly non-measurable because one cannot superimpose successive durations upon one another, then this only testifies to Bergson's insensitivity to the problems of spatial structure. Whether or not they think it problematic, many others can be found confirming Boudot's evaluation of Bergson: space is completely rejected in favour of time.<sup>3</sup> But just as many commentators will reject this appraisal, pointing to both a clear "change of view" coming with the work following *Time and Free Will*,<sup>4</sup> and the "autocritique" provided by *Matter and Memory* of the untenable opposition between space and time in the earlier work.<sup>5</sup> In relation to Boudot's charge of insensitivity to the problems of spatial structure, one can quote in return from the introduction to *The Creative Mind* where Bergson writes that "[t]here is no doubt but that an element of convention enters into *any* measurement, and it is seldom that two magnitudes, considered equal, are directly superposable one upon the other."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*TFW*, p.227 [*Q*, p.148].

<sup>2</sup>Maurice Boudot, "L'Espace selon Bergson", in *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, VOLUME LXXXV (1980), pp.332-356, p.345.

<sup>3</sup>Though we believe there is good evidence for an ameliorated view of space in Bergson's later work (which we will examine below), Boudot, on the other hand, finds little in his *oeuvre* that can be regarded as a genuine move away from the space of *TFW* (cf. Boudot, 1980, p.338). Others who follow him in this respect include, as just a sample, Robert Blanché, "The Psychology of Duration and the Physics of Fields", translated by P.A.Y. Gunter, in Gunter, 1969, pp.106-120; p.108n1; Günter Pflug "Inner Time and the Relativity of Motion", translated by P.A.Y. Gunter, in Gunter, 1969, pp.192-208; pp.192, 204-205; Georges Poulet, *L'Espace Proustien* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), pp.9-10.

<sup>4</sup>Lacey, 1989, p.29.

<sup>5</sup>Robinet, 1965, p.57n1. Milič Čapek (1971, p.91) is adamant that with *MM* is marked a turn where an "untenable dualism of the temporal mind and timeless matter was given up, since becoming was reinstated into the physical realm." David A. Sipfle ("Henri Bergson and the Epochal Theory of Time", in Gunter, 1969, pp.275-294; p.283) endorses this view, saying that the external world in *MM* is less dualistic than it is in *TFW*, in that the heterogeneity of space is finally acknowledged. Gilles Deleuze (1988, p.34) adds his own voice to these: "Duration seemed to him [Bergson] to be less and less reducible to a psychological experience and became instead the variable essence of things, providing the theme of a complex ontology."

<sup>6</sup>*CM*, p.10/12 [*Q*, p.1254], my italics.



Bergson here appears to be perfectly aware of the difficulties that can beset the measurement of space.<sup>1</sup>

This is the central point we would wish to emphasize. There is a historical development in Bergson's understanding of space, with a positive conception of it emerging to counteract the negative presentations that are mostly confined to *Time and Free Will*.<sup>2</sup> The evidence for this ameliorated view is certainly there. What appears as a real property of space in *Time and Free Will*'s depiction becomes the product of *our* pragmatic interaction with it in *Matter and Memory*; homogeneous space and homogeneous time both:

express, in an abstract form, the double work of solidification and of division which we effect on the moving continuity of the real in order to obtain there a fulcrum for our action, in order to fix within it starting points for our operation, in short, to introduce into it real changes. They are the diagrammatic design of our eventual action upon matter.<sup>3</sup>

Real space, on the other hand, is something quite different: "That which is given, that which is real, is something intermediate between divided extension and pure inextension. It is what we have termed the *extensive*."<sup>4</sup> This "extensive" is as prior to homogeneous space as movement is prior to rest in the analyses of *Time and Free Will*. In *Creative Evolution* it is said to be an "undeniable fact" that temporal succession exists in the material world,<sup>5</sup> and though matter has a tendency "to constitute isolable systems, that can be treated geometrically" by science, this isolation is never complete: "matter *extends* itself in space without being absolutely *extended* therein."<sup>6</sup> It is the mind that treats

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<sup>1</sup>What is special about the measurement of time is not merely its pragmatic disregard for time's own integrity (as is true also for the measurement of space) but the fact that it is a complete absurdity.

<sup>2</sup>Some disquiet has also been felt towards the treatment of space in *DS*, in particular as regards its apparent absolutism. We have already given our own interpretation of this absolutism in a context outside of the question of homogeneous space. Certainly there are passages where the physical world is given very little status *vis-à-vis* its own ability to endure (cf., in particular, *DS*, p.46 [*M*, pp.99-100]). This lapse in the improvement of spatiality's standing cannot be easily explained and only serves to point up even more the difficulty of providing a systematic account of Bergson's writing in which each work was produced "in forgetting all the others" (de La Harpe, 1943, p.360). However, it remains an isolated episode which can therefore only qualify rather than attenuate the fact that, after *TFW*, Bergson's view of space did change significantly.

<sup>3</sup>*MM*, p.280 [*Q*, p.345].

<sup>4</sup>*MM*, p.326 [*Q*, p.374].

<sup>5</sup>*CE*, p.10 [*Q*, p.502].

<sup>6</sup>*CE*, pp.11, 214 [*Q*, pp.502, 668].

extensity as though its parts were completely isolated, a treatment required for our own convenience. Our pragmatic and pre-reflective homogenization of space is brought to an absolute purity by scientific and philosophical activity. Pure homogeneous space becomes both a "limit" and a "schema" with which we can work the world.<sup>1</sup> For Bergson then, there is not one space of unmitigated homogeneity, but many spaces with varying degrees of heterogeneity and homogeneity. Indeed, it was because Kant failed to distinguish "degrees in spatiality" that he had to take one type of space, the perfectly homogeneous, "ready made as given."<sup>2</sup> Bergson, on the other hand, considers it possible "to transcend space without stepping out from extensity."<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, it can also be shown that even *Time and Free Will* is not so single-minded in its denigration of space. There too Bergson places a good deal of weight on distinguishing between "the perception of extensity and the conception of space"<sup>4</sup> or between "the existence of a homogeneous Space and...the matter which fills it."<sup>5</sup> He even goes so far as to say that "[w]e shall not lay too much stress on the question of the absolute reality of space: perhaps we might as well ask whether space is or is not in space."<sup>6</sup> In opposition to both Kantianism and empiricism, Bergson does not regard homogeneous space as the condition for all our experience, be this a condition *de jure* (Kant) or *de facto* (Wilhelm Wundt and Alexander Bain). Rather, it is a creation formed with only a small part of experience, namely, the group mind. For Bergson, the locus of this sensibility is at one with that of our social and linguistic sense:

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *CE*, pp.213-214 [*Q*, p.667].

<sup>2</sup>*CE*, p.216 [*Q*, p.669]. If the notion of degrees of spatiality should appear counter-intuitive, Milič Čapek ("Bergson's Theory of the Mind-Brain Relation", in Papanicolaou and Gunter, 1987, pp.129-148; p.145) informs us that: "The view that the relation of mutual externality admits different degrees is truly unusual; but it is certainly no more revolutionary than Karl Menger's "topology without points" or the contemporary theory of "fuzzy sets" which is based on an even more paradoxical view of "different degrees of class-membership."

<sup>3</sup>*MM*, p.245 [*Q*, p.323].

<sup>4</sup>*TFW*, p.96 [*Q*, p.64].

<sup>5</sup>*TFW*, p.236 [*Q*, p.154].

<sup>6</sup>*TFW*, p.91 [*Q*, p.62].

the intuition of a homogeneous space is already a step towards social life. [...] Our tendency to form a clear picture of this externality of things and the homogeneity of their medium is the same as the impulse which leads us to live in common and to speak.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, regardless of its particular origins, we nevertheless tend to interpret *all* of our experience under the shadow of this space. When given a qualitative heterogeneity we try as best we can to interpret it through a homogeneous, objective medium, an attempt he calls "a kind of reaction against that heterogeneity which is the very ground of our experience."<sup>2</sup>

One primary example of a positive space in *Time and Free Will* is to be found in its treatment of the body. Though the body is exposed as the means by which we quantify our intensive states like pleasure,<sup>3</sup> Bergson's employment of it is double-edged. The manner in which he describes the body in terms of its own "inclination," multiform movements and developing extensity, is almost as heterogeneous and metaphysical as his presentation of those intensive states.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, two commentaries have gone so far as to compare *Time and Free Will's* examination of bodily grace<sup>5</sup> with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological analyses of the body.<sup>6</sup>

All in all then, we should remain agnostic as to the status of space in *Time and Free Will*.<sup>7</sup> But outside of that work, there is very little room left for any remaining ambivalence towards space in Bergson's thought. As such, there is considerable scope

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<sup>1</sup>*TFW*, p.138 [Q, p.91]. Moreover, it is mostly for humans that homogeneous space and the "special faculty of perceiving or conceiving a space without quality", is said to arise (p.97 [Q, p.65]); for other animal minds, on the other hand, "space is not so homogeneous...determinations of space, or directions, do not assume...a purely geometrical form," each would have "its own shade, its peculiar quality" (p.96 [Q, p.65]).

<sup>2</sup>*TFW*, p.97 [Q, p.65].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *TFW.*, pp.38-39 [Q, pp.28-29]. Cf. also his use of the body in our quantification of representative sensations (hearing, touch, and so on), at pp.39-50 [Q, pp.29-36].

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *TFW*, pp.20-28, 35-38 [Q, pp.17-22, 26-28], for what he says on muscular effort, muscular tension and pain.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *TFW*, pp.11-13 [Q, p.11-13].

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Richard Zaner, *The Problem of Embodiment: Some Contributions to a Phenomenology of the Body* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), p.166n1; Augustin Fressin, *La Perception chez Bergson et chez Merleau-Ponty* (Paris: Société d'Édition d'Enseignement Supérieur, 1967), pp.60-61. In Part Two we will see *Matter and Memory* bring this nascent body-subject to full fruition.

<sup>7</sup>The difference between this work and his other writings has been variously seen as either a widening of the import of the first (Jankélévitch, 1959, p.49), clarifying the distinction between perceived extension and abstract space (Heidsieck, 1957, p.51), or deepening a doctrine (de Lattre, 1959, p.57).

available for a thesis commending the primacy of perception irrespective of what is written about space in certain places. The same can be said apropos of his conception of the physical, metaphysical and intuitional. If anything, it is possibility that has provided the more consistent metaphysical whipping-boy for Bergson's writing, though even here ambiguities remain. In the next two chapters we shall investigate this area, still with an eye to furthering the case for our own thesis concerning perspectivism.

## *Chapter Three:* *The Possible and the Real*

Of all the essays collected in *The Creative Mind*, the central one must be "The Possible and the Real" (Jankélévitch thinks it "fundamental for understanding Bergsonism"<sup>1</sup>). The first part of the introductory essay to the collection, "Retrograde Movement of the True Growth of Truth," forms a companion-piece to it. Together, these texts are concerned with the ontological status of what has certainly become one of the central categories of contemporary philosophy: possibility. Ignoring the other modalities of necessity and probability, Bergson contrasts possibility exclusively with the radical novelty of duration. Possibility is said to be an artifice. Duration is not only the mark of reality, it is also the agency behind our illusions concerning what makes any one reality possible. Real duration, being prior rather than subsequent to the possible, actually creates the latter *retrospectively*. For example, French Nineteenth Century Romanticism was supposedly made possible because of the preceding conditions created by French Classicism. But, asks Bergson, was it not the romanticism of a Chateaubriand, Vigny or Hugo that really created the supposed *nascent* romanticism of the earlier classical writers in whose lineage the Romantics are assumed to be? Romanticism, by its very coming into existence, retroactively created both its own pre-figuration in the past, and by that, the causal explanation of its own emergence.<sup>2</sup> Bergson also relates an anecdote concerning a journalist who once asked him what he felt the great dramatic work of tomorrow would be. He replied saying that if he knew what it was to be he should be writing it. The future is not yet possible, he says, but when it takes place, it "*will have been possible*."<sup>3</sup> Neither things nor events are "stored up in some cupboard reserved for possibles;" they exist only when they come into existence.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jankélévitch, 1959, p.3.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *CM*, pp.24-25/23-24 [*Q*, p.1265].

<sup>3</sup>*CM*, p.118/100 [*Q*, p.1340].

<sup>4</sup>*CM*, p.118/100 [*Q*, p.1340].

In a sense, Bergson's thesis on possibility amounts to a broadening of the "*post hoc ergo propter hoc*" fallacy: the duplication of the present as a past spuriously set up to explain the origins of this present.<sup>1</sup> According to his view, it is extremely hard for us to acknowledge that each present is really something radically new. Thus our ordinary reasoning is a logic of retrospection which "cannot help throwing present realities, reduced to possibilities or virtualities, back into the past."<sup>2</sup> It is also his contention that what is alternatively called the "retroactivity of the present" is "at the origin of many philosophical delusions."<sup>3</sup> Instances of Bergson's concern at unearthing its presence have been frequently detected in his critical writings. Meaning is reconstituted from words that are already meaningful, melody is reconstructed from notes that are already musical. In each case it is because we already know the result that it can be explained through some mechanism set up as its causal past.<sup>4</sup> In his philosophy of space and time, Bergson proposes both that immobility is a complexity of movement and that simultaneity is a relation derived from our ordinary awareness of temporal succession.<sup>5</sup> Hence, if it is at all possible that movement and time can be reconstituted from immobilities and simultaneities, this is only because these notions already involve some component of the temporal.<sup>6</sup> We will look in detail at only two instances of the critique's application: in his philosophies of freedom and perception.<sup>7</sup> Both are of great significance, the first for our

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<sup>1</sup>Other examples he gives include how a work of genius only becomes such a "work of genius" retrospectively by bringing with it "a conception of art and an artistic atmosphere which brings it within our comprehension" (*TSMR*, p.75 [*Q*, p.1308]). Equally, historical actions, defying all calculation, none the less create their "own route" or "the conditions under which...[they are] to be fulfilled" (*TSMR*, p.296 [*Q*, p.1227]). That is, they prepare the unconscious structural forces, economic, ideological, and so on, that will become their own explanation.

<sup>2</sup>*CM*, p.27/26 [*Q*, p.1267]. At *CE*, p.250 [*Q*, p.696], "retrospective vision" is said to be "the natural function of the intellect."

<sup>3</sup>*TSMR*, p.308 [*Q*, p.1237].

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Jankélévitch, 1959, pp.26-27; *CM*, pp.214-215/181-182 [*Q*, p.1414].

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *M*, p.947-948, 1220; *DS*, pp.51, 52-53, 55, 83, 83n6, 84n8, 91 [*Q*, pp.105, 105-107, 136, 136n1, 137n1, 144].

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Lindsay, 1911, pp.185-186.

<sup>7</sup>Of course, there is another use of the word "possibility", namely, in the negative sense of "non-possibility;" if *Hamlet* was written then it must have been possible to write it. The non-possibility of an event, being the condition of its realization, logically precedes it. Bergson has no quarrel with this truism; he is attacking the notion that "Hamlet" may have been ideally pre-existent, something we may surreptitiously pass to from the truistic use of possibility (cf. *CM*, pp.120-121/102-103 [*Q*, pp.1341-1342]). But even here he has a comment to add. If non-possibility means, in the example chosen, that there were no insurmountable obstacles to the composition of Hamlet, it may still be true that the obstacles only became surmountable (and thus became "non-obstacles") in the (retroactive) light of the act which surmounted them. Once accomplished, the successful act creates surmountable obstacles, whereas the unsuccessful act creates insurmountable obstacles; in both cases there were no obstacles (no non-

own understanding of Bergson's perspectival thought, the second as an indication of the type of reductive strategies Bergson resists.

### *Freedom*

There is a particular tradition of philosophizing about freedom that does not take indetermination as a condition for liberty.<sup>1</sup> Bergson can be placed within it. His own reason is that the indeterminist or libertarian philosopher, or at least one of a particular type, tends to ground his or her philosophy of freedom on the notion of possibility. But in Bergson's eyes, a creative act cannot be said to pre-exist its actuality in any way, "not even in the form of the purely possible."<sup>2</sup>

In *Time and Free Will* it is argued that the supposed possible lines of action grounding the libertarian's freedom of choice are actually created retrospectively by the free act once it has been accomplished. Moreover, it is also argued that the libertarian's prioritization of the possible, being but an inverted form of mechanism, actually plays into the hands of the determinist. Summarizing this argument in "The Possible and the Real," Bergson describes how libertarians, "by affirming an ideal pre-existence of the possible to the real...reduce the new to a mere rearrangement of former elements."<sup>3</sup> But such a strategy can only be led "sooner or later to regard that rearrangement as calculable and foreseeable!"<sup>4</sup> The possible is a retrospective creation of our free, enduring and moving action. But what is past and retrospective is an immobile state, which means for Bergson that it is a homogeneous entity.<sup>5</sup> This kinship between possibility and homogeneous space allows psychological determinism to appropriate the methods of physics,

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impossibility or impossibility) before the act (or attempt) was finished. Cf. *CM*, p.304n18 [*Q*, p.1342n1]. Cf. also, *TSMR*, pp.53-54 [*Q*, p.1020]. In a letter to Brunschvicg (cf. *M*, p.586) Bergson agrees with his correspondent that we may feel our freedom through a clear consciousness of our facticity, but further still, that this facticity is only created by us once the act is accomplished; our mind creates its own reasons and obstacles. Bergson equally applied this same principle to the methodology of the sciences when he wrote that (*CM*, p.59/51 [*Q*, p.1293]) "the truly great problems are set forth only when they are solved."

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Gilson on this (1978, pp.67-68).

<sup>2</sup> *CM*, p.19/19 [*Q*, p.1260].

<sup>3</sup>*CM*, p.123/104 [*Q*, pp.1343-1344].

<sup>4</sup>*CM*, p.123/104 [*Q*, p.1344]. The original argument is at *TFW*, pp. 172-183 [*Q*, pp.113-120].

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *TFW*, p.221 [*Q*, p.145].

neurobiology or sociology and, utilizing an objective spatial reality, portray a subject determined by immobile states. The truth, however, is that the self is not determined by these states, it *creates* them.<sup>1</sup> It does not make a choice between *really* pre-existing alternatives, it creates the *image* of these alternatives in the retrospective light of its accomplished action. Only retrospectively do the "possible alternatives" to what was actually enacted appear to pre-exist as alternatives that it could have chosen but was determined not to. These, in sum, are the main points of Bergson's own philosophy of freedom. Let us now examine them in more detail.

The libertarian's understanding of possible acts, Bergson tells us, stems from a homogeneous, geometrical representation of choice. It is said that I know of others who, in the same situation, chose *x* where I chose *y*, therefore I could have chosen *x*. It is further thought that I myself in previous similar situations chose *x* instead of *y*, so I could have chosen it again instead of *y* this time.<sup>2</sup> Here we see a connection between possibility and the submission of our subjectivity to other perspectives that we examined in Chapter One. Representations of possibility are based on the assumption of the sameness of subjects and of situations. For Bergson, on the other hand, I was a certain person before choosing *x* that I will never be again. The only identity is in the language representing the affair. To represent choices or even tendencies as fixed is a product of the imagination alone. But (bad) common sense prefers to make things out of directions, retrospectively tracing a "line" of action from the present back to the past where it crosses another possible line of action (the act that was not chosen), the point where they meet being deemed the moment of decision.

A determinist would say that the activity prior to this point always tended in one direction in spite of any hesitations. It is the libertarian strategy, on the other hand, to schematize the directions (as a multitude of possible acts) but not the act of choosing itself. The

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *TFW*, pp.165-172, 219-221 [*Q*, pp.109-113, 143-145].

<sup>2</sup>This ability to choose differently even under a reprise of the very same conditions of the action is held by many libertarians to be the essence of freedom; cf. John Hospers, *An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp.235-236.



choosing-self's activity is separated from the choices, thus making the former seem impartial. Even in choosing one line of action the others remain, as though we could retrace our steps and choose again. But it is the inconsistency of not schematizing the choice itself that the determinist leaps upon. It amounts to no more than a deferral of the problem, putting the whole issue under discussion, free action, within the analysis of it and calling it the "moment of decision."

Both the libertarian and the determinist use the schema of "conception", "hesitation" and "choice", which, for Bergson, is merely the verbal crystallization of a geometrical schema. Just as the spurious relativity of STR is built in part upon geometry, so the spurious freedom of the libertarian is built upon another homogeneous representation.

One commentator arguing the libertarian case, A.R Lacey, disagrees with Bergson's description of the act of choosing.<sup>1</sup> Bergson's contention that we would still not choose *y* even were we to be at the exact moment of decision again (because we can never be other than the particular individual we were at that moment), is based, he says, on a confusion. It confuses "would not choose" with "could not choose". In other words, yes, as we did not choose *y* so we obviously would not choose it again in an exact repetition of the total situation. But it does not follow from this that we *could* not choose *y* at the time. Lacey's point is worthy of consideration, yet he seems to have missed the import of the possible-real distinction at work in Bergson's analysis of the problem. Bergson's point is that the full meaning of "again" must entail "would not" being equivalent with "could not," for the extra possibility that the libertarian adds to the situation in saying that he or she could have acted differently (thus separating "would" from "could") is a possibility only created after the act. In the production of the action, "would" does mean "could." Bringing myself back, if only conceptually, to a former action and allowing myself the possibility (or "freedom") to have done otherwise, is an imaginative elimination of the novelty of time: the "I" that I was then is what it was. Though others or even myself in similar situations have done otherwise, this does not

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Lacey, 1989, p.83.

authorize the existence of an extra possibility latent within this past act. Each situation, each subject and even each moment of my own subjectivity constitutes a unique entity, incomparable to any other.<sup>1</sup>

### *Perception*

The other exemplary application of Bergson's critique of possibility is in his philosophy of perception. Conventional presentations of this part of his thought normally concentrate on its distinction between process and stasis when criticizing mechanistic accounts of perception. Before the scientifically elucidated physiology of visual perception, for example, Bergson holds that there is the unanalyzed act of seeing:

We have the act of seeing, which is simple, and we have an infinity of elements, and of reciprocal actions of these elements on each other, by means of which the anatomist and the physiologist reconstitute that simple act. Elements and actions express, analytically and so to speak negatively, being resistances opposed to resistances, the indivisible act, alone positive, which nature has effectively obtained.<sup>2</sup>

In analysing the structure of an organ we could go on "decomposing [it] for ever" when all the time the function of the organ would remain a "simple thing."<sup>3</sup> Vision is a physical function, capacity or action before being an immobile physical mechanism. We may analyse the act of seeing into as many elements and actions as we require; but an action will not be reconstituted from immobile entities: "There is in vision *more* than the component cells of the eye and their mutual coördination."<sup>4</sup>

But alternatively, one could say that the real cannot be reconstituted from the possible. Bergson's anti-mechanistic arguments also use the vocabulary of the possible and the real. Simply by coming into existence, the act of vision creates the purported physiological means for this existence:

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<sup>1</sup>Discussing moral reasoning, (*CE*, pp.7-8 [*Q*, p.500]) Bergson writes: "the same reasons may dictate to different persons, or to the same person at different moments, acts profoundly different, although equally reasonable. The truth is that they are not quite the same reasons, since they are not those of the same person, nor of the same moment."

<sup>2</sup>*TSMR*, p.207 [*Q*, p.1152].

<sup>3</sup>*CE*, p.94 [*Q*, p.571].

<sup>4</sup>*CE*, pp.96-97 [*Q*, p.573].

the undivided act of vision, by the mere fact of succeeding, overcomes at a stroke thousands and thousands of obstacles; it is these obstacles, surmounted, which appear to our perception and to our science in the multiplicity of cells constituting the eye, the intricateness of our visual apparatus, in short, the endless series of mechanisms which are at work in the process of seeing.<sup>1</sup>

The causes of vision only become apparent after the fact of vision; the possible comes after the real because it is a product of the real.

To illustrate the import of this view we will examine a current mechanistic view of the mind and perception, taking Eliminative Materialism (EM) as our example.<sup>2</sup> The one great advantage EM has over other types of materialism is that it is "non-reductive." According to EM, if there are no precise correlations between the mental and the physical that will allow the former to be smoothly translated into the latter (as is often the case), it must be because our language of mind is misconceived and false. For Paul Churchland, for example, our perception and understanding of the world evinces a "thoroughgoing *plasticity*;" our awareness of the world is formed according to the greater or lesser ability we have in exploiting "*the natural information contained in our sensations and sensory states*."<sup>3</sup> Most of us are quite inefficient at exploiting this information and we have consequently been burdened for too long with the illusion that what we see now under introspection is what is actually there.<sup>4</sup> Our own perspectives are often rife with what Churchland calls "intensional fallacies".<sup>5</sup> We believe that our sensations have colour, intensity or whatever, whereas brain states appear to be void of these qualities. Thus we naturally have dualist intuitions which deny the reducibility of mind to matter. Yet this same argument (which is most often a use of Leibniz' law of the identity of indiscernibles against materialistic identity theories) could also be used to prove that salt is not NaCl:

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<sup>1</sup>*TSMR*, p.197 [*Q*, p.1143].

<sup>2</sup>We could as well have taken Functionalism instead, but must limit ourselves to one example. Donald Davidson's alternative non-reductive materialism, "anomalous monism," as well as Daniel Dennett's "instrumentalism" will be examined later in other contexts.

<sup>3</sup>Paul Churchland, *Scientific Realism and the Plasticity of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p.7.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Paul Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness: A Contemporary Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), pp.76-79 discussing the corrigibility of sensation reports.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Churchland, 1988, pp.31-34.

"because I believe that salt tastes nice but NaCl does not, salt cannot be NaCl". But for Churchland, this really only proves something about the mind's own ability for self-delusion and nothing as to the relationship between salt and NaCl. Churchland asks us then to engage in an "expansion of introspective consciousness."<sup>1</sup> Once we have, we will realize the need to eliminate our old language of the mind. As one commentator puts it: "sensations and sensation-talk...will simply disappear from a scientifically oriented language, much as demons and demon-talk have already disappeared."<sup>2</sup> Such linguistic cleansing will remove our naive vocabulary of beliefs, desires, dreams, and so on in favour of the new language of neuroscience: "A-delta fibres and/or C-fibres" will replace our notions of pain, "iodopsins", our colour after-images, and "vestibular maculae", feelings of acceleration and falling.<sup>3</sup>

There are various problems with EM that are not at issue here; they include the ineliminability of *qualia* and the conditions for EM's very own expressibility.<sup>4</sup> What we are interested in here, however, is the relationship between this new language of neuroscience and Bergson's thesis concerning possibility. In Churchland's opinion, there is a kinship between our normal folk psychological vocabulary and that of certain physical and abstract sciences; for both, meaning is "relational", there being no single, explicit definitions for anything, but rather, meanings that are fixed solely by the set of

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<sup>1</sup>Churchland, 1979, p.116.

<sup>2</sup>C.V. Borst, "Introduction", in C.V. Borst, ed., *The Mind-Brain Identity Theory* (London: Macmillan, 1970), pp.13-29; p.20.

<sup>3</sup>Churchland, 1979, p.119.

<sup>4</sup>Concerning the expressibility of EM, cf. Gerard Casey, "Minds and Machines", in *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, VOLUME LXVI (1992), pp.57-80; and as a response to the sort of argument Casey poses, Paul Churchland, "Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes", in William G. Lycan, ed., *Mind and Cognition: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp.206-223; pp.221-222. The problem of *qualia* concerns the irreducibility (or ineliminability) of the phenomenological qualities of our experiences of pain, after-images, and so on. This problem has pertinence even for the examples Churchland takes as model illustrations of elimination. According to Churchland (cf. 1988, pp. 43-44), heat and burning provide two examples of just the evolution of language advocated by EM. Heat was once deemed to be a fluid, caloric, whilst burning was originally thought to involve the release of a substance, phlogiston; in both cases the true explanations turned out to be altogether different: molecular movement and oxygenation respectively. Yet one might still wonder whether the phenomena of heat and burning *as experienced* (and not simply as previously explained), have been left uneliminated in either case. After all, our experience of burning is incomparable with our understanding of both phlogiston and oxygenation. This is not to say that it may not also be linked to either of the two in some way, only that this relation cannot be an identity. This is basically what Bergson argues in *TFW* and *MM*: our experience of colour or our very own consciousness may correspond in some way with electromagnetic radiation or the activity of our brain and nervous system, but that does not allow us to identify them with these substrata *in toto*.

laws, principles and generalizations in which they figure.<sup>1</sup> However, the relationship is not one of equals, for the structure of our psychological vocabulary is derived from the other more objective sciences. As a consequence of all this, that is, of the meaning of mental and physical vocabularies being fixed through relations and the vocabulary of the former being parasitic upon the vocabulary of the latter, Churchland can conclude that "there is no problem in assuming that physical states could have propositional content, since in principle they could easily enjoy the relevant relational features."<sup>2</sup> In advancing these views, we are led to a vision of the brain as a syntactical engine and a rejection of semantics that consequently allows for a consistent account of the elimination of mind in favour of the promotion of matter. This picture of the brain and of the physical in general is prominent within both the sciences of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the neurocomputational approach to the brain; it will eventually bring us back to Bergson's critique of possibility.

According to some critics, a part of what facilitates the apparent parallel between mind and machine or mind and parts of the brain is language. Descriptions of the machine in terms of its "language", "memory", "information" and so forth, as well as descriptions of the mind in terms of the brain and its "mechanisms", "systems", "receivers" and "transmitters," are intrinsic to the establishment of a conceptual continuum along which we can effortlessly slide from one category to the other. The parallel is really an illusion built upon rhetoric.<sup>3</sup> Peter Hacker has noted that part of the second strategy is to attribute properties of the mind to the brain.<sup>4</sup> One supposition is that the brain has a language of its own consisting of symbols representing things. But according to Hacker, a language is not something one *has*, it is something one *uses* to say things, make orders, ask questions and so on. Thus, to speak of the brain, let alone a part of the brain as having

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Churchland, 1988, pp.56-66.

<sup>2</sup>Churchland, 1988, p.66.

<sup>3</sup>For a list of the number of metaphors used in cognitive psychology, computer science, information theory and other areas, cf. Richard Boyd, "Metaphor and Theory Change: What is "Metaphor" a Metaphor for?", in Andrew Ortony, ed., *Metaphor and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) pp.356-408; p.360.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Peter Hacker, "Languages, Minds and Brains", in Colin Blakemore and Susan Greenfield, *Mindwaves: Thoughts on Intelligence, Identity and Consciousness* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), pp.485-505.

language is "literally" unintelligible: "There are no symbols in the brain that by their array express a single proposition, let alone a proposition that is known to be true."<sup>1</sup>

Another sceptic, Raymond Tallis, sees the reductionists' strategy as an active equivocation which he calls "thinking by transferred epithet."<sup>2</sup> He takes the word "information" as a particular example and examines the evolution of its use. In the late 1940s communication engineers first gave it a specific role by linking it with the measure of entropy in a physical system. Whatever of the legitimacy of this original appropriation, since then, certain theorists have allowed this application to imply that physical things can possess information. In one sense this has always been true; books, landscape paintings, indeed all perceptible objects possess information. But the further equivocation is in the assumption that what has information is *informed*. Information is only information when it is taken up as such by something that can be informed. To think that the information is informed is as ridiculous as to think that, because a painting is a picture of a landscape, the painting *has* a picture of the landscape. Of course, one can always take two books, for instance, and show them to stand in some type of translational relationship with one another. But thinking that either *translates* the other will be at the expense of ignoring the need for a real translator. Yet if one makes of matter an information-informed system while at the same time equating the person with his or her brain, itself conceived as an information processing mechanism, it is not long before an easy continuity between the living and the mechanical is facilitated. Such a procedure, whereby attributes such as "sees", "understands" or "knows" are predicated either of what is non-sentient or of what is only a part of a sentient being, has been critically termed the "homunculus fallacy." But it is a strategy fraught with danger:

like Descartes the modern neurophysiologist is trying to explain the processes involved in seeing an object. And he comes perilously close to saying that when a person sees an object there is a map, a representation of the object, not on the pineal gland, but on the visual cortex. But now he must explain who or what sees or reads the map. If it is neither the mind nor a gnostic cell, who can it be?<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hacker, 1987, p.492.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Raymond Tallis, *The Explicit Animal: A Defence of Human Consciousness* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 88-101.

<sup>3</sup>Hacker, 1987, p.499. Later, we will come to the arguments of those (like D.C. Dennett) who admit the use of homunculi in ostensibly physicalist explanations, only to defend it on the grounds that these are

The homunculus fallacy in the philosophy of mind is a prime example of the retrospective illusion highlighted by Bergson. A present reality that can only belong to a conscious being, be it perception, meaning, language, memory or whatever, is placed into the past to become what made this present possible: in the case of consciousness, its neurological systems, stores and mechanisms; in the case of the machine borrowing from consciousness, its "rememberers", "evaluators", "overseers", and so on.<sup>1</sup> For both, it is a retrograde activity that underwrites these elucidations. In connection with software design for computers "[t]he program *begins* with a characterization of the possible objects and properties," these objects and properties being set by the programmer.<sup>2</sup> And in the design of the hardware, one advocate of AI has even admitted that "[w]orking backwards...has proved to be a remarkably fruitful research strategy."<sup>3</sup> The ability to retrospect is part and parcel of what allows us to seemingly reduce what we see in the present. That is why Bergson says that those in the biological sciences who study the genesis and evolution of living organisms, histologists and embryologists, are far less prone to reductionism as compared with physiologists whose eyes remain entirely on functions within the present.<sup>4</sup>

As we will see later, it is another tenet of Bergson's philosophy of perception that in principle the object is perceived where it is. That is to say, the object is neither perceived in the eye, the nerve, nor in the brain, but in the object itself. This peculiar view arises out of what are in essence the same criticisms of physicalist explanations of consciousness that we have examined here. A sensation, Bergson writes, "cannot be in the nerve unless the nerve feels. Now it is evident that the nerve does not feel."<sup>5</sup>

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only operational and not substantial notions, that are, in any case, eventually "discharged" from the explanation.

<sup>1</sup>Daniel Dennett, "Why the Law of Effect Will not Go Away", in *Brainstorms: Philosophical Essays on Mind and Psychology* (Sussex, Harvester Press, 1979), pp.71-89; p.80.

<sup>2</sup>Terry Winograd and Fernando Flores, *Understanding Computers and Cognition* (New Jersey: Ablex, 1986), p.118, my italics.

<sup>3</sup>Dennett, 1979, p.81. The "success" of the retrograde approach can be compared with the failure of the earlier work within AI that followed an evolutionary approach to computer design and attempted to emulate the forward progress of natural evolution; cf. Winograd and Flores, 1986, pp.102-103.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *CE*, p.38 [Q, p.525].

<sup>5</sup>*MM*, p.62 [Q, p.208].

Bergson's positive thesis then, is a radicalization of the critique of the homunculus fallacy, for it condemns all notions of sensation being felt anywhere other than in its object: "it soon becomes clear that if it [the sensation] is not at the point where it appears to arise, neither can it be anywhere else: if it is not in the nerve, neither is it in the brain."<sup>1</sup> A fuller examination of this peculiar view of perception must await the second part of our thesis.

But before leaving the philosophy of mind there is one other connection between possibility and reductive physicalism worth investigating. We mentioned above one of the traditional problems of identity that have beset modern physicalisms; another is that when one says that mental events are really brain processes one seems to be left with no individual reality for "mental event" of which it can be said that *it* is really a brain process. One reply is that the identification is not an *a priori* but contingent one. It is not saying that *x* is *y*, but rather that *x* has been identified as *y*.<sup>2</sup> For example, a stranger at the door may turn out later to have been the doctor at the door. But that does not mean that all statements concerning that stranger are identical to ones concerning the doctor; each has its own logic. Yet it will eventually be found that what those stranger-statements were referring to was really the doctor, just as science discovered that lightning-statements were really referring to an electrical discharge.<sup>3</sup> The apparent individual reality to both the entity to be reduced and the entity it will be reduced to, actually pertains to the different types of logic we use in making statements about the two. It is nothing essential to them. Yet the problems with identity persist.<sup>4</sup> Bergson's own criticisms of identity theories foreshadowed them. He writes:

To say that an image of the surrounding world issues from this image of a dance of atoms, or that the image of the one expresses the image of the other...is self-contradictory, since these two images - the external world and the intra-cerebral movement - have been assumed to be of like nature.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*MM*, p.62 [*Q*, p.208].

<sup>2</sup>The Identity Theory of mind and brain is supposed to be a scientific hypothesis, so it will be the findings of the natural sciences that will demonstrate its truth or falsity.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. J.J.C. Smart, "Sensations and Brain Processes", in Borst, 1970, pp.52-66; pp.55-56, 62.

<sup>4</sup>J.T. Stevenson, "Sensations and Brain Processes: A Reply to J.J.C. Smart", in Borst, 1970, pp.87-92.

<sup>5</sup>*ME*, p.238 [*Q*, p.964].



Expression and issuance imply a duality, whereas being of "like nature" invokes a monism. Monisms state that "everything is  $x$ " dualisms that some  $x$  "influences, causes, symbolizes, expresses, issues, or produces"  $y$ . Despite themselves, identity theories usually state the latter. As Bergson succinctly puts it, "[a] relation between two terms is [made] the equivalent of one of them."<sup>1</sup>

More interesting still, the appeal made to intertheoretical reduction by the physicalist is equally prone to the problems concerning identity. It is argued that because lightning-statements and colour-statements have been found to actually refer to electrical discharge and electromagnetic radiation respectively, our notions concerning consciousness will in turn eventually be found to really refer to brain processes. Yet the first quarter of *Time and Free Will* is devoted to refuting the reduction of colour to objective phenomena. An objective description like that provided by the theory of electromagnetic radiation may indicate their cause, but colour phenomena are not wholly reducible to these causes. The singular names we give to them belie a far greater degree of complexity. Phrases such as "shades of a colour" catch little of the continuously changing experiences they supposedly denote. As such, we must say that the theory of electromagnetic radiation, though both a cause of our experience of colour and fundamental to it, remains far from being the sum total of its reality.

reducible  
not  
clear

We might say that what we have here is a case of, in John Searle's terminology, a successful *causal* reduction itself proving to be irreducible to an *ontological* reduction.<sup>2</sup> We might say this, but we do not, and the reason concerns causation. According to Bergson, we cannot speak of any "causality in general" (successful or not), for there are

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<sup>1</sup>*ME*, p.246 [*Q*, p.969]. Every type of monism, he writes (*ME*, p.237 [*Q*, p.963]), involves an illegitimate movement between two "notation-systems", the one idealist, the other materialist. If we were to try to follow its reasoning we would find that "we pass instantly from realism [materialism] to idealism and from idealism to realism, showing ourselves in the one at the very moment when we are going to be caught in the act of self-contradiction in the other." We will be examining these systems of notation in Part Two. According to Leszek Kolakowski (*Bergson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp.51-52), Bergson often causes confusion by putting *a priori* arguments against materialism (one of which is given above) with another that is purely empirical, namely that only a correspondence and never a strict one to one correlation will ever be found between states of the mind and parts of the brain.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Searle, 1992, pp.114-116.

as many different types of causality as there are different events causally related.<sup>1</sup> The rigidity of the relation between cause and effect actually admits of nuances and degrees, each denoting a different proportional relationship between cause and effect. Causality is not so much a strict fact of the world as a principle of our perception of it. According to our perceptual powers, we are able to see the greater or lesser degree of freedom or causality at work within the world. Some will see all antecedent-consequent relations tending as far as possible to being identical with each other,<sup>2</sup> others will see freedom as an irrefutable fact.<sup>3</sup> Whether an event is deemed completely reducible to its antecedents will depend on our perception as much as anything. If what one person calls the "effect" is regarded by another in terms disproportionate to what the first also calls its "cause", then the two will obviously disagree on the type of relationship holding between the two events; for one there might well be a *strict* causation, for the other a possible emergence of real novelty.

Take the example of light. Contrary to the law of colour constancy which states that variations in the illumination of a coloured object will not be perceived as variations in the object's "real" colour (which remains constant), but only as shades of that real colour, Bergson claims that our immediate impression *is* of a qualitative change in colour. As a result of our inveterate desire for a certain type of objectivity, we have developed the habit of attributing these changes to quantitative alterations in background illumination.<sup>4</sup> When the illumination of a white object is decreased our immediate sensation is of a new colour, grey. But grey is not an absence of white or a change in the intensity of white; blacks and greys are just as real as white. The same holds for colour saturation. If colour intensity is supposedly on a scale with black as the null-point, so too is saturation with white as its end-point. But for Bergson, saturated degrees of the one colour are all *different* colours. Psychophysics can quantify physical causes and sources only, it

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<sup>1</sup>*M*, p.438; cf. also, p.515n1.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *TFW*, p.207-208 [*Q*, p.136].

<sup>3</sup>The decisive statement given by Bergson on the origin of our perception of causality is in his 1900 paper "*Note sur les Origins Psychologiques de Notre Croyance à la Loi de Causalité*" (cf. *M*, pp.419-428).

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *TFW*, pp.50-72 [*Q*, pp.36-50] for Bergson's discussion of the psychophysicists Gustav Fechner and J. Delboeuf's work on measuring colour sensations.

cannot objectify our immediate sensations. As a consequence (though Bergson does not explicitly draw this conclusion himself), the immediate experiences of colour can never be reduced to any homogeneous physical substratum such as the wave-length of electromagnetic radiation. What, for example, would be the wave-length of the real experience of black? Physical "substrata" refer primarily to either an indirect, austere or general aspect of these phenomena, which is not necessarily to say that the wave-theory of light is untrue, but only that it does not provide the complete account of light. But if light cannot be fully reduced to such substrata, even less so can consciousness be completely identified with the brain. In this manner, the Bergsonian objection cuts off the physicalist's argument for the reduction of consciousness at a stage earlier than expected by wrecking the appeal to intertheoretical reduction.<sup>1</sup>

Yet in contradistinction to Bergson's full-blown anti-reductionism, there have been attempts to refute physicalisms of the mind while still saving original reductions like those of light and heat. They do this, and here we come to the point of this analysis, by making recourse to the notion of possibility. Amongst its other innovations, Saul Kripke's "Naming and Necessity" is celebrated for having argued for the concept of an *a posteriori* necessary identity. Such an identity would be necessary though without being immediately apparent. This notion would counter the usual appeals of anti-reductionists to Leibniz' law of identity, for it would authorize an identity between things in spite of some discernible differences being evident. Heat's identity with molecular motion is a favourite example of a necessary identity which is not *apriori*. Heat had to be discovered to be the mean kinetic energy of molecular motion and it is even arguable that it might have had some entirely different physical basis. It is a necessary identity, yet it appears contingent.

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<sup>1</sup>Similarly, Thomas Nagel (1979, p.175) makes the following remark about reductionism in general: "In a sense, the seeds of this objection to the reducibility of experience are already detectable in successful cases of reduction; for in discovering sound to be, in reality, a wave phenomenon in air or other media, we leave behind one viewpoint to take up another, and the auditory, human or animal viewpoint that we leave behind remains unreduced."

Kripke explains this anomaly by showing how the contingency of the identity actually belongs to an aspect of our *understanding* of heat and molecular motion, an aspect confused with what belongs to both essentially, that is, to what belongs to both *in every possible world*. What is inessential belongs to the manner in which the reference of the first term "heat" is "determined" or "fixed."<sup>1</sup> What is essential to the two, on the other hand, pertains to the "rigid designators" that describe the properties of the two appropriate for their detection in every possible world. Thus heat can be reduced to molecular motion without obstacle. No like move, however, can be made by the mind-body reductionist. For example, any reduction of pain would be disallowed because the property that the identity theorist wants to deflate (how pain feels to consciousness) is exactly what is essential to pain. Kripke is therefore rejecting the validity of a certain type of intertheoretical reduction. Pain is not to C-fibre firing as heat is to a property of molecular motion; someone might sense a phenomenon as heat even though the phenomenon was not a property of molecular motion, but something other than pain could never be mistaken for pain. Unlike heat, pain only exists as a sensation of pain; it is incorrigible.

The problem with Kripke's defence of both the irreducibility and reducibility of mind (the experience of pain is not reduced but the experience of heat is) is its reliance upon "referring expressions"<sup>2</sup> taking the brunt of the contingent in any relationship. A property is said to be essential to or rigidly true of a phenomenon, if it is true of it in all possible worlds. Bergson, on the other hand, would prefer to avoid the necessity-contingency bifurcation.<sup>3</sup> There are indeed properties which appear more rigid and

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Saul A. Kripke, "Naming and Necessity", in *Semantics of Natural Language*, edited by Donald Davidson and Gilbert Harman (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1972), pp.253-355, 763-769; pp.326, 328, 331, 333-334, 338.

<sup>2</sup>This is Richard Boyd's term ("Materialism without Reductionism: What Physicalism does not Entail", in Ned Block, ed., *Readings in Philosophy of Psychology*, two volumes (London: Methuen, 1980), volume one, pp.67-106; p.81) for what Kripke simply states as "the way the reference of a term is fixed" (1972, p.328).

<sup>3</sup>According to Bergson, there is nothing necessary about the laws of nature, though at the same time there is nothing purely conventional about them either; rather, there is a tendency in matter towards the ideal of a geometrical necessity, a tendency we can complete in our minds. Cf. *CE*, pp.222-232 [*Q*, pp.674-681]. In *TSMR* (p.12 [*Q*, p.984]), Bergson parodies the conception of an objectively necessary set of natural laws thus: "There is a certain order of nature which finds expression in laws: facts are presumed to "obey" these laws so as to conform with that order. The scientist himself can hardly help believing that the law "governs" facts and consequently is prior to them, like the Platonic Idea on which all things had to model

others which appear more ephemeral; but the latter are not unreal; they are, so to speak, a more rigid property in the making. Pointing to all possible worlds wherein, on the one hand, certain properties reside and will so ever more, and on the other, certain others must cede their existence, testifies as much as anything else to a lack of imagination.<sup>1</sup>

Or rather, it testifies to the impotence of imagination in its entirety, for each possible world is in essence no more than this world imagined in what can only be quantitatively different arrangements; quantitatively different simply because we *can* imagine them. It is a placing of the real into the possible, or in other words, of the present into the future.<sup>2</sup> The novelty of the future is precisely what cannot be imagined and the genuine imagination of the future is really the imagination of this fact. The future, like the "great dramatic work of tomorrow", does not exist (though it will have existed). As Leszek Kolakowski puts it: "To say that time is real is to say, first, that the future does not exist in any sense."<sup>3</sup>

In fact, Kripke's attitude towards referring expressions can be likened to Churchland's concept of intensional fallacy.<sup>4</sup> Kripke's "modal argument," as it is called, uses possibility to deflate the reality of one variety of our personal grasp upon the world; Churchland invokes the authority of the sciences. But both Kripke and Churchland purchase their essentialism at the expense of demoting the contingent to the virtually non-

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themselves. The higher he rises in the scale of generalizations the more he tends, willy-nilly, to endow the law with this imperative character; it requires a very real struggle against our own prepossessions to imagine the principles of mechanics otherwise than as inscribed from all eternity on the transcendent tables that modern science has apparently fetched down from another Sinai." According to Kevin Sullivan ("The Relation between Duration and the Critique of the Idea of Nothing in Bergson's Thought", in *De Philosophia*, VOLUME IV (1983), pp.75-86; pp.80-81), Bergson can only justify the necessary existence of pure process without at the same time positing either some necessary Platonic realm or a necessary absolute being such as God, by "demonstrating the inauthenticity of the whole necessity-contingency problem" (p.81). Cf. also, Kolakowski, 1985, pp.95-96.

<sup>1</sup>Cf. on the question of "imaginability" in Kripke's argument; Michael Tye, "The Subjective Qualities of Experience", in *Mind*, VOLUME XCV (1986), pp.1-17; pp.2-6.

<sup>2</sup>Kripke's own view of the ontological status of possible worlds is intermediate between the strict realism such as that of David Lewis, and the instrumental view that sees the concept as only a technical device for semantics; cf. Kripke, 1972, pp.266-273 and especially pp.289-290; cf. also John Passmore, *Recent Philosophers: A Supplement to A Hundred Years of Philosophy* (London: Duckworth, 1985), pp.57-58.

<sup>3</sup>Kolakowski, 1985, p.2; cf. also, Milič Čapek, "Immediate and Mediate Memory", in *Process Studies*, VOLUME VII (1977), pp.90-96; p.90.

<sup>4</sup>We might also include here what J.J.C. Smart says about the logic of our statements concerning lightning and electrical discharge.

existent. Furthermore, Churchland's essentialism also promotes the notion that the ephemeral is a homogeneous entity. Believing that salt is not NaCl is one type of attitude, but arguing, as Churchland does, from this to the redundancy of all folk psychology, completely ignores the greater depth or tradition of some "opinions" over others. It is as though history and time itself count for nothing. It may only be a difference of degree, but differences of degree still exist. Obviously it is tempting to see the contents of consciousness, its beliefs and expressions, as "a late and epiphenomenal side-show on the surface of being."<sup>1</sup> But while mind may be an emergent from some more physically solid reality (though Bergson would dispute this assumption), this does not make it any the less real. As Bergson asks: "From the fact that a being is action can one conclude that its existence is evanescent?"<sup>2</sup>

There is a close connection between one's philosophical picture of time and one's conception of the mind-body relation. Reductionist or eliminativist strategies in the philosophy of mind are often underwritten by a neglect of or outright hostility towards the reality of time's passage and the consequent novelty of the present and future.<sup>3</sup> What McTaggart calls the A-theory of time is deemed too evanescent, fragile and subjective to possibly outweigh the need for something permanent (which is understood to imply something physical) characterizing reality.<sup>4</sup> Thus a non-concept of time, eternalism in one form or another, is invoked to maintain the physical present's unhindered authority. Time, or at least one notion of it, is the enemy of physicalism. If one acknowledges the reality of temporal passage then notions of the fleeting and the ephemeral can no longer be equated with the unreal and, consequently, hopes for their reduction or even elimination from existence are frustrated.

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<sup>1</sup>C. Stephen Evans, "Behaviourism as Existentialism? Ryle and Merleau-Ponty on the Mind", in *The Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, VOLUME XIV (1983), pp.65-78; p.76.

<sup>2</sup>CM, p.305n19 [Q, p.1382n1].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. for example, Donald C. Williams, "The Myth of Passage", in R.M. Gale ed., *The Philosophy of Time: A Collection of Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1968), pp.98-116.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. J.M.E. McTaggart, "The Unreality of Time", in *Mind*, VOLUME XVII (1908), pp.457-474. According to Lacey (1989, p.56) Bergson clearly presents himself as a "thoroughgoing A-theorist."

We hope by now to have shown both the significance possibility holds for Bergson as well as its rightful claim (in opposition to space) to be the primary *bête noir* of his most important philosophical analyses. And yet the sharp picture we have presented is about to be put out of focus, for Bergson writes a good deal on possibility that either lies uncomfortably with or flagrantly contradicts what we have hitherto understood as his conception of it. Two questions of overriding importance raise themselves, the first concerning the psychologistic nature of Bergson's conception of possibility, the second his own ambivalence towards the ontological status of the possible. In attempting a clarification of these problems, a matter of fundamental importance will arise regarding the significance of perspectival thinking for his own philosophy.

## Chapter Four:

### *The Problems of Possibility: Psychologism and Perspectivism*

#### *Psychologism*

According to Bergson, each new present can, through an act of mind, become causally linked with various earlier states out of which it is said to have "emerged". One other illustration of this comes in an examination from the "Retrograde Movement of the True Growth of Truth" of the relationship between the colours red, yellow and orange.<sup>1</sup> Imagining that our experience was such that we had had no perception of strong red or yellow but only various hues of orange (through living perhaps in a certain environment), Bergson asks whether orange would then be composed of those two colours as we consider it to be today. His answer is no. Like Romanticism, simply by coming into being, red or yellow create their own possibility in antecedent states of affairs. Previously there was only orange in the orange, now there is the admixture of red and yellow. Solely because a new viewpoint has evolved, what was a simple state is now compound and what was something new is now a mere consequent. And yet Bergson is not talking here about our beliefs concerning orange, red and yellow; he is talking about the colours themselves. An analysis of orange similar to this occurs in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* and it is not surprising that at least one commentator has found it "strange," not knowing whether its significance is epistemological or more than that.<sup>2</sup>

The reason why it is strange is this. When we talk of possibility we can talk of many things. We can refer to physical possibility; metaphysical possibility (is it metaphysically possible for minds to exist without a body?); logical possibility (can the same mind exist both with and without the same body at the same time?) and epistemic possibility (situations left undecided within some body of knowledge).<sup>3</sup> Yet Bergson makes no such distinctions as these, preferring to speak simply of possibility in general. Indeed, this apparent lack of fine-tuning in his thought is evident in a number of areas of his time-

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *CM*, pp.26-27/25-26 [*Q*, pp.1266-1267].

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *TSMR*, p.294 [*Q*, p.1225] and Lacey, 1989, p.184.

<sup>3</sup>We take this list from Blackburn, 1984, p.213.



theory. For example, it is said that both memory and the past are essential to duration: through memory the past is maintained in the present and through this retention, the novelty of the present is ensured.<sup>1</sup> But which is it that is maintained, my past as I remember it or the past itself? There is certainly a major difference between the two, yet Bergson invariably fails to make the distinction, speaking interchangeably about my past, memory, and the past.<sup>2</sup>

Taken together, these shortcomings in Bergson's characterization of time point to what looks like a lack of discrimination between what is subjective and what is objective. In other words, he seems to make no division between what might be called "cosmic" and "phenomenological" time, or simpler still, between the physical and the psychological.<sup>3</sup> And it is this of course that has led to the accusation that, rather than failing to clarify a distinction, Bergson is actually making no distinction at all between the physical and the psychological. Indeed, Bergson himself once said that all "true positivity" has "to be defined in psychological terms."<sup>4</sup> Thus it is argued that Bergsonian philosophy is a psychologism reducing properly objective categories (the past, the logical, the physical) to individual, subjective, and psychological ones.<sup>5</sup>

Yet as Mark Notturmo tells us in his extensive study of the topic, a multitude of sins are covered under the word "psychologism."<sup>6</sup> In Frege's case, he tells us, it was seen as "a

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *CM*, p.211/179 [*Q*, p.1411].

<sup>2</sup>Cf. again *CM*, p.211/179 [*Q*, p.1411], and in particular, *CE*, p.5 [*Q*, p.498]: "the piling up of *the* past upon *the* past goes on without relaxation", then on the next page [*Q*, p.498]: "it is with *our* entire past, including the original bent of our soul, that we desire, will and act." Then on this same page [*Q*, p.499]: "From this survival of *the* past it follows that consciousness cannot go through the same state twice." All emphases mine. Both Bertrand Russell and Jacques Maritain specifically upbraided Bergson for this conflation of memory with the past; cf. Bertrand Russell, *The Philosophy of Bergson* (London: Macmillan, 1914), pp.21-24; Jacques Maritain, *Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism*, translated by Mabelle L. Andison and J. Gordon Andison (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), pp.219-223, 231-236.

<sup>3</sup>For an outline of the differences between "cosmic", "phenomenological", and "existential" time too, cf. David Wood, *The Deconstruction of Time* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1989), pp.321-330.

<sup>4</sup>*CE*, p.220 [*Q*, p.672].

<sup>5</sup>We turn to these arguments in Chapter Five.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Mark Amadeus Notturmo, *Objectivity, Rationality and the Third Realm: Justification and the Grounds of Psychologism* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1985), pp.9-14. In many ways, the word has provided a role in philosophy rather than a positive thesis. Anti-psychologistic thinkers are often less interested in it as a thesis than as a set of consequences from any number of theses, the consequences feared most being relativism, subjectivism, scepticism and idealism.

commitment to the epistemology of empiricist justificationism."<sup>1</sup> Frege believed that only the laws of logic could provide philosophers with both *a priori* valid statements and objectively certain grounds and standards for justification and criticism.<sup>2</sup> But if such is the Fregean brand of anti-psychologism, then it is founded on what is today a shaky assumption according to Notturmo: the possibility of *a priori* knowledge. As a consequence of the work of W.V. Quine and Hilary Putnam that has weakened if not altogether removed the possibility of *a priori* valid statements, anti-psychologism "at least in a justificationist programme, is completely without grounds."<sup>3</sup> And we have already seen that Bergson too rejects the category of necessity; according to his view, even the "laws" of nature have a contingency written into them.<sup>4</sup>

But setting these criticisms of anti-psychologism aside and taking the charge against Bergson at face value, there is enough in any case in what we have learnt so far to see why it is so inappropriate. This comes to light if we turn our minds back to Bergson's ameliorated conception of space. The assumption held in common by both the psychologistic and anti-psychologistic philosopher alike (in their orthodox forms at least), is that the mind must be something, if not separate, at least essentially different from the rest of physical reality. There is already a distinction to be made then, between this psychologism and Bergson's view, for one consequence of the picture of space presented in *Matter and Memory* is that the mind is now regarded as a partly spatial entity: "the truth is that space is no more without us than within us." *Creative Evolution* continues this materialization of the mind in the following vein: "Neither is space so foreign to our nature as we imagine, nor is matter as completely extended in space as our senses and intellect represent it."<sup>5</sup> In Chapter Two we learnt of the multiplicity of forms

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<sup>1</sup>Notturmo, 1985, p.15.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Notturmo, 1985, pp. 104-107, 201, 215.

<sup>3</sup>Notturmo, 1985, p.215.

<sup>4</sup>Of course, we are equating necessity with the *a priori*, but it seems justified at least on the epistemological level. On the metaphysical level, others like Saul Kripke would question such an identification; something might be necessary *a posteriori* or contingent *a priori* (cf. Kripke, 1972, pp.261-263). But we have already seen how Kripke's argument rests on a use of possibility with which Bergson would not hold.

<sup>5</sup>*MM*, p.288 [*Q*, p.350]; *CE*, p.214 [*Q*, p.667]. This is not a materialization of the mind that denies, reduces, or eliminates its contents in order to facilitate this process; it retains these contents as an aspect

that Bergson predicates of space. What we need to add to that now is the fact that Bergson does the same for mind and allows these different layers of mind and matter to interpenetrate at various levels and in varying degrees.<sup>1</sup> In the orthodox sense of the physical and the psychological, Bergson would probably be the first to acknowledge the very real difference between the two. But in their Bergsonian sense, the distinction between them is not so set. If there is a Bergsonian psychology, it does not propose that an empirical psychology be used as the paradigm on which the rest of a separate reality can be modelled, for that would only reduce one pole of the bifurcation to the other. Rather, it espouses an entity that stretches itself towards and impregnates itself into the rest of reality, just as the rest of reality stretches itself towards and impregnates itself into the psychological. There is an element of each existing in the fringes of the other so that the psychic is ineliminable even from the most objective and physical temporality, just as the material is ineliminable from the psychical: "neither matter nor consciousness can be explained apart from one another."<sup>2</sup>

Of course, one could object that this defence simply misses the point. The charge of psychologism concerns logical truth; it is not concerned with the confusion of psychological categories with physical ones, but of logical truths with psychological facts. Yet we have already dealt with logical truths in so far as they might be thought to carry the force of necessity. In this regard, the Bergsonian defence would highlight the illegitimacy of the necessity-contingency disjunction. In due course we will also see just how closely connected to the physical world Bergson finds the concepts of mathematics and logic. If this connection is valid, then far from missing the point, our defence of Bergson is right on target. But before we can come to that, we must work our way through one remaining difficulty for Bergson's conception of possibility.

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of the material. It is an inflation of the material rather than a reduction of the mental; but more about this must wait until Chapter Eleven.

<sup>1</sup>His views on intentionality which pertain to this will be investigated in Chapter Six.

<sup>2</sup>*ME*, p.23 [*Q*, p.828].

## *Multiplying the Possibilities*

According to Deleuze, for Bergson: "The whole source of the false problems and the illusions that overwhelm us lies in this disregard for true differences in kind."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, he goes on, Bergson's method consists firstly in discovering those terms between which "*there could not* be a difference in kind."<sup>2</sup> When these have been discovered we will be left with terms that can be divided according to the natural articulations of the real.<sup>3</sup> Deleuze's analysis refers us to Bergson's discussion of "general Ideas."<sup>4</sup> There he writes of the "small number of ideas which translate essential resemblances. [...] ...what one might call objective generalities inherent in reality itself. ...lending something of their firmness to genera that are wholly artificial."<sup>5</sup> There are three types of these essential resemblances: biological ones such as the organs, tissues and cells which "make up living beings;"<sup>6</sup> physical ones like qualities, elements and physical forces; and conceptual ones such as our own cultural and economic artefacts.<sup>7</sup>

But does this not go completely against all Bergson has written about the possible and the real? For example, as for the "objective generalities" of organs, tissues and cells, when referring to the mechanist's conception of perception, we earlier found Bergson saying that "[w]e have the act of seeing, which is simple, and we have an infinity of elements, and of reciprocal actions of these elements on each other, by means of which the anatomist and the physiologist reconstitute that simple act."<sup>8</sup> Just as we attempt to explain Romanticism by reconstituting it from the nascent romanticism of French Classicism, so we take the real biological function of seeing and reconstitute it from its possible elements: organs, tissues and cells. And yet in the passage quoted above, Bergson is advocating these elements as precisely what "make up living beings."

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<sup>1</sup>Deleuze, 1988, p.23.

<sup>2</sup>Deleuze, 1988, p.25.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Deleuze, 1988, p.18.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Deleuze, 1988, p.116n9 and *CM*, pp.60-71/52-61 [*Q*, pp.1294-1303].

<sup>5</sup>*CM*, p.65/56 [*Q*, p.1298].

<sup>6</sup>*CM*, p.66/57 [*Q*, pp.1298-1299].

<sup>7</sup>Cf. *CM*, p.70/60 [*Q*, p.1302].

<sup>8</sup>*TSMR*, p.207 [*Q*, p.1152].

However, this apparent inconsistency does not exist in a vacuum; even in "The Possible and the Real" there is an ambiguity as to the status of the possible. At times he does not deny the possible outright,<sup>1</sup> but only its existence now in order to predict the future. The present reality can be said to legitimately create the possible, but solely when it is as a means to explain the present. Therefore the possible does now exist, not for the future, but for the present: "But that one can put the possible there [in the past], or rather that the possible may put itself there at any moment, is not to be doubted."<sup>2</sup> The error concerning our notion of the possible is here said to arise when we think that the possible is less than the real and that the real is its fulfilment, or in other words, when we use the possible as a synonym for the future. The real unforeseeable future becomes the "future anterior", the future anticipated.<sup>3</sup> In terms of a present made possible by the past, the possible here does appear to have a truth to it; a possible work of art, once created "will then be real, and by that very fact it becomes retrospectively or retroactively possible."<sup>4</sup> It is in terms of a future made possible by the present that possibility is no more than an illusion.

In *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* what Bergson describes as the "law of dichotomy" can throw some light on the problems we have raised. What he presents is a "law which apparently brings about a materialization, by a mere splitting up, of tendencies which began by being two photographic views, so to speak, of one and the same tendency."<sup>5</sup> This "splitting up" is said to pertain to, amongst other things, reflex and voluntary actions, instinct and intelligence, and the animal and the vegetable. In each of these pairings, the two represent the present state of two lines diverging from the one original source, that source being the activity of the *élan* diversifying as it grows.<sup>6</sup> Now the status of these divergent lines is explicitly put in terms of the possible and the real when Bergson speaks of reflex and voluntary action as embodying "two views, now

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<sup>1</sup>When he does, he describes any notion of possibility as merely "the mirage of the present in the past" (*CM*, p.119/101 [*Q*, p.1341]). Cf. also the introduction to *CM* (p.27/26 [*Q*, p.1267]) where the possible is described as "never being...more than the mirage, in the indefinite past, of reality that has come into being."

<sup>2</sup>*CM*, p.119/101 [*Q*, p.1340].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Jankélévitch, 1959, pp.21, 61.

<sup>4</sup>*CM*, pp.118-119/100 [*Q*, p.1340].

<sup>5</sup>*TSMR*, p.296 [*Q*, p.1227].

<sup>6</sup>Cf. *TSMR*, p.294 [*Q*, p.1226]; *CE*, pp.119, 142, 184 [*Q*, pp.591, 609-610, 643].

rendered possible, of a primordial, indivisible activity, which was neither the one nor the other, but which becomes retroactively, through them, both at once."<sup>1</sup> The possible is no "mirage" here, it is made real by the real.

More interesting still is the fact that Bergson introduces his law of dichotomy through the analysis of the colour orange we alluded to when examining the version given in the "Retrograde Movement of the True Growth of Truth".<sup>2</sup> Though the exposition in both cases is the same, saying that orange *will* come to be composed of red and yellow with the discovery of red and yellow, it is used to make different points in each. In the earlier essay where he is talking about the retroactive movement of truth, that is, of the real's creation of the possible, it is used to show how emergents like red and yellow can make a simple like orange into a compound while at the same time transforming themselves into its causal antecedents. But in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* the analysis is used to show how emergents (such as instinct and intelligence) really do come from some antecedent. Here he seems to be making an ontological point about the two being true aspects of the one. In its first presentation its use appears to be more epistemological, concerning our exploitation of possibility in order to facilitate our explanation of the emergence of the present from the past.<sup>3</sup> In the second it seems as if Bergson believes both that *we* create possibles (an epistemological point that one might think would testify *against* the reality of the possible) and that the *real* makes them (an ontological point vouching *for* the *posterior* reality of the possible). Perhaps then there is further significance to be found in that passage from "The Possible and the Real" where Bergson says, "that one can put the possible there [in the past], *or rather that the possible may put itself there* at any moment, is not to be doubted."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *TSMR*, p.294 [*Q*, p.1226].

<sup>2</sup> In the footnotes to *CM*'s analysis of orange he tells us that, publication dates notwithstanding, the analysis in *TSMR* was composed after that of *CM* ("Retrograde Movement of the True Growth of Truth" was written in 1922, *TSMR*, in 1932); cf. *CM*, p.301n3 [*Q*, 1266n1].

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *CM*, p.25/24 [*Q*, pp.1266-1267].

<sup>4</sup> *CM*, p.119/101 [*Q*, p.1340], my italics.

We can also adapt these findings concerning possibility to further our understanding of Bergson's attitude towards homogeneous space. This brings us back first to Bergson's relationship with Kant. Though there is an element of Kantian thought in *Time and Free Will*, the differences between the two outweigh the similarities. As Kant posited the realm of the noumenal in order to accommodate those things-in-themselves which necessarily transcend all human forms of sensibility and cognition, all that was left for both passive and active apprehension was one *a priori* and homogeneous form for *all* experience. For Bergson, on the other hand, homogeneity is connected with only a small portion of our experience: the social and objective part. Though *Time and Free Will* does not designate the cognitive faculty that might apprehend a non-homogeneous space, we know that it would later become a "superior intuition" capable of perceiving metaphysical reality.<sup>1</sup> However, in Bergson's later work this formation of homogeneous space also becomes a truly varying *tendency* that leads consequently to the existence of varying degrees of homogeneity and with that, various types of heterogeneous space too. Homogeneous space is no longer a simple entity but, in its purest form, an end or "limit" to which we tend:<sup>2</sup> "At bottom, it is for not having distinguished degrees in spatiality that he [Kant] has had to take space, ready made as given."<sup>3</sup>

To regard homogeneous space as an artifice is no doubt correct, but all the same it is not an illusion; it may be a "work" but it is not unreal. To deem it an illusion is to miss the movement Bergson makes beyond *Time and Free Will*. In *Matter and Memory* homogenizing activity will become a natural necessity for what is described as our bodily understanding of the world.<sup>4</sup> But if this homogeneous space is a creation of nature, how can it be an illusion? In *Creative Evolution* it is said that although matter "stretches itself out in the direction of space, it does not completely attain it;"<sup>5</sup> but if matter itself aims at it, it cannot be thoroughly unreal. Deleuze is adamant on this matter: "Although it is illusion, space is not merely grounded in our nature, but in the nature of things. Matter is

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *CM*, p.164/139 [*Q*, p.1374].

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *CE*, pp.213-214 [*Q*, p.667].

<sup>3</sup>*CE*, p.216 [*Q*, p.669].

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *MM*, p.280 [*Q*, p.345].

<sup>5</sup>*CE*, p.219 [*Q*, p.671].

effectively the "aspect" by which things tend to present to each other, and to us, only differences in degree."<sup>1</sup> Indeed (and ignoring his confusing use of the word "illusion"), Deleuze also brings this same principle to bear in relation to the status of the possible: "The *retrograde movement* of the true is not merely an illusion *about* the true, but belongs *to* the true itself."<sup>2</sup> It would therefore be inappropriate to specify whether homogeneous space or possibility was a good or bad metaphysical entity. Simply because the homogenization of space or the explanation of the present with the possible are born in part through the activities of the subject, it does not follow that they are then unreal. What can come across in a first reading of Bergson's writings on possibility as an inconsistent attitude towards its ontological status, is really best described as a more sophisticated and unorthodox conception than first thought imaginable.

Thus, apropos of what we saw Bergson say on the objectivity of certain essential resemblances, we can now reveal that in the same passage he also writes that it is

*as if* life itself had general ideas... *as if* it followed a certain limited number of structural plans, *as if* it had instituted general properties of life, finally and above all as if...it had wished to arrange the living in a hierarchical series.<sup>3</sup>

These unreal comparatives are not poor realities, for almost as a conclusion drawn from the above Bergson immediately adds that "in principle it is always in reality itself...that our subdivisions into species, genera, etc. - generalities which we translate into general ideas - will be based."<sup>4</sup> In a reality where actions are prior to the things which act, even the action produced in conformity with an untenable *ideal* must itself inscribe this ideal onto reality.

The question finally then becomes this: what is the real? When is a possible the product of a *retrospective* fallacy (*only* our placing of it in the past) and when is it the product of a real *retroactive* truth?<sup>5</sup> In the former, the possible would be wholly artificial, while in

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<sup>1</sup>Deleuze, 1988, p.34.

<sup>2</sup>Deleuze, 1988, p.34.

<sup>3</sup>CM, pp.65-66/56-57 [Q, p.1298].

<sup>4</sup>CM, p.66/57 [Q, p.1298].

<sup>5</sup>Deleuze (1988, p.96) seems to be making some attempt at an answer to this when he speaks of two types of dualism in Bergson: "In the first type, it is a reflexive dualism, which *results from the*



the latter, it would be a real illusion. However, is not the whole point of Bergson's "full relativity" in *Duration and Simultaneity* the fact that minds are a part of the real? If this is so, how then can it be said that the possibilities wholly created by the subject are artificial while those created by the subject in conformity with the real's are not? Bergson writes that the complexity of the perceptual organ belongs to "the views we take in turning around it", whilst the simplicity of the perceptual act belongs only to itself.<sup>1</sup> Here it would seem that biological generalities arise with the existence of multiple perspectives: but how do points of view like these gain such leverage over the nature of physical reality? When does the partial point of view win this admittance to the objective world? These are matters for our next chapter. We move on then to explore the diverse realities that can be instituted simply through the sheer existence of different points of view.

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*decomposition of an impure composite.... In the second type it is a genetic dualism, the result of the differentiation of a Simple or a Pure."* What he says here, however, is in need of a good deal of elaboration. For now, we will continue to set the problems we hope to eventually remove.

<sup>1</sup>CE, p.95 [Q, p.571].

## *Chapter Five:*

### *A Bergsonian Multiplicity*

#### *The Critique of Nothingness*

The purpose of the present chapter is to unravel some of the entanglements our last chapter created in its discussion of possibility. We will try to do this in two ways. Firstly, by exposing Bergson's conception of Being, we hope to dislodge the strange oppositions we have encountered between artificial and real illusions. Secondly, we will complete our reply to the charge of psychologism against Bergson's philosophy by applying what will emerge as the fundamental notion in this ontology, that of "dissociation", to the abstract spaces of mathematics and logic. What will emerge from all of this is a thoroughgoing ontological pluralism, one that we will subsequently illustrate through Bergson's treatment of Zeno's paradoxes and thereafter by applying it to an example of psychological materialism to which we have not yet referred. We begin, however, with the aforesaid analysis of Bergsonian ontology and in particular with what many take to be the royal road to understanding Bergsonism as such: his critique of nothingness.

What Deleuze wrote about illusions belonging to "the true" brings us on generally to the question of the real. Deleuze's "post-structural"<sup>1</sup> appropriation of Bergson has allowed him to reveal the egalitarian nature of his thought. But how far does such egalitarianism go? Would it rid us of *all* talk of the non-existence or illusion of possibility? Deleuze paints Bergson as an early philosopher of *difference*, or more specifically, of the differentiation of difference:

Duration is always the location and the environment of differences in kind; it is even their totality and multiplicity. There are no differences in kind except in duration - while space is nothing other than the location, the environment, the totality of differences in degree.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Joseph N. Riddel, "Modern Times: Stein, Bergson, and the Ellipses of "American" Writing," in Burwick and Douglass, 1992, pp.330-367; p.341.

<sup>2</sup>Deleuze, 1988, p.32; cf. also, Deleuze, 1988, pp.31, 38, 93.

Whatever may be thought of Deleuze's own philosophy of difference, what he writes on Bergson is no distortion.<sup>1</sup> In *Time and Free Will* homogeneous space is defined as "a principle of differentiation other than that of qualitative differentiation."<sup>2</sup> Deleuze takes his cue primarily from two areas of Bergsonian thought: the concept of multiplicity and his critique of nothingness.<sup>3</sup> We will concentrate on the critique of nothingness first.

The motivations behind this critique seem varied. It has been said to underwrite his rejection of necessity.<sup>4</sup> Alternatively, it has been connected with his anti-mechanistic philosophy. Mechanistic explanations which go from part to whole require the milieu of an ontological vacuum in which to operate.<sup>5</sup> Thus the need for a concept of nothingness and with it a corresponding need for a critique of such a concept by any anti-mechanistic philosophy.<sup>6</sup> But whatever the motivation behind it, Bergson's critique pursues a clear objective: that of exposing the confusion latent within the ontological question of why Being rather than nothing exists.<sup>7</sup> The confusion is similar to that which posits the reality of the possible, for it will only appear as a question if one posits nothingness first and Being second (just as one might erroneously think that possibility pre-exists reality). But nothingness is not only secondary to Being; be it imagined or conceived, it is also secondary to the act of negation (which Bergson calls "suppression"); the former derives from the latter. Moreover, at the heart of negation itself there is something else again: the emotions of desire and regret. The startling notion that there might have been or could be nothing rather than something pertains to no more than "what we are seeking, we desire.

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<sup>1</sup>As has been remarked (cf. Paul Douglass, "Deleuze's Bergson: Bergson Redux," in Burwick and Douglass, 1992, pp.368-388; p.375), it may be a creative reading, but it is not a twisted one. Bergson wrote of differentiation before Deleuze makes him speak of it; in fact, Gillian Rose (cf. *Dialectic of Nihilism: Post-Structuralism and Law* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), pp.87-108) puts the shoe on the other foot, talking of Deleuze embodying "The New Bergsonism." Vincent Descombes (*Modern French Philosophy*, translated by L. Scott-Fox and J.M. Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p.26) describes Deleuze as a "disciple of Bergson".

<sup>2</sup>*TFW*, p.95 [Q, p.64].

<sup>3</sup>For confirmation, cf. Douglass, 1992, pp. 373, 375, 372.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Sullivan, 1983, pp.80-81.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Jankélévitch, 1959, p.201.

<sup>6</sup>We will be returning to this vacuum that empowers a mechanistic view of the living in Chapter Eleven.

<sup>7</sup>The *locus classicus* of Bergson's critique of nothingness is in the fourth chapter of *CE*, pp.288-314 [Q, pp.726-747], though it is repeated in *CM* (pp.113-116/96-98 [Q, pp.1336-1338]), where it is subsumed under the more fundamental critique of possibility. We will be examining it mostly in the terms set by the later presentation.

expect."<sup>1</sup> Our desires lag behind reality and are only interested in what might have been. What should be an acceptance of what is, is instead a desire that this reality be something else: "Suppression thus means substitution."<sup>2</sup> But when metaphysics attempts to universalize such a nothingness into the idea that there might not have been anything at all, it necessarily falls into absurdity. If negation is substitution, then a negation of everything would be a complete substitution; but for what? There is nothing left to substitute for Being. The idea has all the "emptiness of its dissatisfaction" rather than the "fullness of things".<sup>3</sup>

Yet there is something paradoxical about Bergson's critique of nothingness as well, for in denying its existence he is himself attributing a nothingness to it. The concept of nothingness is one of those "negative factors against which he [Bergson] directs nihilating arguments; yet negativity is, in his philosophy, *denied*."<sup>4</sup> If this is the case, then surely Bergson would have been wiser to follow the relativization of relativity in *Duration and Simultaneity* and critique his own critique of nothingness - by negating it. The idea of nothingness would not *not* exist, it would simply exist less. And absurd though this notion may seem, its presence has actually been observed already within Bergson's own analysis. R.M. Gale's treatment of it points up two interesting facts.<sup>5</sup> The first is that Bergson holds to a redundancy theory of existence, in which case, any attempt to represent nothingness will necessarily represent it as existent and thereby fall flat on its face.<sup>6</sup> But Gale believes that the consequences of this thesis are also devastating for Bergson's main assertion that all negation is at base a substitution. If negation is a substitution then the nature of non-existence itself is transformed to ultimately mean "incompatibility". But:

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<sup>1</sup>CM, p.114/97 [Q, p.1337].

<sup>2</sup>CM, p.114/97 [Q, p.1337].

<sup>3</sup>CM, p.116/98 [Q, p.1338].

<sup>4</sup>P.A.Y. Gunter, "Bergson and Sartre: The Rise of French Existentialism", in Burwick and Douglass, 1992, pp.230-244; p.240; Merleau-Ponty says (1968b, p.196) that in his critique "Bergson proves too much".

<sup>5</sup>Cf. R.M. Gale, "Bergson's Analysis of the Concept of Nothing", in *The Modern Schoolman* VOLUME LI (1973-1974), pp.269-300.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. CE, pp.300-302 [Q, pp.736-737].

Bergson's analysis of thinking that A is non-existent as thinking that A is incompatible with some existent reality or actual reality in general not only does not require (1) [the redundancy thesis] but is rendered absurd by it, since every negative existential judgement would turn out to be necessarily false.<sup>1</sup>

This is all the more interesting when one notes, as Gale states at the outset of his article, that the aim of Bergson's critique is not simply to deny the existence of the absolute idea of nothing alone, but also to argue against "partial" or "relative" nothings or privations.<sup>2</sup> If partial nothings are denied then it is certainly not simply absurd but actually consistent that every negative existential judgement should itself be false; after all, there is nothing negative in Bergson's philosophy. But if one denies a denial what is the status of one's own denial?

This brings us on to Gale's second point, which is that Bergson appears to assume "that *existence* is a vague term that admits of degrees, so that one thing can have more existence than another."<sup>3</sup> Yet what Gale sees as a vice (he adds that this is certainly not "our" ordinary concept of existence), can also be seen as a virtue. It is not that there are degrees of the one Being, there is no one Being at all, simply different beings. Bergson does not hold to an "ontological difference" between beings and Being. Being is a logical abstraction; his critique of nothingness actually counters Being as well and consequently (as Jacques Maritain for one has lamented) "strikes a blow at all metaphysics"<sup>4</sup> (or at least a certain type of metaphysics). Bergson's may be a philosophy of plenitude but it is not a philosophy of "*L'Une*."<sup>5</sup> Deleuze himself states Bergson's case emphatically: "There are differences in being and yet nothing negative."<sup>6</sup> Becoming does not require an immobile *nihil* to start from nor an immobile Being to aim for; becoming, like movement and now like difference, exists for itself.

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<sup>1</sup>Gale, 1973-1974, p.287.

<sup>2</sup>Gale, 1973-1974, p.272. Cf. for example, *CE*, p.305 [*Q*, p.739].

<sup>3</sup>Gale, 1973-1974, p.288n17.

<sup>4</sup>Maritain, 1968, p.316.

<sup>5</sup>Jeanne Delhomme, *Vie et Conscience de la Vie: Essai sur Bergson* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954), p.5.

<sup>6</sup>Deleuze, 1988, p.46.

So with the denial of negativity there comes almost axiomatically the affirmation of multiplicity and plurality, of types of reality. Difference cannot be reduced to *not* being something else, it is its own justification.<sup>1</sup> Though Bergson will continue to use terms like being and order after he has rejected their opposites, he now uses them in a non-oppositional sense. This multiplication of entities beyond the needs of abstract Being is a strategy whose efficacy we will see again and again. Bergson exhorts us to see another being, where we would rather see nothing. Where others see disorder, Bergson sees different types of order.<sup>2</sup> So too where Kant retains only one type of space (in virtue of the relativity of our spatial understanding), Bergson will allow the multiple spaces our understanding uncovers their own reality.

Various commentators have commented on this pluralism, writing that "[d]uration wants and produces difference;" that "Bergson's philosophy is the philosophy of levels of reality" and that "a description of his metaphysics in terms of reality and appearance is certainly not a happy one and is not to be found in his philosophy."<sup>3</sup> Bergson, it is said, affirms "the specific nature of each degree of reality..." where "[e]ach plateau of existence constitutes an irreducible "excess-being" ["*plus-être*"] that one cannot explain by mechanisms proper to the previous plateau."<sup>4</sup> But we should let Bergson speak for himself, here opposing a philosophy of difference to the monolithic Kantian and scientific world-view:

If there is *one* science of nature (and Kant seems to have no doubt of it), if all phenomena and all objects are spread on one and the same plane, so as to produce a unique, continuous experience that is entirely on the surface (and such is the constant hypothesis of the *Critique of Pure Reason*), then there is only one type of causality in the world, all phenomenal causality implies rigorous determination and it is necessary to search for freedom outside of experience.

But if there is not *one* science but several *sciences* of nature, if there is not *one* scientific determinism but several scientific *determinisms* of unequal rigor, then it is necessary to distinguish between different *planes of experience*; experience is no more simply on the surface, it also extends into the depths; finally it is possible by insensible transitions,

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Gilles Deleuze, "La Conception de la Différence chez Bergson", in *Les Etudes Bergsoniennes*, VOLUME IV (1956), pp.77-112; p.96.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *CE*, pp.232-237 [*Q*, pp.681-685]; Cf. also, Delhomme, 1954, p.70.

<sup>3</sup>de Lattre, 1990, p.162; Daniel Herman, *The Philosophy of Henri Bergson* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1980), pp.15, 54. Jankélévitch (1959, p.103) describes Bergsonism as a "philosophy of *planes of reality*."

<sup>4</sup>Marie Cariou, *Lectures Bergsoniennes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990), pp.63, 64.

without any sharp break, without quitting the terrain of facts, to go from physical necessity to moral freedom.<sup>1</sup>

Bergson's "working hypothesis" is "disunity:" of the sciences; of being; of the ego;<sup>2</sup> and even of causality. So whenever (and if ever) we deny, we must not assert a non-existence but simply a lesser existence. All thought, even "erroneous" thought, stands for something.<sup>3</sup> "Error itself", Bergson writes, "is a source of truth."<sup>4</sup> "Yes and no are sterile in philosophy. What is interesting...is *in what measure?*"<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the only error which is not instructive is the one that denies the existence of something absolutely; the correct way can only be a question of fixing something's just place in the whole.<sup>6</sup> The objection to this that says that one can deny the content of another's belief without necessarily denying the belief itself as a belief, misses the point. The belief *is* the belief in its content, and it is this belief that demands acknowledgement. In the context of our broader thesis, the other's point of view, even if that other is an earlier version of oneself, is irreducible and undeniable; it exists and as such has a reality. The existence of even the most ephemeral moment, its beliefs and opinions included, cannot be denied and any philosophy that recognizes "an effective action and a reality" to time must realize this.<sup>7</sup>

But the Bergsonian affirmation of multiplicity is not an endorsement of relativism; there is "a good and a bad" for Bergson.<sup>8</sup> Limited knowledge is one thing, relative knowledge something else again.<sup>9</sup> As we have already seen in *Duration and Simultaneity* and as we will learn more when we come to *Matter and Memory*, while the relative implies a lost absolute, the limited opens itself up to the whole. The differences within reality, as we

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<sup>1</sup>*M*, pp.493-494.

<sup>2</sup>We will investigate his views on the ego later.

<sup>3</sup>In *TSMR*, p.251 [*Q*, p.1189], Bergson calls the idea of nothing a "natural" illusion.

<sup>4</sup>*M*, p.331.

<sup>5</sup>*M*, p.477.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Simon Frank, "L'Intuition Fondamentale de Bergson", in Béguin and Thévenaz, 1943, pp.187-195; p.193.

<sup>7</sup>*CE*, p.17 [*Q*, p.508].

<sup>8</sup>Jankélévitch, 1959, p.220.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. *M*, p.774.

will see, carry a differing value along with their differing existence, not because they are variations upon a transcendental theme, but because of a principle immanent to themselves and constitutive of their type of being. The only hierarchical scale to be found in Bergsonism, we argue, pertains to the degree in which we recognize the value of life: of those others and of that alterity that extends beyond us. This new absolutism arises out of a full relativity that takes the integrity of perspective, both of others and of oneself, as its sole directive. One commentator has said that Bergsonism, "without being a philosophy of judgement", is none the less animated by the "fundamental concern" of recreating the "accord" between spirits.<sup>1</sup> We would go further and say that any hierarchy in Bergsonism must not be grounded on a principle of nature above us, but on our own greater or lesser neglect of others' points of view. Another interpreter has written that Bergson can only talk of greater or lesser if he has some notion of a purity or limit.<sup>2</sup> The limits of pure perception and pure memory described in *Matter and Memory* come to mind in this respect, and it will be the task of the second part of our work to integrate the significance of these two very troublesome notions into the broader thesis we have been propounding here.

### ***A Philosophy of Dissociation***

In *Matter and Memory* the "levels of reality" are presented in the vocabulary of the "virtual" and the "actual". Deleuze sees the notion of virtuality (and so that of actuality as well) coming to play an increasingly important role as Bergson's philosophy developed.<sup>3</sup> But with these two concepts comes another, "dissociation", that represents the movement between the virtual and the actual. The virtual pertains to that which is more past and with that more "in" *durée*, more in a state of mutual interpenetration with other elements. The movement from a state of interpenetration or unity to that of disintegration or disunity (or lesser unity), is a dissociative movement. What was a purely psychological term

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<sup>1</sup>Fabre-Luce de Gruson, 1959, p.198.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. de Lattre, 1990, p.76.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Deleuze, 1988, p.43.



prevalent in the Nineteenth Century,<sup>1</sup> is given a thoroughly ontological bearing by Bergson. It is fundamental to a great deal of his thinking and though its presence can be masked by the vocabulary in which it is set, the continuous use of the language of differentiation, divergent development or growing disharmony is enough to indicate its ubiquity.<sup>2</sup> The *élan* is one representation of it. "Life," he writes, proceeds "by dissociation and division."<sup>3</sup> The individual is not what has been composed from cells so much as what "has made the cells by means of [a] dissociation" of itself.<sup>4</sup> Our knowledge also, says Bergson, far from being "made up of a gradual association" is the "effect of a sudden dissociation."<sup>5</sup> Memory too works through dissociation, firstly taking resemblances which are perceived without any notion of difference, and then "decomposing" them into individualities: "dissociation is what we begin with."<sup>6</sup> Even counting, as we will see, is a "dissociation" whereby a given qualitative multiplicity is reduced to a homogeneous quantity.<sup>7</sup>

The "Law of Dichotomy" is another of its manifestations. It describes how a single tendency can be split into two opposing ones simply through isolated points of view being taken upon it.<sup>8</sup> These "photographic views", being only partial, are necessarily unbalanced and consequently lead to Bergson's second law of "twofold frenzy". Each tendency goes off in its own direction until "when we can go no further, we turn back, with all we have acquired, to set off in the direction from which we had turned aside."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The notion has currently fallen into disuse; cf. Charles Rycroft, "Dissociation of the Personality", in R.L. Gregory, ed., *The Oxford Companion to the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp.197-198.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. André Robinet, "Bergson et "L'Indien Sioux", in *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, VOLUME XLV (1991), pp.97-107; pp.100-101.

<sup>3</sup>*CE*, p.94 [*Q*, p.571]; cf. also, *CE*, pp.106, 272 [*Q*, pp.581, 714]; Georges Mourélos, *Bergson et les Niveaux de Réalité* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964), pp.150; Robinet, 1965, p.103.

<sup>4</sup>*CE*, p.274 [*Q*, p.715].

<sup>5</sup>*CM*, p.161/137 [*Q*, p.1372]; cf. also, *MM*, p.236 [*Q*, p.318], where understanding is said to be "a certain faculty of dissociating".

<sup>6</sup>*MM*, p.215 [*Q*, p.304].

<sup>7</sup>Cf. *TFW*, pp.75-90 [*Q*, pp.51-61]. What is given in the French (*Q*, p.59) as "dissocie" and "dissociation" in the description of counting, is translated in the English (p.87) as "separate" and "separation" respectively.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. *TSMR*, pp.296-300 [*Q*, pp.1227-1231].

<sup>9</sup>*TSMR*, p.297 [*Q*, p.1228], Bergson discusses the case of Epicureanism and Stoicism. Their dichotomous pursuit of pleasure and the ascetic actually implicate each other in their common origin (that Bergson traces back to Socrates). Where the one seeks happiness in the abundance of pleasurable things, the other seeks it in an independence from them. But both revolve around the same view: that

The ease with which the one tendency can be exchanged for the other is ample testimony of their joint heritage. Related to these laws from *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* is the following, written twenty nine years before. Certain concepts, Bergson writes

ordinarily go by pairs and represent the two opposites. There is scarcely any concrete reality upon which one cannot take two opposing views at the same time and which is consequently not subsumed under the two antagonistic concepts. Hence a thesis and an antithesis that it would be vain for us to try logically to reconcile, for the simple reason that never, with concepts or points of view, will you make a thing. But from the object, seized by intuition, one passes without difficulty in a good many cases to the two contrary concepts, and because thesis and antithesis are seen to emerge from the reality, one grasps at the same time how this thesis and antithesis are opposed and how they are reconciled.<sup>1</sup>

Here we have a case of "dissociation" being prior to "association". According to Bergson, there is no point in trying to explain the relationship between things by associating their actual properties. Any connectedness that exists between objects, intentional relations in particular, is a residue of a unity that has dissociated in separate directions.<sup>2</sup> Bergson's thesis concerning the possible and the real is another aspect of the same idea: the supposed causal antecedents of the real come with its actualization and not before. The real and truly new present is only ever *re-constituted* out of consequents recast as their own possibility. Evolution, time, or change is primarily a process of dissociation and only secondarily one that is advanced by associative activity.

The correct way of thinking about dissociation is through "qualitative integration". Bergson proposes that "*one of the objects of metaphysics is to operate differentiations and qualitative integrations.*"<sup>3</sup> In examining the world around, we must firstly realize

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happiness is related to "strength", a strength "found either in the mastering of things, or in the mastering of self which makes one independent of things" (p.300 [Q, p.1230]).

<sup>1</sup>CM, p.208/176-177 [Q, p.1409]. One can find the same view propounded as early as 1892 in Bergson's essay on *le bon sens* (cf. *M*, p.331) where he notes that "the doctrines most opposed in appearance have a common principle, that they both emerge through a slow evolution, that most often, in raging against what one believes to be the opinion of others, one also condemns one's own, and that error itself is a source of truth."

<sup>2</sup>One example of this comes from *CE*(pp.182-183 [Q, pp.641-642]), where Bergson cites the sympathetic relationship between an *Ammophila* wasp and its prey. He describes how the *Ammophila*, simply by being in the presence of its prey, seems to show an intimate knowledge of the latter's nervous system in that it can sting it with such perfect control as to ensure it is paralysed but not killed (so that it can provide a living food supply for the *Ammophila*'s larvae). This sympathy (taken in the etymological sense of the word) can be seen either as what it is, a singular activity, or it can be resolved into the association of a plurality of intelligent acts; a knowledge supposedly effected through trial and error between the animal and its prey.

<sup>3</sup>CM, p.226/191 [Q, p.1423].

that many phenomena can exist in levels or degrees, thereby constituting the "differentiations" of which Bergson speaks. And then we must also realize that there are times when what is before us is not the product of a recent association, but the residue of an older dissociation. Such is the operation of a qualitative integration. The latter is no idealist reconciliation of thesis and antithesis through a future, teleological mediation.<sup>1</sup> It is a placing of oneself in the process that brought the dichotomy about. It is thought put into "reverse," attention turned "back."<sup>2</sup> It is a search, not for a "middle-term,"<sup>3</sup> but for the moment before division such that the problem is removed rather than simply averaged out. What is required is a rethinking of the dichotomy in terms of the mutual opposition of its elements. This rethinking cannot take place, however, on the level of associative and associating intellect, but only through intuiting original unities long dissociated.

To flesh out this rather stark and abstract depiction of Bergson's pluralism, we will turn to his philosophy of number and his analyses of Zeno's paradoxes of movement. Both have further significance for our own research in that the former allows us to complete our response to the charge of psychologism while the latter can be applied to an example of materialism that, oddly enough, purports to be "non-reductive."

### ***Pluralism and the Nature of Abstract Spaces***

Our previous dealings with the topic of psychologism ended with the query as to whether our defense missed the point entirely, confusing the opposition between mind and matter with that between mind and logical truth. We said then that Bergson would not have recognized the distinction, for logical, mathematical and necessary truth is itself an abstract from the physical. "[O]ur logic", he writes, "is, pre-eminently, the logic of solids."<sup>4</sup> It is time now to examine this notion (one itself that many would see as further

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Mourélos, 1964, p.160.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *CM*, pp.223, 163/190, 138 [*Q*, pp.1422, 1373].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Delhomme, 1954, p.83.

<sup>4</sup>*CE*, p.ix [*Q*, p.489].

evidence of the psychologicistic nature of his thought) through an investigation of his views on mathematics.

The essential aspect of Bergson's philosophy of number is that counting is inseparable from homogeneous space. Homogeneous space is the ideal and necessary medium through which we effect a numerical unity. Bergson's theory is therefore constructivist to the extent that it agrees with the Kantian view that numerical distinctions involve a juxtaposition of spatial entities. We will let Milič Čapek present a synopsis of Bergson's own version:

He pointed out first that a mere *enumeration* or listing of members of a certain class is not counting. When we really count instead of mere enumerating, for instance, when we count sheep in the herd, we deliberately disregard individual qualitative differences between them; in considering their number we even disregard their common features which makes them to belong to the same species and treat them as homogeneous units each of which is qualitatively identical to other and each of which still remains distinct from other. What differentiates such qualitatively undistinguishable units must be *a principle of differentiation other than qualitative* and this is precisely space.<sup>1</sup>

Through this principle of differentiation a quantitative multiplicity is effected. But before such a multiplicity can be created through the agency of space, there must firstly be given the unity to be homogenized. Bergson calls this unity a "qualitative multiplicity."<sup>2</sup> Qualitative multiplicity is the multiplicity most peculiar to consciousness; it is heterogeneous and interpenetrational. As such, it cannot be quantified, or rather, when it is quantified, it changes in kind as it happens. It changes from a particular degree of qualitiveness to a greater degree of quantitiveness.<sup>3</sup> Bergson indicates how even numbers have a qualitative element which, through daily use, can lead to each of them having their own emotional equivalent.<sup>4</sup> As such every numerical quantity could be said to have its own actual or potential quality and that an addition to a sum actually changes it in kind. The quantitative feeds off of the qualitative: "Hence it is through the quality of quantity that we form the idea of quantity without quality."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Čapek, 1971, p.176.

<sup>2</sup>TFW, p.121 [Q, p.81]; cf. also, pp.85-87, 121-123 [Q, pp.58-59, 80-82]. Deleuze (1988, pp.38-40) is one to have noted its centrality to Bergson's work.

<sup>3</sup>However, quality and quantity are not mutually exclusive concepts; they exist in an inverse proportional relationship: "quantity is always nascent quality" (CM, p.225/191 [Q, pp.1422-1423]).

<sup>4</sup>Cf. TFW, p.123 [Q, p.82].

<sup>5</sup>TFW, p.123 [Q, p.82].

Of course, counting does seem to employ perfect and *indivisible* wholes, in that the units being counted are themselves deemed perfectly equal save for their spatial location. But if homogeneous space is so central to counting, from where does this indivisibility (a characteristic usually exclusive to *durée*) arise? Bergson's answer is that it is borrowed from the act of mind implicit in the counting.<sup>1</sup> We create the unity. Once the larger number is formed, its units are given the divisibility of homogeneous space. Thinking of it as having units is really to count them again. Therefore, the formation of a number must be separated from its formed state; objectified, it seems infinitely divisible, in subjective formation, it is indivisible. Homogeneous space remains the material with which consciousness builds up number, but the mind pays more attention to its own acts than to the material with which it works; it is due to this that it gives the latter the benefit of its own attributes. A hybrid creation is formed possessing the unity of consciousness and the divisibility of space. As such, it can appear different from and even independent of both, and we are left with numbers that appear to exist in some third realm.

Anti-psychologicistic philosophers would dissent from most of these ideas. Bertrand Russell, for example, believed it was Bergson's (purportedly) strong tendency to visualize that led him to think that space and number are intimately related.<sup>2</sup> According to Russell, we could only know the twelve apostles, tribes of Israel, months of the calendar and signs of the zodiac as twelve in number, if the number twelve was something abstract and separate from each of these collections and not if there were some common property possessed by them all. To group these four collections together rather than with a cricket eleven, for example, is possible only because "what different collections of twelve units have in common...is something which cannot be pictured because it is abstract."<sup>3</sup> But Russell is mistaken in his presentation of Bergson as a strong visualizer. Space for

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *TFW*, pp.82-85 [*Q*, pp.56-58]. In the act of counting an *x* as a unit it is deemed indivisible, but in moving on to count in the next *x*, the previous past *x* is objectified and made into a spatial entity, whence it then does appear to be divisible. Its indivisible unity belongs to it then, only when it is being counted and that because all such unity really belongs to the subject counting.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Russell, 1914, pp.14-15.

<sup>3</sup>Russell, 1914, p.14

Bergson, and this is stated explicitly, is a principle of homogeneous difference and not the locale for some visual scene.<sup>1</sup>

However, it must be admitted that, even as a principle, this homogeneity does have some spatial increment within it (or why otherwise should space be deemed the primary site of homogeneity?).<sup>2</sup> But this would not be a fatal blow to Bergson's argument, for Milič Čapek, though noting the increasingly imageless nature of modern mathematics, believes that such eventualities do not preclude the existence of "*far more subtle and more elusive elements* [of spatiality] *even in the most abstract mathematical and logical thought.*"<sup>3</sup> The mathematical intuitionist L.E.J. Brouwer, for instance, believes that the principal of the excluded middle arises in part out of "an extensive group of *simple every day phenomena.*"<sup>4</sup> In a similar vein, one might ask to what degree the logical continuity of a mathematical series is free from our understanding of a spatial continuum. The metaphorical status of "logical space" in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is equally open to interrogation. If the latter is merely a metaphor, why was the particular metaphor of space chosen?<sup>5</sup> According to Čapek

there is a perfect isomorphism between physical atomism and the logical atomism of Wittgenstein: the objects of *Tractatus* are as immutable, discontinuous, indivisible and simple as the indivisible and homogeneous particles of classical physics. In both kinds of atomism, change is reduced to the changing 'configurations'...of these ultimate units.<sup>6</sup>

The modern champion of anti-psychologism was, of course, Gottlob Frege. He posited "three reefs" upon which any psychologistic philosophy of number must inevitably founder. Perhaps we can estimate whether Bergson is really propounding a

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *TFW*, p.95 [Q, p.64]. H.W. Carr's defence of Bergson that was included as a part of Russell's book ("On Mr. Russell's Reasons for Supposing that Bergson's Philosophy is not True," in Russell, 1914, pp.26-32; p.28) tells us that it is immaterial whether the image underpinning number is visual, auditory or motor, "the essential thing is that it is spatial."

<sup>2</sup>We ourselves, on the other hand, will argue later that even potential forms of space cannot be the absolute locus and source of all homogeneity and that, stemming both from a certain circularity within Bergson's thought on this issue and from his own reformulations of that thought, *representation* would be a more suitable candidate for the source of homogeneity.

<sup>3</sup>Čapek, 1971, p.182.

<sup>4</sup>L.E.J. Brouwer, "Consciousness, Philosophy and Mathematics", in *Collected Works: Volume One: Philosophy and Foundations of Mathematics*, edited by A. Heyting (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1975), pp.480-494; p.492.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. J.-C. Pariente, "Bergson et Wittgenstein", in *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, VOLUME XXIII (1969), pp.183-200; pp.198-199.

<sup>6</sup>Čapek, 1971, p.76.

psychologism in the Fregean mould by considering how his philosophy would have fared against these reefs. They are, firstly, how the sameness of the units are reconciled with their distinguishability; secondly, accounting for the numbers zero and one: and thirdly, accounting for large numbers.<sup>1</sup> We need concentrate on only the first here.<sup>2</sup> Bergson's answer to it is clear: homogeneous space provides just the right medium to synthesize the one (the sameness of the units) with the many (their distinguishability).<sup>3</sup> Now Frege also notes that the correct degree of abstraction, enough to form a genus, not so much that the particularity of the species to be numbered under this genus is dissolved, is "difficult to hit" upon.<sup>4</sup> But it is only a difficulty if it is deemed to be a mental act of abstraction. Now according to *Time and Free Will*, it is we who form this medium. But though this space may be an abstract conception that also allows for abstraction, it itself is not formed by an act of abstraction, but through an intuition.<sup>5</sup> In the later works, *Creative Evolution* in particular, it is matter itself which is given the ability to stretch itself

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<sup>1</sup>We take this account from Frege's review of Husserl's 1891 *Philosophy of Arithmetic* (cf. Gottlob Frege "Review of Dr. E. Husserl's *Philosophy of Arithmetic*", translated by E.W. Kluge, in *Mind* VOLUME LXXXI (1972), pp.321-337; p.330). Taking our account from here is all the more appropriate when we note that Aron Gurwitsch has pointed to the similarity between Bergson's "qualitative multiplicity" and Husserl's theory of the "genuine apprehension of a plurality" (cf. Aron Gurwitsch, *The Field of Consciousness* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1964), pp.140-143; p.140n127).

<sup>2</sup>The Bergsonian response to the second reef must come in two parts. The origin of the number zero is simple enough. For Bergson, it would be like infinity, less a number than a concept, namely the concept of nothingness which has behind it an act of negation inspired by desire and regret. As for the number one, we must pass from Bergson to the intuitive mathematician who Milič Čapek, at least, believes to closely parallel the Bergsonian conception of number: L.E.J. Brouwer. He too sees number as a movement of time, a quality that has been divested of all heterogeneity to form a purely quantitative and empty substratum (cf. Čapek, 1971, pp.183-184). Brouwer tells us that "the basic operation of mathematical construction is the *mental creation of the two-ity of two mathematical systems previously acquired*, and the consideration of this two-ity as a new mathematical system." (L.E.J. Brouwer, "Points and Spaces", in Brouwer, 1975, pp.522-538; p.523.) As Čapek tells us (1971, p.184) that the term 'two-ity' is alternatively written by Brouwer as 'two-oneness', we can see the strategy to be taken towards Frege's second reef of accounting for the number one. The basic *felt* difference between the modalities of present and past is also the basic distinction that arises when what was one becomes two, when what was simply present becomes now both past and previously present: two-oneness. One might suspect that Brouwer's account is too mentalistic; a Bergsonian gloss on his analysis might overcome this by reformulating the compass of the two mental faculties at the heart it: perception (of the present) and memory (of the past). As we will see, in *Matter and Memory* both perception and memory are presented through a stratified account that allows for the two to exist in gradations ranging from the officially subjective (mental) to the officially objective (physical). (We ourselves will contend further that at this objective pole, memory merges into the faculty of perception. But this must remain for later.) Frege's last reef concerned the apparent inability for any psychologism to account for the existence of large numbers by the usual process of the perception of some empirical analogue. Again, Brouwer has given the explicit answer. All such numbers only come into existence when they are known to exist: we create them (cf. Brouwer, 1975, p.482).

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *TFW*, pp.75-79 [*Q*, pp.51-54].

<sup>4</sup>Frege, 1972, p.330.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *TFW*, p.97, 138 [*Q*, pp.65-66, 91]. This is not, however, the Bergsonian intuition of the later works.

towards the ideal of space as a limit.<sup>1</sup> In neither case is this space a mental creation involving volition and deliberation.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, this matter, being able to form itself into what can be the repository of number for us, would seem to indicate that here is a Bergsonian analogue for the objectivity Frege had to seek in his other-worldly "third realm".<sup>3</sup>

Kant characterized things-in-themselves as unknowable in virtue of what was for Bergson his impoverished conception of human understanding. Bergson reinstated these noumena through the widened perception of a non-homogeneous spatiality.<sup>4</sup> Similarly to Kant, Frege had to make his third realm extra-sensory. But for Frege, this was because he failed to see how spatiality, this time going in the opposite direction, can form itself into a greater level of abstract homogeneity than that to be seen in such usual empirical givens as the twelve apostles, the twelve tribes of Israel, and so on. Like homogeneous space, number is objective, but by "objective" we should not understand something bereft of subjectivity, nor something that cannot evolve into something else less "objective". Space can exist at many levels, tending both towards and away from either of those things we call the subjective or the objective.<sup>5</sup>

Of course, the mathematical platonist could reply that it was the very formulation of new multiple spaces by thinkers such as Reimann and Hilbert that led to a mathematics divested of any reference to the actual world and becoming instead a pure science of

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *CE*, p.11 [*Q*, p.502]: "matter has a tendency to constitute *isolable* systems, that can be treated geometrically."

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *CE*, pp.221-222 [*Q*, p.673].

<sup>3</sup>We are leaving aside the issue of whether Frege should have posited this supersensuous realm at all if there is already enough in his other ideas to obviate its necessity; cf. on this, Michael Dummett, "Frege's Myth of the Third Realm", in *Frege and Other Philosophers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp.249-262.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *CE*, p.216 [*Q*, p.669].

<sup>5</sup>Thus we may have been partially disingenuous when we earlier dubbed Bergson a constructivist. The constructivist holds that spatial configurations underlie numerical distinctions, that mathematical activity is a creativity of the mind, and that mathematical objects are creations of the mind. As regards numbers then, this view is an idealism. It is usually contrasted with the platonist position (such as Frege's) which is a realist conception of number, seeing abstract objects (mathematical ones included) existing independently of the mind apprehending them. Consequently, it would be better if Bergson's theory, given the orthodox meaning of both mind and matter, were described as intermediate between these two positions.



numbers (that might possibly exist in a third realm).<sup>1</sup> However, these are not the spaces of which we are thinking. It is arguable whether Reimann's non-Euclidean space, for example, constitutes a truly new space as opposed to what would be for Bergson a mere reformulation of Euclid's homogeneous medium. This was certainly his opinion of Hermann Minkowski's relativistic space.<sup>2</sup> The spaces we are thinking of in Bergsonism might be more appropriately described as phenomenological, although that appellation too could prove problematic. Spaces formed with and by the body as they are delineated in *Matter and Memory* might come closest to the mark.<sup>3</sup>

But this relationship between the development of non-Euclidean spaces and the "purification" of mathematics of any reference to the actual world points to a second interesting parallel between logicism and Kantianism. Kant's antinomies aimed at showing that space and time are our constructions and that if any things-in-themselves transcending these homogeneous forms of temporality and spatiality did exist, they could neither be perceived or known. Likewise, the discovery of multiple possible spaces for this world might lead one to believe that numbers are independent of this world; if they can be known, it must be through some cognitive source other than sense perception. Bergson's responses to both parallel each other. The space (and time) Kant conjured with in his antinomies was of only one type.<sup>4</sup> Having failed to see the varying other degrees of spatiality that can exist, he also failed to see that there can be sources of knowledge other than those deemed officially cognitive within the Kantian scheme of things. Similarly with the logicists. The multiple spaces they point to, being really only reformulations of one type of space, are far from proving that number must be extra-spatial. Rather, number is so infra-spatial that it is actually generated with the true multiplication of states of space by space itself! In other words, number arises through

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. L.E.J. Brouwer, "Historical Background, Principles and Methods of Intuitionism", in Brouwer, 1975, pp.508-515; p.508.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *DS*, p.134 [*M*, p.189].

<sup>3</sup>For Bergson's problematic relations with phenomenology, and his own philosophy of the body, cf. Chapter Six, and Chapters Seven and Nine respectively.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *CE*, pp.216-217 [*Q*, p.669].

the process of matter changing from one more qualitative state to another more quantitative and homogeneous one.

The banishment to another world of either the things-in-themselves or all mathematical objects is founded upon a vision of the world as simpler than it is. A plurality of entities will only be regarded as incommensurate with the real if one's reality is impoverished. Bergson, on the contrary, has a very rich conception of reality, as rich and diverse as the number of points of view creating it.

### *The Multiplicity of Movement*

A concrete illustration of this pluralism can be found in Bergson's treatment of Zeno's paradoxes. Bergson's position is that duration cannot be measured.<sup>1</sup> When we say that motion is measurable we are mistaking a homogeneous space underlying the movement for what is actually given: an individual act which is consequently indivisible and non-measurable. Every movement is an action, and an action, unlike an object, cannot be divided and remain the same action. A hand-movement, for example, stopped sooner rather than later, will not be the same movement only shorter.<sup>2</sup> There is no such thing as a "hand-movement" outside of a narrowly descriptive language; it is always a grasping, a pushing, a reaching; and a reaching movement would certainly not be at all the same if it were cut short under restraint (for no action of cutting short exists without reason, except again if it were so represented by language). Zeno's paradoxes rest upon a confusion between this indivisible act and the divisibility of the homogeneous space it traverses. In discussing Zeno, Bergson concentrates primarily on the paradox of Achilles.<sup>3</sup> According

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *TFW*, pp.106-112 [*Q*, pp.71-75].

<sup>2</sup>As some seem to think; cf. Lacey, 1989, p.31.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *TFW*, pp.112-115 [*Q*, pp.75-77]. We are using some passages from Bergson's 1911 paper, "The Perception of Change" especially *CM*, pp.170-176/144-149 [*Q*, pp.1379-1381], in that the analysis of the Achilles paradox there, though in essence no different from that in *TFW*, brings out the points of interest more clearly. He also turns to the paradoxes at *CE*, pp.325-330 [*Q*, pp.755-760] and *MM*, pp.250-253 [*Q*, pp.326-329]. If it should be wondered whether Zeno's paradoxes can at all be relevant for any philosophical argument in the light of their resolution by modern mathematical methods, cf. David M. Sherry, "Zeno's Metrical Paradox Revisited," in *Philosophy of Science*, VOLUME LV (1988), pp.58-73 and Ray, 1991, pp.11-13. In *CE* Bergson himself rejects the mathematical resolution for dealing "only with lengths" rather than movement (*CE*, pp.328-329n1 [*Q*, p.758n1]), and elsewhere he accuses the mathematical solution of simply translating the problem into equations (cf. *M*, p.1222). The two analyses mentioned above are in part agreement with him.

to his interpretation, each of Achilles' steps is an indivisible act "of a definite kind" all its own. One cannot divorce the actor from the act. If one wants to find out how Achilles overtook the tortoise one simply asks him, because "he must know better than anyone else how he goes about it."<sup>1</sup> As reported by Bergson, his answer is this: "I take a first step, then a second, and so on: finally, after a certain number of steps, I take a last one by which I skip ahead of the tortoise."<sup>2</sup>

Bergson is not being facetious here; the point being made is that Achilles' steps are "overtaking-steps", and that is how they overtook the tortoise.<sup>3</sup> If we could write "Achilles-is-pursuing-the-tortoise," these hyphenations would indicate the description of an unanalyzable act from which the actor cannot be removed with it still remaining the same act. We do not have the right to "disarticulate it [Achilles' course] according to another law, or to suppose it articulated in another way."<sup>4</sup> This is not a race between two tortoises, the one slow, the other fast. In other words, we cannot reduce Achilles' actions into atoms and rebuild it with the acts of the tortoise. Yet that is exactly what Zeno's analysis does, using homogeneous space as the atomic realm. But a space which is indifferent to the actions "contained" within it cannot be the basis for any adequate explanation. In attempting to reconstruct his movement with that of the tortoise, one only ignores the particularity of Achilles' kind of step in favour of a neutral third variable that ought to have nothing to do with the matter: homogeneous space.

As an illustration of Bergson's position we will turn to a particular passage in his treatment that has aroused the curiosity of at least one commentator. At one point Bergson treats the paradox as though it were analogous to two tortoises starting out at different times yet agreeing to make the same kind of step in order that the one should never catch the other.<sup>5</sup> In response to this, A.R. Lacey has asked insistently as to the

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<sup>1</sup>*CM*, p.170/144 [*Q*, p.1379].

<sup>2</sup>*CM*, pp.170-171/144 [*Q*, p.1379].

<sup>3</sup>Vladimir Jankélévitch (cf. "With the Whole Soul", translated by Thomas Hanna, in Hanna, 1962, pp.155-166; pp.162-163) also emphasizes Bergson's questioning of Achilles as a recognition of the primacy of the actor over any analysis of the act.

<sup>4</sup>*CM*, p.171/145 [*Q*, p.1380].

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *TFW*, p.113 [*Q*, pp.75-76]; Lacey, 1989, pp.34-35.

need to say that they *agree* on this, for, from Zeno's argument, they will never catch each other anyway, agreement or no agreement. But this is exactly the point: the actor's agreement puts the meaning into his or her acts and constitutes them as the particular acts they are. Of course, "agreement" is a far too mentalistic phrasing of it, as Lacey shows when he reduces the example to the absurdity of wondering whether each of Achilles' steps has to be looked upon as an action preceded by a decision. The meaning or "decision" is in the act itself without any actual mental activity required. The meaning is objective; it belongs to a bodily intentionality.

Of course, Zeno has four paradoxes of movement, and talk of bodily intentionality brings us on to the argument of the Arrow.<sup>1</sup> Naturally, it is hard to see any actor behind the arrow's movement (no one seriously cites the archer as a candidate), but the fact that Bergson maintains the position adopted in relation to Achilles, only highlights the existence of a type of objective quality and material intentionality in his thought. His own solution is that the arrow is only at a point if it stops there; any other point which we might pick along its course will only represent a point it might *possibly* be at <sup>2</sup> without really being there. The course of the arrow is "a single and unique bound."<sup>3</sup> There has been an attempt to see this answer in terms of a causal theory of individuation,<sup>4</sup> but it misses the point that a movement's individuation need not have to have an efficient cause to particularize it, but, as we think Bergson must mean here, a formal cause. Such formality of objective movement would arise out of a quality that belongs to the world irrespective of our sensation of it. But we return to these issues of intentionality and objective quality in the next chapter.

### ***Non-Reductive Movement***

Privileging the individuality and irreducibility of movement also has pertinence within the philosophy of mind. In our last discussion of this area we saw that the major stumbling

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *CE*, pp.325-327 [*Q*, pp.755-757]; *MM*, p.252 [*Q*, p.328].

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *CE*, p.325 [*Q*, p.756]: "it might be there".

<sup>3</sup>*CE*, p.326 [*Q*, p.756].

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Lacey, 1989, p.36.

block for modern reductive materialisms remains the problem of showing how the mental and the physical can be identical in spite of the fact that they fail to translate into each other without remainder. Eliminative materialism was one answer to this problem; forget the need for neat reductive matches between unlocalized things like colour sensations and uncoloured things like parts of the brain; feelings and sensations cannot but fail to reduce simply because they are not real. The only things which exist are material entities such as brain-states. This was one type of "non-reductive materialism", but it is not the only one.

Donald Davidson's "anomalous monism" is another materialism that avoids the problematic search for one-to-one correlations between the mental and the physical. At the heart of this approach is what is called the "supervenience of the mental", a principle whose ubiquity in philosophy is now such that it has recently been described as the "last refuge of the modern physicalist."<sup>1</sup> Simply stated, it holds that there can be no mental change without a physical change.<sup>2</sup> The mental is supervenient in that no parallel statement is made asserting there to be no physical change without a mental change (this would lead to panpsychism). Anomalous monism is a materialist thesis in that it claims that all events are physical, while still being non-reductive in that it does not specify which non-mental event will accompany the mental event. It therefore rejects the thesis that mental phenomena can be given purely physical explanations.<sup>3</sup> It is a monism in that it takes all events to be physical, but it is anomalous in that the nature of this monism is thought to be indescribable in any law-like or nomological manner.

Yet there is something mysterious in this version of the identity theory. According to Davidson "[t]he principle of the anomalism of the mental concerns events described as

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<sup>1</sup>Tim Crane and D.H. Mellor, "There is No Question of Physicalism", in *Mind*, VOLUME XCIX (1990), pp.185-206; p.203. Davidson's work is one part of a broader range of purportedly non-reductive yet analytical explanatory schemas in an assortment of areas going beyond the narrow confines of the mind-body question; cf. Charles and Lennon, 1992, p.2, where the editors' introduction describes the distinction of modern anti-reductionist strategies in terms of their realism and anti-dualism: "While defending the autonomy of the particular discourses with which they are concerned, they none the less accept some form of *supervenience* or dependence claim, grounding such discourses in underlying materialist or naturalist ones."

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Donald Davidson, "Mental Events", in *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), pp.207-227; p.214.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Davidson, 1980, p.214.

mental, for events are mental only as described."<sup>1</sup> When an event is described as mental it is given an intentional or quasi-intentional character which enters it into a holistic structure incapable of being divided according to the atomistic nature of the physical.<sup>2</sup> But the same event can also be put under a non-intentional description involving deterministic laws of cause and effect. Neither of these two descriptions can be reduced to the other, yet they are descriptions of the same event. Hence we have an anomalous monism; a monism which cannot be stated in any law-like way. The mystery is how and why Davidson should believe that this same event that can be put under various descriptions, intentional and non-intentional, *is* the one and same event. It seems to us that Davidson's monism occupies a realm similar to Kant's noumenal freedom (he invites the comparison by quoting from Kant on exactly this issue at the beginning and end of his essay<sup>3</sup>); it is an identity between mind and body that exists without any possible means of philosophical justification.

According to Bergson, Kant had to hoist any absolute space and time out of the conceivable (and thereby existent) only because he thought that there was one type of space and time alone for our knowledge, one which is clearly dependent upon knowledge rather than vice versa. While allowing that there are different ways of knowing our own actions, through pure reason where they appear to be determined, and through practical reason where we feel their freedom, no similar multiplicity is predicated of space and time. Freedom is lucky enough to be hauled up out of pure reason into the noumenal. But forms of space and time other than those conceived by pure reason, on the contrary (and there is only one form of each conceived by it), are removed to oblivion. In a similar fashion, Davidson hoists his event-monism into the anomalous (without, however, denying its existence as a consequence), on account of the incommensurability of the intentional and non-intentional descriptions under which an event can be brought. But just as Bergson asks Kant to consider that space and time may exist in forms other than those analysed in the first *Critique*, so might we ask why Davidson should take one

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<sup>1</sup>Davidson, 1980, p.215.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Davidson, 1980, p.221.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Davidson, 1980, pp.207, 225.

event under many descriptions to be one event at all.<sup>1</sup> Under what description is this one event known in all its enduring singularity beneath these various descriptions? Any answer to this question can only reply with an action under either an intentional or non-intentional description. But that is exactly the reverse of what is being requested. Yet from what we have learnt of the Bergsonian conception of action, one possible answer might be to say that there are as many events as there are supposed descriptions of this "one" event.

The archetypical example of an event coming under different descriptions is "arm-rising" (a non-intentional description) versus "arm-raising" (an intentional description). Of course, Bergson also illustrates his arguments with frequent talk of arm-movements.<sup>2</sup> But whenever he writes of a difference between an arm raised and an arm moved unintentionally,<sup>3</sup> it is understood that there must be two different movements entailed, not one movement falling under two different descriptions. Bergson holds that each movement is individuated and particular. Achilles and the tortoise may appear to make the same passage, but they do so with completely different movements. Even though these two movements could be brought under one non-intentional description treating them identically, this would be a mistake. Any identity found between objective movements in space stems from a retrospective act that distorts a difference into a likeness. This disregard for difference really is the crux of the matter. It is not simply that movement has been substituted for space, it is one principle of differentiation that has been replaced with another. Quality has been ousted for quantity, and this replacement has occurred *retrospectively*.

In other words, there are never any movements which can be two different things *at the same time*. Either there is a plurality of movements (mental *and* physical) where none supervene on the other, or there are singular movements (mental *or* physical) that can

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<sup>1</sup>Davidson is following G.E.M. Anscombe's work on intentionality in this regard of seeing one action underlying a plurality of descriptions; cf. G.E.M. Anscombe, *Intention* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963), §§ 23, 26 (pp.37-41, 45-47); Passmore, 1985, pp.64-65.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *CM*, pp.189-190/161 [*Q*, p.1395]; *CE*, p.96 [*Q*, p.572]; *TSMR*, p.259 [*Q*, pp.1195-1196].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *CE*, p.261 [*Q*, p.705].

only be brought under a second description retrospectively. For example, I kiss a friend in a public garden; I greet a friend; I cause a friend to be arrested; I start a world-religion. Of these various descriptions of the one apparently singular action, most will only be brought to bear on the action retrospectively. The action could only be taken for a key event in the development of a world-religion from the point of view of those of us who have seen Christianity rise to that status. What Judas' movement was then was what he intended by it at the time; all other descriptions of it, though applicable and possibly growing in truth, are less real with distance in space and time.

So following one of Davidson's examples, if I flip a switch and in doing that, also turn on a light, illuminate a room, and inadvertently alert a prowler in my house, it is not that there have been four events (which Davidson would not say anyway<sup>1</sup>), nor that there has been one event of which four descriptions could have been given (which Davidson would say), but rather that there has been only one event, of which none but one of the four descriptions can be completely true, namely the one which I *intended*.<sup>2</sup> If there are four equally true descriptions then there are four different actions which have taken place at four different times. In this second case there would not be one event, a monism, but many events, namely the various descriptions which must be performed at different times. If each of the descriptions report something in a completely true manner, then they truly report four different events. Description can no longer be seen as an innocent and purely speculative action. But these matters concerning the multiplicity of movement quickly lead us into the thorny areas of truth and intentionality, both of which come in a variety of forms in Bergson's account. We deal with them in the following chapter.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Donald Davidson, "Actions, Reasons, and Causes", in Davidson, 1980, pp.3-19; p.4.

<sup>2</sup>Others may become more retrospectively true with time, but none will match my original intention of the movement. Bergson's views on intentionality and truth will be investigated next. What we now ought to add is that the act may have been performed unintentionally, in which case, being a completely surface phenomenon, it *will be* open to numerous different descriptions (though all again occurring successively).



## *Chapter Six:*

### *Truth and Intentionality*

The purpose of this chapter is to deepen our understanding of Bergson's pluralism through an examination of two areas where its importation would be of particular benefit: truth and intentionality. Discussing them now will serve to further highlight the place perspective has within Bergson's work as well as prepare us for the second part of our thesis where our findings so far are applied to a reading of *Matter and Memory*. We begin with truth.

#### *Truth*

According to Deleuze, "[i]f we take the history of thought, we see that time has always put the notion of truth into crisis."<sup>1</sup> Attention to time is an attention to the mobility of reality, of the particularity and novelty of each situation, and hence of the superficiality of an eternal truth. So what does Bergson, foremost of the time-philosophers, say about truth? Certainly the notion of eternal truth awaiting its discovery by the mind is rejected.<sup>2</sup> With the pragmatists Bergson sees truth as "*an invention*" that comes "little by little into being."<sup>3</sup> Absolute distinctions between mere belief and justified true belief or knowledge would be out of place in the Bergsonian scheme of things, for no representation is so entirely cut off from reality that it could be either a wholly untrue belief or a wholly disbelieved truth. Reality itself is "mutable" and what truly exists, exists in degrees. Consequently, the truth of every reality exists in degrees also. What starts out as merely a "refractory" representation can become a given truth, clear and intelligible, simply in virtue of our own manipulation of the concept. A true affirmation can thus have a "retroactive" or "retrograde" movement: "the paradox of today is often only the truth of tomorrow."<sup>4</sup> Familiarity breeds belief, but this is not to say that

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<sup>1</sup>Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Athlone, 1989), p.130.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *CM*, pp.22-23/22 [*Q*, p.1263].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *CM*, p.256/215, 216 [*Q*, p.1447]. A.R. Lacey points to Bergson's "affinity with James" and "the strong pragmatist element in Bergson" (1989, p.92; cf. also, p.131).

<sup>4</sup>*M*, p.1092.

linguistic truth is arbitrary, for not every notion becomes familiar to the same degree: only those which "push their roots deepest into reality" gain the continual usage required for eventual admittance into fuller credulity.<sup>1</sup> There are many descriptions of Achilles' movement possible, but they will vary in their truth-value, not between zero and one, falsity and truth, but along a continuum of increasing truth that reaches its apogee in the specific intention that animated his act at the time.

Most often Bergson writes as though the word "truth" were synonymous with the word "reality".<sup>2</sup> What is true is not so much what statement corresponds with reality as what is real (or more real). Certain theorists are of the opinion that truth must not only pertain exclusively to linguistic entities; they can pertain to one type of linguistic entity alone, statements.<sup>3</sup> Bergson, on the contrary, would see perception, art and beliefs being just as open to the category of truthfulness as language is.<sup>4</sup>

We usually suppose objectivists to believe that there are true descriptions and false ones and that this is enough to justify the substantial nature of truth; relativists, on the other hand, appear to believe that there are many true descriptions and so no truth. The Bergsonian view is no less licentious, tolerating an ever-increasing plurality of truths. But from this multiplicity it goes on to draw the alternative conclusion that there must be something peculiar about descriptions rather than something wrong with truth. If we

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<sup>1</sup> *CM*, p.258/217 [*Q*, p.1449]; *CE*, pp.164, 226 [*Q*, pp.627, 677].

<sup>2</sup> He does make a distinction between truth and reality in one instance of correspondence with William James (cf. *M*, p.727): "I believe in the mutability of *reality* rather than in that of *truth*. If we can regulate our faculty of intuition to the mobility of reality, would not the regulation be stable, and truth, - which can only be this adjustment itself, - would it not participate in this stability?" In a good deal of what has gone above, we have conflated Bergson's views on truth with those of William James', in part because Bergson felt that the latter's position possessed an unchallenged "depth and originality" (*CM*, p.259/218 [*Q*, p.1449]), and in part also because of the strong pragmatist trend of his own thought. The aforementioned divergence of view concerning the mutability of truth and reality, though itself a peculiar instance in Bergson's thought, might none the less represent one of the "certain reservations" (*CM*, p.259/218 [*Q*, p.1449]) he also had with James' position.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. for instance, Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1978), p.19: "Finally, for nonverbal versions [of the world] and even for verbal versions without statements, truth is irrelevant."

<sup>4</sup> Cf. for some useful comments on this matter, Raymond Tallis, *Not Saussure: A Critique of Post-Saussurean Literary Theory*, (Basingstoke, Hampshire, 1988); for example, p.248: "Truth may be variously seen as residing in the relation between: perception and reality; belief and reality; knowledge and reality; thought and reality...and so on. It may even be argued that truth resides in reality itself.... Why, then, choose the relations between *statements* and reality as the privileged repository of truth?" We will see in *MM* that even the objective world as it is for itself is not immune from representation.

give up on truth, it is only because we have a false conception of what truth should be "in virtue of the principle deep-rooted in our intellect, that all truth is eternal. If the judgement is true now, it seems to us it must always have been so."<sup>1</sup> Representation is a temporal phenomenon. It is not something true or false at one moment and then once and for all; it is a becoming. Statements are not false and then true; rather, what is less true now may be more true later because linguistic truth is an emerging entity. There are consequently many truths because truth changes. Of course, one might say that the addition of indexical markers to a statement will fix its truth value in perpetuity, as for example if one were to say "I thought that the sky was blue at 1.00 pm on the 5th of June 1993 at *x*" (*x* being a complete description of the place one was in). But then we face the issue of whether conceptualizations of context such as indexicals really can give a complete account of context or situation. It is sometimes thought that a sentence's meaning regains its fullness when reconnected to the person uttering it and his or her situation. But how could any analysis, description or account of meaning effect this without travelling back in time to *be* the sentence, person and situation? How can one represent a previous context when an essential part of that context is its *as yet* unrepresented state? One could object that whatever there was in the situation left behind by description *de jure* will in any case be quite peripheral to requirements. Yet this is the whole point being debated. Anthropologists like Gregory Bateson, AI designers like Terry Winograd,<sup>2</sup> and even some philosophers warn us of the danger of contextual representation. Context is not an independent variable upon which the action *within* the context is dependent; the action is a part of the context. Likewise, meaning does not reside *in* the environment, it emerges through the medium of it.

It seems to be the very act of naming it that sets context off as a separate entity from and container of what it is we exactly do not wish to isolate. Attempts by Paul Grice to explain the origin of non-natural meaning through pragmatics,<sup>3</sup> or by Austin to analyse

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<sup>1</sup>*CM*, pp.22-23/22 [*Q*, p.1263].

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution and Epistemology* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1972), p.338; Winograd and Flores, 1986, p.43n7 (Winograd and Flores make their point in terms of "environment").

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Paul Grice, "Meaning", in *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp.213-223.

the various types of speech act, have been variously criticized for supposing a delimitable number of intentions,<sup>1</sup> or an "exhaustively definable context."<sup>2</sup> In Austin's case, semantic truth or falsity are replaced by the felicity or infelicity to a set context; for "making clear" what a speech act is doing, we rely above all "upon the nature of the circumstances, the context in which the utterance is issued."<sup>3</sup> Heirs to Austin's speech act philosophy continue this line of thought, with talk of "the context [that] will make it clear what the illocutionary force of the utterance is" and of "the boundaries of the linguistic situation."<sup>4</sup> Speech act philosophy might consequently be seen as either an accidental or deliberate quantification of context effected simply by invoking it in terms of indexicals, demonstratives, and so on.<sup>5</sup> The recalcitrance of meaning is "relegated" to "pragmatics" leaving behind a "protective quarantine" for a quantified semantics.<sup>6</sup> Context *in toto* then becomes "exotic context" such that when these exotica are stripped away, a core context-independent meaning remains behind. But the problem remains that context, like time itself, refuses to allow itself be fully quantified. And if context cannot be quantified, then there is nothing to which a fixed truth might be anchored.

Yet the alternative espousal of truths which are emerging and truths which are degrees of truth is quite problematical too. What are they emerging into? Which truth are they degrees of? It is all very well for us to say that the agent's intention provides the supreme account of "the" action he or she effected, but what of events without any discernible intention at the heart of them?

Our description of Bergsonism seems to want its relativist cake only then to eat it objectively. Relativism is usually connected to both indeterminacy and some form of subjectivism. As regards the latter, the truth is said to be relative to a subjective point of

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. P. F. Strawson, "Intention and Convention in Speech-Acts", in *Logico-Linguistic Papers* (London: Methuen, 1971), pp.149-169; pp.156-157, 163.

<sup>2</sup>Jacques Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context", in *Margins of Philosophy*, translated by Alan Bass (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982), pp.307-330; p.323.

<sup>3</sup>J.L. Austin, "Performative Utterances", in A.P. Martinich, ed., *The Philosophy of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp.105-114; p.111.

<sup>4</sup>John R. Searle, "What is a Speech Act?", in Martinich, 1990, pp. 115-125; p.118; Robert Stalnaker, "Pragmatics", in Martinich, 1990, pp.176-186; p.180.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Winograd and Flores, 1986, pp.60, 111.

<sup>6</sup>John Haugeland, "Understanding Natural Language", in Lycan, 1990, pp.660-670; p.670n5.

view. Both affirmation and negation, writes Bergson, "are expressed in propositions, and...*any* proposition, being formed of *words*, which symbolize *concepts*, is something relative to social life and to the human intellect."<sup>1</sup> In the next section of this chapter we answer this problem through an interrogation of the relativity of the subject in terms of its supposed unworldliness. But first we must examine the notion of indeterminacy. These two notions are also connected in that it is often presumed that a truth is true in virtue of the determinate world whence it comes, whilst indeterminacy is attached to subjects free to create any "truth" relative to their desires: fire may burn in both Hellas and Persia, but men's ideas of right and wrong vary from place to place.<sup>2</sup>

The theme wherein indeterminacy figures most strongly for Bergson's thought is obviously that of the retrograde movement of truth. Truth is an emerging entity accompanying the continuously novel present and its perpetually retroactive revisions of the past. As early as *Time and Free Will* the representation of the past was shown to be an indeterminate entity:

In resuming a conversation which had been interrupted for a few moments we have happened to notice that both ourselves and our friend were thinking of some new object at the same time. - The reason is, it will be said, that each has followed up for his own part the natural development of the idea at which the conversation had stopped: the same series of associations has been formed on both sides. - No doubt this interpretation holds good in a fairly large number of cases; careful inquiry, however, has led us to an unexpected result. It is a fact that the two speakers do connect the new subject of conversation with the former one: they will even point out the intervening ideas; but, curiously enough, they will not always connect the new idea, which they have both reached, with the same point of the preceding conversation, and the two series of intervening associations may be quite different. What are we to conclude from this, if not that this common idea is due to an unknown cause - perhaps to some physical influence - and that, in order to justify its emergence, it has called forth a series of antecedents which explain it and which seem to be its cause, but are really its effect?<sup>3</sup>

The mind appears to be caught in a continual "legitimation crisis", internalizing the laws of association in order to explain its present state:

If we question ourselves carefully, we shall see that we sometimes weigh motives and deliberate over them, when our mind is already made up. [...] ...it seems that we make a point of safe-guarding the principle of mechanism and of conforming to the laws of the association of ideas. The abrupt intervention of the will is a kind of *coup d'état* which our mind foresees and which it tries to legitimate beforehand by a formal deliberation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*CE*, p.307 [*Q*, p.741].

<sup>2</sup>*Cf.* Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, V, vii.

<sup>3</sup>*TFW*, pp.156-157 [*Q*, pp.103-104].

<sup>4</sup>*TFW*, pp.157-158 [*Q*, pp.104-105].

But such indeterminacies as these should not hasten us to any conclusions about reality being, for example, essentially ambiguous and beyond all determinate representation. The retrograde movement of interpretation is not of an illusion (we learnt this much in our clarification of Bergson's understanding of possibility). Rather, it is "the *true* growth of truth." Not all representations make this movement as successively as others. Yet problems remain. According to Bergson, we practically treat as true only those representations which "push their roots deepest into reality," but what does this mean precisely? There are many traditions in philosophy that emphasize the linguistic construction of our world. It is said that language is in some important manner prior to experience; there are no extra-linguistic facts, only interpretations of the world that must employ a linguistic medium. Some schools go even further and take the world as such to be textual, a place of writing; only it is a kind of writing which is purely formal, meaning being an effect rather than a content of language.

But while there are points of convergence between Bergson's view and parts of these positions, there is one important contrast; Bergson places far greater emphasis on an image of the world that is itself worldly, rather than one that is primarily linguistic or textual. This is something that will emerge more in the second part of our thesis. Through various channels, both scientific and aesthetic, our language maintains close relations with the world and is not at all free to wander in the relativistic wilderness; there is always a certain non-subjective reality to it. The various ways of representing a situation are all restrictions of that reality to some extent - it is always a retrospective creation - but none of them are so unworldly as to be absolutely false. As we will see shortly, there are levels of intentionality for Bergson; not a failure of perception and language *in toto* and a completely noumenal reality thereafter, but a hierarchy of forms of perception and language that attain the objective in varying degrees.

This essential characteristic of a Bergsonian "relativism" is highlighted by Georges Mourélos in the contrast he makes between Bergson's pluralism and Merleau-Ponty's

philosophy of ambiguity.<sup>1</sup> Contrary to finding a proliferation of responses to a given situation to signify an essential ambiguity of behaviour, he shows how Bergsonism takes this multiplicity at face value, positing instead an enlargement or narrowing of behaviour at various different levels. Like relativism, the prioritisation of ambiguity indicates a disappointed absolutism finding itself unable to capture reality in any singular form: "[a]n ambiguous behaviour" is only capable of situating itself "on the same level of reality."<sup>2</sup> Instead, we should learn to grasp the "multiplicity of meanings" we can attribute to reality as exactly what allows us to take hold of its polymorphic nature.

A useful illustration of this difference comes in the respective attitudes of Bergson and Merleau-Ponty to what was once called the "education of the senses". Our senses appear to only gradually learn how to coordinate their impressions of an object. In *Matter and Memory* Bergson's purpose was to counter the then contemporary interpretations of this phenomenon that employed it as evidence to show that sensations are unextended. Bergson believes the exact opposite: our perception of the object is extended in the object itself.<sup>3</sup> But these interpretations take the education of the subject's senses to indicate the localization of *unextended* sensations needed to effect our perception of an extended object. For Bergson, on the other hand, perception is an on-going process of discernment and subtraction that is continuously altering its *modus operandi*. Diverse perceptions of the same object remain separated by intervals created by our perception. But this state of disintegration is not static, being capable of both improvement and deterioration with the development of our perceptual mechanisms. What the "education of the senses" really implies is the partial filling in of these gaps; the restoration to an object of a part of its continuity that was only destroyed in the first place by our perception. Therefore, the more our perception appears to take a grasp upon the objective the more it attains, not to an unextended intention *of* the object, but to the condition of

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Mourélos, 1964, pp.39-45.

<sup>2</sup>Mourélos, 1964, p.43.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *MM*, pp.45-49 [*Q*, pp.197-199]; perception and sensation should not be taken for distinct entities at this point.

*being* the object. The end-product, the greater perception of a whole object, lies with the object first and last, not with the senses.

Merleau-Ponty takes a different line on this issue.<sup>1</sup> Although not siding with Bergson's opponents (who believe that the senses are unextended), he instead finds that all interpretations of the phenomenon behind the education of the senses are "*equally probable*;" they are all "only different names for one and the same central phenomenon."<sup>2</sup> Here we see the "same level" of which Mourélos spoke. Bergson sees a movement of perception through different stages either towards or away from the objective. The theorists he opposed saw only the one and same object that our unextended senses attempt to perceive. Merleau-Ponty abandons this object, but also abandons the movement of perception (as reflected in the different sets of facts going towards the different interpretations of the phenomenon), positioning a new absolute in place of them both: ambiguity.<sup>3</sup>

But once again these matters have quickly led us on to another area of Bergson's pluralism: his conception of intentionality. When turning to the issues connected to any discussion of a possible Bergsonian relativism, we left aside the area of subjectivity to concentrate on indeterminacy. We said then that where a Bergsonian subjectivity would part ways with rather than support relativism, is on the grounds of its "supposed unworldliness". Turning to intentionality allows us now to explicate the meaning of this.

### ***Intentionality***

When Deleuze depicts the "radical"<sup>4</sup> opposition between Bergson and Phenomenology with a contrast between the Husserlian war-cry that "all consciousness is consciousness *of something*" and the corresponding Bergsonian adage that "all consciousness *is*

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), pp.116-118.

<sup>2</sup>Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.118.

<sup>3</sup>It must be noted that "ambiguïté" is less pejorative in the French than in the English equivalent, being more a repudiation of any absolute knowledge than mere equivocation. This does not negate our point, but only makes it all the more ironic that Merleau-Ponty should install it as a new quasi-absolute.

<sup>4</sup>Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Athlone, 1986), p.61.



something,"<sup>1</sup> it has to be said that the picture presented is somewhat simplified. Bergson's theoretical relations with Phenomenology are complex to say the least. Where they are most fraught is on the matter of intentionality. For Bergson, all consciousness is indeed *something*, not only because there is nothing totally unreal (the theme we have examined here), but also because of the peculiarities of his own theory of perception (a theme that must await the second part of our thesis). And yet there are still real variations amongst these somethings, for Bergson is not a relativist and not all referents are of the same type and value. But if one does believe that there can only be one type of referent and that it correlates with one type of consciousness, then one will have a phenomenology of intentionality with which Bergson would be at odds. Instead of a philosophy truly concerned with levels of reality, we would have what Georges Mourélos describes as a type of "distribution" on the "horizontal" plane of one type of consciousness.<sup>2</sup> In Husserl's phenomenology, he says, any apparent passage made between different levels only concerns the "greater adequacy" or "more complete adjustment"<sup>3</sup> of consciousness to the same object: "Husserlian philosophy, centred entirely on the intentionality of consciousness, effectively deploys itself on the same plane of reality."<sup>4</sup> Bergson, on the other hand, is not interested in any multiple system of reference made on one plane towards another; in his view, we cannot take up each level of reality with the same type of mental action because consciousness itself changes along with the objective world it helps constitute.<sup>5</sup>

We will not pursue Mourélos' critique of Husserl's pluralism here, but instead turn to Sartre. He too has a quite restrictive theory of intentionality that one might almost describe as the apotheosis of Husserl's conception. But we turn to Sartre primarily because his phenomenology has both historical and theoretical links with Bergson's work that are significant for our own investigation. Most significantly, we will see that

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<sup>1</sup>Deleuze, 1986, p.56.

<sup>2</sup>Mourélos, 1964, p.25.

<sup>3</sup>Mourélos, 1964, p.29.

<sup>4</sup>Mourélos, 1964, p.31.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Mourélos, 1964, p.77. We examine the mechanism by which this joint variation is effected in Chapter Eleven.

Sartre's radicalization of Husserlian intentionality exposes what is for Bergson a very typical attitude towards consciousness.

In Sartre's early tirade against Bergson in *Imagination*, it was for lacking an intentional account of consciousness that he criticized him: "instead of consciousness being a light going from the subject to the thing, [for Bergson] it is a luminosity which goes from the thing to the subject."<sup>1</sup> Yet it is exactly this "luminosity" that Deleuze uses to characterize Bergson's thought when he contrasts it with Phenomenology. With a paraphrase of Sartre, he reverses the charge against Bergson thus:

[phenomenology] made consciousness a beam of light which drew things out of their native darkness. ...instead of making light an internal light...the intentionality of consciousness was the ray of an electric lamp.... For Bergson it is completely opposite. Things are luminous by themselves without anything illuminating them: all consciousness *is* something, it is indistinguishable from the thing, that is from the image of light.<sup>2</sup>

The strict ontological dualism of being and non-being in Sartre's own theory of intentionality certainly leaves little space for the degrees in being that come when "things are luminous by themselves". In his argument for the precedence of nothingness over negation he proceeds by depicting consciousness as essentially that which is not whatever it is a consciousness of. Bergson's own explanation of the origin of nothingness through negation is rejected: "In a word, if being is everywhere, it is not only Nothingness which, as Bergson maintains, is inconceivable; for negation will never be derived from being."<sup>3</sup> But Sartre fails to realize that the Bergsonian conception of being is not in anyway univocal or self-identical, for it already possesses the seeds of various tendencies and differences within itself. Thus, there is no problem for Bergson in deriving negation from being, for this being is not the opposite of Nothingness; it is an entity that is already in a state of continual growth and self-denial.

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<sup>1</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, *Imagination: A Psychological Critique*, translated by Forrest Williams (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962), p.40.

<sup>2</sup>Deleuze, 1986, pp.60-61.

<sup>3</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, translated by Hazel E. Barnes (London: Methuen, 1958), p.11.

Not that Sartre himself simply derives negation from a Nothingness standing outside of his conception of Being; his analyses of such *négalités* as distance, absence and change show it to be intimately related to a host of "ultra-mundane" beings.<sup>1</sup> These beings gain their intimacy with nothingness via the special standing they possess in relation to a particular type of being:

*The being by which Nothingness comes to the world must be its own Nothingness. By this we must understand not a nihilating act, which would require in turn a foundation in Being, but an ontological characteristic of the Being required.* <sup>2</sup>

This particular "Being" is the *pour-soi* and the special standing these *négalités* possess in relation to it is its intention of them. "Consciousness of" is the defining characteristic of Phenomenology's picture of the mind in general, but in Sartre's hands intentionality becomes the locus of non-being. Yet Sartre's equation between intentionality and nothingness would not be completely without grounds for Bergson either, for as we shall see in the second part of our thesis, he too regards the intentionality of at least intellectualized thought (but not all of consciousness) as a secondary power. Where they would continue to differ is over the status of this particular intentionality.<sup>3</sup> In contrast with Sartre's ontology of being and non-being where whatever does not belong fully to being must belong to non-being (from which it follows that any devaluation must be absolute), a Bergsonian "secondary" power can never signify an absolute devaluation to zero.

For Bergson, the image of a substantive nothingness is derived from one species of subjective activity: negation. Though one commentator has rightly surmised that Bergson holds partial nothings to be subjective "in the sense of being dependent upon or relative to a conscious *subject*,"<sup>4</sup> it would be wrong to give that subject its essence as a negating being. Negation is one part of being conscious, it exists in degrees as a tendency or direction. While Bergson's description of a non-negating being also shows us something

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Sartre, 1943, pp.18-21.

<sup>2</sup>Sartre, 1943, p.23.

<sup>3</sup>Furthermore, there are other types of intentionality for Bergson than simply that of mental intelligence.

<sup>4</sup>Gale, 1973-1974, p.298.

thoroughly non-human,<sup>1</sup> this is not to deny that we hold a good degree of the non-human within our own humanity.<sup>2</sup>

It is not that the same space can be posited or intended in different ways, nor that the same consciousness can constitute truly different spaces, but simply that different spaces and consciousnesses always arise with each other. The "of" separating consciousness from the object of consciousness comes in many forms. The Sartrean world-view, where subject and object are firmly separated, is only one level of intentionality, modelled (as it would be for Bergson) on a particular type of spatiality. Contrary to this, there are types of consciousness and spatiality for Bergson which do not involve something unextended and inner intending something extended and outer: "the truth is that space is no more without us than within us."<sup>3</sup> Our bodies, for example, appear to the tactile senses to be external to one another, yet according to Bergson, it would be a mistake to attach the entirety of what we call the mental to this objective image.<sup>4</sup>

It has quite rightly been said that for Bergson there is an intentionality "which is lived and experienced, prior to, and distinct from, logical meaning."<sup>5</sup> It is also said that a separation for Bergson is more than just a negation, it is also a position.<sup>6</sup> What he calls "[u]nreflecting sympathy and antipathy" "give evidence of a possible interpenetration of human consciousnesses."<sup>7</sup> Bergson even speaks openly about the possibility of telepathy. But it would be less a mysterious power than a natural ability "operating at every moment and everywhere, but with too little intensity to be noticed."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *CE*, p.310 [*Q*, p.743].

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *CE*, pp.45-46 [*Q*, p.531].

<sup>3</sup>*MM*, p.288 [*Q*, p.350].

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *ME*, pp.96-97 [*Q*, p.874].

<sup>5</sup>Ian W. Alexander, *Bergson: Philosopher of Reflection* (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1957), p.79. We would not interpret what Alexander calls the distinction between logical and lived meaning as an irreconcilable gulf but rather as a mutual irreducibility.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Trotignon, 1991, p.293.

<sup>7</sup>*CM*, p.36/32 [*Q*, p.1273].

<sup>8</sup>*ME*, p.79 [*Q*, p.863].

Such abilities as intuitive sympathy or even telepathy are thus natural givens. It is perhaps when they fail and come under scrutiny that we begin to speculate as to possible mechanisms which will explain their appearance. One might say that their failure already marks the beginning of their own reduction and even elimination, and that it is in order to redress this process that we create a mechanism explaining and justifying their existence. We usually think of telepathy, for instance, as a *difficulty*, a surmounting of physical barriers locking away our discrete thoughts from each other. But this is the problem of our understanding: we are tireless in our desire to express all meaning in terms of one type alone:<sup>1</sup> an intelligence composed of discrete concepts with supposedly no native spatiality. Yet intuition and telepathy need not operate by *surmounting* the physical, but *via* the physical. I do not usually try to explain the intuitive understanding I have of those I am intimate with by recourse to extra-sensory perceptions. I have simply grown to know their "interiority" as I have become acquainted with their visible behaviour over time. Yet to an uninvolved third party it may none the less appear to be a mysterious power by which I can know the current moods and attitude of this friend with what seems to be only the barest evidence. But there again, it is only because a multiplicity has been taken for a singularity that a miracle seems to be suddenly required. The human person exists in as many ways as there are types of relationship in which he or she is entered. According to Bergson, instinct will only appear to be a magical knowledge if it is seen firstly in terms of two related things rather than simply as one "*relation*."<sup>2</sup> Any understanding between two subjects is specific to the particular relationship they co-constitute. From an outside point of view, even that of the two protagonists at a later date, this understanding may well seem mysterious; but again only in virtue of assuming that the agents always face each other with the same visible image, where in actual fact there is no one image at all but only and always a mobile relationship.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *CE*, pp.183-184 [*Q*, pp.642-643].

<sup>2</sup>*CE*, p.183 [*Q*, p.643].

Of course, such Bergsonian ideas as these may well put us in mind of Merleau-Ponty who equally refused to look upon intentionality solely as a site of impassable division and negativity and instead saw it as a coexistence supported by the intending body. The "fundamental likeness" between the two has struck many writers,<sup>1</sup> one of them telling us that "Bergson is often the most effective escort into Merleau-Pontian reflection on many subjects,"<sup>2</sup> another going so far as to describe *Phenomenology of Perception* as a testament to the Bergsonian influence on Merleau-Ponty.<sup>3</sup> Though their views on freedom and determinism, idealism and materialism as well as science and philosophy are greatly in accord, it is the similarity of their conception of intentionality that concerns us here.

In particular there is Merleau-Ponty's differentiation between two "layers" of the body, the actual or objective body that exists at any moment and the more fundamental habitual or phenomenal body incarnating the subject.<sup>4</sup> The parallel between this distinction and the one we will see Bergson draw in *Matter and Memory* between the objective and subjective image of the body is striking. Indeed, according to Richard Zaner, what Bergson calls the "logic of the body" and Merleau-Ponty the "body-subject" marks the exact point where the latter leaves Phenomenology for ontology.<sup>5</sup> Zaner believes that Merleau-Ponty's error, "like Bergson before him,"<sup>6</sup> is born of a confusion between two quite different phenomena: bodily conscious and "non-thematizing consciousness": "*The body is not an animate organism because it is itself an intentionality...but rather because it is the body of a specific consciousness.*"<sup>7</sup> It is "absurd" to say, like Merleau-Ponty, that

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<sup>1</sup>Ben-Ami Scharfstein, "Bergson and Merleau-Ponty: A Preliminary Comparison", in *Journal of Philosophy*, VOLUME (1955), pp.380-386; p.385.

<sup>2</sup>Edward S. Casey, "Habitual Body and Memory in Merleau-Ponty", in *Man and World*, VOLUME XVII (1984), pp.279-297; p.283.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Eugene Kaelin, *An Existentialist Aesthetic: The Theories of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1962), p.339; cf. also, Albert Rabil, *Merleau-Ponty: Existentialist of the Social World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), pp.186-187.

<sup>4</sup>Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.82.

<sup>5</sup>Zaner, 1971, p.234.

<sup>6</sup>Zaner, 1971, p.206.

<sup>7</sup>Zaner, 1971, p.219.

the sensation of blue is "intentional;"<sup>1</sup> such propositions show that Merleau-Ponty "can no longer consistently maintain a genuine theory of intentionality."<sup>2</sup>

And yet Zaner is not quite fair in his appraisal. As another philosopher of the body has noted, the only manner in which the body has gained respectable entry into contemporary psychology is via the concept of "body experience".<sup>3</sup> There are many synonyms or near synonyms for this: "body concept", "body schema", "body image" and so on.<sup>4</sup> In each case, it is a matter of "beholding" one's body or the feelings and experiences one has in reference to one's body. Yet each remains a mentalistic picture; knowledge of the body, rather than true bodily knowledge; the "non-thematizing consciousness" Zaner himself opposes to bodily consciousness. But the apparent absurdity of attributing an understanding proper to the body only arises if one takes the *objective* image of the body to be its only image; as Merleau-Ponty himself remarks:

The eye is not the mind, but a material organ. How could it ever take anything 'into account'? It can do so only if we introduce the phenomenal body beside the objective one, if we make a knowing-body of it, and if, in short, we substitute for consciousness, as the subject of perception, existence, or being in the world through a body.<sup>5</sup>

Bergson himself also felt that the only way to explain hearing or sight, for example, was to postulate organs of "virtual sensation" such as a "mental ear" or "virtual retina" in parallel with the organs of the objective body.<sup>6</sup> In neither case is it a question, as it might be for some reductive physicalisms, of covertly bending language and slipping seeing and hearing homunculi in through the backdoor. Both Bergson and Merleau-Ponty use their language of bodily consciousness overtly. They are calling for a revision of our linguistic conventions in order to see that intentionality is no one simple thing, but a complexity of different intentionalities. Neither leave a "genuine theory of intentionality"

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<sup>1</sup>Zaner, 1971, p.183n1; Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.213.

<sup>2</sup>Zaner, 1971, p.204; cf. also, p.218: Merleau-Ponty has "simply given up the essential features of the intentionality of consciousness."

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Joseph Lyons, *Ecology of the Body: Styles of Behaviour in Human Life* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1987), pp.33-34.

<sup>4</sup>Lyons, 1987, p.34.

<sup>5</sup>Merleau-Ponty, 1962, pp.309n1.

<sup>6</sup>*MM*, pp.168, 166 [*Q*, pp.275, 274]; *M*, p.622. Cf. also generally, *MM*, p.164-169 [*Q*, pp.273-275]; *M*, p.617 (the references to *M* come from notes taken during a course given by Bergson between 1903 and 1904 on theories of memory).

behind; rather, the concepts of intentionality, knowledge, and understanding are all expanded beyond their narrow borders.

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This concludes the first part of our thesis. What has been especially noteworthy in these last two chapters is the connection between dissociation, perspectivism and Bergson's pluralist philosophy. One exemplar of dissociation, the law of dichotomy, was described in terms of "photographic views" decomposing reality. Further to this, one commentator has forwarded the possibility that the "secret" process by which Bergson's pluralist reality is engendered, that is, the dissociative movement itself, may have some connection with the difference between first and third person points of view.<sup>1</sup> The very multiplicity we (may) perceive might itself be constituted by a process similar to that which follows the objectification and subjectification of our own perspectives. Considering that two of the levels of most obvious interest in Bergson's thought are those of mind and body, this notion would be well worth considering in relation to Bergson's resolution of the mind-body problem. This is precisely what the second part of our thesis endeavours to do, taking what has so far been a fairly general discussion of Bergson's thought and providing it with an application through a detailed reading of his most important work: *Matter and Memory*.

Thus far we have asserted (with evidence from Bergson's texts) that the place of perspective in his work is of paramount importance, that its priority amounts to a thesis concerning the primacy of perception, and that this itself is part and parcel of his anti-reductionism. We then argued that what he writes of the physical, the metaphysical, intuition, and space not only does not contradict, but actually supports our thesis. We subsequently turned to the neglected place of possibility in his thought, showing there how the various tensions and ambiguities in what he says can actually be unravelled when placed within the context of a thesis supporting the primacy of perspective and

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Mourélos, 1964, p.237.



perception. From there we finally showed how his pluralism is a further statement of this thesis, providing applications and elaborations involving mathematical space, Zeno's paradoxes, non-reductive materialism, truth and intentionality.

And yet in all of this we have mostly skirted around the work wherein Bergson's philosophy of perception and multiple reality is first and most fully set out, *Matter and Memory*; the work frequently described as the "keystone" and "bed-rock" of his thought.<sup>1</sup> In finally examining its arguments in detail, we hope to put more flesh on the descriptions presented of Bergson's philosophy, explaining as we do, both how his pluralism is engendered and what role perspectivism plays in the process.

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<sup>1</sup>de Lattre, 1990, p.159; Alexander, 1957, p.30.

***PART TWO: APPLYING THE BERGSONIAN IMAGE***

## *Introduction*

As in Part One, this half of our thesis is divided into six chapters. The first two, Chapters Seven and Eight, are devoted primarily to three concerns: the subjective and objective body in *Matter and Memory*; the theories of pure perception and pure memory; and the evidence that would seem to indicate both the redundancy of pure memory (as it is usually interpreted) as well as the inadequacy of representational-memory. From all of this we will conclude that a picture of personal memory as an unextended, non-sensuous and informational representation of *the* past (and this, either wholly or in part is what any theory of memory has usually amounted to and probably all it ever can amount to), is both prejudicial against and dispensable through the restoration to perception of a multiplicity of forms. Such a multiplication would prohibit the thought that perception is of *the* present or of *the* world in favour of the existence of as many worlds and presents as there are perceptions.

However, such multiformity brings its own problems with it, in particular two problems which we deal with in Chapter Nine. The first is directed against our own identification of the primacy of perspective with the primacy of perception, and concerns those arguments against the adequacy of perception drawn from illusion and the corrigibility of introspection. The second impinges on both Bergson's usual theory of time (with the role of memory retained) and our own interpretation of it without memory: the problem of radical novelty. If everything is new, multiple or different, surely there must be at least the stable anchoring to allow us to *re*-cognize this novelty *as* novelty. Answering this difficulty will force us re-admit representation into our reading, only now with a reformed significance that can be integrated into our broader thesis concerning perception.

The two subsequent chapters, Ten and Eleven, return to the issue of perception, the first of these fleshing-out a Bergsonism without memory with evidence from his writings for

a worldly and thoroughly non-theoretical pure perception, the second applying this to his treatment of the mind-body problem.

The twelfth and concluding chapter steps back to begin firstly with an examination of both the probity and plausibility of our treatment of Bergsonism, as well as the possibility for *any* Bergsonism in the light of his own attitude towards the language and conceptualization of time. Following this, we end our study with a discussion of the "perceptual innocence" that has underpinned most of the preceding arguments, relating it both to a particular criticism of perspectival knowledge and then to what Bergson writes on the subject of individuality in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. The return to innocence is very much the same endeavour as the return to individuality, the latter almost being the lived realization of radical novelty.

## Chapter Seven:

### "It Reaches to the Stars": Bergson's Philosophy of Perception

#### *Objective Body and Subjective Body*

*Matter and Memory* begins with the same attempt at "coming face to face" with immediacy as was seemingly undertaken by *Time and Free Will*:<sup>1</sup>

We will assume for the moment that we know nothing of theories of matter and theories of spirit, nothing of the discussions as to the reality or ideality of the external world. Here I am in the presence of images, in the vaguest sense of the word, images perceived when my senses are opened to them, unperceived when they are closed.<sup>2</sup>

The term "image" is employed universally to designate the objects of every type of perception: "by "image" we mean a certain existence which is more than that which the idealist calls a *representation*, but less than that which the realist calls a *thing* - an existence placed halfway between the "thing" and the "representation".<sup>3</sup> Bergson understands "idealism" and "realism"<sup>4</sup>, as another text tells us, as "two notations of reality" respectively implying the possibility and impossibility of identifying things with the "presentations" they offer to human consciousness.<sup>5</sup> It is this dualism, said to be brought about by a "dissociation" between "existence" and "appearance",<sup>6</sup> that Bergson is trying to avoid with the "image".

Yet this return to purity is shown to fail almost immediately. For within this world of indiscriminate images there is said to be always at least one that can be immediately distinguished from the others: the image of my body. An immediately given dualism is re-inscribed within the realm of images, in that the body alone is known in two differing

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<sup>1</sup>*TFW*, p.47 [*Q*, p.34].

<sup>2</sup>*MM*, p.1 [*Q*, p.169].

<sup>3</sup>*MM*, pp.xi-xii [*Q*, p.161].

<sup>4</sup>The latter is taken to be synonymous with "materialism"; he uses the phrase "materialistic realism" at *MM*, p.14 [*Q*, p.177].

<sup>5</sup>*ME*, p.236 [*Q*, p.963].

<sup>6</sup>*MM*, pp.xii-xiii [*Q*, p.162]; cf. also, p.260 [*Q*, p.333].

manners: through the perception of its objective form as *a* body amongst others and through the subjective experience of being incarnated within and possessing this body: the feeling that "it is my body."<sup>1</sup> The body, or *my* body, is consequently "a privileged image, perceived in its depths and no longer on the surface...it is this particular image which I adopt as the centre of my universe and as the physical basis of my personality."<sup>2</sup> A further basis to this privilege stems from the fact that the images other than my body appear to influence each other in a determined, automatic or necessary manner. Other images influence my body by giving it their movement just as my body returns that influence by giving movement back to them. The difference is that only my body appears *to me* to choose how it will restore the movement it receives.<sup>3</sup> It constitutes a centre of choice and decision from among many possible steps of action. This choice is made in accordance with how these other images present themselves to my body. I have a "horizon" of interests which my body can gain from them and this horizon is constituted through the spatial relationship that these other images have with my body:

The more I narrow this horizon, the more the objects which it circumscribes space themselves out distinctly according to the greater or less ease with which my body can touch and move them. They send back, then, to my body, as would a mirror, its possible influence; they take rank in an order corresponding to the growing or decreasing powers of my body. *The objects which surround my body reflect its possible action upon them.*<sup>4</sup>

The restoration of the dualism inherent in actual reality and only temporarily reduced is now complete. On account of the privileged status of the body, *every* image now seems to be able to exist in "two distinct systems"; one where each image exists "*for itself*", the system Bergson attributes to science, the other where the very same images exist for the one "central image" of my body, a system he calls "*consciousness*."<sup>5</sup> But just as any image can be given according to either the objective system of science or the subjective system of consciousness, it should be remembered that the body too can be taken up

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<sup>1</sup>*MM*, p.1 [*Q*, p.169].

<sup>2</sup>*MM*, p.64 [*Q*, p.209].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *MM*, pp.4-5 [*Q*, p.171].

<sup>4</sup>*MM*, pp.6-7 [*Q*, p.172], translation altered. On Bergson's notion of "horizon", cf. also, *MM*, pp.185-187 [*Q*, pp.286-287].

<sup>5</sup>*MM*, pp.14, 12 [*Q*, pp.177, 176]. He also calls images for themselves "matter," and images for the body the "perception of matter" at *MM*, p.8 [*Q*, p.173].

from either the objective or subjective stance. While my body seizes objective images through its subjectivity, it too is an image that can be seized objectively. Its movements and gestures can be stripped of the qualitative heterogeneity that makes them mine to become the mathematical movements that belong to everyone. Opposed to "*le corps vivant*", there is, as one commentator puts it, "*le corps géometre*".<sup>1</sup> *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* fleshes out this rather stark dualism of the body, beginning with what the objective stance perceives:

For contemporary science the body is essentially what it is to the touch; it has a definite form and dimension, independent of ourselves; it occupies a given position in space and cannot change it without taking time to occupy successively the intervening positions; the visual image of it would in that case be a phenomenon whose variations we must constantly rectify by recourse to the tactile image; the latter would be the thing itself, the other would merely indicate its presence.<sup>2</sup>

Which can then be contrasted with an alternative view:

For if our body is the matter to which our consciousness applies itself it is coextensive with our consciousness, it comprises all we perceive, it reaches to the stars. But this vast body is changing continually, sometimes radically, at the slightest shifting of one part of itself which is at its centre and occupies a small fraction of space. This inner and central body, relatively invariable, is ever present. It is not merely present, it is operative: it is through this body and through it alone, that we can move parts of the large body. And, since action is what matters, since it is an understood thing that we are present where we act, the habit has grown of limiting consciousness to the small body and ignoring the vast one. [...] If the surface of our organised small body...is the seat of all our actual movements, our huge inorganic body is the seat of our potential or theoretically possible actions: the perceptive centres of the brain being the pioneers that prepare the way for subsequent actions and plan them from within, everything happens *as though* our external perceptions were built up by our brain and launched by it into space. But the truth is quite different, and we are really present in everything we perceive.<sup>3</sup>

These opening analyses of *Matter and Memory* clearly show us the kinship between Bergson's presentation of the subject-object dichotomy and the philosophies of both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. This is only to be expected. Bergson's descriptions of images for themselves and images for the body are without doubt a decisive (though usually unaccredited) forerunner to the accounts of "*en-soi*" and "*pour-soi*", "objective body" and "phenomenal body" that these thinkers produced in the 1940s.<sup>4</sup> It is now

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<sup>1</sup>Delhomme, 1954, p.54; cf. also, Alexander, 1957, p.37.

<sup>2</sup>*TSMR*, p.133 [Q, p.1088].

<sup>3</sup>*TSMR*, pp. 258-259 [Q, pp.1194-1195].

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Gunter, 1969, p.11; Zaner, 1971, pp.243, 247.

acknowledged, however, that it was Bergson "who first saw...the genuine significance and peculiarity of the body,"<sup>1</sup> he being the first to fully realize "the body's pivotal position...as a continual "center of action".<sup>2</sup>

But this centre of action is not so by proxy of the beliefs and desires of an incorporeal *cogito*. To the ire no doubt of those in agreement with Richard Zaner, the Bergsonian body is a true body-subject with its own desires, Bergson writing explicitly of an "intelligence of the body" and a "logic of the body".<sup>3</sup> Most important of all, however, is what he calls "bodily memory".<sup>4</sup> Amongst his criticisms of atomistic psychology is a rejection of those theories of recognition making recourse to supposedly objective processes of association and recollection. Seeing that every image is objectively similar in one way or another to every other image, such associations always beg the question by implicitly assuming a partial recognition which can evoke precisely the desired line of association rather than any other one.<sup>5</sup> Instead, Bergson places the subject's body, anchored to a particular place and time, at the centre of recognition.<sup>6</sup> There is a type of recognition consisting of bodily action without any representation. To recognize an object is firstly to know how to *use* it. The habit of using an object organizes various bodily movements together such that any one part of these movements "virtually contains the whole"<sup>7</sup> so that re-encountering one part automatically results in bringing back the memory of the whole. Thus, for example, one's familiarity with a town would be composed more of a "well-regulated motor accompaniment" acquired during repeated walks through it than any set of representations in one's head.<sup>8</sup> As one commentator describes it: "one's body *knows* this city; one's body *recognizes* this city. [...] One's

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<sup>1</sup>Zaner, 1971, p.243.

<sup>2</sup>Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p.179.

<sup>3</sup>*MM*, pp.137, 139 [*Q*, pp.256, 257].

<sup>4</sup>*MM*, p.197 [*Q*, p.293].

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *MM*, p.213 [*Q*, p.303]: "This is as much as to say that between any two ideas chosen at random there is always a resemblance, and always, even, contiguity; so that, when we discover a relation of contiguity or of resemblance between two successive ideas, we have in no way explained why the one evokes the other."

<sup>6</sup>Cf. *MM*, pp.105-118 [*Q*, pp.235-244].

<sup>7</sup>*MM*, p.112 [*Q*, p.240].

<sup>8</sup>Cf. *MM*, p.111 [*Q*, p.239].



body does not picture or imagine or think: it acts out, plays out, and this is its memory."<sup>1</sup> It is this bodily cognition which acts as the basis for our more mental recollections, intellections and understandings.

Aside from the body's new position, these passages also add further testimony to the improved role of possibility. This is seen in the activity of the body as a centre of action, for this action can be either that actual activity of the "smaller" body or the "potential or theoretically possible actions" of the vaster body. It is perception that is this possible or virtual action.<sup>2</sup> Perception is no longer to be understood as being in the service of information and passive speculation; it is an action that changes things, measuring the possible action of the world upon me and of myself upon the world and creating a world that is for me out of this world of images existing for themselves.<sup>3</sup> Space no longer constitutes a meaningless void; separation, as we have already been forewarned "is not a negation but a position."<sup>4</sup> The more a separation decreases, the more the pivotal action of the body becomes real; when it is zero, the image concerned is the body itself. Thus, what the physical sensation of one's own embodiment is to the perception of other images, real action is to possible action. Our own conceptual thoughts, each having their ultimate origin in perception<sup>5</sup> and each being directed towards some form of action, would be a furtherance of this possible action,<sup>6</sup> supplying a frame in which "an infinity of objects" may be related to each other in space.<sup>7</sup>

But the activity of our thoughts belongs to us wholly as individuals. The space of possibility that is coordinated by our body, on the other hand, pertains to a body belonging to the beliefs and desires of the *species* before being in the service of our own

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<sup>1</sup>Andrew Tallon, "Memory and Man's Composite Nature according to Bergson", in *New Scholasticism*, VOLUME XLVII (1973), pp.483-489; p.487.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *MM*, pp.57-58 [*Q*, p.205]; *CE*, p.102 [*Q*, p.577].

<sup>3</sup>"To profess that perception is action is to situate it in the totality of relations between the organism and its surroundings" (de Lattre, 1990, p.61).

<sup>4</sup>Trotignon, 1991, p.293.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *CM*, p.156/133 [*Q*, p.1369].

<sup>6</sup>Cf. *ME*, p.58 [*Q*, p.850].

<sup>7</sup>Cf. *CE*, pp.157, 185 [*Q*, pp.622, 644].

individual projects. Intelligence does not have its hands totally free; before us "it is the species which thinks space."<sup>1</sup>

The possibility of an action is consequently not to be thought of as an all or nothing affair, the occurrence of which depending on whether its object is within range or not. Range and distance are no longer neutral variables; they are precisely the measure of variable possibility or impossibility that Bergson is talking about: "the *degree of impossibility* is exactly what is called distance."<sup>2</sup> "All or nothing" are abstracts from *one* type of space only, the objective space of solid bodies. Though some philosophers might argue that we are all realists "*au fond*", and that consequently we must believe that "for any statement there must be something in virtue of which either it or its negation is true,"<sup>3</sup> there seems to be very little difference between such realism and what Bergson calls "materialistic realism".<sup>4</sup> Two-valued logic, as Hans Reichenbach pointed out, is a derivative of the particular world in which we find ourselves where "corporeal substance" appears to be the rule for space.<sup>5</sup> But this space is not the simple given Reichenbach assumes it to be. As Bergson says, reality will answer "by a yes or a no"<sup>6</sup> only in virtue of the question asked, but as always, "[y]es and no are sterile.... What is interesting, instructive, fecund, is *in what measure?*"<sup>7</sup> The space of corporeal substance is only one part of reality; there are others that measure possibility rather than simply affirming or negating it.

### ***Bergson's Theory of Perception***

But in portraying both perceptual and intellectual consciousness as essentially pragmatic, Bergson takes an unorthodox stance. Whilst there is no doubting that Kant has taught us

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<sup>1</sup>Delhomme, 1954, p.72.

<sup>2</sup>*DS*, p.73 [*M*, p.126].

<sup>3</sup>Michael Dummett, "Truth", in his *Truth and Other Enigmas* (London: Duckworth, 1978), pp.1-24; p.14. However, as Passmore tells us (cf. Passmore, 1985, pp.84-86), Dummett has lately been more hesitant to characterize the realist by his or her acceptance of the principle of bivalence.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *MM*, p.14 [*Q*, p.177].

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Hans Reichenbach, *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), pp.189-190.

<sup>6</sup>*CM*, p.223/189 [*Q*, p.1421].

<sup>7</sup>*M*, p.477; cf. also, *M*, p.588.

to mistrust the idea of an innocent eye upon the world and that we have come some way since Huxley's epiphenomenalism that denied consciousness any causal role whatsoever, the hope still prevails to find some passive representational "content" to what this eye sees, a content which might then be reduced to a purely informational substratum.<sup>1</sup> Consciousness, if its existence is at all admitted, still remains a speculative, unextended nothingness facing the world.

According to Bergson, on the other hand, no objective image of the body can ever give birth to a representation, for it is only one amongst a system of such images of the world. When we look at the world subjectively, there seems to be an addition to the vision that science supplies us with, namely my view-point upon the world. Another name for this addition is representation. But such representations are not passive, they affect the world of images for themselves by reducing their real action into a possible action. Thinking of representation as *informational*, that is, as no longer a type of action upon the world, is a sure sign of a confusion as to which system of images is being dealt with. It is exactly this potential for confusion that the materialist plays upon. In explaining her theory, she perpetually and surreptitiously switches back and forth between her own objectivist notation of reality and another which prioritizes the subjective stance over all others.<sup>2</sup>

The materialist tends to identify the body solely with the small organic form that takes its magnitude to be just as it is given to us through the sense of touch.<sup>3</sup> The imperialism of this sense over all the others precludes the body from being taken in that distended image provided through the other senses. Yet Bergson insists that we are "really present in everything we perceive."<sup>4</sup> In his lecture "The Soul and the Body", he sketches the interpretation science gives to this phenomenon of the extended body. If we do have a contact with the world beyond our body, science will say that it is only because "vibrations from afar have impressed eye and ear and been transmitted to the brain: there,

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Tim Crane, "Introduction", in Tim Crane, ed., *The Contents of Experience: Essays on Perception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp.1-17; pp.6-12.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. for the following *ME*, pp.234-250 [*Q*, pp.962-971].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *TSMR*, p.133 [*Q*, p.1088].

<sup>4</sup>*TSMR*, p.259 [*Q*, p.1195].

in the brain, the stimulation has become auditory or visual sensation; perception is therefore within the body and not spread abroad."<sup>1</sup> This interpretation amounts to what we would call today a causal theory of perception (CTP), which, stated simply, says that one's awareness of an object is due to events that constitute a causal chain between the object and one's sensory mechanisms. The chain terminates in the brain with an event which we call the perception of the object. Though it would be possible to concoct a non-materialist CTP, most current advocates of the theory, as Raymond Tallis tells us, forward a reductive neurophysiological version of it.<sup>2</sup>

What is implausible about a CTP is that such a physicalist theory as this should seal off a segment of the physical, the body, from the rest of the world and allow that remaining world to orient itself towards it in order to cause its perceptions. According to Bergson, it is a tenet of physicalism that "behind ideas is a cause which is not idea." Yet surely these divisions and directings between body and world are our ideas imposed on the physical.<sup>3</sup> Talk in terms of "external" and "internal", "input" and "data-reception" depends upon a point of view that sees only a part of the whole, it depends upon an opacity of vision that can only belong to a situated perspective. Physicalism supposedly "defines the object not by its entry into our presentation, but by its solidarity with the whole of a reality supposed to be unknowable;" yet "is it not at once clear that to consider the brain separately, and separately also the movement of its atoms, involves now an actual self-contradiction?"<sup>4</sup> To say that there is a brain with objects external to it and which "modify it in such a way as to raise up ideas of themselves" is to surreptitiously pass to the idealist's language and posit "*as isolable by right what is isolated in idea.*"<sup>5</sup> Thus Bergson finds materialism incapable of keeping to a non-idealist language or "system of notation" while remaining consistent.

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<sup>1</sup>ME, p.41 [Q, p.839].

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Tallis, 1991, p.46.

<sup>3</sup>ME, p.243 [Q, p.967].

<sup>4</sup>ME, p.244 [Q, p.968].

<sup>5</sup>ME, p.245 [Q, p.968].

But if one maintains oneself within the system appropriate to any discussion of representation, the system of *consciousness*, one finds a body that is far from being a passive receptacle awaiting the impression of the world; it is a body that is one with that world. The idea of the body or a part of the body being able to reproduce or create an image of an external reality, stems from seeing it as a discrete and entirely self-sufficient entity.<sup>1</sup> But this, for Bergson, is to fix oneself too firmly on the sense of touch alone.<sup>2</sup> The tactile senses give us the solidity of the object, its resistance, intransigence and threatening impenetrability. But referring all our other senses to touch only creates a solipsism of images quite unsuited to the subjective plane where Bergson has placed himself. We must learn to think through our other senses<sup>3</sup> and actively distend the body. Doing this would leave us in greater doubt as to whether perception actually does either double, mimic, reproduce, or create the world in any immaterial or informational manner.

Bergson arrived at this view by examining both the evidence from evolution and the structural development of the nervous system. In doing so, he found that the nervous system is basically a facility for exchanging movement; it adds nothing to what it receives; its function is simply to allow a communication or to delay it.<sup>4</sup> The brain acts as an instrument of analysis in regard to movement received and selection in regard to movement executed, but in both cases "the brain is an instrument of action, and not of representation."<sup>5</sup> Its own movements or action then, consists in reducing other movements. Our perceptual mechanisms neither mirror nor create reality, they limit it. Not that a Kantian model that sees the world conforming to the structure of the mind would have no place for deletions and delimitations.<sup>6</sup> But by seeing the body enact a narrowing or restriction, Bergson has no ontological difference in mind between the agency of this action and the world on which it acts; perception is not of any stuff of which the rest of material reality is not already made. As a result, our perception is, at

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *M*, p.411.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *MM*, p.264 [*Q*, pp.335-336].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *M*, pp.643-644.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *MM*, p.19 [*Q*, p.180].

<sup>5</sup>*MM*, p.83 [*Q*, p.221].

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Nelson Goodman (1978, pp.7-17) on the five various ways the mind can be seen to construct its world.

least in principle, neither relative nor subjective: "*there is in matter something more than, but not something different from, that which is actually given.*"<sup>1</sup>

If one consequently asks where perception takes place if not in the brain, Bergson's answer will be that, *de jure*, it takes place in the object! This will sound ridiculous only if one is determined to believe that perceptions must exist in the brain. But if they are unextended or informational, how can they be contained at all? If they are extended, on the other hand, and are thereby truly *of* the world and not just *about* it, then they must be in the object in some manner. Bergson's whole argument is that it is just as likely that the perception should occur in the object where we perceive it, as it is for it to occur in our eye or our brain. In fact, because the perception is of the object, it is *more* likely *de jure* to occur in the object than anywhere else. We already saw the absurdity of thinking that the brain can plan or communicate or contain information as though that did not imply the need for a fully sentient planner, communicator, or informant. Such thinking falls victim to a retrospective fallacy by putting a living homunculus within the body: "a sensation cannot be in the nerve unless the nerve feels. Now it is evident that the nerve does not feel.... [...] ...[and] if it is not in the nerve, neither is it in the brain."<sup>2</sup> So if the sensation is not at the place where it arises, neither can it be anywhere else. Imagining the "stimulation" of the nervous system by a ray of light at a source P, Bergson writes:

The truth is that the point P, the rays which it emits, the retina and the nervous elements affected, form a single whole; that the luminous point P is a part of this whole; and that it is really in P, and not elsewhere, that the image of P is formed and perceived.<sup>3</sup>

The pure image of the thing is formed and perceived then, not in the nervous system but in the thing itself. What we think of as "the nervous system" of the body belongs to an objectivist system of notation; but perception belongs to the subjective system of consciousness: "We have the act of seeing, which is simple, and we have an infinity of elements...by means of which the anatomist and the physiologist reconstitute that simple

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<sup>1</sup>MM, p.78 [Q, p.218].

<sup>2</sup>MM, p.62 [Q, p.208].

<sup>3</sup>MM, pp.37-38 [Q, p.192].

act."<sup>1</sup> Of course, this odd-sounding language of perception occurring *in* the object may be misleading. Without any loss of essential meaning, however, it can be translated (as Deleuze translates it) into the vocabulary of perception *being* the object.

Rejecting the informational and speculative picture of consciousness and situating it back in the world, as Bergson does, leads consequently to a predication of extension, not to the causes of perception, but to the perceptions themselves. Bergson gives up the myth of an entirely immaterial mind: "the truth is that space is no more without us than within us."<sup>2</sup> Those, on the other hand, who continue to maintain that the mind is wholly immaterial, must face the inevitable objection. How are mind and matter ever to be related if the former is continuously allowed to emerge mysteriously from the latter as an unextended representation of it? Materialism, according to Bergson, holds precisely this view; matter does have the ability to produce something entirely different from itself, namely the *perception* of matter.<sup>3</sup> Materialism views this perception as a "*wholly speculative interest; it is pure knowledge.*"<sup>4</sup> Of course, it may see perceptual knowing as confused and only generally true compared to the perfectly true world of scientific images, but perception is still deemed to be informational. One reason why causal theories of perception are so favoured amongst physicalists is that they explain how and why perception should be generally faithful to "external" reality.<sup>5</sup> If we are in any sense truly related to what we perceive as it is in itself, it is only because our final perception is connected to the object of perception via a chain of causal mechanisms. Perception is consequently deemed to be an access to a world of information and the mind to be the processor of this information. Yet there is another tradition (including most notably Merleau-Ponty) which does not see perception as a true *access* to reality, but as a reality in itself. Bergson heralded this view with the contention that perception is an action

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<sup>1</sup>*TSMR*, p.207 [*Q*, p.1152].

<sup>2</sup>*MM*, p.288 [*Q*, p.350]; cf. also, Čapek, 1971, p.217.

<sup>3</sup>Remembering also that "matter" and the "perception of matter" are two synonyms for the systems of science and consciousness respectively; cf. *MM*, p.8 [*Q*, p.173].

<sup>4</sup>*MM*, p.17 [*Q*, p.179].

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Tallis, 1991, pp.79-82.

within a world of actions. Perception signifies a loss of action, a reduction from real to possible action.

Conceiving perception as a diminution of the extended world obviously goes against the view that sees its action upon and existence within the objective world as an addition to and not a subtraction from it. But that the activity of perception is omissive is essential to Bergson's solution to the mind-body problem. It makes more sense to understand perception as a loss of matter rather than as a magical superaddition of something non-material to matter (the representation of it). So long as a dualism of perceptual information and material world is maintained with one as the passive spectator upon the other, the relationship between the two will never be explained. Perception is an action, a deletion of what is of no interest to our body in the world, not a magical superaddition of something entirely different from that world.

### ***A Problem in Objectivity: Pure Perception***

In playing the central role that it now has in bodily perception, space, like possibility, has definitely come of age in Bergson's work: "the visible outlines of bodies are the design of our possible action on them."<sup>1</sup> And yet its role is still not entirely unambiguous. While privileging bodily space with the capacity to understand and endure, it is also stated that it is this same body that homogenizes the concrete space surrounding it. We turn now to this perplexing situation.

"*The objects which surround my body reflect its possible action upon them.*"<sup>2</sup> With this adage the apparently objective space of "science" becomes, via the action of the body, a meaningful space for me.<sup>3</sup> Yet *Matter and Memory's* precept also depicts the means by which meaning is stripped from the physical world; *homogeneous* space is said to be "the diagrammatic design of our eventual action upon matter."<sup>4</sup> *Creative Evolution* puts it even

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<sup>1</sup>*CE*, p.102 [*Q*, p.577], translation altered.

<sup>2</sup>*MM*, pp.6-7 [*Q*, p.172].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *MM*, pp.185-186 [*Q*, pp.285-286].

<sup>4</sup>*MM*, p. 280 [*Q*, p.345].



more explicitly: "This [homogeneous] space is therefore, pre-eminently, the plan of our possible action on things."<sup>1</sup> In both cases, this action, being eventual or possible, belongs to the perceiving body. But if such is the case, then it seems that it is the meaningful space of the body that, being simultaneously an intolerant space, reduces the rest of the meaningful world to a manipulable quantity. The homogenizing impulse that belonged in *Time and Free Will* to the peculiarly human capacity to be inauthentic,<sup>2</sup> has now been given to bodily consciousness first and foremost, making of it the primary pragmatic instrument of homogenization. It is not *our* intellectual desire so much as the desire of our body that now reduces the rest of the world to a non-enduring space.<sup>3</sup>

And yet this cannot be quite right, for Bergson seems to be simultaneously saying that:

1. there is an objective space of images that exists for itself, the system belonging to science, which would appear to be theoretically independent of my body but which is also one that can be transformed into a meaningful world of images for my body; as well as that
2. the homogeneous space we take to be external to ourselves is a product of our bodies' diagrammatic design upon a qualitative and enduring space that pre-exists this reductive action.

What is problematic is the status of this system of objective images belonging to science; does it exist for itself and before my body's action upon it or is it a purely derivative product of my body's activity upon a concrete space enduring for itself? The answer, we believe, can be found in a thought experiment conducted by Bergson. The point of the experiment is to render what this system of objective images might be like if experienced, not from the situation of either myself or my body, but from a thoroughly objective stand-point, a veritable view from nowhere. He calls such a view "pure perception".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*CE*, p.165 [*Q*, p.628].

<sup>2</sup>*Cf. TFW*, pp.97, 231 [*Q*, pp.65, 151].

<sup>3</sup>At *TSMR*, p.167 [*Q*, p.1117], the "logic of the body" is described as an "extension of desire".

<sup>4</sup>*Cf. MM*, pp.24-38 [*Q*, pp.183-192].

We said above that perception begins with the object *de jure*. But *de facto* perception is obviously not so faithful to its subject-matter. In order to get to the heart of the relationship between body and world, Bergson attempts an exorcism of all that might make perception subjective. Thus he constructs a perception that belongs neither to any subject, nor any body-subject, but instead to a mathematical point perfectly mirroring the universe.<sup>1</sup> The body literally becomes a point perspective. Along with the body's banishment goes memory, because it is memory too, both bodily and intellectual, which lends perception its subjective character.<sup>2</sup> This objective realm will be that of the purest perception, an absorption in the timeless present with a vision of the world where we are "actually placed outside ourselves; we touch the reality of the object in an immediate intuition."<sup>3</sup>

Yet Bergson realizes that even this anonymous perception will never achieve its desired objectivity. What is given in this pure perception as a "presence" is still *not* the entirety of the object. The "*present* image" or "objective reality"<sup>4</sup> is never fully present, remaining as always partially obscured. All that is given is what interests our body, even though it is a body without extension. Simply because it has to be located, perception cannot fail to be perspectival and as such, cause the suppression of those parts of the object hidden from its perspective. The images of objectivity may be fully present to each other, but they can only be *known* under pain of diminution. Pure perception itself becomes a type of "representation", it can never escape being representation, for all perception entails the reduction of a presence. The coincidence with the object desired can only be a "partial coincidence."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *MM*, pp.26, 32, 310 [*Q*, pp.184-185, 188-189, 363]; cf. also, *ME*, pp.95-96 [*Q*, p.873], *M*, p.646. Despite describing the body of pure perception as a "mathematical point" at *MM*, p.310 [*Q*, p.363], elsewhere (*MM*, p.83 [*Q*, p.221]) Bergson's concentration lapses and pure perception is described in terms of "organs" and "nerve centres." Perhaps we should read these lapses as representative of a *purer* perception (memory would still be held in abeyance) if not a perfectly pure perception.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *MM*, p.80 [*Q*, p.220].

<sup>3</sup>*MM*, p.84 [*Q*, p.222].

<sup>4</sup>*MM*, p.28 [*Q*, p.186].

<sup>5</sup>*MM*, p.297 [*Q*, p.356]. Cf. also, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *L'Union de L'Ame et du Corps chez Malebranche, Biran et Bergson: Notes Prises au Cours de Maurice Merleau-Ponty à L'Ecole Normale Supérieure 1947-1948*, recueillies et rédigées par Jean Deprun (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J.Vrin, 1968), pp.82-83. Merleau-Ponty kept the issue of a partial coincidence long in his mind, ranging from initial outright dismissal of the idea in *Phenomenology of Perception* (cf. 1962, p.62) through various reconsiderations: cf. 1968a, p.113; 1964, p.184; 1968b, pp.122-123. We address these below.

What can we learn from this in relation to our problem concerning the status of the objective and scientific image? Surely not that it is an illusion; Bergson's respect for the natural sciences was too great for him to have ever implied that, and he states explicitly that "an image may *be* without *being perceived*."<sup>1</sup> Bergson's empiricism is not as radical as Berkeley's. On the contrary, the system of objective images does indeed exist, but the lesson we learn is that it can never be *given* to any living, conscious perspective including the scientific one. Bergson's science, like his "developing and incomplete" metaphysics, is perpetually unfolding.<sup>2</sup> This must surely be the meaning of Bergson's critique of simultaneity. The world can only be experienced piecemeal through the succession of its various aspects, not all at once in a simultaneous vision. Deleuze puts it as follows:

The Whole is never "given". [...] This is the constant theme of Bergsonism from the outset: The confusion of space and time, the assimilation of time into space, make us think that the whole is given, even if only in principle, even if only in the eyes of God.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps that is why Bergson, not without subsequent controversy,<sup>4</sup> chose the word "image" to designate every type of perception. As far as our knowledge of the world is concerned, we cannot escape from images: "[w]e are always more or less in idealism."<sup>5</sup> But Bergson is no idealist, the "more or less", the *desire* to reach beyond what a certain system of images may signify, is essential. It defines the difference between solipsism and common sense. Objectivity exists, but it is not as we might think it to be. The objectivity of science can never be given. In what could be taken as a reply to A.R. Lacey's complaint that he places too much faith in common sense and its naïvety regarding secondary qualities,<sup>6</sup> Bergson himself talks of the sensations of hot or cold as

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<sup>1</sup>*MM*, p.27 [*Q*, p.185].

<sup>2</sup>Lindsay, 1911, p.34; cf. also, *CE*, p.xiv [*Q*, p.493].

<sup>3</sup>Deleuze, 1988, p.104. Cf. *CE*, pp.39-41 [*Q*, pp.526-528], where Bergson reproaches those who believe that "*all is given*". Our prior investigations have cautioned us against putting the blame on space as Deleuze does above. It is the assimilation of novelty to pure homogeneity that is in question.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *CM*, pp.90-91/77 [*Q*, p.1318].

<sup>5</sup>*ME*, p.248 [*Q*, p.970].

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Lacey, 1989, pp.89-90.

"for the most part relative to the state of my body."<sup>1</sup> There may be objective secondary qualities before the body can relativize them (and so Bergson's faith in common sense may not be so misplaced). But if there are, they can never be given, even to a body without a body. Yet in our introduction we distinguished between Bergson's use of common sense and *le bon sens*, and there may still be a thesis in the objectivity of pure perception concerning the latter.

But our problems are not yet over. There remains the peculiar fact that scientific images seem to designate the same objectivity as the homogeneous space forged by the activity of the body. One possible response that emerges from the foregoing may be that the two can designate the same thing, only they need not do so necessarily. In terms of what has been given to me by a body that belongs to my species before it belongs to me, the system of objective images *collapses* into the homogeneous space formed by and with the body. But in terms of my own appropriation of my body's activity, the body in the making as it were, this space can *raise* itself towards the *telos* of another type of objectivity quite distinct from homogeneity. It will not attain this objectivity for sure, but it may still attempt it in good faith. The second *aspired* objectivity, we will argue, is the true import of "pure perception," for despite having sometimes expressed himself as though it would pertain solely to the vision of the species if it were to belong to anyone at all,<sup>2</sup> there is evidence that it can signify a profoundly personal and individual vision for Bergson.<sup>3</sup>

So what of this other type of objectivity? Well, it is possible that objectivity might signify more than just a set of self-sufficient objects; there may also be the good sense to be *objective* and to aspire towards objectivity. Indeed, talk of "objects", "images", and "presences" is somewhat premature when discussing pure perception, for the intent behind the hypothesis is to gain access to the moment before our actual perception has

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<sup>1</sup>*M*, p.412.

<sup>2</sup>By this we allude to those passages (for example, *MM*, p.83 [*Q*, p.221]) where pure perception appears simply to be a *bodily* perception divorced from memory (it would therefore belong to the species' body).

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Chapter Ten below.

delineated any discrete objects: "In the movement-image", as Deleuze describes an image for itself, "there are not yet bodies or rigid lines."<sup>1</sup> If there is something *objective* to pure perception, it cannot be on account of a literally pure perception of *objects*. It may be that Bergson's thought experiment is concerned with more than simply the exposure of some vain hope at seizing reality.

Merleau-Ponty once described Bergson's partial coincidence as a contact that is "absolute *because* it is partial."<sup>2</sup> This sounds less paradoxical when related to Bergson's position on relativism. If pure perception is always already a representation, that should not lead us into thinking of Bergson as either an idealist or a relativist. Relativism is a disappointed absolutism, the unfulfilled desire for an absolute description of the world. But descriptions or representations are not necessarily mirrorings of an external world. For Bergson they are a part of the world and are related to it as part is to whole. If they do not embrace the whole, this testifies all the same to truly being at least a part of it: "there is in matter something <sup>more</sup> than, but not something different from, that which is actually given."<sup>3</sup> Being a part automatically brings the whole, if not into perfect vision, at least into sight. Representation, or at least the representation of pure perception, is not a nothingness or formless content of pure information. It is a possible action, and as all reality is movement and action of some kind, it is consequently a part of what really exists.<sup>4</sup> The qualities of sounds, colours, tastes, and smells are objective, in principle if not in fact, not because they pre-exist their actual bodily manifestation in some virtual state, but because, belonging to a subject that is a part of the whole, they have as great a claim (though not a hold) on reality as anything possibly can have. It is not that they correspond to or actualize a pre-existent object, but rather that they can become, if not objects, at least *objective* in virtue of the integral worthiness of the perspective that

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<sup>1</sup>Deleuze, 1986, p.60.

<sup>2</sup>Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p.184.

<sup>3</sup>*MM*, p.78 [*Q*, p.218]; cf. also, de Lattre, 1990, pp.96-97.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Jean-Jacques Lecercle, "Berkeley: Bishop or Buzby? Deleuze on Cinema", in Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne, eds., *Thinking Art: Beyond Traditional Aesthetics* (London: Philosophical Forum/Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1991), pp.193-206; p.198: "It is easy to see that we are a long way from Berkeley, since images are not in the mind, but in the world, a long way from Kant as well, as there is nothing 'behind' the image-phenomenon, and even further from Sartre, as this image is certainly not 'nothing'."

experiences them. It is said that in pure perception there is never any "image without an object," whilst in the introduction to *Matter and Memory* Bergson talks of each object as a "self-existing image."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps, then, each image is also a type of object in that there is never an image that is not in some way objective. Merleau-Ponty also wrote of the idea of coincidence as being "with a movement that emanates from ourselves."<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this can be taken in a more literal manner than originally intended. The images of *Matter and Memory's* first chapter may be concerned as much with the reality of subjective images (image-things) as with the phenomenology of objects (thing-images).

But pure perception is not the only means of access to reality presented in *Matter and Memory*. As its title would suggest, the faculty of memory has a central role to play. However, that role is far from being without its own perplexing qualities. In examining them in the next chapter we will be engaged in a twofold objective: to accord to what Bergson calls "pure memory" its proper status within his thought *vis-à-vis* its perspectivist tendencies, and through this to further our understanding of pure perception as we have explicated it here in terms of an aspiration towards objectivity. We will find that the reality evoked by pure memory may have more to do with the aforementioned objectivity that collapses into homogeneity than it does with the space that aspires to a real but perpetually withheld objectivity.

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<sup>1</sup>*MM*, pp. 39, xii [*Q*, p.193, 162].

<sup>2</sup>Merleau-Ponty, 1968a, p.113.

## *Chapter Eight:*

### *From the End of Memory to the Primacy of Perception*

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first two set out a critique of Bergson's theory of memory, commencing with what it has to say about "habit-memory", and then turning to its realism towards the past. The third part will play the preparatory role of revising Bergson's theory of radical novelty so that it now concerns the multiplicity of both perception and the present. With that, the scene will be set for those problems that inevitably face any theory of radical novelty (which we tackle in Chapter Nine). We begin with the theory of memory.

#### *Bergson's Theory of Memory*

To find the pure perception that was never found, Bergson attempted to exorcise all subjectivity from the world. What was divorced from actual perception were memory and the body. Having dealt with the body we now turn to memory, for as Bergson writes, "it is memory above all that lends to perception its subjective character."<sup>1</sup> According to most presentations of his theory, there are two forms of memory described, the one named "habit-memory", the other "representational-memory".<sup>2</sup> The first is no more than a set of physical motor-mechanisms, wholly bent on action; the second are true iconic recollections representing the past. He illustrates his distinction by asking us to contrast the ability to learn a lesson by rote with the ability to remember the specific occasion of that action. Learning by rote creates a cerebral motor-mechanism, a habit of the body that can be repeated at will when called upon. A representational-memory, on the other hand, is of a specific event in my life, it has a date and as such can never recur identically.<sup>3</sup> What is essential to habit-memory is that it is bent upon action, upon the

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<sup>1</sup>*MM*, p.80 [*Q*, p.220].

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *MM*, pp.89-98 [*Q*, pp.225-231].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *MM*, pp.90, 94 [*Q*, pp.226, 228].

present and upon the future; it does not represent, it acts: "the one *imagines* and the other *repeats*."<sup>1</sup>

Obviously there is a problem in all of this for us, for we have been busy emphasizing the importance of bodily memory, and yet here Bergson is, in spite of having "written better on the body,"<sup>2</sup> making representational-memory the paradigmatic form of recollection.<sup>3</sup> Habit-memory barely "deserves the name of memory" for it is only in virtue of being able to *represent* when the habit was acquired that we can call it any sort of memory at all.<sup>4</sup> Yet then why continue to call it a memory as Bergson does? He actually describes the formation of habits in terms of the continuous modifications made to the organism by representational memories and through which "is gradually formed an experience of an entirely different order."<sup>5</sup> But one might wonder how something "of an entirely different order" can be "gradually formed."

Thus it is not surprising that various commentators have seen the Bergsonian dichotomy between habit and representation actually ending up as a "continuum of memory" stretching between the representational at one end and the habitual at the other.<sup>6</sup> Jean Hyppolite sees the distinction between representation and habit as something that has possibly "distorted" the study of Bergson's theory of memory.<sup>7</sup> He asks that we reinstate the place of bodily-recognition and see memory as a recognition occurring at all

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<sup>1</sup>*MM*, p.93 [*Q*, p.228]. Despite the fact that Bergson's model foreshadowed the current distinction between "declarative" and "procedural" memory (cf. Larry R. Squire, "Mechanisms of Memory", in *Science* VOLUME CCXXXII (1986), pp.1612-1619; p.1614), and that his introduction of habit-memory "was potentially revolutionary for Western theorizing about memory" (Casey, 1984, p.280), many have found his sharp separation between habit and representation questionable. It is quite possible that I might recall a philosopher's argument without remembering the occasion on which I heard it. On Bergson's model this would be a habit-memory, yet it would seem to be perfectly intellectual. Alternatively, one may be in the habit of perpetually recounting one's part in the Battle of the Somme on the 5th of July 1916 without one iota of conscious investment (cf. Don Locke, *Memory* (London: Macmillan, 1971), p.44).

<sup>2</sup>Merleau-Ponty, 1968a, p.90.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *MM*, p.95 [*Q*, p.229]: "Of the two memories...the first [representational-memory] appears to be memory par excellence."

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *MM*, pp.93, 95 [*Q*, pp.228, 229].

<sup>5</sup>*MM*, p.92 [*Q*, p.227].

<sup>6</sup>Mary Warnock, *Memory* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), p.30.

<sup>7</sup>Jean Hyppolite, "Aspects Divers de la Mémoire chez Bergson", in Hyppolite, 1991, pp.468-488; p.476.



stages: "we are our past as much as we are our body."<sup>1</sup> Concentrating upon representational-memory as *the* true model leads to a perception of the Bergsonian past as solely "a set of given images ready-made in the unconscious," despite the fact that this is wholly opposed to Bergson's vision of a "living memory."<sup>2</sup>

Yet Bergson himself seems to be adamant. He speaks repeatedly of a "fundamental" distinction between habit and representational-memory, of the "profound difference, a difference in kind, between the two sorts of recollection,"<sup>3</sup> and of the fact that of the two, only representational-memory is "the true memory" or "memory par excellence."<sup>4</sup> He also says that habit-memory is so bent towards action rather than representation that it constitutes a fundamental part of my present, a present consisting of a series of motor mechanisms accumulated within the body.<sup>5</sup> But this last point may actually hold a clue to a resolution of the problem. The portrayal of the body in the chapters of *Matter and Memory* after the first concentrate on the objective image of it given to science. But these are also the chapters where the habit-representation dichotomy is set forth. Bergson no longer writes so well of the body because he has turned to a different image of it. It is the body without time, existing within the instantaneous present that forms one pole of Bergson's divided memory. Hence, he can say that it is by means of our body that we have a present and that "[m]y present is, in its essence, sensori-motor. That is to say that my present consists in the consciousness that I have of my body."<sup>6</sup>

Commensurate with this dual attitude towards the body comes a double-think in relation to habits and habitual action as well, given, not so much in *Matter and Memory*, as across a number of Bergson's other works. It has been remarked that Bergson's own views were part of a movement that saw in habit "a fear of life" and the desire to

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<sup>1</sup>Hyppolite, 1991, p.479.

<sup>2</sup>Hyppolite, 1991, p.476.

<sup>3</sup>*MM*, pp.92, 91 [*Q*, pp.227, 226]; cf. also, *MM*, p.195 [*Q*, p.292].

<sup>4</sup>*MM*, pp. 195, 95 [*Q*, pp.292, 229].

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *MM*, pp.91, 96, 92-3 [*Q*, pp.226-227, 229-230, 227].

<sup>6</sup>*MM*, p.177 [*Q*, p.281].

"duplicate the outward comportment of most other people."<sup>1</sup> The habits depreciated were consequently *social* and signified the death of the individual: "Mindless social habits engender patterns of obedience and regularity, but they do not express real individuality, which, for Bergson, was the most important thing."<sup>2</sup>

So it is not surprising that there might be room for a type of habit running alongside of that form which facilitates social control, and this is indeed what Bergson writes of when dealing with the issue of character. If social habits are the material out of which our own various automatism are constructed, the ones Bergson examines in *Laughter*,<sup>3</sup> there also exist "motor-habits" or "dispositions to take certain habits" which constitute the "organic bases of character."<sup>4</sup> The difference is that these latter do not actualize themselves according to any necessary action; like character itself, they lend themselves to a probabilistic analysis alone.<sup>5</sup> An automatism allows us a virtually infallible foresight, but knowing a person's character can only lead us to probable conclusions about that person.

But there is more to this distinction than the degree of foreknowledge of the subject the two forms of habit accord us. According to Eugène Minkowski, there are two kinds of automatism, psychological and mental.<sup>6</sup> The former typifies an action that is merely unrepresented or unconscious. The second is a psychiatric condition concerning subjects who act as if under another's control. The source of their decisions appears to them to come from without rather than within. No doubt this is deemed to be a delusion on their part, yet Bergson's own aversion to habitual behaviour was based exactly on the fear of

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<sup>1</sup>David Gross, "Bergson, Proust, and the Revaluation of Memory", in *International Philosophical Quarterly*, VOLUME XXV (1985), pp.369-380; p.372.

<sup>2</sup>Gross, 1985, p.373.

<sup>3</sup>And in *Laughter* (Bergson, 1911, p.11 [*Q*, p.392]), Bergson does not link the automatism of the (literally) absent-minded with present-centred perceptions, but with past-centred representations; it consists of "a certain inborn lack of elasticity of both senses and intelligence, which brings it to pass that we continue to see what is no longer visible, to hear what is no longer audible, to say what is no longer to the point: in short, to adapt ourselves to a past and therefore imaginary situation, when we ought to be shaping our conduct in accordance with the reality which is present."

<sup>4</sup>*M*, p.720n2 (this reference is taken from notes made during a course on theories of the will given between 1906 and 1907; cf. *M*, pp.685-722). Edward S. Casey (1987, p.150) points out that the Greek root for the term "habit" is "*héxis*" which "connotes a state of character for which we are responsible, especially in its formative phases."

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *TFW*, pp.183-184 [*Q*, pp.120-121].

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Minkowski, 1970, p.212.

each subject's own tendency to succumb to the patterning of its social milieu. Such subjects that do give way "are acted" rather than act themselves.<sup>1</sup> Thus there are the habits which come from without, society, and those which come from within, the individual's own character. As a consequence of this dual perspective on habit, his depreciation of habit memory makes more sense when understood in terms of a rejection of the role objective habits and the objective body might have in memory.

### ***Beyond the Cult of the Past***

One source for the difficulties encountered by critics of Bergson's philosophy of memory has been their tendency to see a simpler theory for the one that is actually presented. His theory is in fact a tripartite one with a concept of "pure memory" alongside those of habit- and representational-memory.<sup>2</sup> The basis for this disregard is its confusing depiction within *Matter and Memory*. At one point Bergson seems to be presenting a dyadic theory of habit and representation, while at another, he seems to posit a triadic theory adding "pure memory" to the former pair. If we look closely, however, we realize that Bergson is doing two different things entirely. On the one hand, he gives us a theory of *recollection* that espouses a dualism between representational-recollection and habit-recollection, on the other, he gives us a three-part theory of *memory* involving these two types of recollection and one form of *unrecollected* pure memory.<sup>3</sup> This last memory, he tells us, is pure on account of its unrecollected or virtual state,<sup>4</sup> whereas the recollected image, being actual, is "one simplification or another of anterior experience."<sup>5</sup> As Deleuze rightly says, in contrast to the virtual, every type of actual image "implies, according to Bergson, a corruption of pure memory, a descent from memory into an image which distorts it."<sup>6</sup> Thus we now have a new opposition, this time between two

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *TFW*, p.231 [*Q*, p.151].

<sup>2</sup>Don Locke makes no references to the tri-partite nature of Bergson's theory at all, whilst both Edward S. Casey's *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* and "Habitual Body and Memory in Merleau-Ponty" barely make any mention of it.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *MM*, p.170 [*Q*, p.276].

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *MM*, p.171-172 [*Q*, pp.276-277].

<sup>5</sup>*CM*, p.181/153 [*Q*, p.1388].

<sup>6</sup>Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, translated by Richard Howard (London: Allen Lane/Penguin, 1973), pp.57-8. Deleuze's remark applies specifically to the dream image, but it remains true of every actual image as well. The English translators of Deleuze's *Bergsonism* (1988, p.9), note that "the authorized translations [of Bergson's works] do not make a systematic distinction between "recollection" and "memory" in the English." Such indistinctness could lead one to confuse representational-memory with

forms of recollection that we can generically term "image-memory" and one form of true memory called "pure memory."

The significance of this new opposition is all important. Bergson is adamant that he should not be confused with others who see only a difference of degree or intensity between perceived images and pure memory: "Memory actualized in an image differs, then, profoundly from pure memory."<sup>1</sup> He repeats this principle at various points, in *Matter and Memory* saying that "[t]o *imagine* is not to *remember*,"<sup>2</sup> in another text that "the recollection of an image is not an image."<sup>3</sup> The crucial point to be retained in understanding Bergson's distinction between recollection and pure memory is this: whereas a recollection actualizes the past, pure memory *is* this past,<sup>4</sup> the past itself being defined as "*that which acts no longer*."<sup>5</sup> With pure memory so identified with the past, the equation thus forged is given attributes usually thought more appropriate to its components taken individually. From memory comes the subjective attribute of unconsciousness, from the past the objective attribute of powerlessness.<sup>6</sup>

A host of criticisms have arisen from this identification of the past with memory. Bergson has either failed, it is said, to differentiate the "*being of nature*" of the past from the "*intentional being*" of this same past, or he has confounded "an act of knowing with that which is known."<sup>7</sup> The issues raised by this further strain of apparent Bergsonian psychologism go beyond our previous discussion of its mathematical and logical varieties. The first of these pertains to the problematic notion of exactly in what "the

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pure memory. But on the other hand, Bergson does not help his case, for in the French he uses '*mémoire*' and '*souvenir*' interchangeably: "*La mémoire est autre chose qu'une fonction du cerveau, et il n'y a pas une différence de degré, mais de nature, entre la perception et le souvenir*" (*Q*, p.366). Or: "Mais qu'est-ce que cette mémoire pure, et que sont ces souvenirs purs?" (*Q*, p.368). The translators preserve this confusion of memory (*mémoire*) and recollection (*souvenir*) at *MM*, pp.315, 317.

<sup>1</sup>*MM*, p.181 [*Q*, p.283].

<sup>2</sup>*MM*, p.173 [*Q*, p.278], translation altered.

<sup>3</sup>*ME*, p.165 [*Q*, p.917].

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *MM*, pp.170-173, 180-181 [*Q*, pp.276-278, 283].

<sup>5</sup>*MM* p.74 [*Q*, p.216]: A.R. Lacey (cf. 1989, p.134) finds this definition circular for "no longer" already implies "not present". But even if we rephrased it as "that which does not act" (rather than "acts no longer"), this, he says, would still fail to differentiate the past from, for example, the future or the imaginary.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. *MM*, p.181 [*Q*, p.283].

<sup>7</sup>Maritain, 1968, p.220; Russell, 1914, p.21.

past" consists. According to Bergson, what is duplicating itself at any one moment as both our perception of the world and the memory of this perception is "the totality of what we are seeing, hearing and experiencing, all that we are with all that surrounds us."<sup>1</sup> Not much to quarrel with here. Differences arise, however, in deciding exactly what it is that we do see, hear or experience; for as we have seen, Bergson believes that if we do not experience the whole, each individual experiences at least as much as any other can:

Leibniz said that each monad, and therefore *a fortiori* each of those monads that he calls minds, carries in it the conscious or unconscious idea of the totality of the real. I should not go so far; but I think that we perceive virtually many more things than we perceive actually.<sup>2</sup>

Bergson cannot "go so far" because he knows both that *the* real is always represented and that as a consequence, it cannot be given. But seeing that there can be no "view from nowhere", neither can we dismiss the possibility that each actual viewpoint might be at least the virtual apprehension of all that *can* be apprehended. We are really present, it is said, in "everything we perceive", whilst this perception itself "reaches to the stars."<sup>3</sup> Might not these statements be partly true simply because there can be no perfect or pure perception? And if there is no perfect perception, neither can there be a perfect memory to say of any individual's pure memory that it is not of *the* past.

But, it might still be said that the past itself may yet subsist irrespective of not being given to any perspective. And obviously this is true, only now this past remains, just as we argued in respect of the objective present, as an aspiration rather than a ready-made entity. Objectivity is something in the making and it is this creation to which "*the* past" must pertain.

In imagining the past as given to any possible perspective, even if only God's, one is necessarily imagining it as a ready-made entity. As such, one is falling into the confusion between the mobile and the immobile, the enduring and the inert, real time and

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<sup>1</sup>ME, p.166 [Q, p.918].

<sup>2</sup>ME, pp.95-96 [Q, p.873].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. TSMR, pp.259, 258 [Q, pp.1195, 1194].

homogeneous space. If our point of view on the whole is not relative, it is precisely because it is *on* the whole; it is a relationship of part to whole, not an *intentional* relationship of speculative knowing to the object of knowledge.

Such cognitive experience is not passively speculative but vitally active and as such,<sup>1</sup> it creates a *plurality* of objects to be experienced. There is no one reality, no univocal Being. There are as many experiences as there are changing realities and none of them, for any transcendental reasons, can be any more unreal than another. So also then, there are numerous pasts with the possibility of one objective past only there *as an aspiration*. But this apparent relativism is again relativized by according a value to the very recognition (and its greater or lesser acknowledgement through action) of this fact: that others have a point of view different from yet equal to my own. This is the objectivity to which we can aspire.

So what of Bergson's own use of *the past* in *Matter and Memory*? That he seems not only to allow it an existence but actually a survival within the present might well put one in mind of some Parmenidean immobile reality. Though this might appear as unBergsonian a thought as one could have, a number of commentators have remarked upon the similarity between Bergson's thought and the Eleatic philosophy of atemporality and monism. Maritain describes the relation Bergson establishes between the soul and the body as "very much what eternity is to time," whilst A.E. Taylor found Bergson's prioritization of temporal continuity more like F.H. Bradley's "absolutely undifferentiated One" than anything else.<sup>2</sup> The question of the present persistence of the past is obviously not that of whether *the past* exists, but the two are related in their Bergsonian manifestation, and they bring us on to the vexed question of Bergson's own position *vis-à-vis* the monism or dualism of his philosophy. Explaining both this issue and the

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *MM*, p.281 [*Q*, p.346].

<sup>2</sup>Maritain, 1968, p.236; A.E. Taylor, "Review of *Matter and Memory* by Henri Bergson", in *International Journal of Ethics*, VOLUME XXII (1911), pp.101-107; p.102; cf. also, A.O. Lovejoy, "The Problems of Time in Recent French Philosophy", in *The Philosophical Review* VOLUME XXI (1912), pp.322-343; 328-329; Gale, 1973-1974, p.300.

connected matter of the past's survival within the present, will clarify Bergson's espousal of the past as an apparently singular entity.

Interestingly enough, quite a number of the critical examinations of this matter end up offering the same conclusion: Bergson is both a monist and a dualist: "On the surface and explicitly he is a dualist. It is when we dig deeper into the more technical features of his system that his monism shows through;"<sup>1</sup> the "infrastructure" of his philosophy is at once "dualist and unitary;"<sup>2</sup> it is a "dynamic monism" allowing for "qualitative diversity,"<sup>3</sup> such that "Bergsonism appears to us as a *monism* of substance, a *dualism* of tendency;"<sup>4</sup> for Bergson "[d]ualism is therefore only a moment, which must lead to the re-formation of a monism."<sup>5</sup>

Connected to this surprising concord is the following irony: the word "duration" implies a verb which can mean its exact opposite, "to endure". Instead of the transitive nature of becoming, we have permanence, persistence and resistance to becoming.<sup>6</sup> The difference between Bergson's first two works is illuminating in this regard:

Many difficulties arise from the confrontation between the theory of *Time and Free Will* and the theory of pure memory in *Matter and Memory*, where a new dimension, in depth, of the past appears. Words like "action" and "life" successively take on different aspects, often opposed.<sup>7</sup>

The language of *Time and Free Will* fosters images of continuous transformation, whereas *Matter and Memory* promotes an imagery of depth and conservation.<sup>8</sup> Pure memory presents an "almost Platonic" vision of an "eternal present" that is "outside time, above time, in a time made of eternity: the time of memory."<sup>9</sup> But this Proustian "cult of

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<sup>1</sup>Lacey, 1989, p.112.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Mourélos, 1964, p.90.

<sup>3</sup>Čapek, 1971, p.193; Čapek, 1987, p.132.

<sup>4</sup>Jankélévitch, 1959, p.174.

<sup>5</sup>Deleuze, 1988, p.29.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Jankélévitch, 1959, p.44n2.

<sup>7</sup>Jean Wahl, "A Tribute to Bergson on the Occasion of the Bergson Centennial in Paris, 1959," translated by Thomas Hanna, in Hanna, 1962, pp.150-154; p.152.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Mourélos, 1964, pp.92-93, 96, 138-139, 218-219.

<sup>9</sup>Mourélos, 1964, p.139.

the past"<sup>1</sup> and its accompanying thesis concerning its survival within the present are not without their own subtleties.

Bergson defines the past as "essentially *that which acts no longer*."<sup>2</sup> And yet he equally says that "this [pure] memory itself, with the totality of our past, is continually pressing forward, so as to insert the largest part of itself into the present action."<sup>3</sup> What type of (non-) action is this latter "pressing forward" then? There have been various attempts to answer this question. Čapek makes the logical point that the past "cannot be undone" or made "as *not* having happened."<sup>4</sup> Lacey forwards the hypothesis that it may concern the effects of the past rather than the past itself: "pure memories do not exist now as entities - they exist (timeless present) in the past, but they have causal effects now, in so far as they generate memory images, which are present phenomena."<sup>5</sup> The first explanation attempts to retain the Proustian side to Bergsonism without succumbing to any Eleatic ontology, the second tries to show how the past can persist while also retaining an image of time as a real passage. What is desired in both cases is an acknowledgment of both the immortality of the past as well as the real novelty of the present. We believe, however, that Bergson has already given us the tools with which to achieve this through his distinction between quality and quantity, a distinction that can be expanded to mean the qualitative persistence of the past and the quantitative passage of the present.

*Time and Free Will* would obviously be the first place to go for real evidence of this divide between quantity and quality.<sup>6</sup> The concepts of a qualitative and quantitative multiplicity are central to its argument.<sup>7</sup> Not that the two are wholly unconnected with each other either, for Bergson also believes that every "quantity is always nascent

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Jankélévitch, 1959, p.278. Oddly enough, Jankélévitch incriminates both *MM* and *TFW* in this "passéiste" cult.

<sup>2</sup>*MM*, p.74 [*Q*, p.216].

<sup>3</sup>*MM*, p.219 [*Q*, p.307].

<sup>4</sup>Čapek, 1971, p.153.

<sup>5</sup>Lacey, 1989, p.134.

<sup>6</sup>Thibaudet informs us that *TFW* might have been entitled "Quantity and Quality" on the advice of François Evellin; cf. *Le Bergsonism*, two volumes (Paris: Nouvelle Revue Française, 1923), volume one, p.54.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. *TFW*, pp.121-123 [*Q*, pp.80-82].



quality."<sup>1</sup> But the difference between them is enough to make some sense of the relationship between the past's persistence and the present's passage. It is quite plain that for Bergson, a quantitative change hardly deserves the name at all, being no more than a "rearrangement of the pre-existing."<sup>2</sup> A qualitative change, however, signifies a true creation.

Thus, it is interesting to note that when Bergson famously asserted in 1911 that "*[t]here are changes, but there are underneath the change no things which change*" he almost immediately added that "*there is no inert or invariable object which moves: movement does not imply a mobile.*"<sup>3</sup> By making this gloss some have thought that Bergson has weakened his claim to say merely that there is no *permanent* thing which moves rather than that there is no subject of movement.<sup>4</sup> Alternatively, we could follow Bergson's own *disavowal* of the (allegedly) Heraclitean view that "finds mobility everywhere,"<sup>5</sup> and interpret it instead as a contrast between an "inert and invariable" quantitative change, which is no real movement at all, and the real qualitative movement which must underlie such spurious variation.

Thus, when Bergson says that the past "acts no longer", we could read the word "acts" to mean a quantitative action only. Of course the past no longer acts, for only the present acts in this manner, that is, it alone makes a quantitative passage. But to add that the *past* can still persist is not necessarily to deny that the present passes. It is not a matter of asserting that *quantities* like things, events and experiences persist, but that the past in

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<sup>1</sup>CM, p.225/191 [Q, pp.1422-1423]. Cf. also, CM, p.147 [Q, p.1382], where Bergson states again that it is wrong to think that beings can "change place [quantity] without changing form [quality]."

<sup>2</sup>CM, p.21/21.

<sup>3</sup>CM, p.173/147.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Lacey, 1989, pp.95-96.

<sup>5</sup>CM, p.104/88 [Q, pp.1328-1329]. Bergson's process philosophy can as equally talk of "the *substantiality* of change" as it can of the mobility of things in the making (CM, p.175/148 [Q, p.1383]). In CM he asserts that "the permanence of substance" is the "continuity of change" and that "stability" is no more than "a complexity of change or...a particular aspect of change" (pp.103, 104/88 [Q, p.1328]). He may, he admits, be resolving stability into change, but he is not denying the distinction between stability and change. He is not setting substance aside, but reformulating our understanding of what substance means.

general persists, which is to say that it is the qualitative *effects* of the past which persist.<sup>1</sup> There is a real present which once dead and dated, is so forever: "The battle of Austerlitz was fought once, and it will never be fought again. It being impossible that the same historical conditions should ever be reproduced, the same historical fact cannot be repeated."<sup>2</sup> To talk at all as though the past were to persist *both* quantitatively and qualitatively is tantamount to a reduction of our changing phenomenal world to an illusion of the senses.

And yet Bergson is consistently presented as a "promoter of the past" in preference to being a philosopher of memory.<sup>3</sup> And though this characterization is understandable, at least one reader of Bergson has argued that such an apparent realism towards the past must be put in its historical context.<sup>4</sup> The philosophical orthodoxy against which Bergson waged his own thesis held that memories were only copies of sensation. Bergson wanted to argue, however, that perception and memory were qualitatively different and, as such, that our sensory mechanisms were connected only with the faculty of recollection, having nothing to do with the creation of memories. What we see as a realism towards the past is symptomatic more of an over-emphasis upon the independent reality of memory.

More radical interpretations of Bergsonian memory go further still, not only disconnecting it from this realism but also sharply curtailing whatever scope representation has within it. We noted already Bergson's view in *Matter and Memory* that "the recollection of an image is not an image" and that "[t]o *imagine* is not to *remember*,"<sup>5</sup> yet it is not until an essay from 1902 that he says more on what such

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<sup>1</sup>As we will see, this notion of "past in general" is actually Bergson's, and it is one that Deleuze uses in his own radical reading of Bergson's theory of memory.

<sup>2</sup>*ME*, pp.78-79 [*Q*, p.863].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. John Fizer, "Ingarden's Phases, Bergson's *Durée Réelle* and W. James' Stream: Metaphoric Variants or Mutually Exclusive Concepts on the Theme of Time", in *Analecta Husserliana*, VOLUME IV (1976), pp.121-139; p.132.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Léon Husson, "La Portée Lointaine de la Psychologie Bergsonienne", in *Actes du X<sup>e</sup> Congrès des Sociétés de Philosophie de Langue Française* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1959), pp.157-162. Husson is thinking of those instances of realism as at *MM*, pp.196, 210 [*Q*, pp.292-293, 301]. We refer to this collection henceforth as "Actes".

<sup>5</sup>*ME*, p.165 [*Q*, p.917]; *MM*, p.173 [*Q*, p.278], translation altered.

imageless remembering might entail. Here, a pure memory is described in terms of its "power", "bearing", "value" and "function" rather than in terms of an eidetic representation.<sup>1</sup> He consequently concludes that "it must be the *meaning*, before everything, which guides us in the reconstruction of forms and sounds," and that true "intellection [...] consists in a movement of the mind continually coming and going between perceptions...on the one hand, and their *meaning*, on the other."<sup>2</sup> It is exactly this notion of meaning that the aforementioned radical interpretations utilize in their readings of Bergson.

Bergson frequently voiced the opinion that it was not memory but the act of forgetting that required explanation.<sup>3</sup> Taking him at his word, commentators such as Jankélévitch and Deleuze propose that the meaning we truly remember is more closely connected with forgetting than with representing. *Le bon sens*, writes Jankélévitch, knows "the art of liquidating its past."<sup>4</sup> Knowing how to forget allows one to rediscover a naïve and artistic vision that restores "the virginity of perceptions."<sup>5</sup> Deleuze even goes as far as saying that "attentive recognition informs us to a much greater degree when it fails than when it succeeds."<sup>6</sup> Not that anyone could argue that attentive recollection is no recollection at all. To believe this would be to fly in the face of too much of what Bergson has written on the subject.<sup>7</sup> It would be sheer nonsense to say, for example, that I have remembered a formula best when I have not been able to represent it. However, it may only be a nonsense because formulas and other such obviously symbolic entities are fundamentally representational.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *ME*, pp.197-198 [*Q*, p.938]. Bergson employs Alfred Binet's analysis of various chess-masters' own descriptions of how their memory functions. The above descriptions apply to the memory of the chess pieces, yet in that each connotes the very dynamism Bergson is trying to exhibit as the primary quality of the non-representational aspects of memory (this essay being his first important discussion of "dynamic schemas"), they are equally attributable to pure memory itself. There will be a fuller discussion of Bergson's dynamic schema in Chapter Ten.

<sup>2</sup>*ME*, pp.207, 204-205 [*Q*, pp.944, 942]. We have omitted the phrase "or images" from the last quotation to avoid any confusion; it is *actual* rather than virtual images that are most probably at stake in this reference to images.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *CM*, p.181/153 [*Q*, p.1388]; *M*, p.984,

<sup>4</sup>Jankélévitch, 1959, p.128. Cf. also, p.228: "But this art of forgetting is quite the most delicate of all."

<sup>5</sup>Jankélévitch, 1959, p.127.

<sup>6</sup>Deleuze, 1989, p.54.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. *MM*, pp.118-145 [*Q*, pp.244-261]; for example, p.124 [*Q*, p.248]: "But every *attentive* perception truly involves a *reflection*,...that is to say the projection, outside ourselves, of an actively created image."

On this matter of deprecating representation, Bergson himself describes the *appearance* of memories in consciousness as an action entailing "nothing positive", being rather "something to lose" such that "my memories are there when I don't perceive them."<sup>1</sup> Thus, when I greet a friend with her correct name I remember it without any need for representation, any active imagery that might otherwise have been involved being symptomatic instead of a poor remembrance. I do not actively "recognize" the friend either, I simply greet her as a friend.

Apart from talking about recollective failure, Deleuze in particular utilizes a concept Bergson calls "the past in general."<sup>2</sup> Bergson introduces this notion when discussing the phenomenon of false recognition or *déjà vu*. The memory of the past in general is an unrepresented memory of an "indeterminate past" which has never been "localized in a particular point;" it is a "past that has no date and can have none."<sup>3</sup> A past in general which has no date is a far cry from usual realisms towards the past. For our part, we would see it as further testimony to what we view as the real point of Bergson's thesis concerning the survival of the past: it posits the persistence of the past in virtue of its qualitative effects, not the survival of the past *as it was present*.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, it can be argued that representational-memory, far from being the paradigm for Bergson it can appear to be, is actually a loss, a forgetting. Bergson says that perception does not add to reality but selects from it. Yet he also says that the subjectivity of perception is "above all" the work of memory.<sup>5</sup> If we take Deleuze's and Jankélévitch's arguments on board, it becomes clear that perception is an impoverishment primarily when memory is added to it, more specifically, when representational-memory is added

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<sup>1</sup> *M*, pp.588-589.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Deleuze, 1989, pp.79-80; cf. also, Minkowski, 1970, p.162.

<sup>3</sup>*ME*, pp.137, 166 [*Q*, pp.899, 918]. The pathology of *déjà vu* arises when this memory is represented to the self. Cf. also, *M*, p.1062: "But it is probable that the whole of the past is preserved intact. It is preserved in what we call "the image of the past in general"."

<sup>4</sup>Bergson also calls it a "*memory of the present*" (*ME*, p.167 [*Q*, p.919]), believing that a memory of the present perception is formed *simultaneously* with the perception itself (cf. p.157 [*Q*, p.913]). However, Bergson appears to have abandoned this puzzling view some years later (cf. *M*, p.1067). We return to this memory of the present below.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *MM*, pp.25-26, 80 [*Q*, pp.184-185, 220].

to it: it is "a weak part only" of the past, says Bergson, "that becomes representation."<sup>1</sup> Is this not tantamount to what Bergson says of *retrospection* in "The Possible and the Real"? Our inattentiveness towards the novelty of the present stems from an active retrospection whereby this novelty is diminished in order that the present can become causally and ontologically reduced to what made it possible in the past. Is this not also central to *Duration and Simultaneity's* argument: that an experience *imagined* is incomparable with an experience *perceived*?<sup>2</sup>

### *From the Ambiguity of the Present to the End of Memory*

Between a past that is unrecalled and a past in general with no date, Bergson can be brought a long way beyond any Proustian "cult of the past". The question as to whether he is a promoter of the past or a philosopher of memory seems superfluous when we remember two of the things we have learnt from our examination thus far. The first is that no definite article can be attached to what is past because, like "*the present*", there is no given past that is not already a representation. The second is that true remembrance is less a matter of eidetic recollection than of something unrepresented. Which immediately leads to the question as to what this unrepresented "something" is. Jankélévitch spoke of the connection between the art of forgetting and a naïve and artistic perception.<sup>3</sup> But if perception is identified with the present, then Bergson, who also talks of "an extension of the faculties of perceiving,"<sup>4</sup> has immediately problematized the meaning of the present.

Not that "the" present was not always under attack since he first criticized the notion of simultaneity, but now the import of this critique has gained new depth. André Robinet writes of the "ambiguity of the present" in Bergsonism, while another critic refers to the Bergsonian present as an "indefinite field" or "temporal hole."<sup>5</sup> Though he can also refer in a rather matter-of-fact manner to the present as "the consciousness I have of my

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<sup>1</sup>CE, p.6 [Q, p.499], translation altered. Though of course, subjectivity cannot be the work of memory *entirely* because even the purest perception itself has to be located and from this location diminish the world. Objectivity can never be fully given.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. DS, p.65-66 [M, pp.118-120].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Jankélévitch, 1959, p.128.

<sup>4</sup>CM, p.160/136 [Q, p.1371]; cf. also, pp.159-160/135-136 [Q, pp.1370-1372].

<sup>5</sup>Robinet, 1965, pp.26-38; Mourélos, 1964, pp.230, 232.

body" or "the very materiality of our existence,"<sup>1</sup> Bergson has already shown us that the body "can be seized at different levels of reality" and that material objects too can be known in different ways, either superficially or profoundly.<sup>2</sup> Even when Bergson says that "what I call "my present" has one foot in my past and another in my future,"<sup>3</sup> the very fact that the meaning of "future" and "past" is relative to the meaning of the word "present" only accentuates the difficulty he has brought to light. Bergson's present is problematized simply because the singularity of its co-referents, perception, the body, and the material world, have themselves been put in question.

But Bergson actually amplifies this difficulty even more with a number of puzzles concerning "the" present. The first of them concerns the distinction between immediate and mediate memory. Bergson finds it illegitimate. There can only be a difference of degree and not of nature between the retention of the short- and long-term past, for it would be no more mysterious were we able to retain a life time's experience of the past than it is to be able to retain twelve seconds of it. Bergson presents the (non-) difference between the two as follows:

My present, at this moment, is the sentence I am pronouncing. But it is so because I want to limit the field of my attention to my sentence. This attention is something that can be made longer or shorter, like the interval between two points of a compass. [...] ...an attention which could be extended indefinitely would embrace, along with the preceding sentence, all the anterior phrases of the lecture and the events which preceded the lecture, and as large a portion of what we call our past as desired. *The distinction we make between our present and past is therefore, if not arbitrary, at least relative to the extent of the field which our attention to life can embrace.*<sup>4</sup>

Yet by this last sentence which relativizes the definition of the present, Bergson has also shown that what is at issue need not necessarily be which portion of the past is being retained, but rather which *present* is being attended. In the same location he subsequently argues that "the preservation of the past in the present is nothing else than the indivisibility of change."<sup>5</sup> In place of "the indivisibility of change" he also uses the

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<sup>1</sup>MM, pp.177, 178 [Q, p.281].

<sup>2</sup>Fressin, 1967, p.109.

<sup>3</sup>MM, p.177 [Q, p.280].

<sup>4</sup>CM, pp.178-179/151-152 [Q, p.1386], my italics; cf. also, ME, pp.69-70 [Q, p.857].

<sup>5</sup>CM, p.183/155 [Q, p.1389].

phrase "undivided present."<sup>1</sup> But we might ask in relation to both whether inferring the preservation of the past from the indivisibility of the present is the most legitimate move open to him. If Bergson can argue for the preservation of the past in virtue of its being "automatically"<sup>2</sup> preserved within the indivisible structure of the present, we might question in turn whether this "indivisible" structure tells us as much of the ambiguous and polyvalent nature of the present as it does of the mysterious immanence of the past. Indeed, it has been proposed that Bergson's argument as regards the continuity of mediate and immediate memory actually undercuts his own dualism of memory and perception, and marks as a result the abandonment of his hypothesis of the integral conservation of the past.<sup>3</sup> We might conclude ourselves that the differences highlighted by Bergson in respect of our varying "attention to life" do not delineate different types of memory so much as different types of perception, and with that, different forms of "the" present.

Our meaning may become clearer when we look at Bergson's second enigma concerning the present. As part of an argument challenging the reduction of memory to its physiological basis, Bergson outlines the following problem. It is a principle of the opposing view that "when certain cells come into play there is perception, and that the action of those cells has left traces so that, when the perception has vanished, there is memory."<sup>4</sup> But one might wonder when a perception is supposed to *objectively* come to an end to allow for the creation of the memory:

What right have we, then, to suppose that memory...divides psychical life into definite periods and awaits the end of each period in order to rule up its accounts with perception? [...] ...this is to ignore the fact that the perception is ordinarily composed of successive parts, and that these parts have just as much individuality, or rather just as little, as the whole. Of each of them we can as well say that its object is disappearing all along: how, then, could the recollection arise only when everything is over?<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>CM, p.180/152 [Q, p.1387].

<sup>2</sup>CM, p.180/153 [Q, p.1387]; CE, p.5 [Q, p.498].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Edgar Wolff, "Mémoire et Durée", in *Actes*, pp.333-337; pp.335, 337 and "La Théorie de la Mémoire chez Bergson", in *Archives de Philosophie*, VOLUME XX (1957), pp.42-77; pp.55-71.

<sup>4</sup>ME, p.158 [Q, p.913].

<sup>5</sup>ME, p.159 [Q, pp.913-914].

Bergson is here again highlighting the materialist's constant switching between an objective system of images, physiological mechanisms, traces, engrams and so on, and the subjective system of images perception offers. Bergson believes that the only possible answer is that "*the formation of memory is never posterior to the formation of perception; it is contemporaneous with it.*"<sup>1</sup> Though certain interpreters have taken this even more puzzling and rather Parmenidean response in earnest,<sup>2</sup> Bergson himself abandoned it in a later treatment of the same issue with an acknowledgment that "before converting our perception into memory we usually wait till our present is finished."<sup>3</sup>

It may be that Bergson's initial solution was only the other half of an antinomy concerning memory. On the one hand, if there is any temporal lag between a perception and its memory, then the perception will not have been completely remembered. But as any part lost of a perception is itself a perception, this is as much as to say that certain consciously perceived experiences not only will not but cannot ever be remembered. As far as we know, however, there is no evidence to believe that this is true. On the other hand, to avoid such an outcome one must suppose that memory is formed simultaneously with perception. Yet if this is the case, then the present must have the mysterious ability to duplicate itself at once into both a perception and a memory of the present.<sup>4</sup> However, just as the two sides of Kant's antinomy, though opposed regarding the extension of space, none the less assumed that it was singularly homogeneous, so both sides of the antinomy Bergson constructed assume that there is one simple thing called the present, another simple thing called the past, and that perception pertains as exclusively to the first as memory pertains exclusively to the second. Bergson himself admits in the course of the analysis that one way out of his antinomy would be to assume that "the present leaves no trace in memory."<sup>5</sup> But virtually as much follows from our own argument against the interpretation of Bergson's thought that takes for granted the purity of both pure

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<sup>1</sup>*ME*, p.157 [*Q*, p.913].

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Mourélos, 1964, pp.130-131; Deleuze, 1989, pp.78-83. In that a memory of the present would, to be a memory, mark that present as somehow already past, and with that, not fully present, such a phenomenon would seem to cancel the reality of time's passage in a rather Eleatic way.

<sup>3</sup>*M*, p.1067.

<sup>4</sup>Which is exactly what Bergson first argued for; cf. *ME*, p.160 [*Q*, p.914].

<sup>5</sup>*ME*, p.160 [*Q*, p.914].



perception and pure memory, or in other words, that both the present and our memory of the present are set entities.

Bergson not so much explains the past as problematizes it, or to be more precise, he problematizes both those homogeneous entities we call *the* past and *the* present, objects that are supposedly held in common by all subjects and by that multiplicity of subjects incarnated in each centre we call *a* subject. The word "present" is as relative as the words "empirical" and "metaphorical". It is noteworthy in this regard that amongst the alterations made to the material that would become the second chapter of *Matter and Memory* (it had been published before as an article), Bergson qualifies a number of references to an impersonal perception by inserting a possessive pronoun; "*la perception*" becomes "*ma perception*."<sup>1</sup>

One recent commentary places great emphasis on the importance of particularity, situation and ownership in Bergson's thought.<sup>2</sup> Movement and concrete extensity, feeling and consciousness; all are defined by their particular situation or moment, by their place or level. There are no longer any movements whatever; there are only privileged movements. The same can be said of *the* present as well; there are only new individual, owned presents, that may well have qualities overlapping with others (and out of which we can construct something called *the* present), but which none the less remain unique *in toto*. But of course there are major problems to be faced by such unrestrained pluralism, problems held in common with what is often understood as the defining characteristic of Bergson's philosophy: its espousal of radical novelty. We turn to these in the following chapter.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *Q*, pp.239 L6, L11, 252 L4. The English translation at pp.110 and 130 does not preserve the first and last of these distinctions. Cf. also, André Robinet "Le Passage à la Conception Biologique: De La Perception, de l'Image et du Souvenir chez Bergson", in *Etudes Philosophiques*, VOLUME XV (1960), pp.375-388; p.381n2. Robinet explains these alterations in terms of Bergson's desire for a contrast between the personal perception of the second chapter of *MM* and the impersonal pure perception of Chapter One. Thus he argues that perception is made personal by the "intervention" of personal memories. Alain de Lattre agrees. From our point of view he begins well, saying: "If perception represents, it is because it is, in fact, *our* perception" (1990, pp.67-68). But then he puts this possession down to memory, missing, in our opinion, both the complexity of the treatment of pure perception and the significance of first person perception in Bergsonian thought. Perception is ours, different *in itself* and without need of recourse to something called memory.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. de Lattre, 1990, pp.137, 139, 141, 149-150, 158-159.

## *Chapter Nine:*

### *The Problems of Radical Novelty*

#### *Process, Generality and In corrigibility*

Fundamental to Bergson's conception of time is its essential creativity: duration is described as "the uninterrupted up-surge of novelty" and is continually evoked in terms of "radical novelty", "the radically new", or "complete novelty."<sup>1</sup> But there are at least three real problems and one illusory one which the concept of radical novelty must face. The illusory problem concerns the age-old debate over process philosophy. A.R. Lacey, for example, has various arguments against the irreducibility of process that he uses to question the very basis of Bergson's philosophy. The trouble is that too often these points simply *assert* that phenomena which Bergson would deem irreducible, like subjectivity, must be reducible to an immobile physical substratum such as the body.<sup>2</sup> This is illustrated in the following.

Bergson's favourite example of pure change is the melody: "When we listen to a melody we have the purest impression of succession we could possibly have."<sup>3</sup> The melody becomes the model for understanding every other phenomenon. Lacey, on the other hand, insists that many phenomena do not have the temporal characteristics of a melody.<sup>4</sup> The human person is a case in point for Lacey. When I meet Smith at noon he is met fully at noon because a person is not like a melody spread out in time.<sup>5</sup> Lacey is here building upon Aristotle's distinction between an activity and a process.<sup>6</sup> An activity does not involve time in the same way that a process does; while saying "I see X" is not at all incompatible with saying "I have seen X", the same cannot be true of saying "I am building a house" in comparison with saying "I have built a house." Unlike the former

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<sup>1</sup>CM, pp.17, 117, 40/18, 99, 35 [Q, pp.1259, 1339, 1276]; CE, p.173 [Q, p.634].

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Lacey, 1989, pp. 27, 50, 96-99.

<sup>3</sup>CM, p.176/149 [Q, p.1384]; cf. also CM, p.19/19 [Q, p.1261]; TFW, pp.100-101, 111 [Q, pp.67-68, 74].

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Lacey, 1989, p.97.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Lacey, 1989, p.27.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Lacey, 1989, p.50.

activity, the latter process involves a terminus. Activities, then, are not so tied to a continuous temporality as a melody is.

Yet Bergson would have probably objected to Lacey's use of this distinction. Between two supposedly identical activities of seeing the "same" thing one can interpose a thick description that would differentiate one state from the next and transform the series of activities into a process. To say that "Smith met at noon is Smith completely met at noon" is to identify Smith with his body rather than anything else. If I have lived with Smith for over ten years and meet him at noon, do I not meet more of Smith at that rendezvous than some lesser acquaintance, and would I not meet even more of him the longer we remained friends? Could our encounter not be spread out in the manner in which we recognize or grow familiar with a melody? Of course, it all comes down to what one means by "Smith." For Lacey, and this is his comparison, a man is closer to a cricket ball than he is to a melody. Being complete at any one time, he cannot be described as an event or process:

A man exists as a whole at any one moment, even though he is only a man if he has a certain history. [...] ...a man can be recognised as such at any one moment.... [...] If a man dies prematurely his life may not reach completion, but he was complete at every moment of it.<sup>1</sup>

But surely Lacey is speaking here of the body rather than the person (and a particular objectivist conception of the body at that). It is one's body that is completely apprehended at every moment. One's personhood, on the other hand, is not only grasped by others in a piecemeal fashion, being itself in continuous formation, the process by which another becomes acquainted with "it" is itself interminable.<sup>2</sup>

And as for cricket balls, here again we have an instance of a spatiality that can be either becoming or inert depending on which image one chooses as the point of departure. The lesson to be learnt from all this is that criticisms of process philosophy taking their stand on the need for a structure to support change, can only hang their argumentation on the

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Lacey, 1989, p.97.

<sup>2</sup>Bergson's conception of the ego is addressed in the following chapter.

assumption of the complete reducibility of the mobile to the immobile. If this assumption is not shared, then their objections cannot even begin.

But there are other problems for a philosophy of novelty with which it is not so easy to deal. The first is our very own perception of it: in order for novelty to be recognized as new, it must firstly be recognized as such, there must be something familiar about it. Novelty appears to be in need of familiarity, generality or continuity. Indeed, that our memories of early childhood are often so sparse and incoherent has been explained in terms of the paucity of "general knowledge schemas" with which young children can interpret, organize and stabilize their early autobiographical memories.<sup>1</sup> It would be ironic if memory, one of the prominent features of Bergson's *durée*, should prove in need of exactly that degree of generality which would negate *durée's* radical novelty. In fact, from this alternative approach to Bergson's, such radical novelty would actually negate the possibility of memory. This is exactly what one critic has highlighted in saying that Bergson does not give sufficient stress to the "recognition of Form and structure" in his theory of duration.<sup>2</sup> We cannot deal with this issue, however, before we have looked at the second and third problems for radical novelty.

The second problem concerns the incorrigibility of introspection. How it is related to novelty will become apparent through the course of the following examination. We talked earlier of Judas' intention as the true meaning of his action. But very often our intentions are confused and mistaken. The apprehension of many emotions and representations can be both in need of and improved by education, or as one commentator puts it, "*recupération*."<sup>3</sup> In Bergson's own words, the "immediate is far from being the easiest thing to see."<sup>4</sup> However, against this view there is much to be said in defence of

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Gillian Cohen, Michael W. Eysenck and Martin E. Le Voi, *Memory: A Cognitive Approach* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p.53.

<sup>2</sup>Carl R. Hausman, *A Discourse on Novelty and Creation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), p.82.

<sup>3</sup>Robinet, 1965, p.54.

<sup>4</sup>*M*, p.1148. Milič Čapek points out that in philosophical usage there can be two meanings to the word "immediate": one corresponding to the immediate *de facto*, the other to the immediate *de jure*; cf. Čapek, 1971, pp.86-87. Bergson's immediacy is in the *de jure* sense.

incorrigibility. One could start by asking whether illusory moments of perception really do stand alone as illusions or rather whether they are not a part of what ensures the general truth of perception. Merleau-Ponty, for example, writes as follows on the matter:

Seeing, some distance away in the margin of my visual field, a large moving shadow, I look in that direction and the phantasm shrinks and takes its due place; it was simply a fly near my eye. *I was conscious of seeing a shadow and now I am conscious of having seen nothing more than a fly.* My adherence to the world enables me to allow for the variations in the cogito, to favour one cogito at the expense of another and to catch up with the truth of my thinking beyond its appearances. [...] There is the absolute certainty of the world in general, but not of any one thing in particular.<sup>1</sup>

Each perception, though always capable of being 'cancelled' and relegated among illusions, disappears only to give place to another perception which rectifies it. Each thing can, *after the event*, appear uncertain, but what is at least certain for us is that there are things, that is to say, a world. To ask oneself whether the world is real is to fail to understand what one is asking, since the world is not a sum of things which might always be called into question, but the inexhaustible reservoir from which things are drawn.<sup>2</sup>

For Merleau-Ponty, perception is less an access to a ready-made world that may or may not meet with success, than a reality that is worldly in itself in virtue of its own general success. For even were we to leave aside the partiality of illusion and interpret it (as the sceptic does) as an indictment of perception in general, it remains true that arguments for corrigibility from illusion assume that veridical perception ought to be an access to and correspondence with reality. But in this they not only import an arguable understanding of perception, they also beg the question as to the nature of reality. Something really hot, it is said, is falsely perceived as cold; lines of equal length appear unequal; a star that died millions of years ago is still visible to the eye, and so on. But in each case, the coldness of the object, the equality of the lines, or the physical existence of the star is assumed to encompass the complete reality for which the defective perception aims. What makes the object *really* cold, for instance, is a measurement of the mean kinetic energy of the molecules' movement and/or its stimulation of a particular area of our nervous system. Yet this already assumes that the illusory perception *should* be of these other perceived "realities", which begs the question as to what is real and why. As John Searle notes, felt temperature has not been successfully reduced to these other substrata, it has simply

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<sup>1</sup>Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.297.

<sup>2</sup>Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.344, my italics.

been left behind as temperature *in toto* is redefined in terms of an objectivist description advantageous for our "control of reality."<sup>1</sup>

Yet in positing the corrigibility of such reports himself, could it not be argued that Bergson is neglecting the integrity of the subject as well? Has not the subject's own testimony and point of view been ignored by saying, perhaps even with that same subject (only "after the event" - as Merleau-Ponty says<sup>2</sup> - when he too may appropriate the objective judgement in disregard of his former self), that that moment was merely an illusion in comparison with this moment now? But if some moments are unreal, what is to be said of the "effective action" and "reality" of time that Bergson purports to uphold?<sup>3</sup> If it is possible to objectify oneself and if this subject has a reality (at whatever level) with its own point of view, then surely it is possible that a subject's reports of quantitative intensive magnitudes might be true for that subject. Thus, and here we come to the problem raised by incorrigibility for Bergson, such reports of generality, familiarity and continuity, rather than of *radical novelty*, would have their own irreducible integrity.

Of course, such uncooperative subjects may be poor in the twin arts of introspection and reportage. We would thereby be given leave, one might think, to disregard the import of their evidence. Yet it remains true that they would still have an *acquaintance* with their own states moment to moment; an acquaintance which, unless one is to deny such phenomena outright, must (at least in terms of the moment in question), bear more weight than any third party's conception of them.<sup>4</sup> Someone might assert in return that the reports in question must be conceptual and that knowledge by acquaintance, being theoretically non-conceptual, is not a knowledge of any kind that might be open to being corrigible or incorrigible. The question is simply irrelevant. But Bergson, who did hold

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<sup>1</sup>Searle, 1992, p.121. Thomas Nagel would agree; we do not so much reduce the human viewpoint as "leave [it] behind" (1979, p.175).

<sup>2</sup>Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.344.

<sup>3</sup>*CE*, p.17 [*Q*, p.508].

<sup>4</sup>According to Stephen Priest (*Theories of the Mind* (London: Penguin, 1991), pp.26-27) the incorrigibility thesis of the mind is not the same as a transparency thesis (such as Descartes held) and so would not be refuted by evidence concerning unconscious mental states; it concerns the infallibility of conscious mental states alone.

to the possibility of a non-symbolic knowledge, *would* deny exactly this.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, our privileged "access" to our own subjectivity is not an epistemic access at all according to Bergson; it is a coincidence. We do not intend our "inner" states as we do an external object of perception; we simply are these states, though again, this ontological relation, like all things ontological for Bergson, "admits of degrees."<sup>2</sup>

A last ditch defence of corrigibility might simply ignore such evidence and instead posit radical novelty as a transcendent category. Just as Being does not require nothingness and difference does not require something to be different from, so novelty can be self-constituting and independent of both the subject's need to recognize it and the evidence of felt generality. But this would be a desperate and foolhardy move for any Bergsonian to make because it leaves radical novelty back where Newton placed absolute time, flowing "equally without relation to anything external,"<sup>3</sup> when *durée* is first and foremost a time accommodated to the subjective perspective rather than overflowing it.<sup>4</sup> To think of radical novelty as a transcendental principle is totally out of keeping with the Bergsonian spirit.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *CM*, p.162 [*Q*, p.1396]. It might be thought, of course, that this is surely a transgression of all that Wittgenstein wrote concerning the impossibility of accounting for one's sensations without the medium of a language with public rules and conventions. But this would be a hasty judgement, because Bergson's exact point is that the need to give a communicable account of our private states is exactly what leads to their conceptualization, generalization and distortion. What Wittgenstein outlaws is the ability to refer to or have a concept of private entities in any law-like way that is not public, for concepts, rules and laws are necessarily public. His is an argument concerning private concepts and languages, not private *non-symbolic* entities; cf. Norman Malcolm, "Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*", in *The Philosophy of Mind*, edited by V.C. Chappell (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp.74-100; p.94. Other interpretations may, however, extend the anti-private language argument to outlaw the possibility of a private non-symbolic knowledge as well; cf. Priest, 1991, p.58. But we must note in return, however, that Bergson has a complex theory of symbols too; as we will see in Chapter Twelve, his non-symbolic knowledge pertains to what is not embedded within a particular type of symbolism.

<sup>2</sup>*CE*, p.211 [*Q*, p.665]; cf. also, *CM*, p.190/161 [*Q*, p.1395]. Cf. too, John Searle's helpful comments (1992, pp.96-99, 143-144) on the inappropriateness of such metaphors as "introspection" or "privileged access" in relation to the bond between ourselves and our states.

<sup>3</sup>Isaac Newton, *Scholium* to the definitions in *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, Book One, translated by Andrew Motte and revised by Florian Cajori, in Arthur Danto and Sidney Morgenbesser, eds., *Philosophy of Science* (New York: World Publishing, 1960), pp.322-329; p.322.

<sup>4</sup>Both Roman Ingarden and Milič Čapek admit that Bergson understood radical novelty as a selective, personal experience, rather than a transcendent, universal truth. But they think he is wrong in this, for according to their view, it necessitates "a *universal* character and thus cannot be confined to a particular, passing moment of private life" (Čapek, 1971, p.169). Ingarden, Čapek tells us (p.168), interpreted Bergson's intuition of creative *durée* as a datum that "can in principle be intuited by all persons."

So what can be said in response to Bergson's own problematic advocacy of radical novelty? We believe that the answers are to be found in Bergson's texts, though extracting it can be a little difficult. Of the first problem concerning familiarity Bergson was well aware: "There will be novelty in our acts thanks only to the repetition we have found in things."<sup>1</sup> And in relation to the second problem of corrigibility, Bergson actually places this repetition or familiarity in precisely the activity of the subject, as can be seen in the following concerning the formation of general ideas:

To form a general idea is to abstract from varied and changing things a common aspect which does not change or at least offers an invariable hold to our action. The invariability of our attitude, the identity of our eventual or virtual reaction to the multiplicity and variability of the objects represented is what first marks and delineates the generality of the idea.<sup>2</sup>

The necessity of repetition is not only acknowledged, it belongs to the person, to the "invariability of our attitude".

This recognition of the subject's role in creating or at least accentuating the homogeneous is linked to the fact that corrigibility is a private affair for Bergson. Any intolerance there may be towards our stratagems of self-reduction should not come from a public third-person source. That is why it is not altogether clear whether Bergson would have ever seen corrigibility as a matter of introspection, report and counter-report at all. For him, it is more likely to be a silent, pre-reflective self-education than a public conceptual debate. What requires education or recuperation is one's own inadequate degree of self-tolerance. A perception is more real than an hallucination, for example, because its integrity bespeaks the toleration of numerous other perceptions. Perspectivism is tied to perception because each perception is part of a network of perspectives, personal, social, bodily, and so on. A single hallucination, on the other hand, is only one perspective, or at least a comparatively paltry number of perspectives. To acquiesce to the truth-claims of such a singular new-born hallucination is also to betray a massive history of other perspectives. What one must therefore not tolerate, what one must correct, is this

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<sup>1</sup>CM, p.111/94 [Q, p.1334].

<sup>2</sup>CM, pp.111-112/95 [Q, p.1335].



insubordinate and youthful revisionism. A hallucination is not unreal: it too is a becoming reality. But if it is taken on an equal footing with other realities (as in accepting that this grass is blue, for example, irrespective of the fact that, *ceteris paribus*, grass has never been blue before<sup>1</sup>), one blinds oneself to the greater age and consequent truth of the latter.

### ***The Immobilizing Body***

And yet, after all of this there still remains a further difficulty for Bergson's theory of novelty. Aside from the issue of any philosophy of novelty's own cogency *qua* the concept of novelty itself, it is also highly problematical for such a philosophy should it ground the novelty of the present upon a *retention of the past*. Surely such a retention is exactly what would exclude the possibility of the present being truly different from the past and therefore radically new. Milič Čapek has grasped this nettle. Acknowledging the paradox in saying that "the *novelty of the present* is constituted by the *survival of the past*,"<sup>2</sup> he explains it thus:

the novelty of the present requires the persistence of the past as a necessary, contrasting background. But conversely, the pastness of the previous moment is impossible without the novelty of the present; it is a new moment, which, metaphorically speaking, 'pushes' it into the past.<sup>3</sup>

The persistence of the past grounds the innovation of the present, or in other words, continuity ensures novelty. Yet paradoxically, if there had not been a *new* emergent present that grounding past would not have become past. Čapek calls this the "'dialectical" identity of the novelty of the present and the survival of the past."<sup>4</sup> But others might not be so charitable in what they would call it. Even were we to accept the probity of posing a paradox as an answer, we might ask in any case why we should accept any notion of a retained past (be it retained quantitatively or qualitatively) when Bergson's critique of possibility seems perfectly applicable to precisely this idea.

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<sup>1</sup>We leave aside the question of whether the phenomenology of an hallucination or any other form of illusion can ever be completely mistaken for that of a real perception; cf. on this, Merleau-Ponty, 1962, pp.334-345.

<sup>2</sup>Milič Čapek, "Bergson's Theory of Matter and Modern Physics", translated by P.A.Y. Gunter, in Gunter, 1969, pp.298-330; p.300n1.

<sup>3</sup>Čapek, 1971, p.128.

<sup>4</sup>Čapek, 1969, p.300n1.

According to Bergson, the present is irreducibly novel; looking for its grounding cause in the virtual, the past or whatever else, is exactly the type of endeavour to eliminate time in favour of an explanation in terms of possibles, antecedents and so on that Bergson deplores.

But there may be a way out of this for Bergson. It may be possible to turn to his concept of bodily memory for a retention of the past that is not so *retrospective* and with that, not so prone to falling foul of the critique of possibility. According to Bergson, there are *bodily* categories underpinning our mental categories of familiarity and novelty, these last, when inflated into doctrines, leading to conceptualism and nominalism respectively. In the third chapter of *Matter and Memory*, Bergson sets out to undermine the perceived difference between these doctrines by showing how they both rest upon an erroneous conception of the origin of generality.<sup>1</sup> The manner in which Bergson distances himself from these doctrines may show us the route along which his own philosophy must be taken if it is to be relieved of the difficulties we have uncovered.

It is Bergson's view (one which is not without precedent) that the only thing nominalists see in the general idea is an open and unlimited series of individual objects with only a name held in common. Everything is new or absolutely novel. However, says Bergson, surely something else must also be in common between two or more things in order for that *same* name to be attributed to them both. We see a similarity, thus some similarity exists.<sup>2</sup>

Alternatively, conceptualists prioritize a genus-quality from the series of objects that involves each of them potentially. The conceptualist's problem is that the priority of such a genus-quality already assumes the primacy of generalities, formed, as they must be, by an act of abstraction. The problem with both doctrines, however, is that they always start

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *MM*, pp.201-215 [*Q*, pp.295-304].

<sup>2</sup>Certain nominalists would not disagree, accepting that there are really perceived likenesses, only that these likenesses are neither subsidiary to or identical with concepts. But the nominalism Bergson criticizes is of a simpler variety.

with the "fact" that we perceive individual objects. Nominalism composes the genus (which is only a name for it) by enumeration of such objects; conceptualism disengages it from them by analysis.

But for Bergson, the clear perception of individual objects, and with that the conception of genera, is a product of *late development*. What strikes us first is a "background of generality or of resemblance" that is "experienced as forces"<sup>1</sup> rather than individuals and genera. It is reflection that clarifies resemblance into the general idea as representational-memory narrows it into the perception of the individual. Primal perception, however, is a "discernment of the useful"<sup>2</sup> without need of abstraction. The similarity with which we begin this work of discernment is not the same as the similarity the mind arrives at when it consciously generalizes.<sup>3</sup> The first is a similarity "felt and lived" which seizes us through our bodily interests.<sup>4</sup> It is a bodily recognition. The second is a thought concept that is as interested in the similarity it sees as it is in the difference that it implies.

But unfortunately, the problems for Bergson do not cease there, for we can still wonder whether the role played by bodily recognition is not simply a deferral of the problem of novelty rather than a true resolution of it. According to Bergson, he himself is not "only throwing the problem further back" because bodily memory is not of a "psychological nature."<sup>5</sup> It works in virtue of the "purely physical law" that objective similarities exist in nature:

Hydrochloric acid always acts in the same way upon carbonate of lime whether in the form of marble or of chalk yet we do not say that the acid perceives in the various species the characteristic features of the genus.<sup>6</sup>

Bergson's defence might be called "getting generalization for free",<sup>7</sup> yet it sparks off as great a problem as it solves. Leaving aside the fact that many of his descriptions of

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<sup>1</sup>*MM*, p.206 [*Q*, p.299].

<sup>2</sup>*MM*, p.206 [*Q*, p.299].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *MM*, pp.208-209 [*Q*, pp.300-301].

<sup>4</sup>*MM*, p.208 [*Q*, p.300].

<sup>5</sup>*MM*, pp.206, 207 [*Q*, p.299].

<sup>6</sup>*MM*, p.207 [*Q*, p.299].

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Beth Preston, "Heidegger and Artificial Intelligence", in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, VOLUME LIII (1993), pp.43-69; p.60.

bodily intentionality are far from being "purely physical",<sup>1</sup> even if they were, this would then raise the question of how such a physical background could serve *as a background* for generalizations of a "psychological nature". If it serves as a background, then it must be related. Any such relation, however, would surely necessitate some psychological component to the background and return us consequently to the possibility that bodily memory only continues to throw "the problem further back".

So it seems that Bergson must trade the sin of deferral for his non-cognitivist theory of memory. Which brings us back to the problem of novelty, for irrespective of whether or not it is "Bergsonian" to try and explain the novelty of the present, *we* are still left with the problem of discovering how novelty can be understood without recourse to either mysterious retentions, pre-existent possibilities, or passing the buck to bodily homunculi. Yet after all of this pessimism, we still believe that there is a resolution to these quandaries which will allow us to retain what is essential in Bergson's philosophy of novelty. Again, the issue turns on reevaluating the status of memory.

What is really at work in the notion of "bodily" memory? It may ensure the cogency of a philosophy of novelty by supplying the requisite category of familiarity, but is it simply a memory and nothing more? Behind both conceptualism and nominalism, says Bergson, is a mental idea of the general, embraced by the first, rejected by the second. For Bergson, on the other hand, what we begin with is a bodily perceived resemblance. Before all conceptual familiarity and unfamiliarity there is a bodily familiarity and unfamiliarity. Yet while Bergson challenges the positive thesis of conceptualism (that of the origin of universals), he says little of the positive thesis of the nominalists - that of a dissimilarity intellectually apprehended - compared with their negative one: that conceptualism is wrong. But if nominalism says that everything is new, then surely a philosophy of novelty and creation such as Bergson's must do more than simply reject nominalism. It must also replace it with the proper category of novelty that will explain

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<sup>1</sup>Indeed, we remarked in Chapter Six that it was the fact that Bergson's was an overt challenge to a narrow conception of intentionality that defended his theory of bodily understanding from the homunculus fallacy.

why it should be preferred. And in fact, it naturally follows from his analysis of generality and bodily understanding that behind his own advocacy of novelty *per se* there ought to be something which might be best called a carnal nominalism. To describe it would be difficult, terms like "culture shock", "homelessness" and even "trauma" being perhaps the best approximations available. The nearest we know that Bergson comes to a discussion of such an existential and carnal novelty is with a notion he terms "*the astonishment at finding myself there.*" He mentions it as a condition for experiencing the phenomenon of *déjà-vu*: "The scene in which I find myself must be not only new to me, but in strong contrast with the course of my *habitual* life. [...] ...I should experience a certain quite peculiar astonishment, which I will call *the astonishment at finding myself there.*"<sup>1</sup> The astonishment of being there is also for us the paradigm for a Bergsonian understanding of novelty as such, a novelty that would strike our habitual bodily understanding first.<sup>2</sup>

But how does the body react to such upheaval? Let us look at familiarity again. What the body holds in its understanding (and so recognizes) is limited; though it may reach to the stars,<sup>3</sup> it cannot *behave* as though it did. The body must homogenize and segment the world according to the plan of its "eventual" or "possible" action upon it.<sup>4</sup> The body's "felt and lived" interests not only perceive similarity, they create it. It has certain needs the fulfilment of which entails that it treats (what is from the Bergsonian view) its "vast body" (the universe) as though it were another's body; it must *consume* other beings to survive: "The species and the individual thus think only of themselves - whence arises a possible conflict with other forms of life."<sup>5</sup> The "logic of the body" immobilizes the

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<sup>1</sup>*ME*, p.182 [*Q*, p.928], first italics mine.

<sup>2</sup>The difference between this paradigm of novelty and the one he normally accuses of being no different from a re-arrangement of the pre-existing, is that, having a bodily disturbance at its root, the former describes a novelty that can never be expected, for expectation is a *mental* intention of the future. Expectation is the attempt to see or know *x as y*, that is, *x* re-arranged as *y*. But the new that cannot be foreseen by the mental, though still a re-arrangement, is none the less a re-arrangement enacted firstly upon an *unforeseeing* body rather than upon a seeing mind. This foreseeing mind, despite its lulled sense of expectancy, must always take its cue from the less foresighted body.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *TSMR*, p.258 [*Q*, p.1194].

<sup>4</sup>*MM*, p.280 [*Q*, p.345]; *CE*, p.165 [*Q*, p.628].

<sup>5</sup>*CE*, p.53 [*Q*, pp.537-538]; cf. also, p.268 [*Q*, p.711]: "each species behaves *as if* the general movement of life stopped at it instead of passing through it. It thinks only of itself, it lives only for itself. Hence the numberless struggles that we behold in nature" (my italics). Note what we learnt already about those activities of nature effected "as if" some transcendental principle held true.

living and the moving,<sup>1</sup> and, quite literally, demands its death. It is at the level of these basic functions then that the living body delimits the universe,<sup>2</sup> placing a perimeter of recognition around it and thereby finding a home within it.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the bodily source of familiarity that anchors and legitimates novelty is not bought with the aims of speculation and information in view, but in order to subjugate and survive. It violates any encountered novelty with repetition and generality in order to continue living.

Furthermore, if the body homogenizes in order to survive rather than represent, this is not simply in virtue of reasons essential to its constitution but accidental to its being; the body *is* this continuing act of consumption:

Our needs are, then, so many searchlights which, directed upon the continuity of sensible qualities, single out in it distinct bodies. They cannot satisfy themselves except upon the condition that they carve out, within this continuity, a body which is to be their own and then delimit other bodies with which the first can enter into relation, as if with persons. To establish these special relations among portions thus carved out from sensible reality is just what we call *living*.<sup>4</sup>

One writer has found a circular reasoning in this passage: "Our needs carve out a body - but how do we have the needs unless we already have a body?"<sup>5</sup> But such apparent circularity (which we shall meet again) can be dissolved once we understand "body" and "need" as two sides of a single process, one objective, the other subjective. The body is an item in continuous transformation. It has needs, but it was itself created from need. The movement from the vast body to the "inner and central" one is the on-going expression of a need: to consume and thereby forge a body of an increasingly self-identical nature out of a body composed from a universe of difference. The logic of the body is "an extension of desire;"<sup>6</sup> not a power of *recreating* the past, but a power to *create* the past or general out of the new.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *CE*, p.316 [*Q*, p.748]; Delhomme, 1954, pp.47-49,

<sup>2</sup>Though this delimitation is still far less severe than that enacted by those of our own concepts modelled upon the sense of touch.

<sup>3</sup>Edward S. Casey (1987, p. 193), though following Merleau-Ponty more than Bergson, talks of the work of the body as "*domesticating* in function; it forges a sense of attuned space that allows one to feel *chez soi* in an initially unfamiliar place."

<sup>4</sup>*MM*, p.262 [*Q*, p.334].

<sup>5</sup>Lacey, 1989, p.139.

<sup>6</sup>*TSMR*, p.167 [*Q*, p.1117].

Yet, for all that we have said to its disadvantage, representation is none the less real and representative memory none the less faithful (in greater or lesser degrees), simply because what the body does cannot be negated by some transcendental truth such as "radical novelty". Radical novelty is won or lost at the behest of we body-subjects who have a hand in the creation of reality, not on command of something exterior to us. The body acts "as if" the "movement of life stopped at it;"<sup>1</sup> yet this unreal comparative still signifies a reality. The fixities produced by physiological matter are not erroneous descriptions of a transcendently novel universe; a creation of immobility is as equally a creation of the objectivity of immobility. As we learnt through our examination of possibility in Part One, in a reality where actions are prior to the things which act, even the action produced as if informed with a "false" ideal inscribes this ideal onto reality. We remove the paradox of novelty when we realize that what *creates* the general is a pragmatic action on the part of the body and not a speculative disinterested reception of information from the past. The perspective of the body-subject is real enough to fulfil this function.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>CE, p.268 [Q, p.711].

<sup>2</sup>Criticisms of process philosophy that demand that change or movement must be a change or movement of something stable find their answer here; stability does exist (life immobilizes), but the question as to which is ontologically prior becomes increasingly redundant. If we shall at all estimate mobility and immobility differently, then it will be according to the moral value of what motivates the creation of the two; Chapter Eleven will enter into this more.

*Chapter Ten:*  
*The Primacy of Perception*

Our journeying amongst the problems of Bergson's philosophy of novelty has allowed us, we hope, to retain the notion as an immanent rather than transcendental principle. As regards our own argument, it also allows us to maintain the primacy of perception *vis-à-vis* the import it holds for the multiplicity of the present. There is no one present, we have argued, but as many "nows" as there are points of view. Understanding this multiplicity can be the key to resolving various difficulties. Both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, for instance, found Bergson's conception of time and memory unsatisfactory in that it failed to give an account of how the past is retained in the present, for the "synthesis" of the two.<sup>1</sup> But Bergson insists that "[t]he past preserves itself automatically" and that therefore "[w]e shall no longer have to account for remembering, but for forgetting".<sup>2</sup> Perhaps now we know a little more why. The mystery of the past's retention, even as we understand the term "retention" in the most orthodox fashion of "remembering", only arises if we think of ourselves as *contained* in the same present wherein each of us individually develops. The need to enlist the services of a past, pure memory, virtual present, or any other ethereal entity has been removed.<sup>3</sup> My present can provide me with a continuously novel vista whose novelty implicates my own substance in this on-going alterity. In this chapter we shall elucidate this dissipated present: first, in terms of what we have learnt thus far of pure perception and pure memory (in the process of which we shall invert the value normally attached to each); and second, through an examination of the evidence for the priority of perception in *Matter and Memory*.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Sartre, 1943, p.135; Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.276n1. Cf. also on this, Laurent Giroux, *Durée Pure et Temporalité: Bergson et Heidegger* (Montréal: Ballarmin, 1971), pp.53-55, 118; Roger McLure, "Original and Psychic Temporality (A Study in Ontological Meaning and Foundation)", in David Wood and Robert Bernasconi, eds., *Time and Metaphysics* (Warwick: Parousia Press, 1982), pp.161-197; pp.187, 196-197n66.

<sup>2</sup>CM, p.181/153 [Q, p.1388].

<sup>3</sup>Nor is there any need to think of a physiological trace to explain the memory of the past. According to Eugène Minkowski, the mystery of a recurrent past brings forth our natural "horror of a void" which can only be allayed with "mnemonic traces and other conceptions of the same order" (1970, p.168). But is the rational problem of memory not simply memory itself? We might add "memory" and "the past" to those "other conceptions" Minkowski objects to.



### *Making Bergson More Bergsonian*

We have made frequent mention of Bergson's dissatisfaction with Kant for having mistaken a plurality for a singularity. As a result of this purported error, any absolutes that might have been cognizable in Kant's system but were not, such as the things-in-themselves, had to be conjured off into the noumenal realm. In sharp contrast to this, the essence of the Bergsonian method is to attempt to expand our perception, to see something other than we do before reaching a verdict on whether a being can be known or not. Thus, before we pronounce in favour of the existence of nothingness we must try to see another being than the one expected. Before pronouncing in favour of the existence of chaos we must try to see another order than the one expected. And before pronouncing in favour of the noumenal we must try to perceive differently than the way we do, and with that, to see a different spatiality than the one we do.

Yet did Bergson see another *present* as clearly as his own critique of simultaneity should have allowed him? It seems to us that Bergson's pure memory plays the same role in his own philosophy as Kant's noumenal did in his, as the third realm does in Frege's, as ambiguity does in Merleau-Ponty's, and as the "anomalous" does in certain modern physicalisms. Like these others, it serves to aggrandize what might otherwise be a less palatable retention of entities that his philosophy ought to preclude. Indeed, it plays this role even though his philosophy also furnishes us with a method by which we can return to a plurality of presents without need of any other-world. The service pure memory provides for Bergsonism - an explanation for the nature of our subjective and relative grasp upon the world and the present - can be dispensed with once we relinquish the illusion that there must only be one world to be perceived and one present in which this world is to be perceived. Contrary to any Proustian "cult of the past", Bergson himself once said that if there were any eternalism in his work, it was not a conceptual eternity, which would be an eternity of death, but a living and moving one.<sup>1</sup> But if the virtual is

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *CM*, p.221/187-188 [*Q*, p.1419].

also moving, then we can find no reason not to see it as that widened, extended, deepened, revived, and completed perception for which Bergson calls.<sup>1</sup> There is no need to say that this perception was always there *virtually*, whether this presence be in virtue of memory or some unconscious perception; it is a new perception we can create by being ourselves and consequently recognizing the difference of others.

But have we gone too far in rejecting such virtualities as pure memory or the past in favour of a multiplicity of perceived presents? Might there be some other less nebulous entity to which we can resort that would be neither mechanistic nor reductive?<sup>2</sup> One alternative arose in our discussion in Chapter Eight of Bergson's theory of habit-memory: character. Our character is said to be "the actual synthesis of all our past states" or "the condensation of the history that we have lived from our birth - even before our birth, since we bring with us prenatal dispositions."<sup>3</sup> Certain commentators have described virtual memory as "the secret components of our character" or more simply as "what I am."<sup>4</sup> Yet the problem with turning to character is that Bergson's own conception of the subject falls far short of the fixity needed to inherit the familiarizing function of the virtual; a persisting and subsisting subject is generally given little place in his texts:

the "Ego" is only a sign by which one recalls the primitive intuition (a very vague one at that) which furnished psychology with its object: it is only a word, and the great mistake is to think that one could, by staying in the same sphere, find a thing behind the word.<sup>5</sup>

The Bergsonian subject is spread across many planes and myriad versions; in a course given on the personality he goes so far as to liken it to the pathology of multiple

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *CM*, pp.158, 167/134, 142 [*Q*, pp.1370, 1377].

<sup>2</sup>As would be, for example, a recourse to physiological engrams to explain memory.

<sup>3</sup>*MM*, pp.188 [*Q*, p.287]; *CE*, p.5 [*Q*, p.498] translation altered; cf. also, *MM*, p.191 [*Q*, p.289]: "The whole of our past psychical life...reveals itself in our character, although none of its past states manifests itself explicitly in character."

<sup>4</sup>Mourélos, 1964, p.127; de Lattre, 1990, p.92. Cf also, Edgar Wolff (1957, pp.60, 72), who assimilates Bergson's virtual memory to the profound self, "le Moi".

<sup>5</sup>*CM*, p.203/172 [*Q*, p.1405]. In *CE*, speaking of the manner in which we segment the "fluid mass of our whole psychical existence" into discrete states, he notes: "as our attention has distinguished and separated them artificially, it is obliged next to reunite them by an artificial bond. It imagines, therefore a formless *ego*, indifferent and unchangeable, on which it threads the psychic states which it has set up as independent entities" (*CE*, p.3 [*Q*, p.497]). And in reference to this creation, he says elsewhere (*CM*, p.175/148-149 [*Q*, p.1383]) that "[d]ifficulties and contradictions of every kind to which the theories of personality have led come from our having imagined, on the one hand, a series of distinct psychological states, each one invariable, which would produce the variations of the ego by their very succession, and on the other hand an ego, no less invariable, which would serve as support for them."

personality and to a series of "*possessions*." <sup>1</sup> Jacques Maritain noted with disfavour that "[i]t is...impossible, in the Bergsonian thesis, to say or to think *I*", whilst Merleau-Ponty lamented the fact that in Bergson's philosophy of perception "[t]he subject dies ["*by subtraction*"]." <sup>2</sup> But the Bergsonian subject has not only been "decentred;" it has been put in motion to such an extent that it now encompasses both what is centred and what is without a centre. Whether the ego is essentially and exclusively multiple or one is not a valid issue, for all such imagery stems from homogeneous space. <sup>3</sup> It is, on the contrary, a qualitative multiplicity; "a unity that is multiple and a multiplicity that is one." <sup>4</sup> The I can be multiple or one, but not in any abstract way. It is always a particular and personal multiplicity or unity: "What really matters...is to know *what* unity, *what* multiplicity, *what* reality superior to the abstract one and the abstract multiple is the multiple unity of the person." <sup>5</sup>

In its Bergsonian manifestation then, character is itself too mobile to bear the weight of our past. What would it mean for our character that the past should or should not be present within it? After all, there are many different types of character yet each would supposedly have its own past present. One might respond that each person's past, being different, affects his or her character in different ways. But such differences could only be established by comparison, not of each person's past with another's (for such things cannot be held up for direct comparison), but of each person's present as he or she *perceives* it. It is from this perception that we *surmise* the causal basis for the differences to exist within their respective pasts.

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<sup>1</sup>*M*, p.858.

<sup>2</sup>Maritain, 1968 p.231; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 1968a, p.83. Simon Clarke (*The Foundations of Structuralism: A Critique of Lévi-Strauss and the Structuralist Movement* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1981), p.16) has noted in Bergson's regard that "[t]he 'death of the subject', much vaunted slogan of structuralism, has roots that go back deep into French philosophy."

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *CE*, pp.271-272 [*Q*, pp.713-714]; *CM*, pp.193, 194/164, 165 [*Q*, pp.1397-1398, 399].

<sup>4</sup>*CE*, p.272 [*Q*, p.714]. The subject is decentred by its very own self-perception or introspection (cf. *M*, p.1060) but it can also (as we will examine in our concluding chapter) return itself from this homogeneous multiplicity to a more integrated form.

<sup>5</sup>*CM*, p.207/176 [*Q*, p.1409].

The only appropriate answer then, is one that is actually given in *Matter and Memory*; our entire personality with the totality of our memory is said to be present "within our actual perception."<sup>1</sup> Not only does the notion of character fail to annex the role of pure memory, we can obviate the need for them both by recourse to the individual perceptions of the subject. In fact, the attribution of efficacy to "our character" or behind that again to "our past" or "our memory", could be seen as a true case of a retrospective placing of the real into the possible, of the present into the past, and specifically, of an indigenous multiplicity of perceptions into other nebulous entities.

Of course, one might be wondering why the optimism shown in our reappraisal of the failed purity of pure perception is not now being applied to the pure memory that seems to have fallen to the same fate. One is being given the benefit of an alternative thesis lying behind it, the other is apparently being sold off as a failed hypothesis. But, one could continue, a failed hypothesis is a failed hypothesis; what justification can there be for consolatory alternatives when the fallen hero in question, pure perception, was never real in the first place? Indeed, the depth of treatment pure memory receives in the third chapter of *Matter and Memory* shows that if anything it is the one with a claim on concrete existence.

Admittedly, pure perception is indeed continually described by Bergson as an "arbitrary hypothesis" or "ideal perception" existing "in theory rather than in fact."<sup>2</sup> Many commentators have followed him in this evaluation, describing both it *and* pure memory as a "limit"<sup>3</sup> or "*condition of possibility*;" as one commentator has put it: "Forms which are not given, but without which we would not be given what we can see."<sup>4</sup> But one wonders whether the status of a "limit" concept attaches to pure perception as Bergson envisaged it, or to the pure perception that actually manifested itself as yet another form of representation. Without a doubt, Bergson has told us that "[t]hat which is given, that

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<sup>1</sup>*MM*, p.215 [*Q*, p.305].

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *MM*, pp.24, 26 [*Q*, pp.184, 185]; cf. also, pp.69, 71 [*Q*, pp.212, 213] and Robinet, 1965, p.71.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Robinet, 1965, p.74; de Lattre, 1990, p.75.

<sup>4</sup>de Lattre, 1990, p.75.

which is real, is something intermediate between divided extension and pure inextension;"<sup>1</sup> or in other words, that the real is between pure perception and pure memory. However, we have found both these limits, as imagined in their purity, to be impossible. But what is an impossible condition of possibility? Perhaps an aspiration towards objectivity as we found in the case of pure perception. But perhaps also a symptom of the desire to escape the inherent diversity of reality as we found in the case of pure memory. The real is also said to be the "living synthesis" of the two,<sup>2</sup> but surely one cannot mix or synthesize what are only ideals, limits or conditions.

What we will argue is that there is an interpretation not only of pure perception, but of pure memory too, that can give them both a substantial rather than theoretical status. Real perception is not an association or "synthesis" of pure memory with pure perception *in their purity*; but it *can be* either pure memory or pure perception in their respective failure to be purities. In a more genuinely Bergsonian fashion, the *pure* form of each are ideals that only arise with a *dissociation* of the real into two limits; the one an aspiration towards the objective, the other an escape into the homogeneous. The cause of this dissociation, we will argue, is representation; for it is the *more* representational form of each, a superficial and narrow vision in the case of perception, conscious recollection in the case of memory, that gives rise to their mutual division. Representation or, in another phrase Bergson uses, *intellectualization*,<sup>3</sup> is at the heart of the dissociation of the real, the one particular example of it that our next chapter will examine being the dissociation between mind and body.

When we speak of ousting the "more representational" form of memory it might naturally be concluded that some other conception of memory can be retained as part of an ideally creative, novel and consequently Bergsonian experience of the world. But in actual fact this point too is debatable, for the less representational memory becomes, the more it distances itself from any orthodox understanding of memory. Of course, that would still

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<sup>1</sup>MM, p.326 [Q, p.374].

<sup>2</sup>MM, p.330 [Q, p.376].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. CE, p.199 [Q, p.656].

leave us with the unorthodox notion of a bodily memory, but as Bergson rightly says of habit-memory, if it at all merits the name of "memory", it is on account of our ability to *represent* the manner, circumstances, or situation of its formation at a point or points in time.<sup>1</sup> If taken as ontologically prior and independent, a non-cognitive memory is really a perception and nothing else. However, we will not press this point in the rest of our investigation, for as we saw in our last chapter, despite this analysis of how things are in principle, representation can none the less be retained once the speculative nature of its motivation has been deleted.

### ***The Impure Reality of Pure Perception***

Evidence for a worldly pure perception can be found at a number of sources in Bergson's writing. Some of the most interesting examples are found in his theory of the unconscious. In one item of correspondence, Bergson draws a specific parallel between the vast field of unconscious memories from which our representations are chosen, and a similar perceptual field surrounding our actual perceptions.<sup>2</sup> He also contrasts this field with our actual perception that "distinguishes objects," agreeing with his correspondent that it probably consists instead of "things in general."<sup>3</sup> The similarity between this and the "past in general" of pure memory is obvious.<sup>4</sup> But it is when he argues for the existence of the unconscious through what appears at first to be an analogy with unperceived space that the case for a concrete non-ideal pure perception becomes most evident.<sup>5</sup> According to Bergson, it would be as correct to say that objects cease to exist when they are not perceived as it is to say that a previously perceived present ceases to exist when past: "what can be a nonperceived material object, an image not imagined, unless it is a kind of unconscious mental state?"<sup>6</sup> The mystery is that my perception presents me with a "horizon" which appears to be bounded by other spaces remaining

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *MM*, p.95 [*Q*, p.229].

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *M*, p.412. On this vaster perceptual field, cf. *MM*, p.186 [*Q*, pp.286-287].

<sup>3</sup>*M*, pp.413, 411. Thus Deleuze was correct to think of pure perception as not yet of "bodies"; cf. 1986, p.60.

<sup>4</sup>*ME*, pp.137, 166 [*Q*, pp.899, 918]; *M*, p.1062.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *MM*, pp.181-191 [*Q*, pp.283-289].

<sup>6</sup>*MM*, p.183 [*Q*, p.284].

unperceived. But how does something appear bounded when the very things limiting it are invisible? Perhaps its "boundaries" mark its limit and nothing more. But as an existence outside of consciousness does appear to be "actually given" in the case of objects, why, Bergson asks, do we have such a different attitude in relation to subjective states? We need not deal here with Bergson's answer to this question.<sup>1</sup> What is of interest is his opinion that the adherence of a memory to our present is "exactly comparable" to the adherence of these unperceived spaces to our perceived horizon and that "*the unconscious* plays in each case a similar part."<sup>2</sup>

This materialization of the unconscious is not unique, pure perception being described elsewhere as a "new form of the unconscious", or as what exists with pure memory "on the edge of the unconscious."<sup>3</sup> Certainly, Merleau-Ponty takes Bergson at his word, describing the "limits" of pure memory and pure perception as two "synonyms of unconsciousness."<sup>4</sup> A more recent exposition, discussing Bergson's "non-Freudian" conception of a "spatio-temporal" unconscious, describes it as "the totality of the objects which at any single moment exist beyond the subject's consciousness."<sup>5</sup> Perception and the perceived world then, can assume those properties of the unconscious usually assigned to pure memory and with that step a little nearer to the esteemed role the latter plays in Bergson's philosophy. Not that we want to divest pure memory of all its substantiality; we will see below that there remains a province for its action in this world as well.

But there is other evidence aside from the unconscious to support a non-theoretical pure perception. In two places in *Matter and Memory* pure perception is described as an

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<sup>1</sup>The reason for this unfair treatment is that space furnishes us with a diagram of our near future, which is the one thing that interests us. Virtual states of space are reified indefinitely because they embody the theatre of our future actions. But in doing just that, virtual time (the past) is shut off behind us as it passes. Virtual space represents our survival, but virtual time represents nothing other to us than what is dead and gone.

<sup>2</sup>*MM*, p.187 [*Q*, p.287].

<sup>3</sup>*M*, pp.806, 485.

<sup>4</sup>Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Eloge de la Philosophie et Autres Essais* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p.30. Cf. also Merleau-Ponty, 1968a, p.96, where he acknowledges that Bergson's virtual is not simply an unconscious mental state but a spatial horizon.

<sup>5</sup>Lecerle, 1991, p.199.

"immediate intuition" of reality.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Jankélévitch interprets the "realism" of pure perception as a thesis concerning our intuition's ability to coincide with the objective.<sup>2</sup> In *Creative Evolution* we find an "aesthetic faculty" that can extend the powers of "normal perception" and breach the separation dividing subject and object.<sup>3</sup> Such a coincidence would seem to point to a pure perception.<sup>4</sup> Other authors pursue this theme, identifying the aesthetic faculty so central to Bergson's work with pure perception.<sup>5</sup> In particular, Jean Beaufret writes of an enlarged aesthetic perception approaching, he says, "the perception of any unconscious material point," this wording being a quotation taken directly from *Matter and Memory's* description of pure perception.<sup>6</sup>

We are arguing thus that the pure perception that never was for Bergson is exactly that which, if not "given", is certainly that which is most "real". But what of the object of this perception, the spatial, material world surrounding it? No proper response can be given to this question because the perception we are dealing with, though not an ideal, remains for the most part an aspiration towards undoing exactly that opposition between subject and object implied within the question. However, there does remain the possibility of other spaces that, if not coinciding with the subject, at least attenuate their opposition to it. At this point we might naturally be expected to return to the evidence for different types of spatiality in Bergson's work. But such a move would not be uncontroversial, for there still remains an ambiguity in how to interpret this evidence. Many writers on Bergson who allow him a positive conception of space still do so in virtue of the properties of memory rather than perception. Deleuze and Čapek, for example, remain cautious in regard to the relationship between enduring space and pure

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<sup>1</sup>*MM*, pp.71, 84 [*Q*, pp.214, 222].

<sup>2</sup>Jankélévitch, 1959, p.74; cf. also, p.164.

<sup>3</sup>*CE*, p.186 [*Q*, p.645].

<sup>4</sup>When talking of coincidence we should remember that Bergson uses the concept (usually reserved for pure perception) in his most famous definition of intuition (*CM*, p.190/161 [*Q*, p.1395]): "We call intuition here the *sympathy* by which one is transported into the interior of an object in order to coincide with what there is unique and consequently inexpressible in it."

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Delhomme, 1954, p.42; Constantine Cavarnos, *A Dialogue Between Bergson, Aristotle and Philologos: A Comparative and Critical Study of Some Aspects of Henri Bergson's Theory of Knowledge and Reality* (Belmont, Mass: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1988), pp.35-36.

<sup>6</sup>Jean Beaufret, *Notes sur La Philosophie en France au XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1984), p.95 (the reference given on p.95 of Beaufret is mistaken, being from *Q*, p.188 rather than *M*, p.888); cf. *MM*, pp.30-31 [*Q*, p.188]. Cf. also, Beaufret, 1984, pp.96-97, 98-99, 115-116.



memory. The two endure, but to differing degrees and separately; memory still holds a privileged position. Others actually maintain the conception of a homogeneous space, only they see it as a medium through which duration may be revealed, space becoming "the condition of virtual action."<sup>1</sup> Matter and the world appear in part as a "system of symbols in which duration realizes itself."<sup>2</sup> In what is called "another reading of Bergsonism", spirit is said to "express itself" in matter just as duration expresses itself in the instant.<sup>3</sup>

And yet when Bergson begins the third chapter of *Creative Evolution* with an attempt to explain the genesis of intellect and materiality, he proposes that the two "are derived from a wider and higher form of existence" and that it must have been the one process that "cut out matter and the intellect, at the same time, from a stuff that contained both."<sup>4</sup> Both these suggested sources lie well beyond any dualism of matter and consciousness or are at least voiced in a vocabulary remaining ambiguous as regards the type of being at issue.

The critical appraisals that take cognizance of this "stuff" containing (one genre of) mind and matter provide a varied reading.<sup>5</sup> Rejecting the "pseudo-spiritualism" that some have hoped to find in Bergsonism,<sup>6</sup> one refers to "a larger field, that is to say, the matter-spirit whole, which constitutes a new larger circle, formed from matter as well as spirit."<sup>7</sup> Georges Mourélos, however, has provided the most sustained meditation on this theme. Writing of a "spiritual space-time", both the representation of memories and the diminution of the material world by perception are said to signify a "putting into relief" of elements from this source.<sup>8</sup> A good deal is made of the notions of spatial, temporal and

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<sup>1</sup>Heidsieck, 1957, p.140.

<sup>2</sup>Merleau-Ponty, 1960, p.77n2.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Nicolas Grimaldi, "Matière et Tradition", in *Revue Métaphysique et de Morale*, VOLUME LXXVI (1971), pp.167-195; p.183.

<sup>4</sup>CE, pp. 197, 210 [Q, pp.653, 664].

<sup>5</sup>We have already mentioned Jean-Jacques Lecercle's reference to a "spatio-temporal unconscious" (1991, p.199).

<sup>6</sup>Angèle Kremer-Marietti, "Bibliographie: Une Idéologie Bergsonienne?", in *Les Etudes Bergsoniennes*, VOLUME IX (1970), pp.209-227; p.225. Merleau-Ponty (1964, p.183) also writes: "When Bergsonian insights are identified with the vague cause of spiritualism or some other entity, they lose their bite; they are generalized and minimized. What is left is only a retrospective or external Bergsonism."

<sup>7</sup>Angèle Kremer-Marietti, "Bergson Métaphysicien de la Matière", in *Actes*, pp.177-181; p.179.

<sup>8</sup>Mourélos, 1964, pp.133, 100.

organic relief as a key to understanding Bergson's conception of depth as well as his theory of time.<sup>1</sup> More specifically, Mourélos relates the idea of relief both with Bergson's "planes of consciousness" and with the more thorough presentation these planes receive when reincarnated as the "dynamic schema" in the 1902 essay, "Intellectual Effort".<sup>2</sup> Significantly, an analysis of *bodily* schemas are included within this second presentation, the example used being the first impression experienced in performing a new dance. Such a bodily schema is neither "purely visual nor purely motor; it is both at once, being the outline of the *relations*, especially temporal, between the successive parts of the movement to be executed."<sup>3</sup> But is the bodily schema only a particular type of what is in general a purely mental phenomenon? Mourélos points up the carnal aspect of the schema by demonstrating its equivalence with the motor-scheme or motor-diagram of *Matter and Memory*, quoting Bergson's description of it as "the empty vessel, which determines, by its form, the form which the fluid mass, rushing into it, already tends to take."<sup>4</sup>

But Bergson does not see the schema as a physical phenomenon pure and simple; it is neither purely physical nor purely mental. As regards its physicality, he records his opposition to those trying to resolve all that is "affective in affection" into "peripheral sensations,"<sup>5</sup> whilst in term of its mentality, he finds it equally "irreducible to ideation."<sup>6</sup> Yet affection is not something "intermediate" between sensation and idea either.<sup>7</sup> The schema is a "*movement of ideas*" or a set of bodily "*relations*."<sup>8</sup> The most appropriate

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Mourélos, 1964, pp.96-101.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *MM*, pp.210-212 [*Q*, pp.301-302]; *ME*, pp.196-203 [*Q*, pp.936-941]; Bergson himself equates these schemas with the planes at *ME*, p.188 [*Q*, p.932]; Mourélos, 1964, pp.106-107.

<sup>3</sup>*ME*, p.217 [*Q*, p.950].

<sup>4</sup>*MM*, p.153 [*Q*, p.266]; Cf. Mourélos, 1964, p.116. Though at times Bergson talks negatively of the relationship between motor-schemas and consciousness (cf. *M*, pp.481, 484), it is quite often motor-schemas stored in the *brain*, that is, a part of the scientific image of the body, that are in question.

<sup>5</sup>The tendency towards such peripheralism was one movement within modern psychology that Bergson himself tried to avoid. Although such emotive peripheralism would obviously include the James-Lange theory of emotions which Bergson partly endorsed in *TFW* (cf. p.29 [*Q*, pp.22-23]), he came round to criticizing such models making recourse to "peripheral sensations" (*M*, pp.688n1, 692) like James' in his course on theories of the will (cf. *M*, pp.690-694).

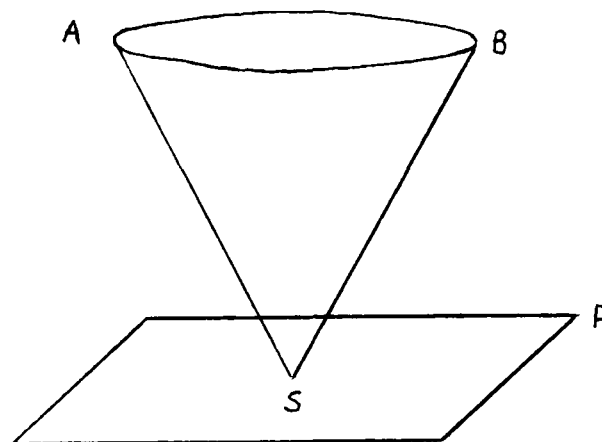
<sup>6</sup>*ME*, p.222 [*Q*, p.954]. Jankélévitch (cf. 1959, pp.116-117) describes the motor-scheme as the "rendezvous of the spiritual and the physical", a bodily "attitude" which is "already spiritual"; whilst Robinet thinks of it as what "annuls, as it were, the dualism of soul and body" (1965, p.75).

<sup>7</sup>*ME*, p.223 [*Q*, p.954].

<sup>8</sup>*ME*, pp.222, 217 [*Q*, pp.954, 950].

response to the question of the mentality or physicality of the schema is that it is neither of them, that is, neither of them as described according to *a particular immobile image*. The schema is as far from being a static idea as it is from being an immobile body. Indeed, these are exactly the images of mind and body Bergson wants to avoid.<sup>1</sup> Such rigid images are dissociations arising from an arrested movement. It is this movement which is in question.<sup>2</sup>

In conclusion to all of this we can make the following general remarks. We stated earlier that the envisaged purities of pure memory and pure perception arise from a dissociation of the real into two limits, the one an aspiration towards, the other a flight from reality. This double attitude of aspiration and withdrawal can be graphically illustrated with Bergson's image of the inverted cone.<sup>3</sup>



We take this famous illustration to represent the system of objective images discussed in Chapter Seven as they are posited by these two attitudes. At its point *S* is the objective image of my body placed amongst the other images of the objective universe. At the base *AB* is what Bergson nominates as the purity of the past in itself. According to Bergson, these two limits signify the two ideals of pure perception and pure memory respectively. According to our view, they also specify two pictures of reality.

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<sup>1</sup>As Yuasa Yasuo notes (Yuasa Yasuo, *The Body: Toward an Eastern Mind-Body Theory*, translated by Nagatomo Shigenori and Thomas P. Kasulis, edited by Thomas P. Kasulis (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), p.168), Bergson's bodily schema is an attempt "to solve the puzzle of what lurks *beneath the layer of bodily sensations*," my italics.

<sup>2</sup>The dissociation and immobilization of movement will be at the heart of Bergson's resolution of the mind-body problem that we will examine in the following chapter.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *MM*, p.197 [*Q*, p.293].

As regards the first, pure perception, the point *S* is said to meet a plane *P* symbolizing "my actual *representation* of the universe."<sup>1</sup> That this supposedly selfless, purely present, and wholly objective perception is still a representation, has indicated to us the need to posit a new meaning for pure perception: that of an aspiration to transcend one's own partiality against other perspectives. But we have also come to regard pure memory represented by the base *AB* in a new light. In its desire for purity we have described it as an article of bad faith; it aspires to homogeneity rather than objectivity.

Along with the singularity of perception and the present that it underwrites, pure memory (and perhaps any notion of memory) stands as an instrument of social homogenization that allows us to forget the individuality of our perspective and enter into a social contract towards uniformity. Rather than accepting the otherness of both one's own and others' perceptions, pure memory aims for what Bergson would call a "half-relativity," annulling all partiality in favour of a new absolute: the view from nowhere. If we may shift our analysis to one of Bergson's last works, we will see that *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* speaks of a certain type of social morality comprised of a "system of *orders* dictated by *impersonal* social requirements."<sup>2</sup> The impersonal order that attempts to see every point of view (and therefore none), takes the place of the personal appeal and particular perspective. This is almost Bergson's definition of matter in *Matter and Memory* which is said to resemble "a consciousness where everything balances and compensates and neutralizes everything else."<sup>3</sup> The closed society tends towards this matter. It is that collection of individuals who have actively compromised their individuality in favour of becoming homogeneous rather than objective, of becoming a mean and a means. What is objective, or at least what was objective before this unholy union, was the very fact that each individual, qua its own desire to be individual, is wholly and irreducibly different. If the homogeneous picture of the world is now the objective one, that is only on account of a society that has elected to reduce itself to the

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<sup>1</sup>*MM*, p.196 [*Q*, p.293], my italics.

<sup>2</sup>*TSMR*, p.84 [*Q*, p.1046].

<sup>3</sup>*MM*, pp.292-293 [*Q*, p.353].

lowest common physical denominator. Just as "negation" is said to be at the root of inert matter,<sup>1</sup> so Bergson also says that negation is of a social nature; where there is denial of another's point of view, "there is a beginning of society."<sup>2</sup> Intersubjectivization, at least of a certain type, is an act of negation and materialization. It is the desire either to enter another's point of view at the expense of one's own or to reduce that other's point of view to one's own perspective. It is a balance which aims at mediation rather than integration; a conceptual synthesis whose ultimate aim must always remain impossible because concepts are as hard and impenetrable as the solids from which they are created.

But a good deal of what we have said against both pure and representational-memory still amounts to assertion rather than explanation; we can see that Bergson might have or should have held to these truths (at least retrospectively), but why should *we* believe they are true? We have talked of the elimination of a nebulous, ethereal past or pure memory in favour of the continuing creation of new presents, perceptions, and subjects. Rehabilitating our own perspectives is essential to the creation of this multiplicity; but why should representation be put to blame for undoing such plurality? To answer this, we turn to one specific instance of the dissociation between "existence" and "appearance,"<sup>3</sup> that between mind and body.

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<sup>1</sup>*M*, p.1031; Jankélévitch, 1959, p.221.

<sup>2</sup>*CE*, p.304 [*Q*, p.739].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *MM*, p.xiii [*Q*, p.162].

*Chapter Eleven:*  
*Perspectivism Applied: The Mind-Body Problem*

At the outset of Chapter One we noted Bergson's belief that "the very mechanism by which we only meant at first to *explain* our conduct will end by also controlling it."<sup>1</sup> By a process of "refractive" reduction, explanation interferes with what it looks at, irrespective of the type of explanation it is. It is an interference in that whatever *controls* what by rights ought to be our *free* action, must also distort it. The purpose of this chapter is to show why this might be so.

Just as it is said that we can only understand duration by entering into it,<sup>2</sup> so also might the explanation and conceptualization of duration be the very act of exiting it. The relationship of concept to conceived is of two things standing outside each other.<sup>3</sup> Such representations are an exile from the world, a nothingness intending it. We have already looked at those interpreters who view representational-memory as a loss or distortion of reality. Representational memory is the "great obstacle", the "source of all mirages;" it "contaminates the perceived." It has even been claimed that the negativity belonging to spatiality in *Time and Free Will* is inflicted upon representational-memory in *Matter and Memory*.<sup>4</sup> Representation is thus said to be homogeneously spatial.<sup>5</sup> But in an almost circular fashion, it may be both the instrument as well as the product of homogeneity. The first part of this chapter investigates this circularity, showing where representation is and is not culpable in the process of dividing mind from body. The second part will concentrate on presenting the mind-body problem as one concerning perception, using as its context a current physicalist theory of the mind that, surprisingly enough, claims something quite similar, only doing so with an entirely different end in mind.

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<sup>1</sup>*TFW*, p.237 [*Q*, p.155], my italics.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *CM*, p.38/34 [*Q*, p.1275].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *M*, p.773.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Jankélévitch, 1959, p.119.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Heidsieck, 1957, p.58: "Memory is spatial in as much as it is representation."

## *Extracted Movement and Abstracted Meaning*

On the opening page of *Creative Evolution* Bergson tells us that one aim of his work will be to show "that our concepts have been formed on the model of solids; that our logic is, pre-eminently, the logic of solids; that, consequently, our intellect triumphs in geometry."<sup>1</sup> Our bivalent logic, and with that the either/or values of "logical space", are derived from a perceived space where only one object can ever occupy a certain space at a particular time. Concepts are shaped by the imprint of objective space. Bergson repeats this assertion at various other points.<sup>2</sup> Yet in the same text he also states the following:

If everything is in time, everything changes inwardly, and the same concrete reality never recurs. Repetition is therefore possible only in the abstract: what is repeated is some aspect that our senses, and especially our intellect, have singled out from reality, just because our action, upon which all the effort of our intellect is directed, can move only among repetitions.<sup>3</sup>

Now, instead of our concepts being modelled upon homogeneous space, it is our intellect's concepts which distort a really enduring extensity. Elsewhere, he writes that "the concept generalizes at the same time that it abstracts. The concept can symbolize a particular property only by making it common to an infinity of things. Therefore it always more or less distorts this property by the extension it gives to it."<sup>4</sup> Again, it is thought which is said to distort the real here. So we are left with a dilemma as to whether homogeneous space is prior to and active upon our mind or whether it is our intellect which distorts concrete extensity into a homogeneous form.<sup>5</sup> A.R. Lacey, who is well aware of this circularity, thinks of it as a weakness in Bergson's thought:

What is not very clear is how they [concepts] could be modelled on objects if we require them to pick out objects as such in the first place - for objects after all depend for their

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<sup>1</sup> *CE*, p.ix [*Q*, p.489].

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *CE*, p.xii [*Q*, p.491]: "Intellectual knowledge, in so far as it relates to a certain aspect of inert matter, ought, on the contrary, to give us a faithful imprint of it, having been stereotyped on this particular object." On p.15 [*Q*, p.506] he refers to "unorganized bodies [matter],...on which we have modelled our fashion of thinking."

<sup>3</sup> *CE*, p.48 [*Q*, p.533].

<sup>4</sup> *CM*, pp.196-197/167 [*Q*, pp.1400-1401].

<sup>5</sup> Of course, Bergson also says that the concept merely "over-accentuates" the homogeneity of matter upon which it is modelled (*CE*, p.218 [*Q*, p.670]), but this still leaves the source of this extra dimension of homogeneity unaccounted for.

reality as objects on being picked out by us for pragmatic purposes. [...] There seems to be a certain chicken-and-egg puzzle here.<sup>1</sup>

And yet the beginnings of an answer to the puzzle are also to be found in *Creative Evolution*, for there we learn of Bergson's belief that "[t]he more consciousness is intellectualized, the more is matter spatialized."<sup>2</sup> According to him, the only coherent hypothesis to explain the intellect's apparently adequate adaptation to the physical world is to suppose that it has "been brought about quite naturally, because it is the same inversion of the same movement which creates at once the intellectuality of mind and the materiality of things."<sup>3</sup> The same movement by which mind is homogenized into an intellect of "distinct concepts" forms concrete space into a homogeneous collection of "objects excluding one another."<sup>4</sup> Similarly, in *Matter and Memory* we read of a process whereby the original intuition of an undivided continuity is broken up into elements "which correspond in the one case to distinct words, in the other to independent objects."<sup>5</sup> Word and object are both creations of the one process.

We are now in a position to find a way out of the problematically circular process by which our concepts can apparently be homogenized by space before they have homogenized matter into that space. The homogenization of the two consists in the one movement: "the space of our geometry and the spatiality of things are mutually engendered by the reciprocal action and reaction of two terms which are essentially the same."<sup>6</sup> But it is a movement which can be taken up from different vantage points.

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<sup>1</sup>Lacey, 1989, p.158. Milič Čapek (1971, p.179) also acknowledges a circularity in Bergson's thought, specifically in relation to his conception of number and the thesis that "it is through the quality of quantity that we form the idea of quantity without quality" (*TFW*, p.123 [Q, p.82]). But Čapek does not see this circularity as a confusion on Bergson's part, so much as a given dilemma of reality: "It is an apparent paradox that the act *negating* duration...is itself *durational*."

<sup>2</sup>*CE*, p.199, [Q, p.656].

<sup>3</sup>*CE*, p.217, [Q, p.670]. The other hypotheses Bergson discusses are empiricism, idealism and pre-established harmony.

<sup>4</sup>*CE*, p.199 [Q, p.656].

<sup>5</sup>*MM*, p.239 [Q, p.319]. Such words are also called dissociations (cf. *CE*, p.253 [Q, pp.698-699]), or as one commentator puts it (Gilson, 1978, p.48) "the fallen back, materialized, spatialized of thought."

<sup>6</sup>*CE*, pp.213-214 [Q, p.667]. Bergson does add that these two terms "move each in the direction inverse of the other" (*CE*, p.214 [Q, p.667]). This must be clarified in that Bergson in places remains overly fond of equating *durée* solely with the subjective, and can consequently imply that *durée* is still one with the intellect. In our reading, on the other hand, *durée* actually moves in an inverse direction to both spatial and intellectual homogeneity, having both subjective or "spiritual" and objective or "material" aspects to it.



What occurs to concrete extensity to produce homogeneous space is now but one side or pole of an activity that can just as well be viewed from what happens to consciousness to produce intellect. However, it would still be wrong to describe the entire process anew in terms of this alternative pole of intellectualization: Bergson insists that the genesis of the one cannot be considered "without making the genesis of the other."<sup>1</sup> In the language of *Matter and Memory*, we cannot enter into one system of images at the exclusion of the other when explaining a process that pertains to them both. The process which engenders the two can be seen and explained from either side.<sup>2</sup> The crimes of representation highlighted above have not been committed without an accomplice. "Intellectualization" was the process we had in mind when dealing with the inadequacies of representational-memory, but homogeneous space is not an innocent victim: the two act together and engender each other. How this happens more precisely remains to be seen. But a clue to the general form of this operation can be found through an examination of the representational facet of the process.<sup>3</sup>

The individuality of movement is its metaphysical status. What makes it individual is the rich particularity, ownership, intentionality, and situation with and in which it unfolds. When we describe this movement adequately, our necessarily thick and "metaphysical" description will appear to be a projection. In fact, it will be a projection, but only of that meaning which belonged to it indigenously and which was first extracted by precisely our

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<sup>1</sup>*CE*, p.210 [*Q*, p.664].

<sup>2</sup>Looking at the process from the objective stance, *CE* talks of inert matter as an "interruption" and "inversion" of movement (pp.212, 222, 229, 231, 270 [*Q*, pp.666, 674, 679, 681, 712-713]), or as "*a reality which is unmaking itself*" (p.261 [*Q*, p.705]). Physics is called a "reversed psychology" or simply "psychics inverted" (pp.219, 213 [*Q*, pp.672, 666]). But this same process is also explained in subjective terms of negation. Matter exists "only as negation of motion, yet is something other than absolute nothingness" (*M*, p.1031). For Jankélévitch (1959, p.221), "Bergsonian matter is *negation*, but not at all *nothing*. [...] It is a movement which annuls another movement, a tendency which neutralizes another tendency, an active resistance." Other explanations with the emphasis on the subjective come in a number of vocabularies. For some, matter and the unconscious are both "fallen spirit" (cf. for example, Fressin, 1967, p.179), for others, homogeneous space is created by a subject alienated from itself (cf. for example, Heidsieck, 1957, pp.66-67), or it is the interruption of a desired or intended order (cf. Delhomme, 1954, pp.70-71).

<sup>3</sup>Interestingly enough, the process of intellectualization described in *CE* is linked with dreaming (cf. *CE*, p.212 [*Q*, p.666]) so that here dreams are connected with homogeneous spatiality (a point that Deleuze for one endorses; cf. Deleuze, 1988, p.127n27). This is significant because in *MM* the dream state is often linked to both pure and representational-memory, and would thereby seem to indicate an important change of attitude towards imagery. Cf. on this change, P.A.Y. Gunter, "Bergson's Reflective Anti-Intellectualism", in *The Personalist*, VOLUME XLVII (1966), pp.43-60; pp.55-56.

abstract representation of it. When represented, what Bergson calls at one point the "metaphysical object" at another, a "wider and higher form of existence,"<sup>1</sup> has each of its various properties "extracted" as a concept. Abstraction is *extraction*.<sup>2</sup>

Concepts, each of them a "halt of thought"<sup>3</sup> and consequently as immobile as inert matter, are part and parcel of the homogeneous intellect generated with the creation of homogeneous space. Not that it is our personal intellect alone which is incriminated; our individual actions, both personal and social, only embroider a degree of increased homogeneity upon an objectively given homogeneous space primarily belonging to the body of our species. At a higher level of abstraction, materialism and idealism have continued to effect this dissociation concluding with a bifurcation between an inert, homogeneous and objective "outside," and a living, heterogeneous and subjective "inside": "formless matter" and "matterless thought" as Bergson puts it.<sup>4</sup>

One incidental confirmation for representation as an ever-increasing and extractive intervention into reality comes from two historical analyses provided by *Creative Evolution* and *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* respectively. It is obvious that our conceptions of mind and matter have not stood still in history. The Ancient Greek notions of body and soul were not defined by geometrical extension and inextension as they have mostly been for the modern philosopher. Their conception of a thing and a thought was not like ours.<sup>5</sup> In *Creative Evolution* Bergson notes how Aristotle's *entelechy* was "less spiritual than our "soul"" just as his *sōma* "already impregnated with the Idea, is less corporeal than our "body".<sup>6</sup> But Bergson is not uncritical in his estimation of the Ancients either; the Aristotelian Idea for him is itself too static. The "metaphysical object" he wants to return to is not an object conjoined with a concept. Concept and object are both culpably static for they arise with the halt of a *movement*.

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<sup>1</sup>CM, p.197/167 [Q, p.1401]; CE, p.197 [Q, p.653].

<sup>2</sup>CM, pp.196-197, 137/167,116 [Q, pp.1401, 1354]; TSMR, p.180 [Q, p.1128].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. ME, p.55 [Q, p.848].

<sup>4</sup>MM, p.9 [Q, p.174]. On this idea of "inner" and "outer" cf. Lindsay, 1911, pp.5, 91-92, 156-157, 168-169.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. CE, pp.369-370 [Q, p.790-791]; M, p.624.

<sup>6</sup>CE, p.369 [Q, p.790].

The metaphysical object is a movement, a continuity, a meaning; what has been extracted as a concept of the soul that is supposed to belong to or be contained within a body, was originally an *action*. It was not an action *of* a body, but simply an action. And it was not any general action either, but always a specific, meaningful movement.

But these interpretations of mind and body that separate Ancient from Modern are not simply innocent doctrinal issues; they are actually constitutive of the mind-body problem itself. This comes out more clearly in the second analysis. In *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* Bergson traces the process by which the individual movement of springs and fountains was extracted by ancient animistic religions. The meaningful action of supplying water, once a "datum provided directly by the senses" with its "own independent existence", became the "spirit of the spring", localized firstly in a thing and then in a person. It is the "persistence" of this activity (heterogeneous space already tending towards homogeneity), that

set it up as the animating spirit of the spring at which we drink, whilst the spring, detached from the function which it performs...*relapse[d] the more completely into the state of a thing pure and simple.*<sup>1</sup>

No longer ourselves being animists, we now think of this spirit as "an abstract idea...extracted from things by an intellectual effort," whereas it was originally thought that this spirit *was* that action.<sup>2</sup> It might be truer to say that with the "spirit of the spring" we already have the beginnings of that extraction, and that our conception of this spirit now as merely one abstract idea amongst others, far from being an innocent description of a tenet of animism, is actually a furtherance of this extractive process. The activity of the spring, like that of the body, has been extracted as an immobile idea, leaving both spring and body to "relapse" into a state of inert materiality. If the processes of intellectualization on side, homogenization on the other, can be given a more precise meaning, then it is this: they involve the elimination of movement and time.

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<sup>1</sup>*TSMR*, p.180 [*Q*, p.1128], my italics.

<sup>2</sup>*TSMR*, p.180 [*Q*, p.1128].

This extraction of movement from what will then become the residual thing is greatly facilitated through an inattentiveness towards context. As one commentator strongly emphasizes, each movement is individual in virtue of its particular situation or context.<sup>1</sup> But situation signifies more than just spatial location; it is both temporal and spatial.<sup>2</sup> We can only separate a body from its world by ignoring the specific moment that individuates that world as the one that belongs to it completely.<sup>3</sup> The intimacy between inhabitant and place inhabited becomes all the clearer as our *attention to life and movement* fixes on their coexistence at each moment. It is precisely when we abstract (or extract) our regard from them in favour of the "overview" that the two are immobilized: "the concept generalizes at the same time that it abstracts."<sup>4</sup> By immobilizing them and ignoring what is specific to them at each moment, they dissociate into container and contained.<sup>5</sup>

The dissociation between mind and body is one continuation of this inattentiveness. As the body is stripped of more and more meaning to become a mundane physical substratum, so the mind becomes more baroque in its inner wealth. This ignorance of the body, this "prophysical" perception, *is* the very rich and multifarious processes of the mind. Our body and the physical world which it inhabits lose their own depth. Yet these ideas stolen from them also lack depth, in that they now miss the worldly context that would give them any real significance. And while intellection may sometimes bring an individual to see with greater acuity, at the species-level we are primarily dealing with, it is normally both a perpetuation and a furtherance of this restrictive power of perception.

As what will become our current notions of mind and body is torn further asunder, it becomes all the harder to see how what it engenders might ever have been connected

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. de Lattre, 1990, pp.137, 139, 141, 149-150, 158-159.

<sup>2</sup>The problems of such talk of context have already been mentioned. It is only too easy to slip back into thinking of context as what an object is *in* when we talk of about it. If that is what is understood by context, then it might be best to avoid speaking about it completely, for it is certainly not *that*.

<sup>3</sup>As Edward Casey (1987, p.197) comments: "Places are empowered by the lived bodies that occupy them; these bodies animate places, breathe new life into them by endowing them with directionality, level and distance."

<sup>4</sup>CM, p.196/167 [Q, p.1400].

<sup>5</sup>Cf. MM, p.277-278 [Q, pp.343-344].

more intimately simply because our ideas are so unworldly and our world is so apparently mundane.

It would be a profound mistake, however, to think that we might effect a qualitative integration of the two simply by rejoining the concept to the thing. Thinking is not so innocent an activity. One early commentary on Bergson pointed to the possibility that "our pre-occupation with discovering repetitions in the interests of explanation had something to do with the limited extent of the direct knowledge which we ordinarily enjoy."<sup>1</sup> If we are to return to the real, she continued, we must first stop trying to explain it.<sup>2</sup> Bergson himself put it like this:

So long as you argue about the obstacle, it will stay where it is; and so long as you look at it, you will divide it into parts which will have to be overcome one by one; there may be no limit to their number; perhaps you will never exhaust them. But you can do away with the whole, at a stroke, if you deny its existence.<sup>3</sup>

But Bergson's point is more than epistemological. As Jankélévitch puts it, explanation both abolishes and supposes the "abolition of time" so that one might describe even "definition" as a type of "bad faith".<sup>4</sup> Perhaps then, it is in thinking about the mind-body problem that the difficulty arises, for the very demarcation of the problem through conceptual analysis itself has repercussions upon the supposedly objective area of study. Representation is exactly what narrows our perception. When Descartes tells us that we can "easily have two clear and distinct notions or ideas, the one of created substance which thinks, the other of corporeal substance, *provided we carefully separate all the attributes of thought from those of extension*,"<sup>5</sup> what actually facilitates his discovery of mind and matter in isolation may be precisely this careful separation of thought from extension. This is surely why Bergson quotes Descartes approvingly when the latter confided to Princess Elizabeth that one learns to understand the union between soul and

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<sup>1</sup>Karen Stephen, *The Misuse of Mind: A Study of Bergson's Attack on Intellectualism* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1922), p.99.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Stephen, 1922, p.106.

<sup>3</sup>*TSMR*, p.53 [*Q*, p.1020].

<sup>4</sup>Jankélévitch, 1959, pp.59, 63.

<sup>5</sup>René Descartes, *The Principles of Philosophy*, in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes* translated by Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross, two volumes (New York: Dover, 1911), volume one, pp.201-302; p.241, my italics.

body "in abstaining from meditating" and "only using life."<sup>1</sup> The mind-body problem is one of perception, of the inattention to life and movement that ensues from the incursion of what can be described, at one level as representation, at another, as that "spatialized" world wrought by the countless homogenizations performed by our species and our ancestor species.

### *The Mind-Body Problem as a Question of Perception*

A recent work on the mind-body problem concludes with a solution of its own somewhat similar to the one we have been looking at. The mental becomes an "activity" rather than any kind of special substance.<sup>2</sup> Consciousness, it is argued, is not another stuff that we must somehow connect to physical stuff; it is simply what physical stuff does, it is its movement or activity. The mind-body question is reduced to an "interface problem" ("how can extended things interact with unextended things") which is then brushed aside with the assertion that "there is no interface problem between things and their activities."<sup>3</sup> To assure us of this, the example of motion is taken: "If a bus is moving down the street, there is no 'bus-motion problem'. It is not as though the motion of the bus could exist as a ghostly see-through residue, were the bus to be dismantled."<sup>4</sup> But while he has probably resolved the relationship between mind and body in the only way how, "*in terms of time rather than of space*,"<sup>5</sup> the author has none the less underestimated the difficulty of the issue of both motion and activity in general. Zeno would not have been so confident in the motion of this bus.

While the *relationship* between mind and body is a question of time or movement, the *mind-body problem*, on the other hand, cannot be boiled down to time, because time itself is not as uncomplicated as we might tend to think. But the differences encountered

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<sup>1</sup>M, p.1577. If this reminds us of Schelling's view that the bifurcation between subject and object is created by conscious reflection, we should keep in mind that one of Bergson's strongest influences was Félix Ravaisson who was himself greatly influenced by the German idealist.

<sup>2</sup>Priest, 1991, p.214. Admittedly it is described as the "activity of the brain", but such physiological reductionism is incidental to our purposes at the moment.

<sup>3</sup>Priest, 1991, p.214.

<sup>4</sup>Priest, 1991, p.215.

<sup>5</sup>MM, p.77 [Q, p.218].

here *can* be reduced to those of perception. Or rather, they can be *elevated* to this category of difference, in that the criterion of perception, being itself the least public and most personal possession of the subject, is essentially non-reductive. In our introduction we looked at reduction as the (greater) infiltration of the public into the private; but so long as we remain on the terrain of perception, differences cannot be evaluated according to any public, third person, or retrospective criterion, for any such standard could only merit its *perceived worth* by being something over and above perception. This, in contracted form, was our point against the argument for corrigibility from illusion. However, there is one proviso to add; all perceptions are of equal value only if they perceive each other with equal value. That is what allows us to *correct* the thesis of corrigibility with impunity; the perception to be admonished is the one which reduces that of the other.<sup>1</sup> What follows will endeavour to elucidate this point.

Zeno could not fathom the reality of motion in rational terms; Bergson could. Some might see this difference in terms of the differing rationalities of the thinkers themselves, others might see it as a difference in their perception. We have been arguing that the two, perception and conception, must be taken together. It is not that Zeno never perceived any movement; what he never perceived was the greater reality of movement over immobility, a perception possibly having something to do with his conception of the two. After all, it is probably not incidental that engineers and physicians comprise a disproportionately high number of those who are unsusceptible to the phenomenon of apparent motion; as Nelson Goodman tells us, they are "unable to *see* what they *know* is not there."<sup>2</sup> One could circle around forever trying to find the causal direction for this blindness: conception after perception or vice versa? So why not take the two together? Now there is obviously nothing startling in saying that our perception is dictated in large part by what we know; but it is seldom that this principle is applied to a problem of philosophy in a prescriptive manner. It is normally assumed that this relativity of the senses gives rise to a genuine problem for the reality of perception rather than, as we

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<sup>1</sup> Whether we must be able or simply are able to know at any point when a perception is reductive is not the issue.

<sup>2</sup> Goodman, 1978, p.92, my italics.

have been arguing in this thesis, that the genuine problem concerns this *one* reality into which our perceptions, if veridical, would have been thought to admit us. The crisis is not for the reality of perception, but for *the* reality we should all be expected to perceive if it existed.

The mind-body problem is an issue of perception-conception, which is really to say that it is an issue of different types of perception (with different degrees of representation). There are living conscious beings that we sometimes perceive in terms of what is inert and at other times do not. At one level, for example, we can relate to each other as irreducibly vital beings, at another, as compositions of inert chemical elements. The question now concerns the basis for this partiality. Not that the difference between the living and the inert has to be qualitative to still be a difference. The hopes of those concerned with creating artificial intelligence (with presumably some form of artificial life in tow) may be partially fulfilled, though probably not completely.<sup>1</sup> Despite sometimes putting the difference between mind and matter in qualitative terms, the difference between artificial manufacture and vital organization is not so marked for Bergson. He simply says that manufacture works from the periphery to the centre, while organization works from the centre to the periphery.<sup>2</sup> Admittedly, the first may also be more conscious, being a "*sum of means employed*" rather than a mere "*sum of obstacles avoided*" as organized matter is,<sup>3</sup> yet Bergson ends his last major work with a positive vision of the machine-world:

If our organs are natural instruments, our instruments must then be artificial organs. The workman's tool is the continuation of his arm, the tool-equipment of humanity is therefore a continuation of its body.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps Bergson is not to be taken at his word here. But what would allow us to take him literally such that a tool could be seen as an organ? The answer is, again, time. Associative actions are too conscious and individual to create anything lasting; this is

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<sup>1</sup>At *ME*, p.26 [*Q*, p.830], Bergson admits that the future success of the efforts of physics and chemistry to fabricate life is "by no means improbable."

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *CE*, pp.97-99 [*Q*, pp.573-575].

<sup>3</sup>*CE*, p.99 [*Q*, p.575]. Bergson does see this as a qualitative difference, but we will see him alter his view below.

<sup>4</sup>*TSMR*, p.309 [*Q*, p.1238].



Bergson's criticism of neo-Lamarckism,<sup>1</sup> but it is also his criticism of manufacture in general. An organ is a tool with a history, created almost by time itself rather than by any individual in time; it is the sedimented design of generations (though it is born into actuality abruptly), not the conscious intent of a few. In spite of the optimism of the above quotation, Bergson continues to describe this "tool-equipment of humanity" as a body "distended out of all proportion" without the soul which can fill its bulk.<sup>2</sup> What the machine-body requires is a soul, which is to say in the language of *Matter and Memory* and *Creative Evolution*, a past, for the truly living body is a "register in which time is being inscribed."<sup>3</sup> What the tool lacks is tradition, history, or in other words, the inscription of time. The hope for artificial life may thus go some way towards its ambition (a Bergsonian soul is, after all, a varying quantity rather than an immobile substance); but what it will always lack is the time in which to fulfil it completely, one reason being that life itself will be continuously advancing in age ahead of it and consequently forever redefining the goal to be attained.

"Organization" is therefore an appropriate term for living matter, for it connotes the residual effect of past actions accumulated within the present. To simulate them would be impossible because they are essentially the concretion of a past greater than any necessarily more recent simulation could possibly muster. The main reason for this is simple: this history of organization is infinite. There is no origin or starting point to when this life emerged; if matter and consciousness (which is life)<sup>4</sup> are mutually explanatory in Bergson's view,<sup>5</sup> then they must needs be coexistent with each other as well. If matter has existed eternally, then so must have life. One might dispute this and posit a radical origin, if not to life, then at least to matter. But such creationism *ex nihilo* is precisely the image of creation Bergson resists.<sup>6</sup> Bergson's critiques of nothingness

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *CE*, pp.179-180 [*Q*, pp.639-640]; *TSMR*, p.273n1 [*Q*, p.1207n1].

<sup>2</sup>*TSMR*, p.309 [*Q*, p.1239].

<sup>3</sup>*CE*, p.17 [*Q*, p.508].

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *CM*, p.108/92 [*Q*, p.1332].

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *ME*, p.23 [*Q*, p.828].

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Guy Lafranc, "Continuité et Absolue Nouveauté dans la Durée Bergsonienne", in *Dialogue*, VOLUME VII (1968), pp.94-101; pp.99-100. In *CE* (p.253, [*Q*, p.699]) Bergson does criticize the notion of an "uncreated matter," but it is the homogeneous matter subsequent to the dissociation of that

and disorder have respectively removed the ontological void and unorganized substance which creationist and mechanistic explanations necessarily inhabit.<sup>1</sup> What is left, according to the similar view of another thinker, is a "qualitative infinity."<sup>2</sup> Concrete extensity is inexhaustible in its depth of organization, and with such unending complexity we thereby gain an unending history of organization; the two infinities, temporal and extensive, go hand in hand. Though some have attributed a temporal finitism to Bergson's work,<sup>3</sup> Jankélévitch for one has rightly surmised that "[t]he problem of radical origin" must necessarily be "an ideological mirage" for Bergson.<sup>4</sup> If such is the case, then a never ending history of organization is instituted, one which would obviously have an irremovable advantage over any artificial rivals. But we have condensed a number of ideas in a small space. Let us look at this issue now in more depth.

It has been said that if a computer were to learn from its own "experiences" and make humanlike associations, amongst other things, it would require "a humanlike body with appropriate physical movements, abilities, and vulnerability to injury."<sup>5</sup> But it will actually need more than that, for our body extends beyond us as well, as Bergson writes:

An organism such as a higher vertebrate is the most individual of all organisms; yet, if we take into account that it is only the development of an ovum forming part of the body of its mother and of a spermatozoon belonging to the body of its father, that the egg...is a

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"stuff" that contained both it and intellect (in another form) that he is speaking of here (this reference takes part in the section concerning the "*Ideal Genesis of Matter*," my italics).

<sup>1</sup>Apropos of the first, cf. Jankélévitch, 1959, p.201; in respect of the second, we should not wish to imply that what Bergson's calls "*automatic*" or "*inert*" order is no different from "*vital*" or "*willed*" order or organization (*CE*, p.236 [*Q*, p.685]). If there is a case to be made for panpsychism in Bergson's thought it should not begin here. But we do believe that the critique of disorder strikes a devastating blow against mechanistic explanations of life that deem it emergent from inert matter. For a discussion of any potential panpsychism in Bergsonism (which must always be tinged with his own reservations toward it as an overly subjectivist projection; cf. *TFW*, pp.212-215 [*Q*, pp.139-141]), cf. William E. May, "The Reality of Matter in the Metaphysics of Bergson", in *International Philosophical Quarterly*, VOLUME X (1970), pp.611-642.

<sup>2</sup>Milič Čapek (1971, p.309) records Bergson's likeness to David Bohm's philosophy of qualitative infinity thus: "'the qualitative infinity'...of nature shows clearly his [Bohm's] affinity with process philosophy of the type [Bergson's] discussed in this book." Needless to say, a *qualitative* infinity as we would understand it in no way implies an infinite divisibility. In fact, Bohm's response to the indeterminacy of the Copenhagen Interpretation of quantum theory which substitutes an unending stratification of nature for the latter's singular plane of indeterminacy, matches Bergson's preference for pluralism over any foundational ambiguity (as can be found, for example, in Merleau-Ponty's work). Cf. David Bohm, *Causality and Chance in Modern Physics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), pp.132-140.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Čapek, 1971, pp.373-374, 378-383, 391-392.

<sup>4</sup>Jankélévitch, 1959, p.p.264-265.

<sup>5</sup>Hubert L. Dreyfus and Stuart E. Dreyfus, "Making a Mind Versus Modeling the Brain: Artificial Intelligence Back at a Branchpoint", in Stephen R. Graubard, ed., *The Artificial Intelligence Debate: False Starts, Real Foundations* (Cambridge, Mass./London: MIT Press, 1988), pp.15-43: p.39.

connecting link between the two progenitors since it is common to their two substances, we shall realize that every individual organism, even that of a man, is merely a bud that has sprouted on the combined body of both its parents.<sup>1</sup>

To be in possession of both a body and the background of organization required to support it, to have all these quite specific and individual causal powers,<sup>2</sup> is exactly what it is to have, at the end of one line of evolution, a human rather than artificial mind. Quite often, the extent to which AI is seen to succeed is really in virtue of certain biological resources it has tapped into. The voice synthesizer of an "intelligent" machine, for example, will help to convince us of its mindfulness only by exploiting our own sedimented sensitivity to certain sound patterns. The *history* the machine thus gains is on lease from the present and the living. It is a retrospective borrowing, and thereby, a *simulated* success at creating artificial life.

It may be thought that our argument must be guilty of the genetic fallacy of confusing development with capacity. This we refute. As far as vital capacities are concerned, there are few of any consequence that are what they are in isolation of the development of the substance supporting them.<sup>3</sup> No material can be an unordered mass or neutral "stuff." Consequently, no material can be entirely devoid of the individual causal powers that follow from it being both the specific type and token of material that it is. It follows, then, that when in composition, a material will always impinge in some way on the nature of the thing it composes. There can be no "functions" that proceed in complete immunity from the material that supports those functions.<sup>4</sup> The substance of which we are made is not incidental to us; it too has a history which is a part of our history. Not that beings embedded in a continuous and unceasing line of descent do not themselves create other things (such as human artefacts) the very recency of which lends itself to simulating them all the more easily. A chair can be as well made of wood as of plastic. But to the extent

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<sup>1</sup>CE, p.45 [Q, p.531].

<sup>2</sup>Of course, this causality is not the general image of causation tending towards the principle of identity.

<sup>3</sup>This is not to say that our capacities are reducible to the substance composing them, but only that the two are mutually dependent.

<sup>4</sup>John Searle has recently emphasized the importance of the substantial in understanding life and mind; the neurophysiology of the mind is prior to the functional roles of that neurophysiology (cf. Searle, 1992, pp.160-162); what we are arguing here could be looked upon as an extension of this view that radically extends it beyond the neurophysiology of the brain.

that the forces engendering these offspring belong to individuals rather than more recently evolved *associations* of individuals, the more they will only be recreated by an artificial system in a superficial manner.

To translate the quasi-empirical nature of our argumentation into a more abstract idiom, we might answer the question of what type of thing other than the really intelligent and living might be intelligent and living, like this: none. Only the real is real; it allows for no other possibilities that might be it and not be it simultaneously, as the words "artificial life" and "artificial intelligence" imply. As far as the living individual is concerned, artificial life (whatever about artificial intelligence, for its definition is highly variable) is a contradiction in terms.

Of course, the defence will be that it is not an artificial life but an artificially *created* life that is at issue. But then our response is that life is not created. There is no first life, be it a pure *posse* awaiting actualization or a pure nothingness out of which this creation will mysteriously emerge. And as there is neither any first life nor any objective *telos* for such life, so there is no objectively set ascending order to life either. Bergsonian evolutionism is radically non-hierarchical, positing a "discontinuous evolution which proceeds by bounds, obtaining at each stopping-place a combination, perfect of its kind."<sup>1</sup> Just as grey is not a variation upon white, neither is man or any other species a variation upon a transcendental theme. If there are any hierarchies to be found, then they are created when each species freely elects to fall into self-absorption and a disregard for "almost all the rest of life."<sup>2</sup> As attention to life is the sole imperative in nature, Bergson's describes "a partial sleep" as the process by which a hierarchy of the living is instituted; whichever species manages to retain the greatest degree of consciousness will automatically attain greatness.<sup>3</sup> Natural justice ensures that one loses one's own right to be regarded as living as one loses the ability to perceive others as living.

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<sup>1</sup>*TSMR*, p.127 [*Q*, p.1082].

<sup>2</sup>*CE*, p.135 [*Q*, p.604].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *CE*, pp.135-137, 142 [*Q*, pp.604-605, 610]. As we will note in the following chapter, humanity may currently possess this greatest degree of consciousness, but it is not our essence: some other species may well take our place.

But in perceiving a living organism in place of an inert fabrication, we are not in direct perception of something called "the past"; what we perceive is a subject's individual history, not an impersonal time. But this is really only to say that we see the subject as something different from us. The difference between perceiving the other as living or inert is precisely the difference between the perception of the other as other, as a being alien to our own appropriation of it, and the perception of it subsumed entirely under our own perception and conception of it (be it personal or species-specific). But this alien being is not strange solely on account of its objective differences (the alterity we have in mind is not shared by weird rocks from Mars). It is alien to us in virtue of its own individual and subjective perspective. Its world is not our world and cannot be reduced to it (save when *it* should desire to reduce itself to a common world). Others have argued, however, that this perception of the other need not necessarily be of any *real* pre-existing subjectivity at all, for perception can actually be constitutive of the subjectivity in question.

In relation to our earlier analysis of the homunculus fallacy, Daniel Dennett is one who is happy to admit that assuming an artificial system to possess information is to ascribe an intentionality to it. However, he adds that it is an ascription made necessary if we want to interact with it: "The decision to adopt the strategy is pragmatic, and is not intrinsically right or wrong."<sup>1</sup> Dennett is an instrumentalist as regards propositional attitudes like belief and desire; their ascription does not entail that they really exist, only that it is efficacious that we should believe that they exist.

There are two ways in which an attribution of intentionality to an artificial system such as a computer can be justified. Firstly, one can begin by consciously placing homunculi with their own beliefs and desires at the highest level of the computer design (subsystems such as "rememberers", "evaluators", "overseers" and so on).<sup>2</sup> But these

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<sup>1</sup>Daniel Dennett "Intentional Systems", in Dennett, 1979, pp.3-22; p.7.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Dennett, 1979, p.80.

homunculi themselves are continuously analysed into smaller and "less clever" homunculi until a level is reached when all anthropomorphizing has ceased and we are dealing purely with "adders and subtractors."<sup>1</sup> The successful activity of one homunculus is thereby explained, not through recourse to another homunculus within it, but through positing a team consisting of smaller and individually less talented homunculi.<sup>2</sup> Our initial set of full-blown homunculi are thereby "discharged"<sup>3</sup> of their duties and can be replaced by a cumulative structure comprised solely of levels which are entirely mechanistic. But the problem with this answer to the fallacy is one of emergence. It is one thing to see how an activity normally performed by a single agent of certain intelligence could be effected by lesser beings with their talents pooled together, quite another to believe it possible that beings with no intelligence whatsoever could muster anything beyond this level, irrespective of how many of them are collected together. If they seem to cause the emergence of something new, it can only be on account of some hidden homunculus.<sup>4</sup> "More clever" can be resolved into "less clever", but a total absence of intelligence cannot be inflated into anything else; it is always easier for the "reverse engineer" to explain things by working backwards rather than forwards.

The second strategy is the one of particular interest for our thesis. It side-steps the whole issue of whether computers merit intelligence as we do, asserting instead that the question of its attribution is as applicable to the living as it is to the inert. Our pragmatic ascription of intentionality is deemed true, not merely of our attitudes to machines, but of our interaction with any object:

Consider the all too familiar line of reasoning that concludes that no computer ever *really* means anything at all.... [...] ...a computer is really just a sort of automated book or blackboard, a symbol storehouse whose symbols have only the meaning we interpreters

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<sup>1</sup>Dennett, 1979, p.80. John Searle (cf. 1992, pp.212-214) would see a homunculus at work even at this level, only now installed in the outside observer *interpreting* a physical opening and closing device (such as an electric switch) as an adding and subtracting activity.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Lycan, 1990, p.80.

<sup>3</sup>Dennett, 1979, p.81.

<sup>4</sup>There are obviously new features, properties, qualities and so on to be seen when certain (relative) simples enter into a compound. But to say that these novelties emerged from these *relations* (as opposed to the less sophisticated mechanisms that have them emerge from the elements related) still begs the question of reducibility, relationships now bearing the brunt of mysterious containment. When Bergson says that Achilles' movement is irreducible, it is not only his objective image (a body changing location in space) that is rejected as a substratum; his body in motion would be equally unacceptable, for the body that moves is a late product of a dissociated motion.

assign them. Implied in this argument is that we *uninterpreted interpreters* are the *Ursprung* of all real meaning.... What the new view invites us to consider, on the contrary, is that there are no uninterpreted interpreters, no privileged representers. An implication of the view crudely expressed by the slogan that our brains are organic computers is that *just like computers* their states can be interpreted via a sort of hermeneutical procedure by outside observers to have content - and that's as strong a sort of content as their states can - or could - have. *We* are both the creators and the creatures of such interpretation, and are nothing beyond the reach of that activity.<sup>1</sup>

According to Dennett, we can interpret other objects according to three different stances: physical, design and intentional.<sup>2</sup> The intentional stance enters us into the hermeneutic circle with a presumption of subjectivity that is either reinforced or not according to the wholly external and mediated (through our interpretation) behaviour of the object. We are both "creators and creatures" of such interpretation. Limitations on space prevent any engagement here with the ever-increasing critical literature surrounding Dennett's work, so we will confine ourselves to what is pertinent in it for us.

The biggest problem we find with Dennett's position is its disregard of difference in favour of similarity. According to his account, the original uninterpreted interpreter, be it taken as each and every subject or just an initially privileged one, is itself an interpretation. Of course, for Bergson too the purest perception is also a representation; the objective universe remains an image of a sort. But that it is an image "of a sort" is not unimportant. What Dennett writes of man and machine is true as far as establishing a quantitative similarity between the two, but such similarities themselves are not simple. There are real differences between the interpretation at work in understanding machines and that in understanding each other because there are differences within the categories of representation, imagery or intentionality. If I know the referents of "black", "white" and "mixture", can I then be said to know the referent of "grey" without ever having seen it?<sup>3</sup> If I have been in a bus station one day and have seen a train on another, do I then know *a priori* what a train station is? These are not simply Nagelian concerns about the non-representational nature of either perceptual *qualia* or parts of our everyday experience.

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<sup>1</sup>Daniel Dennett, "Comments on Rorty", in *Synthese*, VOLUME LIII (1982), pp.349-356; 354-355.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Dennett, 1979, pp.3-22.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *CM*, p.234/198 [*Q*, p.1430].

Our perception is symbolic and interpretative,<sup>1</sup> but it still remains of interest to know what *type* of interpretation it is. Intentionality, reference and even symbolism.<sup>2</sup> come in degrees, degrees which should not be neglected via recourse to the quantitative-qualitative divide. Too often the failure to establish a qualitative difference is assumed to license the disregard of all quantitative difference, no matter what its degree. A personal experience is not pure, direct, unrepresented, uninterpreted, or free of all citation, yet its being personal holds for something. Of course, personhood, too, comes in degrees, for the measure of our own individuality is, according to Bergson, a varying one.<sup>3</sup> But a varying measure is not an identity, that is, difference itself is not self-identical or homogeneous; it too is variegated. Our privacy may be haunted by others, but are ghosts no different from flesh and blood people?

According to Dennett, our perception is constitutive of the other's subjectivity. Stated thus, he is in superficial accord with the Bergsonian view we have been articulating here: that the mind-body *problem* revolves about the perception of other minds. Only it is not a problem for Dennett on account of our *inability* to perceive other minds properly, but, in a perverse reversal of this position, precisely *because* of this perception of minds as such. The minds we find so incommensurate with the physical world are born out of an interpretative strategy that allows us to see objects *as* mindful. Dennett starts from the premise that the three stances, physical, design and intentional, though of differing pragmatic value in accordance with the situation and subjects involved, are nevertheless on the same epistemological level. This is so because it is also assumed that the question of the other's subjective reality is unanswerable in absolute terms; all we get is what we see and what we get is exterior behaviour. The Bergsonian view differs. Beginning with the reality of subjectivity, the perception that sees that subject as an inert machine is deemed to be a necessarily impoverished vision. But beginning with the reality of a

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<sup>1</sup>Ian W. Alexander (1957, p.72), commenting on Bergson's antipathy to the view that experience contains "no symbolic material prior to its elaboration at the predicative level", tells us that Bergson opposed this notion "by showing that immediate experience is already structured and is itself a process of formulation, whereby the forms and patterns implicit in memory are infused into the concrete perception and projected in symbolic form - 'metaphorically,' as Bergson says - in meaningful action, gestures, and speech."

<sup>2</sup>As we will see in the next chapter.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *CE*, pp.13, 15, 273 [*Q*, pp.504-505, 506-507, 714-715].



subjective, living consciousness is not simply one hypothetical premise among others: it is a premise born from perception. The notion of "stance" or "strategy" is already wrapped up in a prior conception of the nature of intersubjectivity and with that of the subject itself. Descartes' *cogito* is not the same as Augustine's, nor is Augustine's like that of Montaigne; what the inner self has been found to be through introspection (and also what introspection itself entailed) has changed with history. There is nothing "subjectivistic" in Augustine's turn to subjectivity because, as Gary Madison tells us, "what Augustine discovered by going "inside," into his innermost self, was nothing other than Otherness itself..., the reality (presence) of other (human) selves."<sup>1</sup> Descartes' *cogito*, on the other hand, is "ruthlessly" purified of all traces of otherness, so that in the end he is not sure whether there is a real world "out there" or whether the others he sees from his window are not mechanical automatons. This is Dennett's picture of the *cogito*, where a theoretical leap is required in deciding whether these others are automatons or whether they are living, conscious beings. It need not be a conscious leap, but it is none the less a "knowledge" that "must be organized into something like a theory."<sup>2</sup>

One line of defence against such theorizing has been broadly termed the holistic response. In Dennett's opinion, the intentional strategy can work on both humans and chess-playing computers. We interpret the computer, for instance, to *want* our knight because it *believes* that it will only lose a pawn in return. But it has been argued that intentions like belief and desire can only gain their meaning within a broader sphere of intentions such as trying to make good moves, or wanting to win, or caring not to lose. These affects themselves are entered into a network of beliefs and attitudes involving public recognition and esteem, pride and self-respect, and so forth. Yet it makes little sense to attribute these to a computer, for it lacks both the life and world in which each of these intentions could find their anchoring and orientation. Hubert Dreyfus, for example, has argued that this "frame problem" is the major stumbling block for cognitivist models of

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<sup>1</sup>Gary Brent Madison, "Flesh as Otherness", in Galen A. Johnson and Michael B. Smith, eds., *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1990), pp.27-34; p.29.

<sup>2</sup>Daniel Dennett, "Making Sense of Ourselves", in *The Intentional Stance* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), pp.83-101; p.101.

AI (and its apologists) because much of the context in which every cognitive action is set is itself non-cognitive, involving moods, cares or embodied skills.<sup>1</sup> But recently both Dennett and the AI camp in general have acknowledged the frame problem.<sup>2</sup> AI itself having undergone a major shift away from the attempt to fabricate symbolic cognitive reasoning and thereby also from the problems associated with it. Friends and foes of AI alike such as Paul Churchland, Hubert Dreyfus and John Searle<sup>3</sup> have all shown either great faith or cautious optimism in the possibilities certain new "connectionist" systems open for the realization of AI ambitions. However, the Bergsonian criticisms of AI remain untouched by these developments (Bergson was never a friend of the unextended or cognitivist model of the mind in any case), for it is our view that *any* artificial system will lack the history of organization that makes living things specifically living.

But these developments aside, there was always one problem with the holistic response to AI in any case. Anything which can be *represented* as a non-cognitive fringe of our cognitive actions seems to be automatically reducible to a cognitive action. Cares can be expressed, therefore cares can be taken to be nothing other than this expression. The very fact that we can point to it shows that at least some aspect of it is publicly visible, an aspect which can then be taken for what it is entirely; it becomes a purely surface phenomenon: the *behaviour* of care, mood, or whatever.<sup>4</sup> We are consequently brought back to Dennett's living texts who can be taken up as conscious or inert purely on the basis of an interpretative act. Expressions, representations, informational models, and so on, are the best we get in our perception of others, thus the intentional *stance* makes a good operational standard for defining all consciousness as such.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Hubert Dreyfus, *What Computers Still Can't Do: A Critique of Artificial Reason* (Cambridge, Mass./London: MIT Press, 1992), pp.53-54; cf. also Haugeland, 1990, pp.666-667.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Daniel Dennett, "Cognitive Wheels: The Frame Problem of AI", in Christopher Hookway, ed., *Minds, Machines and Evolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp.129-151.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Churchland, 1988, pp.156-165; Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1988; Searle, 1992, pp.246-247.

<sup>4</sup>Embodied skills would be one obvious non-cognitive aspect that would resist representation, but their connection with cognition is also the most difficult to show in the first place (the separation of mind from body comes *before* the reduction of mind to the objectified body). Thus skills and "know-how" can be palmed off onto the body and have their epistemological status subsequently discredited. (It is simply because there is an obviously close relationship between cognitive beliefs and non-cognitive affects that the latter are all the more representable in cognitive form.) The AI community were thereby able to appropriate the frame problem as their own by redefining it in terms of a calculational problem concerning when and how certain perfectly cognizable fringe representations can be represented rather than in terms of the existence of non-cognitive states affecting cognitive ones.

Yet a certain view of the individual and individuality must be presumed to set the divide which any *active* ascription of intentionality must surmount. For Bergson, Dennett's individuality would be too heavily set upon the model of our objective bodies which separates them from each other by recourse to the sense of touch.<sup>1</sup> Bergson's picture of individuality is still a notion that is in play, not merely as a theme within his own philosophy, but ontologically in his vision of reality. Individuality admits of degrees. Life, he wrote, is a continuous "balancing between individuation and association;" "individuality is never perfect."<sup>2</sup> Thus, affective states like sympathy and antipathy are not strategies designed to overcome a separation set by a fixed level of individuality; they are said to indicate a possible interpenetration of human consciousnesses.<sup>3</sup>

All Dennett sees (and therefore all he can get) is not the same as all that Bergson sees. The reality of the other's subjectivity is not an assumption, it is a perception, an ontological tie with the other. Similarly, if the living are alive for us, it is not in virtue of an assumption, but on account of the perception of organized matter, of a history and tradition within and upon the "surface" (which is also the depth) of the present.

This inner realm of subjectivity, therefore, is not an "inner" realm at all. It is not a question of what is essentially private versus what is essentially public either. It is a matter of acquaintance.<sup>4</sup> Knowing others from the "inside" is sharing a history with them so that their behaviour becomes meaningful to one in a manner which it could not have been before that history was shared (a history that is partly shared at the level of the species through our bodies). One gains a "spiritual harmony" with the "innermost quality" of another subject (or object), writes Bergson, through "a long comradeship with its superficial manifestations."<sup>5</sup> But this comradeship must itself be shared, not simply at

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *ME*, p.96 [*Q*, p.874]; *CM*, p.36/32 [*Q*, p.1273].

<sup>2</sup>*CE*, pp.273, 15 [*Q*, pp.715, 506]; cf. also, p.45 [*Q*, pp.530-531].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *CM*, p.36/32 [*Q*, p.1273].

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Lindsay, 1911, pp.236-238.

<sup>5</sup>*CM*, p.236/200 [*Q*, p.1432]. Remember too that this knowledge from acquaintance, being associative, will always have its basis in another less mediated intimacy upon which this association builds its new relationship, the nature of this earlier connection finding its origin in a dissociated union.

the level of a stark physical coexistence, but in sympathy (itself manifested physically too). It is not a question of observing another's public behaviour; what is required is a certain type of observation, and with that what is seen is a certain type of public behaviour. Neither behaviour, observation, nor the public are simple phenomena. In place of the scientific perception that aims at control and mastery,<sup>1</sup> one must aspire to look at the object "for itself", "for nothing, for the pleasure of doing so."<sup>2</sup> Without any thought of measurement, relation, or comparison, we can be (in the etymological sense of the word) in *sympathy* with reality. This sympathy will be comprised, above all, of love.<sup>3</sup>

We mentioned above the need to recognize the integrity of quantitative differences in virtue of the audacious manner in which some have tried to exploit the quantitative-qualitative divide (once it has been breached) in order to argue away the real distinctions quantitative differences can instantiate. It is now about time that we interrogated both Bergson's own use of this division and the primacy of quality which motivates it. What are qualities? Sounds and colours? A warm home? Aesthetic and moral values? In *Time and Free Will* it is said that animals probably live in a more qualitative space than humans.<sup>4</sup> Man has thrown a homogeneous medium beneath the qualitative. But has not qualitative space and with that quality as such taken on the same burden here as pure memory? There is a difference between quantity and quality, yet even for Bergson it cannot be qualitative, for as he says himself, every "quantity is always nascent quality".<sup>5</sup> Would it not be more in tune with the Bergsonian spirit of multiplicity, not to say that man lives in one type of space subtending all the others, but simply that there are an inestimable number of different spaces *succeeding* each other? No one of these spaces would subtend any other, for each of them would follow on from the last as a new creation. Animals surely live "in" their space with as great a view to action as men

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *M*, p.978, *CM* p.43/38 [*Q*, p.1279]; cf. also, *CM*, p.149/126 [*Q*, p.1362], where Bergson tells us that the "rule of science" concerns obedience and command. The ideal philosopher, on the other hand, "neither obeys nor commands; he seeks to be at one with nature."

<sup>2</sup>*CM*, p.162/138 [*Q*, p.1374].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *M*, p.1550. Bergson places this love in the vicinity of friendship rather than romantic love.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *TFW*, pp.96-97 [*Q*, p.65].

<sup>5</sup>*CM*, p.225/191 [*Q*, pp.1422-1423]; cf. also, *CE*, p.223 [*Q*, p.674].

pragmatically live in theirs, and it is action which is said to homogenize. The animals' is an action in a different space, not one in a mysterious qualitative space hovering above a homogeneous version of the same world. There are a multitude of worlds created anew with each (not *in* each) moment.

Not that these worlds are ethically equivalent either, however. The duality of quantity and quality cannot be completely overthrown, for there is a real difference between what these words signify. Quality is a type of quantity, and as such, a type of activity (certainly not an inert passivity). But not all types of activity are the same. Some activities acknowledge this very fact that there are often real differences which refuse to be reduced irrespective of the absence of any transcendental reasons justifying such a refusal. Others will not. The former typifies a qualitative action. It is an activity for the other as another, in respect of his, her or its difference as a value or quality (in the ethical sense). We have had recourse to this notion before when there have been suggestions of relativism in Bergson's thought. Quantitative action, on the other hand, at least as a limit concept, typifies an altogether different kind of behaviour. It is an action whose primary meaning (whether represented or not) and last resort is the space of resistance and instrumentation, the means of control. Homogeneous space may be tailored to the tactile senses, as Bergson says, but which touch is he thinking about? There can be a tactile sense used for or against others. If the primary significance of quantification is mastery and control, then it moves in a space of physical violence, be it actual or threatened.

The issue as to whether there is a real distinction between quantity and quality also amounts to the question of whether there is a real monism or dualism in Bergson. Transcendentally, there may be no differences in kind, but sometimes there are immanent differences great enough to warrant a new name and a new attitude.<sup>1</sup> It is consequently arguable that all Bergson's dualisms, subject-object, matter-spirit, perception-memory,

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *TSMR*, p.10 [*Q*, p.982], on mathematical quantitative differences so large that it is incumbent upon us to treat them as though they were qualitative.

immobile-mobile, can be traced back to two sources: love and hate. In the last analysis, Bergson must be referred to Empedocles rather than Heraclitus.

## *Chapter Twelve: Conclusions:*

### *The Possibility of Bergsonism and the Return to Innocence*

#### *The Bergsonian Language of Time*

In the reading we have given of Bergson's work, a reading that has tried to distance itself from the causes of vitalism, spiritualism, psychologism, and, if there were such a word, "pastism", it may nevertheless be thought that we have distorted Bergsonism beyond recognition. Deleuze writes that in Bergson's philosophy "[d]ualism is therefore only a moment, which must lead to the re-formation of a monism."<sup>1</sup> Yet in giving the primacy to perception as we do, have we not also eradicated even what was only the "moment" of dualism in Bergson's thought? The answer to this may well be both yes and no. No because we have tried to follow Bergson in describing experience "above that decisive *turn* where...it becomes properly *human* experience."<sup>2</sup> Thus, we have concentrated upon the notions of novelty and multiplicity as only ideals *for* rather than the reality *of* human experience. Yes because this human reality none the less exists, and along with it the increased reality of familiarity, generality and homogeneity.

With the human there also comes, though only in greater force, representations concerning memory, the past and time itself. Yet talk of past, present and future too is an homogenization, for above the "turn" neither "time" nor its modalities exist to the same extent. Not only did Bergson say that novelty was something "we cannot even talk about", elsewhere he added that "we cannot think it" either.<sup>3</sup> In our opinion, Bergson was correct to think that conceptual language distorts novelty, for whatever the specific language used, "before, simultaneous with, and after", or "past, present and future," to some extent it will always homogenize time into a linear, contained and calculable entity. "Time" is a representation and as such a "spatialization."<sup>4</sup> But the abolition of time by

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<sup>1</sup>Deleuze, 1988, p.29.

<sup>2</sup>*MM*, p.241 [*Q*, p.321].

<sup>3</sup>*DS*, p.150 [*M*, p.205]; *CE*, p.173 [*Q*, p.634].

<sup>4</sup>Giroux, 1971, p.21: "represented time (or the time of "reflective consciousness")...is really space." Cf. also, *TFW*, pp.90, 91 [*Q*, pp.61, 62] for Giroux's reference to "reflective consciousness".

representation is not simply the representation of a time abolished: representation *is* that abolition itself. With this representation, perceptions, novelty, alterity, and difference are all entered into an indifferent and homogenizing schematism. Differences become differences *of* such and such: *of* the world, *of* the present, *of* memory, *of* the past, and so on. Representation kills time, or rather, "time" kills the non-symbolic intuition it is meant to express, for what would an unrepresented time be for any theory, save nothing that could be called a theory of time at all?

Yet despite having questioned the possibility of both talking and theorizing about time, Bergson himself does appear to have addressed the issue of time with theory and through language. But this apparent inconsistency can belie other realities, for it is not that Bergson abandoned all hope for a language of time; he actually left the way open for a language that might *instantiate* time. One early reviewer of *Creative Evolution* rounded on Bergson for having endeavoured to make thoughts not merely know but be the things for which they stand.<sup>1</sup> The same might be said of Bergson and language. He wants it less to stand for the thing than to become it, or at least to become *a* thing. Too often it has been understood that Bergson wants his concepts and words to be like "real" objects, that the concept of mobility is culpable for not moving, just as the concept of quadruped must be chastised for not having four feet.<sup>2</sup> But this is to take the concept of a "thing" uncritically, and as such, this criticism misses the point. The aim is not to correspond to an immobile thing, but to partially coincide with the movement of things. Bergson may say that he wants a concept "appropriate to the object alone" but he adds that we could then "barely say [it] is still a concept;" it would be an "image" "almost matter...and almost mind."<sup>3</sup> If this is mimesis, then it is mimesis with a new meaning; one that imitates the *style* and behaviour of nature by behaving in a like manner.<sup>4</sup> When we act in

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. T. Loveday, "Review of *L'Evolution Créatrice*", in *Mind*, VOLUME XVII (1908), pp.402-408; p.408.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Maritain, 1968, pp.138-139, 162.

<sup>3</sup>*CM*, pp.207, 139/175, 118 [*Q*, pp.1408, 1355].

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Jankélévitch, 1959, p.289. Cf. also, Liberato Santoro on mimesis as an imitation of style, "Aristotle and Contemporary Aesthetics", in *Diotima*, VOLUME X (1982), pp.112-121.



this manner we do not record the object, we *attain* the objective.<sup>1</sup> So when Bergson asks for a metaphysics that would "*dispense with symbols*,"<sup>2</sup> it is really a question of what *type* of symbolism that is at stake.

It has recently been suggested that if Bergson is a neglected philosopher today "it is because language plays a minor role in his conception of the world."<sup>3</sup> Yet it would be truer to say that while language has no conscious role to play in his work and a certain type of concept and a certain type of word are without doubt treated with a vehemence, the work language does *within* his writing is still very large. The problem of expression is at the centre of Bergson's thought,<sup>4</sup> and if Bergson censures language, it is because he believes that it can be both the instrument of our self-enslavement as well as our freedom.<sup>5</sup> The symbol is condemned by Bergson, but it is also replaced with the simile, comparison, and metaphor.<sup>6</sup> A metaphor, for example, is a fluid concept with boundaries not yet fixed. As such, it imitates the style of nature and its on-going dynamism.<sup>7</sup> But such a more natural concept does not exclude it from still being a work of artifice; between art and nature there are many "intermediary degrees".<sup>8</sup> Adjectives are an alternative option. By employing adjectives to increase the number of associations between the object of the noun and other realities, we can re-establish the continuous movement that was originally sacrificed in favour of the substantive.<sup>9</sup> Verbs too can be used where appropriate.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Douglass, 1992, p.377, who tells us that for Bergson, if words are to bring us to some sort of objective reality, they will do so "only through a sort of unceasing provisionality that mimics the incessant process of discovery - disorientation and reorientation - of life. We get to an ultimate Truth only in the *process* of our interaction with the text, which is one of continuous revelation of "difference" and of continuous postponement of finality."

<sup>2</sup>CM, p.191/162 [Q, p.1396].

<sup>3</sup>Lecerle, 1991, p.197.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Alexander, 1957, p.14.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. M, p.487.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. CM, p.198/168 [Q, pp.1401-1402], where Bergson speaks of metaphysics being itself, not when it dispenses with concepts, but when it "frees itself of the inflexible and ready-made concepts and creates others very different from those we usually handle, I mean flexible, mobile, almost fluid representations."

<sup>7</sup>Cf. M, p.501.

<sup>8</sup>M, p.976.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. M, p.516.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. CE, pp.320, 332 [Q, pp.751, 761], where Bergson matches three kinds of representation: quality, form and action, with three essential categories of language: adjective, noun and verb.

Though the difference between the orthodox symbol and these others may only be a matter of degree, it is in view of the former's supposedly greater representational quality that it is condemned. If the symbol is to be a fixed picture *of* reality, then Bergson wants no part of it. The rigidity of the symbol carries within it a "practical question" which can only be answered by nature with a yes or a no.<sup>1</sup> All that can follow is never-ending dialectic and the various oppositions of philosophy: phenomenon and noumenon, substance and accident, being and appearance.<sup>2</sup> But the bivalency of the answer is merely the necessary response to the narrowness of the question; what is missed entirely between the two is the polyvalency of a reality which does not allow for such rigid dualisms. The static representational concept requires a separation between knower and known; but a different type of knowledge will "coincide with the generative action of reality."<sup>3</sup> But again, coincide does not mean correspond. The relationship is one of membership, not representation.

All told, this should lead us to a new understanding of the term "expression". For Bergson, it is argued, expression does not signify the representation of a hidden meaning so much as the relationship that a work of art can have with its artist. Jeanne Delhomme explains the meaning of expression for us thus:

Expression is self-expression, not the expression of something hidden behind the self; exactly as music and painting are expressions of themselves and not of a psychological or ontological ulterior world; expression is its own movement, incarnation is its own progress. In the full rigour of the term, there is *nothing* to express, *nothing* to incarnate.<sup>4</sup>

We do not expect an artist to know what his or her art will express before it is created, yet nevertheless the artwork is said to be an expression of that artist. The expression of art becomes a paradigm through which we can reform our understanding of what language can and cannot achieve. As Maurice Blanchot has noted in his essay on Bergson and Symbolism:

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<sup>1</sup>Cf, *CM*, p.223/189 [*Q*, pp.1420-1421].

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Jeanne Delhomme, "Nietzsche et Bergson: La Représentation de la Vérité", in *Les Etudes Bergsoniennes*, VOLUME V (1960), pp.37-62; pp.52, 56.

<sup>3</sup>*M*, p.773.

<sup>4</sup>Delhomme, 1954, p.172.

Bergson, in short, was imbued with an extreme distrust of words and an extreme confidence in poetry. It is not his criticism of language which makes possible and illuminates the existence of a symbolic art, but his profound feeling for art which furnishes him with the proofs of the validity and excellence of language.<sup>1</sup>

In this same essay, Blanchot goes on to remark on the dissimilarity between Bergson's conception of language and the views of Mallarmé and Valéry.<sup>2</sup> The contrast with Valéry is particularly striking. One commentator has correctly noted that Bergson was "[l]iving in an age when even poets could not help paying homage to science;"<sup>3</sup> and of Valéry this was certainly true. He felt that poetry worked in and for itself; putting us in touch with reality was beyond its purpose or ability. This is evident in his attitude towards Bergson. What he found objectionable in his philosophy was the fact that it had "questioned as a professor and replied as...a poet."<sup>4</sup> But Bergson would have never accepted the dissociation between art and the reality science discovers. If metaphors are significant, it is because they attempt to suggest the reintegration of movement and fluidity with the fixed and solid. Language can belong to a worldly reality through a relationship of coincidence (rather than correspondence) forged through a violent reformation of words that enables them both to mimic the style of more objective realities and to enter into them as a consequence. As such, it is perfectly true that each of Bergson's books "is conceived at once as a scientific work and as a work of art."<sup>5</sup> Paul de Man puts the scientific nature of Bergson's aesthetic in a clear light:

The poetic image...becomes a close verbal approximation to what perception and sensation are actually like, much closer, at any rate, than the purely intellectual representation of reality found in the scientific concept. Poetics thus becomes a vital source for theoretical psychology, rather than a minor part of it.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Maurice Blanchot, "Bergson and Symbolism", translated by Joel A. Hunt, in *Yale French Studies* VOLUME II, No. 2 (1949), pp.63-66; p.64.

<sup>2</sup>Blanchot, 1949, p.65.

<sup>3</sup>Joseph Chiari, "Vitalism and Contemporary Thought", in Burwick and Douglass, 1992, pp.245-273; p.259.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted in Pilkington, 1976, p.104.

<sup>5</sup>Gilson, 1978, p.64. Kolakowski (1985, p.53) calls *CE* a "literary masterpiece" and cites Alfred Loisy (p.100) referring to *TSMR* as a "theogonic poem."

<sup>6</sup>Paul de Man, "Modern Poetics in France and Germany", in *Critical Writings 1953-1978*, edited with an introduction by Lindsay Waters (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), pp.153-160; p.154.

## *Innocence Regained*

What has preceded, however, is only the beginnings of a Bergsonian philosophy of language. We have seen it condemning language at the very same time as it exploits the potential of its form. Yet such a strategy as this, letting language instantiate a meaning that cannot be directly expressed, has rarely won many adherents in the history of philosophy. It has only ever been a minority who have written of the suggestive characteristics of language. The majority has seldom been impressed. Desiring demonstration rather than suggestion, propositional content has been constantly preferred to the mimetic qualities of linguistic form. More recently, the search for *apodictic* demonstration has led to the bed-rock of "truth-value" beneath the propositional; so, for example, says the philosopher taken with the notion of "logical equivalence". Alonzo Church, for example, is said to have employed logical equivalence to install Frege's concept of truth-value as the key notion in developing logic.<sup>1</sup> Apparently different expressions are logically equivalent when they assert the same truth-value, because truth, falsity, or some modality of truth like possibility, are the ultimate meanings of sentences; sentential form is extraneous.

Yet according to two thinkers, Jon Barwise and John Perry, awareness of the situations in which these expressions are "embedded", of the different uses to which they are put, some value-free, others value-laden, demotes the ascendancy of truth-value. Differences between utterances originally thought reducible can be reinstated by due deference being paid to these situations:

In many contexts embedded statements seem to contribute something more specific than their truth-values to the embedding statement. Frege's choice of the truth-value as that which belongs to the statement in virtue of the references of its parts precluded taking this appearance at face value. His approach was to look to another aspect of meaning for the specificity provided by the embedded statement.<sup>2</sup>

The other aspect Frege found, of course, was sense: our personal take-up of a Third Realm objectivity. If expressions can be in touch with physical reality, they will be so in

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Jon Barwise and John Perry, "Semantic Innocence and Uncompromising Situations", in Martinich, 1990, pp.392-404; pp.398-400.

<sup>2</sup>Barwise and Perry, 1990, p.403.

view of this Third Realm rather than any intrinsic feature of their own. Resisting this move, Barwise and Perry attempt instead to take subjective appearances at "face value" and in accordance with the attitude of our "common-sense world."<sup>1</sup> They call this strategy (after Donald Davidson) "semantic innocence." This innocence is a "pre-Fregean" stance rediscovering the "old idea" that statements stand for "situations, complexes of objects and properties in the world."<sup>2</sup> The meaning of "unicorn", for example, becomes the property *unicorn* which exists in the real world independently of whether or not it is exhibited by any real objects. Of course, there are problems with a theory trying to delimit the notion of context; "situation" here is also used ultimately to save a singular reality.<sup>3</sup> But an attempted return to semantic innocence is itself of worth, as we hope the following may illustrate.

Against the irreducibility of the subjective perspective that Thomas Nagel and Bergson champion, there is an argument that makes just the recourse to the expression-sense-reference disjunction that Barwise and Perry are trying to surpass. It is not, it says, that there is a distinct reality to subjective knowledge, but only that there are distinct "*ways of conceiving* of the world."<sup>4</sup> Admittedly, there are indexical and demonstrative forms of thought about the material world, but it none the less remains the same material world as when it is thought of in a non-indexical manner. Nagel's error is to move "directly from forms of understanding to differences in reality.... ...from modes of description to the things described."<sup>5</sup> His position is an attempt to bridge this gap between description and reality, but he cannot succeed unless some state or object is presented that can only be thought of at a relatively subjective level and no other.<sup>6</sup> This he fails to do.

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<sup>1</sup>Barwise and Perry, 1990, pp.392-393.

<sup>2</sup>Barwise and Perry, 1990, p.392.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Terry Winograd, "Moving the Semantic Fulcrum", in *Linguistics and Philosophy*, VOLUME VIII (1985), pp.91-104.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Christopher Peacocke, "No Resting Place: A Critical Notice of *The View From Nowhere*, by Thomas Nagel", in *The Philosophical Review*, VOLUME XCVIII (1989), pp.65-82; p.68. Not that Peacocke's subjective "*ways of conceiving*" are to be confused with Frege's thoroughly objective senses; they are closer to Frege's notion of expression. The "sense/reference" gap he repeatedly refers to as the divide Nagel is trying to close (cf. pp.69, 70, 72), is not Frege's sense/reference bifurcation.

<sup>5</sup>Peacocke, 1989, p.68.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Peacocke, 1989, p.69.

The problem we would have with this critique is its conflation of the question of perspectivism as presented in Nagel's *The View from Nowhere* with the arguments for subjective knowledge in his earlier essay, "What is it Like to be a Bat?" The barrage of criticisms that followed the first essay turned mostly on whether *qualia* could provide us with privileged knowledge: can only the experience of red give us true knowledge of red? The response to this "argument from knowledge" then claimed that the perspectival nature of these experiences only pertained to a certain practical knowledge involved, and not at all to any knowledge of a theoretical kind (this, alone of the two being of importance for an objective description of the world).<sup>1</sup> The dispute boiled down to the question of whether or not *qualia* could be categorized as facts. It is true that Nagel's earlier essay does invite this treatment by continually referring to the "facts of experience" or the "existence of facts beyond the reach of human concepts" or "facts that do not consist in the truth of propositions expressible in a human language."<sup>2</sup> But there is a defence of Nagel that does not see his position as a question concerning facts at all, but one of the ontological status of the subjective perspective.<sup>3</sup> *The View from Nowhere* is the clearer expression of this; the issue no longer hinges on whether what is known to the subjective view is true or false (that is, on whether it is real knowledge), but on the very existence of this perspective right or wrong.<sup>4</sup>

The critique of *The View from Nowhere* that we began with, on the other hand, reduces the problem of perspective to that of a confusion between different modes of description, perspectival and non-perspectival, showing then how the referent underpinning both remains the same. It is the object that science uncovers which underlies both "Morning Star" and "Evening Star", the descriptions science provides of this object being their objective referent as well as the objective mode of description of that referent. The object lying at this spatio-temporal location becomes reality; "Morning Star" and "Evening Star"

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. for example, Lawrence Nemirow, "Physicalism and the Cognitive Role of Acquaintance", in Lycan, 1990, pp.490-499; David Lewis, "What Experience Teaches", in Lycan, 1990, pp.499-519; pp.516-517.

<sup>2</sup>Nagel, 1979, pp.172, 171.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Tallis, 1991, pp.149-155; Searle, 1992, pp.116-118.

<sup>4</sup>Nagel's earlier essay foreshadows this later deepening of the question on p.437: "every subjective phenomenon is essentially connected with a single point of view, and it seems inevitable that an objective, physical theory will abandon that point of view."

become modes of description with no objective referent proper to their modality. In other words, what gives the latter their objective referent has nothing to do with how they characterize it; these are extraneous subjective elements with no claims on reality at all. We have seen how Barwise and Perry attempt to bring a reality to these "extraneous" elements by recourse to the notion of situation.

The Bergsonian response moves towards the same objective though by a different route. It exposes the stratified nature of reality, particular strata of which might be called "Morning Star", "Evening Star", or any one of an innumerable number of names individually connected to a plethora of singular perspectives. Not that they all have the same reality. I can as soon think of a unicorn as I might think of the Morning Star, but only the latter has various other layers subtending it that we simply call physical (though they would be more appropriately described in terms of a variegated physicality). Certain perspectives have a greater history than others. Some belong to the momentary experience of one subject, others to the aeons of understanding that belongs to every possible perspective: personal, communal, species-specific and beyond. The former are less real, yet not unreal; they are becoming realities; too individual, private and intellectual to be guaranteed of greater existence, but none the less with no guarantee of failure either. The latter may be looked upon as the objective presentation of reality, though in no way would this objectivity amount to what we normally understand the physical to be.

The physical will attain to the objective in accordance with the spirit in which we understand it; too often it is taken merely for the canceling out of perspectival differences "where everything balances and compensates and neutralizes everything else."<sup>1</sup> Yet this is actually an ephemeral picture of the physical; a substratum that symbolises power, resistance and impenetrability alone. But there is another picture of the physical that accommodates itself to the multiplicity of perspectives rather than expunging them. This would be an objective physical. Unlike the homogeneous, which can belong to everyone

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<sup>1</sup>*MM*, p.293 [*Q*, p.353].

on pain of self-impoverishment, this physical would be given to no one as a reality, but to everyone as a potential aspiration.

How can we aspire to this objectivity? To answer this we will have to allow ourselves the liberty of touching upon themes from Bergson's last major work that has so far remained marginal to our investigation. The answer arises, oddly enough, through an examination of individuality. *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* could be called a meditation upon the moral significance of the individual. In it, Bergson looks to the tradition of Christian mysticism for examples of beings who are said to each constitute "a species composed of a single individual."<sup>1</sup> Just as it is said that mankind might possibly embody the reason for the existence of all living things,<sup>2</sup> so also one person might become the meaning of mankind. The principle of reciprocal regard that we discovered at the heart of *Duration and Simultaneity* now enters a new plane wherein a multiplicity of perspectives is subsumed under one, not through reduction or mediation, but through a qualitative integration such that the individual can qualitatively contain many points of view other than his own.

Yet this renewed union can only be gained through the reclamation of one's individuality, the lost innocence of what it is to be oneself. We are connected with others in two ways according to Bergson: quantitatively through one form society and qualitatively through another form. *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* describes two types of morality: that which remains within the group and that which goes beyond the group, irrespective of whether it be the family, clan, nation or even species.<sup>3</sup> Closed morality moves round in a circle; there are orders, reasons, and obligations; in a word, a "pressure" that creates the group. This is also one meaning we have found for homogeneity. Open morality, on the other hand, is not a pressure at all. It is not

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<sup>1</sup>*TSMR*, p.268 [*Q*, p.1203].

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *TSMR*, p.257 [*Q*, p.1194]; *CE*, pp.281, 195 [*Q*, pp.721, 652]. It is not that mankind is this reason essentially, for Bergson also intimates that some other species might have fulfilled the role of mankind; cf. *CM*, p.69/59 [*Q*, p.1301]; *TSMR*, p.273n1 [*Q*, p.1207n1].

<sup>3</sup>Cf. for following discussion, *TSMR*, pp.37-38, 65-66, 81-85, 269 [*Q*, pp.1006-1007, 1029-1030, 1043-1047, 1204].



something that could be constituted from the expansion of a closed circle, even if this circle enveloped all of nature. It is an "aspiration" rather than a pressure. It is an aspiration towards otherness as such, persisting even in the absence of any other "living creature."<sup>1</sup>

These two limits also point up two forms of individuality. In the first it is part and parcel of what constitutes the invisible bonds with and "reciprocal dependence"<sup>2</sup> upon the other; it is the individuality that subsumes a multiplicity within itself. In the second it is the individuality of an isolated and *ordered* thing;<sup>3</sup> the person reduced to a body itself reduced to symbolizing resistance, threat and opposition. In fact, it is precisely the individuality of isolated things which engenders the need for a society comprised solely of pressures and legal contracts to unite these things. If the individualism of *Time and Free Will* appears solipsistic, it is not a "hostile retreat from all participation"<sup>4</sup> but only from one form of society and its concomitant individuality. It is this negative individuality, that of an object strung between other objects, that Bergson dealt with when rejecting Lamarck's philosophy of acquired characteristics.<sup>5</sup> This individualism is a sham, far from its true instantiation.<sup>6</sup>

Between these limits then, individuality in general can admit "of any number of degrees".<sup>7</sup> Truer individuality, like the truer society that is built upon personal appeals rather than impersonal orders, *tends* towards the first limit,<sup>8</sup> that of absolute openness. Such a *telos* would be an openness to alterity, futurity and novelty, which is really to say

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<sup>1</sup> *TSMR*, p.38 [*Q*, p.1007].

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *TSMR*, p.14 [*Q*, p.986], translation altered.

<sup>3</sup> We should take "ordered" here in every sense of the word; cf. *TSMR*, p.84 [*Q*, p.1046]; cf. also, *CE*, p.16 [*Q*, p.507]: "By this is a living being distinguished from all that our perception or our science isolates or closes artificially. It would therefore be wrong to compare it to an *object*. Should we wish to find a term of comparison in the inorganic world, it is not to a determinate material object, but much rather to the totality of the material universe that we ought to compare the living organism."

<sup>4</sup> Robinet, 1965, p.55.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *CE*, pp.91-92, 179-180 [*Q*, pp.569, 639-640].

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *M*, pp.500-501 for Bergson's revaluation of the relative status of physical and physiological individuality and simplicity; the former are closed artificially by our perception, the latter are objectively real. (On the two types of simplicity, that of immediacy and that of reason, cf. *TFW*, pp.140-142 [*Q*, pp.93-94]; Jankélévitch, 1959, pp.16-17.)

<sup>7</sup> *CE*, p.13 [*Q*, p.505].

<sup>8</sup> Cf. de Lattre, 1990, p.191: "The individual is only that which *tends* to become individual"

an openness towards the living, for only the living instantiate truly individual differences.<sup>1</sup> Open because they are a part of a whole, which is not to say that they are lacking (for the whole can never be fully given in any case), but simply that they open on to it as a part which must consequently contain the whole, *in part*.

If we were to retake our real individuality or "get back into ourselves"<sup>2</sup> we would also retake our active participation in this whole. We would no longer be separate as a thing is from its container, separate to be either determined by or free from this container. It is a process of self-alienation that cleaves my subjectivity into parts for others and parts for myself, and which, furthermore, creates an environment called character, or the unconscious, or the body, that "I" must either strive to control or flee. This body and unconsciousness both become a part of the objective world that determines me, fathomable only through the expertise of others. Yet there is no one singular and lived perspective that can see the whole from a privileged position. When I realize this and leave the society built upon the illusion that there is, I actually gain the whole as much as anyone can: through my perspective. We must learn what it is to be ourselves, to live for ourselves. One commentator has called attention to Bergson's regard for "*discretion*" and the "*virtues of the private and the secret*."<sup>3</sup> These can best be seen in an item of correspondence from 1939: "I continue to work as best I can, but it is wrong to have said that I was preparing a new book. The truth is that I would like, before leaving our planet, to come to an opinion on certain points, and to do it *for me*."<sup>4</sup>

Every individual, writes Bergson, is at the end of a different line of evolution, each one itself diverging from all the others.<sup>5</sup> Every one of us is consequently a superlative as well as a comparative. This must be remembered. What we have in common with others

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<sup>1</sup>Bergson even writes (cf. *CM*, p.122/103 [*Q*, p.1343]) of the "character" of a blade of grass being no less individual than a Raphael or Rembrandt.

<sup>2</sup>*TFW*, p.240 [*Q*, p.156].

<sup>3</sup>Jean Lacroix, "L'Intuition, Méthode de Purification", in Béguin and Thévenaz, 1943, pp.196-204; p.197n1.

<sup>4</sup>*M*, pp.1588-1589.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *CE*, pp.56-57 [*Q*, p.540]; these lines eventually cross at procreation, out of which new lines will radiate.

is only what we have in common with them; it entails nothing further. It is through thinking that we are essentially the same as others (including the others we were in the past and will be in the future) that we can come to see our differences representing something we are falling short of, things that we could have been. They become possibilities for us that some will say we are free to perform and others the contrary. Yet no one worries about not being naturally able to fly; this possibility is marginalized as a *physical* ability with no relevance for the debate on freedom. But this marginalization only serves to reinstate other differences as possibilities open to general consumption. Though these acceptable differences admittedly appear more transferable than physical ones, they still remain phenomena that are personally owned. It is not a matter of difference, but of *whose* difference and *which* difference. At the leading edge of nature's progress we must adopt the nominalist position on individual natures. Peter is not Paul, so what Peter does can never be a possibility for Paul. It is always my action at a time that was perpetrated, not *an* action that could have been as equally performed by me as by anyone.<sup>1</sup> Actions belong to subjects and situations. There is no such thing as a general type of action; there may be more or less individual actions,<sup>2</sup> but none can be perfectly general.<sup>3</sup> And while the differences here may be minute, at the level we are concerned with, what is small, particular and *nuanced* is of the essence.<sup>4</sup>

As with action, so for perception. There is no such thing as *a* perception of temperature; if we disagree on the temperature of the wind,<sup>5</sup> we can either respond with philosophical argument or we can accept that our seemingly incompatible perceptions have actually uncovered what were irreducibly and incomparably different worlds. We can treat this situation in either its actual multiplicity or its potential singularity; both can become the

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<sup>1</sup>If this seems to cancel any transcendental grounds for either morality or language, this is only because we have set our understanding of both so heavily on models which regard individuality as a *physical* isolation automatically requiring either contracts or mechanisms to annul its effects. Bergsonian individuality, on the contrary, naturally brings its own morality and understanding with it, because it is essentially a tolerance of others' differences and an intolerance towards those who would not tolerate these differences. It is a proximity born of the mutual recognition of a real distance.

<sup>2</sup>Such actions that are less individual form the basis for the mechanistic levels at which we do communicate and otherwise interact with each other.

<sup>3</sup>And it is literally laughable that there might be; cf. Bergson, 1911, pp.168-171 [*Q.* pp.468-469], on the relationship between the general and the comic.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Deleuze, 1956, p.86.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Lacey, 1989, pp.89-90.

next reality. At certain levels then, reality is truly in the making. Bergsonian optimism is not so much a positive representation of this as it is the lived realization that reality is for the taking. Or rather, that those parts of it in play at levels proper to ourselves will be what we make of them. Our actions, perceptions, thoughts and utterances are all a part of reality.

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The preceding six chapters of this work have been occupied primarily with a reading of *Matter and Memory*. It was conducted in the hope of converting the Bergsonian themes uncovered earlier into tools with which to tackle problems current in both Bergson's work (the status of pure memory and pure perception, the cogency of radical novelty) and Philosophy in general (the mind-body problem). For the most part this has taken us away from looking at other areas of Bergson's thought, in particular his philosophy of biology in *Creative Evolution* and his combined treatment of sociology, ethics and religion in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*.

Our interpretation cannot, therefore, pretend to be a reading of all his work. It presents only one image of Bergson. But we feel nevertheless that it is the most Bergsonian image available; if it is not so applicable to the biological vitalism of *Creative Evolution* or the religious vitalism of *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, perverse though this may sound, it is mostly because these themes are the least Bergsonian of his work (despite the popular image they evoke). If vitalism is read in terms of his earlier metaphysics as a temporalism, fine and well; but if it is seen as a singular substance, force, or energy (virtual or actual) pervading the universe (as it can so often appear to be),<sup>1</sup> then it is far from both the majority of what Bergson wrote as well as the entire spirit in which everything he wrote was conceived.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. *TSMR*, p.209 [Q, pp.1152-1153].

Be it described in terms of dissociation, dichotomy, differentiation, divergence, or even *élan* (without the "*vital*"), Bergsonism is a deeply pluralist philosophy. But to understand how this pluralism is engendered one must restore priority to the subjective perspective in every manner of means: the integrity of *le bon sens*; the "full relativity" of reciprocal frames of reference; the critique of nothingness; the aspirational realism of pure perception; attention to life and movement; the objectivity of enduring language. This perspective is not the locus of some essential and immaterial stuff; it is a source through which myriad worlds are created via the multiplicity of perceptions that behold them. It is these ideas that we have tried to faithfully represent in this work; the picture of the world at its best when grasped as an unceasing source of novelty and creation, opposed to the reductive stratagems of every monolithic system and homogenizing thought.

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